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Miguel de Cervantes

Alcalá de Henares, 1547 - Madrid, 1616

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, often simply called Cervantes, was a Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright. His major work, Don Quixote, *considered to be the first modern European novel, is a classic of Western literature, and is regarded amongst the best works of fiction ever written. His influence on the Spanish language has been so great that the language is often called "the language of Cervantes". In 1569 Cervantes moved to Rome where he worked as chamber assistant of a cardinal. He then enlisted as a soldier in a Spanish Navy infantry regiment and continued his military life until 1575, when he was captured by Algerian corsairs. After five years of captivity, he was released by his captors on payment of a ransom by his parents and the Trinitarians, a Catholic religious order, and he subsequently returned to his family in Madrid.*

In 1585 he published a pastoral novel named La Galatea. *He worked as a purchasing agent for the Spanish Armada, and later as a tax collector. In 1597 discrepancies in his accounts for three years previous landed him in the Crown Jail of Seville. In 1605 he was in Valladolid when the immediate success of the first part of his* Don Quixote, *published in Madrid, signalled his return to the literary world. In 1607 he settled in Madrid, where he lived and worked until his death. During the last nine years of his life, he solidified his reputation as a writer; he published the* Novelas ejemplares *(Exemplary Novels) in 1613, the* Journey to Parnassus *in 1614, and in 1615 the* Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses *and the second part of* Don Quixote. *Cervantes died April 22th in 1616.*

The Pretended Aunt

FROM EXEMPLARY NOVELS (1613)

As two young law-students, natives of La Mancha, were one day passing along the streets of Salamanca, they happened to see over the window of a certain shopkeeper, a rich Persian blind, drawn closely down–a novelty which attracted their attention. Fond of adventure, and more deeply read in the noble science of attack and defence than the laws of Bartolus or Baldus, they felt a strong curiosity to know why the articles the shop contained were kept, being marked on sale, so studiously out of view. Why not exhibited in the window as well as at the door?

To remove their perplexity they proceeded to make inquiries–not at the shop, but at one some little distance off, where they observed a babbling old shopkeeper busily serving his neighbours, and, at the same time, retailing the latest news and scandal of the place. In answer to their questions, he ran on with the same volubility.

"My young gentlemen, you are very inquisitive; but if you must know, there is a foreign lady now resides in that

house, at least half a saint, a very pattern of self-denial and austerity, and I wish you were under her direction. She has with her, also, a young lady of extraordinary fine appearance and great spirit, who is said to be her niece. She never goes out without an old squire and two old duennas, young gentlemen; and, as I think, they are a family from Granada, rich, proud, and fond of retirement. At least, I have not seen a single soul in our city (and I have watched them well) once pay them a visit. Nor can I, for the life of me, learn from what place they last came hither. But what I do know is, that the young lady is very handsome and very respectable to all appearance; and from the style of living and high bearing of the aunt, they belong to none of the common sort, of that I am sure."

From this account, pronounced with no little emphasis and authority by the garrulous old gentleman, the students became more eager than ever to follow up their adventure. Familiar as they were with the topographical position of the good citizens, the names of the different families and dwellings, and all the flying reports of the day, they were still in the dark as to the real quality of the fair strangers and their connections in the University. By dint of industry and perseverance, however, they hoped soon to clear up their doubts, and the first thing they ascertained was that, though past the hour of noon, the door of the mansion was still closed, and there seemed no admittance even upon business. From this they naturally inferred that, if no tradesmen were admitted, the family could not well take their meals at home; and that

if, like other mortals, they ate at all, they must soon make their appearance on their way to dinner.

In this conjecture they were not deceived, for shortly they saw a staid and reverend-looking lady issue from the dwelling, arrayed all in white, with an immense surplice, wider than a Portuguese canon's, extending over her head, close bound round her temples, and leaving only just space enough for her to breathe. Her fan was in her hand, and a huge rosary with innumerable beads and bells about her neck–so large indeed, that, like those of Santinuflo, they reached down to her waist. Her mantle was of fine silk trimmed with furs; her gloves of the whitest and newest, without a fold; and she had a walking-stick, or rather an Indian cane, delicately wrought and tipped with silver. A venerable old squire, who seemed to have belonged to the times of Count Fernan Gonzales, escorted his honoured mistress on the left hand. He was dressed in a large wide coat of velvet stuff without any trimming–ancient scarlet breeches–Moorish hose–a cloak trimmed with bands–and a cap of strong netted wool, which produced rather a quizzical effect, but which he wore because he was subject to cold and a dizziness in the head; add to which a large shoulder-belt and an old Navarrese sword.

These respectable-looking personages were preceded by another of very different exterior, namely, the lady's niece, apparently about eