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142 GREAT NORTH WAY, HENDON, LONDON, N.W.4

# The Gryphon

THE JOURNAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

FOUNDED 1895

MAY, 1951

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Gerald Robinson*



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1950—51.

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## EDITORIAL

**T**HERE IS A DANGER, whenever a civilization or a way of life seems to be threatened by an outside enemy, for the inhabitants, men, women and children, of the Beleaguered City, to run to the walls and take up defensive positions at the battlements, abandoning the creative duties which form the vital heart of the complex organism they are trying to defend. If the battle proves to be a long one, it may happen, when victory is finally won and the standard of the besieged people can flutter once more over their City in an atmosphere blown clear of the smoke and the bitter cries and clamour of struggle, that the defenders turn from the walls and gaze upon their City to find the fires extinguished, the beat of the life-giving heart stilled, and that all they have in reality preserved is a ring of stone ramparts, desolate and empty within.

If this happens, it will not be so in spite of everyone having done his duty, but because some have failed to do theirs. For, in a time of crisis, it is necessary to man the walls and beat off the invaders, but it is equally essential for those whose gifts arm them for a different phase of the same struggle not to become confused by the tumult and the shouting and throw aside the arms entrusted to them merely to replace them with others which they are less fitted to wield. It is a question of

not losing one's nerve. And it is also a question of not betraying a trust. For the smallest gift in any creative field is a trust which implies a duty. The man or woman who betrays such a trust, who throws down such a weapon, will be setting the whole cause as harmful a blow as would be dealt by one of the physically armed Captains on the City walls deserting with his whole company to the enemy.

On the other hand, if the gift is treated not as a means of fulfilling one's duty—what should be, surely, a joyful duty—but as a divinely bestowed permit to act in accordance with one's personal fancies, the harm will be as great. The person with this kind of gift has no cause to see himself as a being superior to the man at the wall, for the magnitude of the duty increases with the quality of the gift. The relationship between the two must be one of mutual respect.

Perhaps, as long as men find it necessary to defend the things they have created, the City will always be in a state of siege. If so, then this is not a condition peculiar to our own age, but one that has come down to us from past centuries and one that we shall, presumably, pass on to the generations that follow us. And if a guard of ages long past, on his nocturnal round of the City walls, should have taken comfort at the sight of fires glimmering through the darkness from inside the circle of stone, or the notes of a song drifting through the night air, is it not probable that his counterpart of to-day will be cheered by signs that within his City there still exists the warmth of life and of joyousness?

For the siege of the City is the continual war on the Human Spirit, and when hard pressed, it is only by affirmation that that Spirit can survive. Defence alone is not enough. It is only by the labour of those who are gifted for the task of making the Spirit into a visible and concrete manifestation that the defenders can be fully convinced of the importance of carrying out their job. The defenders need to know that the Spirit, the heart of the City, is not dead. Only by convincing them that it lives and grows in themselves can the battle be carried away from the walls of the City and into the camp of the Enemy.

Ralph Soderberg

## THE DANGEROUS DREAM

LONDON IS A FASCINATING CITY; only one thing can spoil it for the eager traveller, and that is a ticket to Paris.

Charles Tranet croons about "*toi Paris*," and calls it "*la saison de ma vie*"; Beatrice Lilley sings "Paris, I kiss your Right Bank, Paris, I kiss your Left Bank," and everybody agrees that in April the season there allows everybody to kiss somebody, maybe everybody. Paris is Washington and New York and Sodom and Gomorrha all rolled into one, and any of these cities would be content to creep awkwardly up to Paris and nuzzle gratefully into her soft side and think life good to be a little baby suburb. Nowhere else do the sweet ghosts so throng, nor is the infinite so near as in Paris.

The prospect before the pilgrim was never better described than by the old master, Henry James. One of his characters gives us the feeling of generations of fascinated emotions when he confronts Paris and expresses all the magic of the prospect in these words:—

"It hung before him this morning, the vast bright Babylon, like some huge iridescent object, a jewel brilliant and hard, in which parts were not to be discriminated nor differences comfortably marked. It twinkled and trembled and melted together, and what seemed all surface one moment seemed all depth the next." (THE AMBASSADORS).

The great city is a sort of universal heart, for every visitor leaves some bit of himself there as a little token on the altar, and certain ones—hedonists, romantics, sentimentalists—leave considerably more, so that every bar and bridge, every market and monument, would be littered with throbbing aorta, if we could only see reality.

As a matter of fact, the reality of Paris is the subject of considerable debate. To the Puritan, and to some parents, Paris is temptation, anarchy and dissolution of the spirit. Elders often do not welcome news that their children are off to Paris, for they fear the lack of restraint and routine on a trip to such a climate. Youngers have been known to catch fevers in that torrid air. In the consequent delirium, the sense

of time resolves itself into the sense of the present, and responsibility lies over the water, forgotten. Elders caution the young straining spirits, and are glad when they come back.

And of course the young in heart want to make the trip to find something of life which school, family, job, institutions and the familiar lot of home do not give them. The Past and the Future do roll into the Present; experience takes on a sharper more Elizabethan flavor of immediacy and individuality. For here is beauty and freedom, escape and discovery, and the lovely song of a very great city. The Englishman finds a different sensibility here, the Mediterranean emotional spontaneity with which so many of his writers have fallen in love. Forster, Lawrence, Norman Douglas—each has been a physician for England's dull spirit, prescribing a good bleeding of the emotions. Leech Paris will do for this admirably, and it perhaps proves some acuteness in the patient that so many of her beings travel and take the cure.

The American finds the same contrast, particularly if he be from the North, where the ghost of Calvin still walks and a Puritan morality stokes the fires of neuroses. In addition, he finds a civilisation which has visibly grown old gracefully. Much of the emotional appeal of Europe lies in this mellowed and un-selfconscious tradition.

Paris is, in fact, the heart of tradition. It is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, famous for its endless revelations in every form of cultivated life. Its architecture, its boulevards, its restaurants, its night life, its special *savoir-vivre* which may mean anything from painters to prostitutes—or a combination of both popular in some Bohemian circles—are suffused with the tone and the beauty of the past. There is a warrant in Paris for every conceivable expansion of personality.

People go to Paris for a wonderful vacation. The shocked victim of a Lyons table d'hôte will be soothed at every meal; the Folies Bergère *moves* on Montmartre; the markets and bistros and museums and—oh! *les femmes*—are immorally succulent. Everything is possible in Paris; and nothing more so than the realization of a larger self, a Rabelaisian expansion into living.

Yes, Paris is the great dream, the great symbol for freedom and beauty in life. Most of those who visit her for a short time find a holiday change which refreshes and enchants them. But this article is not really about those people. We are to consider the ones who stay. Almost everybody who spends a little time in the City of Light grows wistful on leaving, and wants to remain, find a job—would do anything to live just so, study, write, guide—anything to linger on in the sun. This is about some who do, and why.

I did. I had a job, and I stayed in Paris for about a year and a half. I worked in a building on the Place de la Concorde, and I lived in the Grand Hotel of the Future on the Rue Gay-Lussac, just up from the Luxembourg Gardens. For quite a long time I went to my job at midnight and came away at eight in the morning. My best friend, who also worked there, and I got into the habit of walking down the Boulevard de Sainte Germaine and sitting on the terrace at Lipp's when it opened at nine, and there we would spend the morning talking and drinking the special beer they have there served in special goblets (like enormous brandy snifters) called *sérieux*. They also had a few specimens left of other containers which could formerly be ordered; the increasing sizes were called the *distingué*, the *formidable*, and the *verre de cheval*, or *catastrophe* (which holds six litres). We used to try to persuade the waiter our friend to serve us these, and we once got two *distingués* out of him, but the rest proved extinct. Perhaps some day—

We saw a good deal of life around Ste Germaine de Prés as time wore on, and we talked about it quite a lot. Lipp's is right across the street from the Flore and the Deux Magots, and we came to recognise and discuss a number of the foreign habitués of the region. Since this article is about the resident visitors to Paris, I will mention some of the terrace observations which my friend and I came to make on them.

There were, of course, the large and fairly homogeneous group of young and not-so-young people who had obviously come with a lot of money, to spend a year or so in entertaining themselves. Their lives and motives seemed simple; some were



clearly just out to enjoy themselves for a time in the best possible place. But most of them, we decided, were refugees from home, where everybody worked and where they felt ill at ease simply searching for pleasure without productivity. In a community where the rule of order is eight hours a day at some job, and the interests of the group are based on the economic necessity of an income, the man with money and no particular interest in a job usually finds himself regarded as a drone and/or a wastrel. In Paris the men and women in this position have a way of life laid out for them with others of their kind, and keep busy in their own way with no questions asked. There is no obligation on them except to live as much for their own tastes as possible.

Thus the morality of this group centres itself on self-satisfaction in what were traditional ways even to the Romans, who called Paris Lutetia and built a circus arena there. These people have the security of their money, and feel few doubts about spending it on themselves, far from the accounting office. They are not usually ill at ease about their fortune; they are restless, in general, because it plainly becomes boring to them to depend on their inner resources to stimulate themselves. Paris provides endless opportunities to find other stimulations, though, and dilettante interests in art, music and the philosophy of life need not strain themselves to find subjects for dalliance on the Left Bank. A façade of cultured interests is general in these people; they are not producers, and never will be, but they may pride themselves that they are patrons providing an intelligent audience for the ideas of life and art with which Paris abounds. Their love-lives, centred so much in themselves, are almost inevitably promiscuous and shallow.

This group came to Paris to escape social responsibility; others come to escape more serious obstacles to the full life which home sets up. Thus, there is a considerable element of peculiarly sexed people who find Paris indifferent to their deviations and who remain there without that social condemnation which in their native environments is passed upon them. It is a pity that such moral judgements force them to exile themselves in such a way, a reflection on the prejudices of

less tolerant cities. But again Paris offers refuge of the most satisfying kind to these hounded sensibilities, for it is clear that the beauty of the city satisfies their tastes and soothes the injustice with which the more rugged society of their origin has shocked them.

In point of fact, the fundamental situation of all these people is that they are escaping a moral climate which is at odds with their personal position. If they have enough money, they can evade the pressure put upon them by their native moral code and live freely in Paris. These two groups are in the main free from internal conflicts; they think they are right and live their own lives. Their quarrel is only with Society.

The more unfortunate men and women are those in whom mental conflicts have succeeded in suppressing emotional instincts and who have come to Paris to do something about it. Their quarrel is with themselves. They are aware that they are not happy, and have been informed that moral blocks are imposed on them without justice by various interested institutions. They have read Samuel Butler and D. H. Lawrence and would like to free themselves of those pernicious senses of sin and withdrawal which blight their emotional spontaneity. They are sensitive and self-doubting, and they want to solve their problems. They do not believe in going to work, in accepting the routine of their homes, for they feel that they are far from living fully, and prefer to try to find significance, independence, freedom in life before being committed to a restricted social position. Confusion hates to commit itself.

These pilgrims have come to Paris to find themselves. Free of the familiar restraints, far from the responsibilities which interfere with self-experimentation, they hope to realize, in the dreamed-of Paris, an emotional development to maturity which will give them the basis for a happy life. Sincerely aware of the gap between the ideal and the actual in their power to live richly, unhappy in the confusion of mind which has crippled them, they apply to themselves the curative freedom of Paris to rid their spirits of the poison of oppressed essences.

Most of them have a vision of life as they would like to live it, and in Paris, as they know, they may live as their vision

dictates. Paris is like every city, in this way, or maybe more so—it is the essence of city. For the city is a symbol of infinite opportunity to rise out of littleness and limitation into freedom. And Paris is superior to other cities, for it is felt that there one finds, not the pot of gold which is the main dream of most cities, but the moral richness of opportunity to escape the past which is a deeper dream than that of riches.

And this is the dangerous dream. For these ideas of a life in Paris are often formed on the image, not of the self which exists, but of a free being usually in contrast to that self. By self I mean the collection of moral feelings which make up the individual character. The point I wish to make is that in the unhappiness of their confused and contradictory impulses these people make the mistake of trying to ignore the impulses which they feel to be inhibitory. Because of confusion as to what they really want, they lead a life based on what they think they want. And since what they think they want contradicts the actual moral blocks within them, they feel a sense of sin and guilt. Paris has a peculiar fascination for such people, for the neurotic or semi-neurotic mind in conflict with itself, because of its legendary freedom. The irony of believing that going to Paris will solve everything lies in the fact that it is a delusion to believe that anyone can run away from his own character. The freedom of a city is a danger to anyone believing that in it he can act out of character—which doesn't solve problems, only ignores them.

This article doesn't hope to offer solutions to the case of the maladjusted individual; that is an unfortunate and more or less general condition which life brings on everyone. We are dealing with a particular aspect of Paris, the idea some people hold that it is somehow an answer or a solution to such cases. The dreamers go to a Paris which, for all its differences, is made of the same stuff as the world they left behind them. It is only another city, after all. The individual remains the same but there, in his dream, he is particularly vulnerable to disaster. The freedom which is Paris' great appeal is also its great danger, for freedom requires self-knowledge and self-control. My point about the people who go to Paris to search for themselves is

that they sadly and all too often try to live what they conceive to be free lives, without a proper understanding of life there and its dangers and values (the same they left behind) which would protect them from the consequences.

The result of these unfortunate expeditions into the ideal is that in Paris live many of the unhappiest people I know, unhappy because in running away, in seeking to impose on themselves a misconceived set of values, they have only evaded their problems, not solved them. And on top of the emphasis which the experiment has given the muddled state of their unhappy minds they have added the actual misery which their misconceived actions produce.

The reason for most of the confusion that marks the neurotic mind is a deep fundamental insecurity, springing from the lack of what we call love. Thus the search for the self which characterizes that group to which I am referring is more than anything else a search for love. What makes for tragedy is the common failure to understand just what kind of love is needed, or, semantically, the common failure to define love in the right terms.

The distinction between spiritual and physical love is a difficult one to make ; to say where one begins and the other leaves off seems to be scientifically impossible. However, it would appear that one of the commonest sources of neurosis is the conflict in the mind between ideas that sexual contact is in some way sinful, and ideas plus urges which link sex with love. What this contradiction means to the self-seeker who feels that love is the answer to his problems is that often he comes to believe that Puritanical moral barriers are destroying his chance to love freely ; he links sexual inhibition to emotional inhibition. In a way, he is right, for love is made up of both the mind and the body. But where he goes wrong is when he assumes that by administering sexual experience to himself he will cure his emotional ills. This seems to be a common misapprehension in the lost visitors to Paris.

Naturally, sex is a fundamental problem in our society, and with the ideas of Freud, the findings of Kinsey and the actions of the eternal common man, we are witnessing a considerable moral change toward sexual freedom which should be an



improvement. But at the moment we are at the transition stage, caught between old morals and new (or maybe not so new) manners. The people I am talking about in Paris are mostly from the middle classes, where the inhibitory morality is strongest. Consequently their revolt against it is strongest, and they give it more value than it deserves in their self-analysis. They are most aroused by the modern writing which stresses sexual freedom (writing coming mainly from middle-class sources), and that stress on actual experience, the absence of which has sometimes come to mean weakness of emotions and failure to live fully, marks a very strong feature of the dream of Paris. For there, everyone knows, sex walks the streets without shame, or even modesty. Paris is thought to combine the best aspects of intellectual civilisation and jungle primitivism and directness. And, in its freedom, it does. Opportunity is there in abundance, which is further indication of the need for self-control.

My point in this respect is not, however, an argument for or against greater sexual freedom; it is only that for those people who need real emotional release and security, sex can be a dangerous and unreliable way to find it. What they really want is spiritual love. Removing sexual inhibitions may at best but open the way to that; there is some question as to just how far such inhibitions may be mastered without an emotional release to make the physical act valid, but that is another matter.

The great thing about spiritual love for these people would be that in it they could forget themselves, and so reduce or even eliminate the internal tension and conflict which makes them so miserable. And the pathos of promiscuity in Paris as the solution of these conflicts is that such sexual relationships are almost always motivated by self-interest, which is a direct contradiction to the nature of spiritual love.

Thus, in Paris one sees the man or woman who is "sleeping around," but who, apart from the physical satisfaction of the union (which cheapens itself through misuse), finds nothing to answer the deep emotional need which is his or her problem. And far from being full of risqué gaiety, such people grow more and more profoundly sad.



There are in Paris, too, many cases (my friend and I know three at least) of men and women who find real trouble through such sexual freedom. Paris is used to this, too, and provides for it in her way—it is common knowledge that almost every midwife in Paris also performs abortions, or can tell you who does. Several years ago one of our friends had such trouble; we knew her quite well, and we had occasion to know what anguish her experience brought her. Her sense of values may have been nebulous, but her suffering was terribly real.

For some, naturally, the result, even through unhappiness, can be valuable. Tragedy can refine; it can even teach. Some few of the people we knew who came to Paris with their unhappiness and their search for a solution to it rose above their mistakes and through suffering grew. Some of those who came to do what their own society wouldn't permit found release and even real love in their free relations. Some, even though disillusioned by life in Paris, found understanding and through it independence and clear judgement of what their real problems were.

In the end, the reality of Paris becomes an individual matter. My friend and I have probably judged some to be unhappy who were not; the rich extrovert may be content to lounge in Paris at his pleasure, the refugee homosexual may be happy and feel that he has at last found peace—all these may have found a better society, and in escaping from their own feel none of the sense of loss which would seem natural at renouncing one's own country. Those who go to Paris to find themselves by escape or by trial and error may also find some measure of peace or distraction or even understanding; they may be working out their happiness. But our ideas, our critique and warning, were based on the sense that illusions can be dangerous to the deceived and to others who become entangled with him. And our vision of Paris was and is that in no other place we know is the contrast between the sentimental idea of the city and the lives of those who come to live the Ideal so great; indeed, that is the explanation of my title. Our position is a moral one, clearly, and offers a good target to criticism, as any moral position does. I suppose the question resolves itself into wondering whether there is an ideal moral

awareness, whether any dream is more than a delusion, whether, in fact, life should not be its own justification. Would it be better if a man could find freedom at home, could solve his troubles easily, could fight the imposed battle of the moral life with clear vision and wise control?

These are questions of possibility; the great thing about Paris is that there seems to be in that atmosphere the faint fragrant spring perfume of infinite possibility, and the delicate Grecian music of freedom, wafting softly, softly from the Elysian fields. We come always back to the note of the ideal with Paris; perhaps the only reality is illusion, and the individual moulding of it.

This article is not meant to condemn Paris, or home, or the citizens of either place, whatever their errors and shortcomings. It is, after all, about a particular group of people whom I have seen in their unhappiness, and my sense has been an attempt to analyse their unhappiness and its relation to the city. It is a little bit of advice, perhaps, to check Paris with your own ideas, or maybe better, simply to enjoy Paris in your own way.

Paris, to me, is a great treasure in my mind, over which I can pore and almost weep as I remember the many wonderful things which it gave me. Few people who have visited the lovely city on the Seine can fail to become sentimental when the orchestra plays "April in Paris," when, in the window of the local wine merchant, they see a bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape, '47, and remember a special meal at the Vert Galant, when life seemed their shepherd and they should not want. I am not a European, and to sail far away from Paris with so dim a hope of return fills me with a most poignant sorrow.

But for all that, home I must go, and to work. This Paris I have written about is connected with home and work and life outside the Garden of Love and Lotus Blossoms, and perhaps that is why I have so treated it. If you go, and if you stay, you will find that Paris is a working-out of character through fresh experience, which never seems so vivid as there. But time is there, too, though it seems so easy to escape. And time is what links the symbol to reality, and makes the Seine flow into the sea.

## Robert Holmes

### ICARUS

So Icarus is dead ; another boy  
lost to the flaring sun ;  
blonde hair all weed, and his unearthly eyes  
vaunted as jewels in the island sea.

Poor lad ; and now he lies  
along the waves stirring his slender limbs  
that might have soared beyond the frozen stars  
to cleave a deep and colder atmosphere.

Too late to barter for him ; now the sea  
blisters his tender skin, and all the rocks  
lust for his beauty, broken on the tide ;

Too late ; now let the drifting waters furl  
his wings in some dark channel where the sand  
will never show the tarnish of his blood.





*Joan Barber*

## CONVERSATION PIECE

**S**HE KNEW THAT SHE WAS DYING. She had known it for a long time now, but had refused to acknowledge it.

Even now, at this late hour, to herself she framed it less positively: "She was not going to get better." All the same, it was the end, and despite the finality of the word it meant as little to her now as it had ever done.

Sally, her favourite daughter, was sitting there in the chair, she knew, but the effort of speech was one which she dared not make. Any effort, any movement, might wake up that fiendish pain again. She must remain quiescent, supine. It had been with her so long that it had become an entity in its own right, a being which she knew as well as she knew her own family, except that it was much more powerful and must be more constantly placated.

Yet it was good of Sally to have come. She had had to leave her job and husband, but she realised what it meant to her mother for her to be there. Still, she had always been a loving daughter, and if she'd left her most it was only what she deserved.

Now that it was near the end they did not leave her alone any more; no more long, lonely nights with nothing but the pain in her body and the ceaseless wind moaning outside. They were old friends, the wind and the pain, rose together and fell together—lift and fall, higher, and fall, and then the full force was on you as if in the eternal night all Hell had been let loose.

She heard the door open and from under her drooping eyelids watched her daughter-in-law come into the room. Her face in the fire shadows looked secretive, mysterious, and the two of them sat huddled there like a couple of old witches. She would have chuckled at the idea if she had dared. Their presence was a constant comfort to her, kept all her fiends curled up in corners of the room for hours at a stretch.



Her throat was dryly painful now. It must be the fire. The room was so hot and stale. She would have liked a window open, but Sally said that it made a draught. Thirst was another of her tortures. She dreaded the necessity which it forced on her. The pain of drinking balanced the freshness which the water brought to her mouth.

A sudden stab of pain brought her with a jerk from another uneasy doze. The two women were talking in the sick-room tones that carried so easily to her bed.....

"Did she say whether she wanted to be cremated or buried—because I think cremation's much better. Once you've got over the nuisance of the funeral you've nothing else to bother about—no more expense putting up stones and keeping a grave tidy."

"Well, of course," continued Mary's whine, "it's for you to decide, but I do think cremation's really the best, and there's a friend of Tony's will be glad to take all the trouble of it off your hands. He's just started in the undertaking trade, and I know Tony would like to put a bit of business in his way."

She was sickened with fear as she realised that it was her funeral they were talking about, her quick body her daughter was so calmly burning and which her son wanted to give to his friend as a "bit of business."

As they rushed towards the moaning woman on the bed, outside the wind rose and fell, higher and fall.....

*P. M. Ball*

## BATTLE OF BRITAIN 1951

**A**S THE WAVES OF TOURISTS who hurled themselves at our coasts this last Summer gradually receded, a feeling of alarm could be sensed among some of our higher powers. Supposing these visitors were going away disillusioned, with bitter disappointment in their hearts? Were they perhaps returning to spread sinister reports of affairs here, with disastrous results to the future tourist trade?

Had we, in a word, lived up to their expectations? Had they found us—odd? For that is obviously why the thousands pour in every year, to find out for themselves some hilarious examples of British character, which they can relate, once back home (with authentic accent).

Our constant aim must be to ensure that such examples are abundant; and to combat any recent failure, a campaign must be started. No oddity, no visitors. And always, of course, the toast of this island is the visitor—God bless 'im, especially if he has dollars in his pockets.

Hence, the Festival. We are going to treat our visitors to a season of pure British character. They won't have a chance to miss it this year. No need for them to travel to obscure corners of the island to indulge in their hobby; we are all taking part. The whole country is to be a happy hunting ground for peculiarity—British brand.

A visit to London will fill the ordinary tourist with delight, needing as he does very little to satisfy his ideas of how the British should behave. Here are the wonderful erections on the South Bank, calculated to strike (with some force) the visitor who has his eye cocked for the odd. He will in fact view them with something approaching rapture. If he observes some natives averting their eyes and shuddering as they pass, this will only give the oddity collector another glorious example. It is only when such points as these are pondered upon that the full subtlety of the whole affair becomes apparent.

For consider with what delight the following will be received and noted down: A quiet citizen, viewing, say, two foreign cars in Stratford-upon-Avon, and commenting sadly on

their size in comparison with the street—"They are rather large for the place, don't you think?" Nothing could be more perfect an example, except perhaps another inhabitant expressing some regret that the theatre is always fully booked by foreigners. Down it goes in the notebook: "Englishman, desiring to visit own theatre, to see plays of own dramatist, Shakespeare! Expressing regret at foreign full booking! Oddness—First Class."

Indeed the organisers must be congratulated on the skill and cunning of the whole campaign; the battle is won before it begins. The thousands will flock in, and everywhere they will be rewarded.

Let them visit any town, and true to the tales they grew up on, the British pride in history is revealed. Any association with Queen Elizabeth fills us with reverence; celebrations continue to this day ("Do you know, they still have a pageant in the Summer to commemorate her visit—isn't it cute?") And as for the civil war, it's heat can be felt yet. Frantic research is going on into the Cavalier and Roundhead records, so that the correct sentiments may be expressed, and the carnival details made accurate.

But the speeding cars must not pass through rural England, treating it just as so much dust to be raised. What gems can be discovered in the villages! Already the rehearsals for the morris dances have begun, and the maypoles should be going up any week now.

The village activities look to be the decisive factor. For here the connoisseur of the tourists and the most sceptical will alike be won over. Picture their delight as they see the strange garb of the dancers, the village green, and of course the ancients clasping their tankards, not to mention the olde worlde atmosphere which will be all around, thick as cigarette smoke. "Y'see—they still do it"—the shouts of triumph will be music to our ears, sign of victory as they are.

It will be a confused year, with so much oddity blossoming everywhere. But let us remember it is all for a good cause; look as odd as we can in our quiet way, and resort to our "native reserve" (which in itself is a great draw) to cover up our bewilderment at our own characteristics.

## *Turner Odell*

### TONY ZANELLI'S FIGHT

**T**HE ANNOUNCER'S VOICE came over the P.A. system :  
 " In the final bout of the evening, in the heavyweight class, Anthony Zanelli, of Kingstown University, will wrestle Michel Flynn, of the University of Pennsylvania."

For five men under the high, vaulted gymnasium ceiling, under the bright lights shining down hard from the recesses in the roof onto the crowd, the mat and the scattered figures along its edge—for five men time came focusing to a point and stood still.

Halfway up in the Kingstown side of the stands George Zanelli felt a surge of excitement within him and he thought : " If he wins, I'll be able to tell them about it. I'll walk in from the office for lunch to-morrow, and I'll know it then, but I won't tell them yet. I'll keep it inside of me. Then maybe after we've eaten and we're sitting around smoking afterwards, over the white tablecloths, maybe one of them will ask about the match to-night and I'll be able to tell them. If nobody says anything about it, I'll sort of lead up to it. Maybe I'll ask about Frank's boy. He plays tennis or something in the Spring I think. Then when I've told them, I'll bet their eyes will look different. Their faces too. Just because I'm a new member of the club is no reason for them to look at me like that. There's no reason why they should think they're any better than I am. I've paid my dues like all the rest of them, and I gave even more than Frank did to the Christmas fund. And he's been a member seven years. They know about Tony, and that he's at the University too. When I tell them about to-night, they'll look different all right. I wonder what kind of coaching he's had ? If he doesn't win. . . . . " He rose out of the stands and shouted " Come on, Tony boy ! " and time went on for him.

Eddie Jones walked around behind the bench where the team was sitting towards the big boy standing up, taking off his sweat shirt. Eddie was thinking : " Well, kid, it's up to you. What a spot to be in. My whole job depending on a new kid I've never seen in a tough bout before. If Lawson were still

around I wouldn't have to worry. He slammed Flynn in forty-five seconds of the first period last year. Of course, he was lucky there, catching that foot when Flynn slipped. But he'd have taken an easy decision anyway. Why this kid wanted to wrestle I don't know. But I suppose it is one of the few things he can do, and once they're in contact, that about as good as anyone else. But it don't help him any. With the score tied up and everything depending on him, me and my being here included, I wish to bloody hell it was somebody else going out there now. Just a little slip could finish him and then I'd be through. And two of 'em are here in the stands now, watching. I caught a glimpse of 'em as we came in." Then he said: "Well, kid, it's up to you," and across the corner of the mat the timers were setting their clocks.

High up, two rows from the top, in the Kingstown side of the stands, one of the two men leaned over and said to the other in a low voice: "Well, it's been a pretty good match so far. Hope this bout will be as good as the last one. Do you see what the programme says about this fellow, Zanelli?"

"Yes. Yes, and look at the score. Tied up. This bout'll settle it. I sure wouldn't want to be in Eddie's shoes right now."

"Nor I. But it wasn't our fault. We didn't propose that he should be replaced if the team loses this match."

"You voted for it, didn't you, when the motion was proposed?"

"Sure, but you know his teams' records have been rotten for the past three years. He's losing his grip. Maybe it's time a new coach took over. I think young Mansfield would do a pretty good job. The rest of the Council seemed to think so too. And you voted for it yourself. One vote made the difference, you know."

"I know, but that was the longest damn meeting we've ever had. I was pretty tired that night, I can tell you. If we hadn't finished it off then, no telling how long it would have gone on. And it wasn't my one vote any more than your one vote that made the difference. But look at Eddie's face. He does look worried, doesn't he?"

"Where?"

"Right down there, just to the right of that spiv character



that's standing up yelling."

"Yes, I see him. What time does your watch say? I think mine is slow."

"Eight-forty. Take it easy. I've got my eye on it. We'll make that 'bus all right."

The voices of the two men, swallowed up in the murmuring of the crowd, were too far away for him to catch, but as he threw down his sweat shirt, Tont Zanelli heard his father's voice shouting to him from the stands, and Eddie saying in a low tense whisper into his ear: "Well, kid, it's up to you."

He felt the familiar squeezing sensation inside of him, as the muscles of his abdomen tightened and pushed in little waves on up toward his throat. Muttering "Yeah" in reply, he began to dance lightly up and down on his toes, waving his arms around in circles a few times, feeling the muscles pull across his shoulders and up and down his back. Then he dropped his arms limply to his sides and, still bouncing lightly on the balls of his feet, flicked his wrists hard back and forth until he felt his fingers and forearms go loose and flopping. When Eddie's hand touched his shoulder, he stopped, turned and tried to grin at him, stepped to the edge of the mat, walked off four paces to the centre, and waited.

This was the time he dreaded. When he had met his opponent and become absorbed in the thrill of the struggle, he knew he would be all right. Then the tenseness inside, the anxiety, the aloneness would be lost in the rush and necessity of immediate action. But now everything was just ahead of him. The winning or the losing, personal victory or defeat, for him, Tony Zanelli, was yet to come. It was the personalness of the possible defeat that made him afraid. He knew that next week or even to-morrow it would be hard to see the reason for his present fear. But it was not to-morrow, or next week. It was now, and in that now he felt as if he hung suspended between the lights which he knew were shining down hard from the ceiling, the mat under his feet and the growing roar of the crowd that were coming to their feet around him.

Then he and his opponent, who had approached across the mat, touched hand to shoulder and shoulder to hand.

The crowd hushed and settled down again. He and Flynn broke contact, and as the referee paused, then said sharply "Wrestle!" he heard the clicks as the timekeepers punched the buttons on their clocks, starting the hands swinging evenly across the dials, and he was in it.

But it was not until two and a half minutes of the second period had gone by that he felt the fight really begin. The first period had passed in a kind of continuous somnambulistic shuffling. Once he had tried a leg dive and missed it and, as he recovered, Flynn hooked an arm across his face and rushed, trying for a head and arm, but his rush carried him high and wild. They swung, staggered and went off the mat. And that was all.

Going into the second three-minute period, Flynn had won the toss, and chose the defensive position. For two minutes and thirty seconds, he had surged and bucked and tried to roll, while Zanelli, with one arm wrapped tightly around his waist, rode him out, digging one shoulder into his back and scrubbing his face along the mat, until the timer had called out and the referee repeated, bending over the two men: "Thirty seconds to go."

At this Flynn had gotten to his knees and instead of going from there to a roll which Zanelli was preparing to counter, threw out his legs, reached back and inside his opponent's arching body with his right arm and—all lightning-quick for his size—went into a switch. Zanelli, feeling the sudden pressure on his shoulder, scrambled with his legs and began a re-switch. So the two men spun in a fast, tight circle, each leaning back against the other's thrusting weight, Zanelli's feet going a little faster than Flynn's, but not quite fast enough to overtake the advantage Flynn had gained in surprising him, going round and round, gathering speed and with their muscles growing tauter and tauter until finally, when it seemed to the inhaling and staring crowd that something must break, it did, and Flynn swung loose and away.

The referee pointed to Flynn and, over the sighing, roaring crowd, shouted "One!" Almost immediately afterward, before Zanelli had completely recovered even from the realisation that Flynn was trying a switch, let alone that he had gotten away,

he heard the referee's whistle, and the second period was over.

So here he was now, going into the final period of his bout—and the last one of the evening—with a one-point advantage to his opponent. With the referee touching him on one shoulder, guiding him to the centre of the mat, he dropped to his hands and knees in the defensive position and waited, with his chest heaving and rivulets of sweat running down his face, for Flynn who, he could not know, had paused behind him, crouching to fasten a shoelace. Through the shock of Flynn's escape that still enveloped him in a cloud of insensibility, wrapping him up in his own amazement and confusion, there slowly began to penetrate sounds of the restless noise and movement around him, from the timers muttering over their clocks at the table just beyond one edge of the mat, from the two teams on the benches along the two opposite sides of the mat, sitting sloppily—their job done now—but attentively as they chewed their orange sections, spoke a word now and then, and waited, and from the tumultuous and crowded stands that began just behind the teams' benches and swept up and away to just under the gently curving roof, from where the hard, bright lights glared down yellowly over the whole scene.

One of the two men, high up on the Kingstown side, was speaking, louder now to make himself audible over the uproar, and not leaning toward his companion but out ahead, peering down at the mat with its three small figures: the referee, standing with his arm upraised and the whistle in his teeth, ready to start the men on the final three minutes of their struggle and, in front of him, the two wrestlers, the one tense, crouching on all fours with his head down facing the mat just ahead of the referee's toes, and the other, on his knees beside him, his right arm thrown around the former's waist and his left hand lightly holding his opponent's propping arm just above the left elbow. The referee dropped his uplifted arm, blew his whistle, and the second man, leaning forward too, shouted:

"The hell he won't!" You watch him now."

"I tell you, he hasn't a chance. What's his name——" he glanced down at the programme in his clenched hand——  
"Flynn, he'll hang on like a dog to a bone. All he needs is to hold him down for three minutes and he's got it."

"Yes, but he's tired. Don't forget that. With a hundred and ninety pounds on top of him for damn near three minutes." Then, still shouting: "What time is it?"

"Easy will you? We've got plenty. Boy, if we could see Eddie's face now, sitting down there, instead of just the back of his head! Eddie, I have a hunch you're through."

Down where Eddie Jones sat beside the Kingstown bench, the wrestlers looked like two colossi as they moved tightly and powerfully in locked combat. Inside Eddie's head was turmoil and desperation. With teeth and lips clenched he cursed the boy mentally: "Get up, kid. Get up, Damn you. Quit stalling. and get out of there. Get up. To have to depend on you at a time like this. Can't you see, it's my job. You, when you can't even——. Get up, will you, you son of a bitch?"

George Zanelli, on his feet again, for the fourth time this period, until the man behind pulled him down again, was shouting: "Come on, Tony boy. Get up, get up, get up," almost putting into words the thought that came following: "So I can tell them, tell them. Don't you see? Then they'll think different about me, about me, about me," the words tumbling around his head, but only the "Get up, get up, Tony boy!" coming out into words.

On the mat now, Tony Zanelli, with over two minutes gone and the heavy, pressing weight on his back, sapping his strength, felt a suffocating wave of nausea rise within him. And he knew that if he didn't get up now, he never would. So he put one foot firm and flat on the mat, then the other, spread apart from it, and began, slowly against the dragging weight and the strength in the arms clasped around his waist, to stand up. As he rose slowly against that weight which might suddenly thrust and shift and send him down for what he knew would be the last time, the teams along the edge of the mat and the yelling crowd, ranked back and away and up to the ceiling, began, without knowing it, to come to their feet also.

Then, on his feet, and with the terrific tension of his up-thrusting and the other's pull downward, making both figures—or rather, the one figure of both—rock slightly, he struck hard and savagely at the hand clasping the wrist around his middle, and with a jar that sent him bounding two paces forward to keep his balance, he was free. He heard the referee shout



"One!" and, although he did not see it, knew the arm was pointing to him. He also knew it was not enough, and so on his second step forward he turned and plunged back toward the spot he had just left. His outstretched hand grasped a foot. Scrambling after it, he seized the knee above it with his other hand and, driving his weight forward, brought the man crashing down beneath his arms and shoulder. Bearing down hard with his weight, he half-ran, half-crawled upward toward the man's waist, reached out, slid one arm in front of his right elbow and against his back, just below the shoulder blades, and held his opponent in the bar while his breath rasped and caught in his throat and the nausea rose higher. He did not hear the referee's voice calling "Two!" Neither did he hear the blast of the whistle that came immediately afterward as the timers' clocks clicked to a stop, nor the almost simultaneous surge and slatter of the crowd as they swarmed, hoarse and yelling, out of the stands.

High up on the Kingstown side, the two men stood hunching into their overcoats as the crowd emptied away below them, spilling out over the white canvas.

"Well, looks like Eddie's done it. Not bad, eh?"

"Worse ways of killing an hour or two, I guess. Come on, or we *will* miss our 'bus."

"O.K. Not bad, 'though. Not bad for a blind kid. Not bad for Eddie either."

Eddie Jones had run up to his wrestler just after the referee had succeeded in dragging him loose, persuading him that it was all over, that he had won. As the boy tried to get to his feet, Eddie shook him back and forth by the shoulders and, heedless of his need, cried out to him: "Way to go, boy! I knew you'd do it. I knew you would. I never doubted you, kid."

George Zanelli pushed his way through the throng milling around and over the mat and came up to his son babbling almost incoherently in his joy as he thought of his after-lunch smoke to-morrow in the club, where the tablecloths would be bright in the light like the white canvas: "That's the way, Tony boy! Now I *can* tell them, I *can*, I *can*, I——."

Blind Tony Zanelli, hearing none of this, was suddenly violently sick, and thought only: "I beat him. I beat him. I beat him."

W. A. Hodges

## FARCE AND HIGH TRAGEDY

"CECE," by PIRANDELLO (translated by Frederick May),  
and the "OEDIPUS REX" of SOPHOCLES (E. F. Watling's  
translation)—Theatre Group Productions—Riley Smith Theatre,  
6th to 9th March.

**W**ATCHING RICHARD COURTNEY'S memorable performance in "Cecè" one could not help feeling that he owes much to his unusually strong stage personality and to his own confidence in it. The laughter which he earned—it must be conceded at once that he really did *earn* it—was rather the reward of the successful clown, who is independent of such things as plays and plots, than that of the comic actor seriously concerned to interpret the author's character as drawn in the script.

Studying the play it was not difficult to see that the plebian *Squatrighia*, used by the subtle Cecè for his own ends, *was* intended to show a certain comic ineptitude when faced with the necessity of playing a part before the courtesan *Nada*. But *Nada*, as Pirandello drew her, was, after all, a high-class, *sophisticated* courtesan, and in spite of her absurd moment of weakness, a pretty mercenary one at that. Even in the wildest of farce she would have to have been conceived of by her author as an utter half-wit before he made her fall for any such fantastic display of histrionic ineptitude as Richard Courtney clowned into *his* *Squatrighia*. Pirandello was far too great a dramatist not to have known that even the situations of farce must carry *theatrical* conviction, or else seem weak and clumsy.

A capacity for clowning of the order of Richard Courtney's is a somewhat mixed blessing for producers and playwrights. Often, as in this case, it can have its destructive element, too. On this occasion Richard Courtney's personal triumph—and it *was* a triumph—tended to obscure much of the subtlety of Pirandello's play, and to throw into rather unkind relief the occasional flatnesses in Wendy Rayner's otherwise quite convincing performance as *Nada*, and the rarer, though still noticeable, failures to carry off odd bits of dialogue in Frederick May's performance as *Cecè*.

Putting aside all consideration of Richard Courtney's personal triumph in the most memorable piece of buffoonery seen in the Riley-Smith Theatre for many a long day, and considering the play strictly as a play, it is just a little questionable whether the author was quite fairly treated. And this, after all, when the laughter, including his own, has died away, is the question with which the serious and honest critic must concern himself. The producer and actors alike deserve congratulation for having, at all events, provided a very fine piece of entertainment. And lest he should be thought too much of a purist, the present critic hastens to add that his own belly-laugh was as loud as that of any man present.

That same critic must confess to a certain lack of enthusiasm when it comes to Greek Drama. Honesty demands a frank admittance that theatrical conventions so alien to those of the modern theatre, conventions so stylised and static, which leave so little to the individual imagination, and which belong to an age so utterly unlike the present one, impose a certain strain upon the critical judgment of all but the Classical scholar or the enthusiast. Nevertheless, with this performance, it was not, after all, quite so difficult to achieve that "willing suspension of disbelief" necessary if the performance was to receive full justice.

In its way Malcolm Rogers' Oedipus was something of a *tour de force*. In this part he seemed to find a new and real tragic depth and a maturity of conception which his earlier Theatre Group parts were inadequate to develop. Nevertheless, in its very newness there were dangers. At times he seemed carried away almost to the extent of losing control of his interpretation, so that when he came to his final climax he had not sufficient dramatic energy left to give it that extra power which the plot demanded. If he had a weakness it lay in this occasional failure to control the dramatic power which he had built up in himself, a tendency to sustain tension too long at a uniformly high pitch, a lack of nuance, and a tendency to overwork certain of his characteristic gestures. (One of them, I remember, both in this and earlier plays, suggested rather too incongruously the act of swimming). All the same his

performance was powerful and genuinely moving and showed a tremendous gain in dramatic force over his earlier performances with Theatre Group. It was particularly notable for its complete sincerity. There were no seriously false notes.

Neither were there in the performance of Jacqueline Heywood as *Jocasta*. Her use of her voice, and her firm control of movement and gesture gave her a tragic dignity which completely sustained conviction. Neil Morley gave a convincing and signified performance as *Creon*, Arthur Creedy's *Teiresias* was convincing in spite of the extreme difficulty of conveying the qualities of grief, age and dignity simultaneously, as the part required, and most of the minor characters were quite convincing. Of them Ian Wilson must be specially mentioned. His speech at the end, as the *Attendant* announcing the suicide of *Jocasta* and the self-blinding of Oedipus, had a quality and conviction about it which made it, though short, the most completely satisfying performance, from the point of view of sheer acting skill, of any in the production. In spite of a voice-quality unfavourable to the part he was playing, his firm control of gesture, intonation and, above all, a finer sense for the timing of words than had been shown by any other single actor in the play, established this performance as the evening's most distinguished piece of acting. The chorus work, on the whole, was perhaps the weakest part of the production.

Lighting was undistinguished, save for an annoying and inexplicable flickering, at the opening of the play, upon the cyclorama, and the bad angling of spotlights from the front of the house, which had rather a peculiar effect upon the faces of the actors from time to time.

Theatre Group, Janet Cook, Bill Sharpe and the actors concerned are to be congratulated—Janet Cook and her cast upon the excellent entertainment which they gave with “*Cecè*,” and Bill Sharpe and his cast upon their courage in tackling Greek Drama at all, and, having tackled it, in having achieved so high a standard of production.



# CEMENT MIXER

GERALD ROBINSON



## Gerald Robinson

### STILL LIFE

- I. Was it for a frozen gesture of petals  
for the proud rising spire of fingered blossoms  
he fumbled in the soft roots of unborn hyacinths?

Caressing and caressing the hanging fire of hyacinth  
no fingers feeling in the curling flame  
no fingers meeting in the thick of hyacinth

no arms to hold him broken, and no flesh  
to feed his needing with its quietness.

Was it for the sharp and lacquered beauty of fire  
consuming hyacinth he plunged his blackened hand  
disturbing ashes and a little dust?

only a cling and lingering scent of hyacinths  
to wander in his ways and feel his breath.

- II. It was because and because  
because an eye and more than an eye could see  
the single flower in a time of seed  
could utter in the grain the bright Spring's promise  
floating a dream of coloured petals into Summer winds  
but in a Winter's time his buried hand  
was fingered with the soft roots of unborn hyacinths

a green stem shrivelling in a time of harvest  
and petals scattered round an earthen pot.

*John England*

## RESURRECTION

HE STOOD NOW, by the open window, on his last night, watching the palely-gleaming sea splashing on the rocks, and listening to the wind howling round the old house. The night before, Marlowe had taken his small motor-boat down to the beach with a hole bored in the bottom, and he had set it going by itself out to sea. He estimated it would go three miles out to sea and then sink.

You see, Marlowe was a scientist. He had written books ; he had published scientific papers ; he had carried out research that had made him a benefactor to the world. His life had been everything that he had hoped and intended it to be, in his ambitious youth, but one fear had obsessed him throughout his whole life—the fear of death. By this I mean not the actual process of dying, nor the possibility of life after death (for Marlowe, as a scientist, had far too logical a mind to believe in that); rather did Marlowe fear the forgetfulness of himself that would soon come to his friends and relations, and even to those of the present and the future, who would have cause to study the Science to which he had devoted his life. His intention was suicide, but suicide not for any *common* reason. Marlowe's body, although old, was quite healthy and active. Perhaps in a thousand years or less, the world would have the means to rejuvenate such a body as his, or at least, to increase its life-expectancy by many years. This was Marlowe's great hope, and upon it he based his whole plan. On this slender hypothesis he had worked for many years in the secret caverns below the building, which now he would enter for the last time.

Rain began to fall again as he left the window and the world looked abysmally dull and sombre in the watery moonlight. A perfect night to make a quiet exit from the world, he thought. He smiled wryly. The fire burned brightly in the



hearth and cast shadows around the room unseen, as he left it for the last time. A chair creaked in the warmth of the firelight. The door behind the great dusty bookshelves was firm and solid—a door that only he knew how to open. It opened silently as he inserted the peculiar key between the boards and manipulated it, and closed just as silently behind him, without a clue to its being. The stone-steps were dark and winding and covered with the dust and cobwebs of years, as he went down them. When he reached the bottom he was a considerable way below the old house, with a roof of solid rock above him. He was in a small chamber. How many years would it be, he wondered, before this chamber was discovered—perhaps many hundreds. But Marlowe could not risk the possibility that by then the scientific development of the world would be far from great enough to perform what he required, and so his body should not be discovered in the chamber. There was a complex mechanism hidden behind the rock of an apparently smooth wall that only a magnet could set in operation. It would take surely a thousand years or more before this second hidden cavern was revealed, he thought and hoped. The second door opened. Near the bottom of the lift-shaft down which Marlowe now went was a lever, which he pulled. Immediately there came the rumbling of an explosion, which indicated that the stone-passage down which he had come and the lift-shaft itself were filling with disintegrated rock from the walls and roofs, according to plan. Marlowe was in the second and last chamber. Now there was no going back.

He was filled, momentarily, with a slight fear and regret, which he dispelled as he crossed the room and entered the large cylinder in the corner. He stripped and greased himself. Then he sealed himself into the container and began to breathe pure oxygen. He turned on the anæsthetic. The steel cylinder was connected to a tank of liquid air that was designed to open and flow into it when the stopping of his heart set off an electrical impulse. The air inside the cylinder itself was already being displaced gradually by nitrogen, as also would be the oxygen remaining from his breathing apparatus when he was dead. All this and all else, his dieting over the past days, his will,

the missing boat that would indicate his suicide at sea, was planned to the last detail. Everything has gone according to plan. The deed was done.

There was no stopping now. Nothing in the whole world could spoil his plans. He realized it, and it should not have worried him—but it did. He began to feel the effect of the anæsthetic. Soon he would be dead, the Winter would come and he would still be here—the Spring would come, Spring with its green leaves and flowers, birds singing, pretty girls in Summer dresses, picnics, sailing on the sea, making love, new songs, new light, new laughter, birth and death—and he would still be here. A cold hand touched his heart and he shuddered. He did not want to die! The Spring!—he wanted to see the Spring, wanted to bask in sunshine again, wanted to live again! He made himself be calm and forced himself to reason. How many years, he wondered, before he was discovered? A multitude of visions passed before his eyes, a flickering of light and darkness, of Winter and Summer, of new discoveries made, buildings towering to the sky, cities of the future, bright and shining things—canyons of steel and stone, perpetually bright. How many hundred years? He struggled to keep awake, as the visions blurred. A thousand years—a thousand years?

There was a hiss of liquid air in the cylinder as the light went out, and a thousand years of darkness settled upon the freezing corpse of Marlowe.

## RIOTOUS PROCEEDINGS OF MEDICAL STUDENTS AT LEEDS

**F**OR THE LAST THREE OR FOUR WEEKS the inhabitants of the town, particularly those residing in Briggate and Upperhead Row, have experienced considerable annoyance from the outrageous proceedings of a body of medical students, lads varying from 16 to 18 years of age, who, to the number of a score or more, sally out every night armed with sticks for the purpose of having what is termed a "lark." This career of disorder generally commences at the theatre, from which place they were forcibly ejected the other night, several of them returning home with a pair of black eyes or a bloody nose. After leaving the theatre, the practice of these disgraceful characters has been to march up Briggate in a body, demolishing squares of glass, breaking shop shutters and grossly insulting any individual who happened to be walking alone. They have then adjourned to various public houses, and in several instances the landlord has suffered considerable loss by the breaking of glasses and damage done to the furniture. Strange to say these shameful proceedings have been allowed to go on without any interference from the night police; but the nuisance has now become so great that a representation of the circumstances has been made to the magistrates, who have given instructions to the police to take into custody any such parties as may be found to commit a breach of the peace. Probably a visit to the House of Correction will cure these "Juvenile Flankers," as they call themselves, of their folly.

(From the *Leeds Mercury*, December 26th, 1841).

*Fiona Garrood*

## TO BE, OR NOT TO BE

“**O**DD HOW LIFE SUDDENLY CHANGED, just when one was beginning to feel really dissatisfied with it.” mused John Henry, in his deepest philosophical mood. Only a week ago he’d been just an ordinary boy like all the others, even if he was the only one with a father in “foreign parts,” whom he hadn’t seen for ten years. The novelty of that had worn off long ago, and life in the small Lakeland village had become pleasantly humdrum. But now! He smiled to himself with vast satisfaction, for it was only last week that he had awakened to the fact that he was not just John Henry Tomkins, but the last scion of a noble race!

This amazing realisation followed his meeting with the Man. When he came to the village, the day was fine and warm, with the sun poking bright, inquisitive fingers into all the wintry corners. He remembered the sun, because it made the Man look so strange in his dark, town clothes—as if he had been caught unaware. He’d looked the sort who might like to look round the Church, so John Henry, being very obliging, and always in need of an extra sixpence had engaged him in conversation. Yes, it was in just such a casual manner that he had learned of his great heritage, and the words still rang in his ears.

“A good deal of Viking influence in these parts, my boy, a good deal. Vikings? A great warrior race from the Continent, who settled here, didn’t you know? Might be one yourself, for all you know, eh?”

John Henry, in his discontent, had ignored the bantering tone of this final remark, and escaping to the quiet of his wood near the lake had, with quiet dignity, assumed his new and important responsibilities.



He began to frequent the Lake more often, and anyone who chanced to pass might have seen him standing on the shore, addressing a vast throng of goodly Norsemen, massed at the water's edge, or sailing solitary on the calm darkness of the Lake, erect in the prow of his ship. He was indeed lord of all he surveyed, though the uninitiated might be deluded into thinking that his ship looked like a small dinghy, sadly in need of a coat of paint, and his army resembled nothing more than a large clump of trees. But John Henry knew better. Innumerable times he climbed alone the dark slopes of Giant's Crag, which rose straight from the shore. It gave him immense satisfaction to know that while all his former companions looked upon the mountain with a kind of superstitious fear, he, in his new and exalted position, relaxed in the pleasant feeling that he and the crag were quite good friends. Not many people, he thought, could boast an acquaintance with a mountain! It was almost inevitable, of course, that his school friends should, sooner or later, discover the drastic change in his life. Naturally they laughed at him—it was to be expected—but he bore it with fitting fortitude and even came to delight in the mental battles waged against these unbelievers, as they stood on the shore, jeering in their pitiable ignorance.

Just at first, and then only to a very slight degree, had John Henry ever doubted that he had discovered and assumed his rightful heritage. Indeed, the only misgiving which he remembered was when he examined himself in the mirror, immediately after his discovery. Deterred but little, he had told himself: "There's plenty of time. Vikings probably weren't any bigger than this when they were twelve."

His only real regret was that his aunt and uncle, with whom he lived, didn't appreciate the honour in which they too had a share. The look they had given him when he had casually mentioned an afternoon on the North Sea had been almost more than he could bear.

Then, one evening he returned from a particularly trying day at school, where the schoolmaster either could not or would not understand the change in circumstances, but insisted

on treating him just as before. His uncle called him as he came through the door.

"John Henry, boy, come here. Here's your father come home."

Standing with his uncle was a short, dark, wiry man with twinkling eyes, dressed in even worse "town clothes" than the Man's. Somehow he had preferred his sombre black to the bright blue now before his eyes. In a daze John Henry listened to a cheerful Cockney voice and felt a very strong hand gripping his shoulder.

"'Ello son! How's yerself?"

Was this possible? John Henry tried a swift mental readjustment to these new and disturbing circumstances. But no, try as he would, he could not imagine a Norseman greeting his son in this way, or looking quite so unwarlike as this man....

Not being a Viking, after all his dreams, didn't turn out so badly as he thought it would, at first. He quite liked this new father with his endless stock of hair-raising stories about his travels—probably seen more of the world than a Viking anyway. Funny, those warriors were remarkably like trees when you came to look at them closely.... And hadn't he always been a little frightened of Giant's Crag?

*"Hyde Park"*

HOME AND AWAY

She who's by me only bores me  
 She I love is far away :  
 Bird in hand wants wit and beauty  
 Bird in bush is slim and gay.

Here and now makes wrong responses  
 Tries to force the door to me :  
 There and then came gently having  
 Turned the lock with proper key.

Near turns up at Times and Places  
 Poses in a Lover's Chair :  
 Far-away I could have courted  
 But for pride when I was there.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder  
 I will write and tell her so ;  
 If she answers she'll be near me  
 Presence will to distance go.

She I love will then be near me  
 She who bores me far away :  
 Bird in bush want wit and beauty  
 Bird in hand be slim and gay.

*W. A. Hodges*

## UNCLE GEORGE'S HOWITZER

**I**T WAS IN AUGUST that my Uncle George heard of the howitzer.

I happened to be staying with him and my Aunt Agnes at the time, following an attack of measles, and by the end of the first week the days had begun to drag a little. Aunt Agnes was kindly enough in her way, but she was a woman of principle and decorum, and her life revolved round the Village Institute (where she went every Wednesday to teach the women to make jam and baby clothes in the way in which her mother had taught her to make them), and her three-hundred-year-old lawn, which she insisted on tending herself, arguing that no one else cared enough for it to be able to keep it as well as she did. Uncle George, on the other hand, had commanded a Battery of Gunners in the 1914-18 War, and, as he occasionally assured me, had never been the same man since he left the Service and got married. What sort of a man he had been previously I could not guess, but as I knew him then he was a big, kind, soft-spoken man with a twinkle in his eye, which disappeared whenever Aunt Agnes was about, and a diffident manner which contrasted strangely with his magnificent handlebar moustache and his military bearing.

This diffident manner, as I knew, was deceptive. My uncle and I were old conspirators, and it is doubtful whether, had it not been for the measles, my aunt would ever have consented to so long a stay as this was to be. On my last visit he had taught me to shoot with his twelve-bore, and quite by accident I had shot a pet cat of my aunt's. This had led her to complain to my mother that Uncle George was too weak with me and that I led him into mischief, and that anyway they were both a little too old for children now, and she liked to have George to herself (though, as I overheard my mother saying to my father afterwards, for all the attention

she ever paid him, what with her lawn and her blessed jam-making and baby clothes, he might just as well not be there at all, poor old devil). This time, however, she kept him well out of my way, and I was forced to spend most of the time aimlessly wandering about the garden (though not on the lawn, which was forbidden territory), or up and down the village street where I knew nobody, and life was rather dull. My excitement was therefore great when, one afternoon, I heard his voice calling me softly as I was playing by myself in the dusty old loft over the disused coachhouse.

"Hey, young Walt." I heard him call, "Come down out of that loft and come for a walk. I've something to show you."

Hurriedly I shook the dirty straw from my clothes and hair and bounded down the wooden stairs and out into the sunshine where he stood waiting for me.

"Quickly!" he said, "Let's get away before your aunt comes out and starts asking questions."

Together we nipped quietly out at the side gate and walked smartly towards the village.

"Young Walt." said my uncle after a bit, "Have you ever been to a sale?"

"A sale?" I asked, astonished. "Of course, Harrods'—Gamages—Selfridge's—Barkers—Mum nearly always takes me after Christmas." "Oh, my dear boy, no," said my uncle. "That's not the sort of sale I mean. I mean selling-up, you know—when people go broke or leave the country or something of that sort, and put up all their stuff for auction." I didn't know what "auction" meant, I hadn't been to such a sale, and on the face of it it didn't sound too interesting. I began to wonder if my uncle was slipping. "Oh!" I said, trying not to sound disappointed, "*That* sort of a sale. No, I never have, Why, uncle?"

My uncle did not reply, but just smiled and hurried me along until we came to the extreme end of the village street and reached the broken-down wooden fence which marked the limits of Woodger's stackyard. "There, young Walt." said my uncle, pointing triumphantly to a dirty poster adhering to the palings. "There! Do you see what I see?"



I stared and slowly read out what the poster said. "Sale by Auction," in large type, followed by a list of goods and effects, a large part of it meaningless to my urban mind, and, finally, "August 22nd, at Grangersthorpe Manor, By Public Auction. Messrs. Shackle, Bolt and Shackle, Licensed Public Auctioneers and Valuers." I was bewildered. I could make absolutely nothing of it. "But don't you see, my boy?" said my uncle, shaking me vigorously by the arm. "There, near the bottom. 'Howitzer—Trophy of the Great War.' That's the thing, Walt." I was still more puzzled. "But what's a howitzer?" I said. "Ooooooooooh!" said my uncle, in a long ecstatic sigh, "You don't know what a howitzer is. Best gun of the lot, that is! Crump! Hundred pounds or so of shell, young Walt. Fourteen blessed miles. Ooooooh, wonderful blasted weapon!" His face had turned an ecstatic pink. His moustache stuck out fiercely. He seemed bigger and beefier and stronger than I had ever seen him before in my life. He thumped me so hard on the shoulder that I staggered. "D'you know what, young Walt.?" he said. "I'm going to buy that gun if it takes the last penny I've got."

I was still bewildered, but the mention of guns seemed to open up bright vistas somewhere. All the same, remembering the cat and Aunt Agnes' razor-like nose and steel-gray eyes, I did not feel too happy. "Where are you going to put it?" I asked uncertainly.

"Middle of the lawn, dear boy," said my uncle. "Only possible place. Crump!" He was off in a daydream again. "But what about Aunt Agnes?" I asked weakly. "That's all right, dear boy," he said, "She'll get used to it if we do it tactfully. Just the thing, as a matter of fact. The gun will set her lawn off to perfection and the lawn will do the same for the gun. Couldn't be better."

Reassured, I felt happier, and we turned to walk back to the house, my uncle pausing every few yards to drive his clenched fist into the open palm of his other hand with a muttered "Crump!" But within a few yards of the house he suddenly stopped and whispered: "Not a word to your aunt, though, mind. She'd only raise objections all the while

it wasn't actually there. Once it is there, and she sees what it does for her lawn, she'll be all right, don't worry. But for the moment, mum's the word." I agreed and we slunk into the house.

The following Wednesday was my aunt's Village Institute afternoon. It was also the 22nd August, the afternoon of the sale. We waited until she was clear of the house and then set off for Grangersthorpe Manor, two miles away. It was a wonderful summer day and my uncle sang and whistled all the way. On the way in we saw the howitzer, and its short, thick barrel and massive construction quite convinced me that Uncle George was right. It *would* look wonderful in the middle of Aunt Agnes' lawn, and Uncle George could show me how to work all the levers and handles, and one need never be bored.

I found most of the proceedings of the sale a bit uninteresting after the first few minutes and my attention kept wandering, but I could not help noticing one beery-looking little man who seemed to bid for nearly everything as it came up for sale. I did not like the look of him. He did not seem trustworthy, and I began to pray that he would not want the howitzer for *his* lawn. Then, suddenly, my uncle, who had seemed in a sort of daze ever since his eyes first lighted upon the howitzer, seemed to wake. "Now!" he hissed, gripping my shoulder, and then, eyes alight with exultation, he raised his finger to the auctioneer.

"Tenttententententententen," said the auctioneer, his voice making a noise like a typewriter. My heart full of hatred I saw the beery-looking man raise his finger, too. "LemLemLemLemLem," said the auctioneer, droning. (My uncle raised again). "Tweltweltweltweltweltwel," said the auctioneer. (The beery man raised). And so it went on for long, long minutes, first my uncle on top, then the beery man, until, at fifty-two, my uncle's raised finger called forth no answering gesture from the beery man. The howitzer was ours.

We stayed only long enough after that to buy three dozen patent preserving jars as a peace-offering for my aunt, and to settle the necessary details with the auctioneer, and then went home. On the way we called in on Muggeridge, and asked him

to collect the howitzer with his biggest tractor the next Wednesday afternoon, so that it would be safely installed by the time Aunt Agnes returned from the Institute meeting.

During the intervening days my uncle kept enthusing to me about the howitzer whenever Aunt Agnes was out of earshot, saying how well it would look in the middle of the lawn, how it reminded him of the old days, of the lads—good lads (here his eyes would grow a little misty), and how he had written instructions in his will for it to be taken from the garden after he died and erected over his grave on a granite plinth, instead of a tombstone. And as I was young and fond of him I sympathised, though the prospect of having the best blasted weapon of the lot to mess about with made it impossible for me to feel quite as sentimental about these other things as he did.

We had expected that all would go well, and that we should be able, with very little fuss, to present my aunt with our *fait accompli* before anyone else was much the wiser. But we had forgotten that Muggeridge's biggest tractor was a noisy brute, and that the howitzer would be a frightful load to tow. We had allowed still less for the fact that we were in the middle of the school holidays. Within fifteen minutes of my aunt's departure for the Institute we heard a faint rumbling, which grew louder and louder every second, accompanied by incidental noises suggesting nothing so much as a distant carnival or football match. In a few minutes we saw Muggeridge's biggest tractor turn the corner of our lane, the howitzer lumbering heavily along behind it, and all over and round the howitzer swarms of shouting village boys. My uncle turned a trifle pale, "Get off that gun!" he shouted to the boys, but he might just as well have ordered the church clock to come down from the tower. Then the procession came to a noisy halt outside the gate. In sudden silence Muggeridge got down from the driving seat, unroped from the side of the tractor a large number of two-inch-thick planks, and with a look on his face which clearly called down upon my uncle's head all the curses ever invented, began to lay the planks like railway lines in through the gate and out over the lawn. "Will they take the

weight?" asked my uncle, pale and anxious. "Dunno sir, can't say," said Muggerridge, clearly not intending to commit himself, yet showing plainly by his expression what he really thought about the matter.

All things considered, though, it didn't take long, and we were fairly successful in keeping all but the more adventurous of the village boys outside the garden.

As my aunt came through the gate we were examining the two-inch-deep ruts which the planks, under the combined weight of the tractor and the gun, had made in the lawn. "It'll soon spring up again," my uncle was saying, when he looked up and saw her. Aunt Agnes had a mad look. She stood staring at us both without speaking. My uncle shrank into his broad shoulders. "It's my howitzer, dear," he said. "Howitzer!" gurgled my Aunt Agnes, "Howitzer!"—— She stood looking at the ruts in the lawn and the sharp edge of her nose showed white. Then her shoulders began to shake, and for the first time of my life I saw my Aunt Agnes cry. "My lawn!" she whispered in between her sobs, "My lawn! Three hundred years ——." She turned slowly and walked into the house.

Slowly my uncle and I followed, all pleasure gone, only a deep, blind, inarticulate ache in both of us for the enormity of what we had done.

My uncle was late for breakfast next morning. I sat with my aunt at the table as he came in. My aunt, who had never done such a thing before to my knowledge, rose to meet him, and ignoring me altogether, took him by his hands and said: "George, dear, I'm sorry." I was quite bewildered and, for a moment, to judge by his expression, so was he. But as I watched, I saw a slow flush come under his skin, and saw the life come back into his eyes, though he said nothing, but just held her hands for a moment. Then he shamefacedly cleared his throat and turned to me. "Have some more toast, Walt., dear boy," he said. I shook my head. I didn't understand what it was all about, but I couldn't have eaten anything more.

The next day they packed bags for us all and we drove to the seaside. It was the most wonderful holiday I ever spent

in my life and Uncle George and Aunt Agnes did not seem old any more, but young, and fond of each other, more like my own parents.

When next I went to visit them there was a broad, red-tiled path where the planks had cut into the lawn, and the howitzer had been mounted on a concrete base out in the centre. My aunt still kept the rest of the lawn as she had done before, but it was no longer forbidden territory, and we used to take the tea things out to the howitzer and picnic beside it, and afterwards Uncle George would pretend to work it for me. Sometimes Aunt Agnes would join in and play number three to my number two. But I think that my uncle was glad that it could not be made to work properly any more. I never heard him call it a "blasted fine weapon" again as long as I knew him, and before he died he altered his will, giving the gun to the village to stand on the green outside the church as a memento of the Great War.



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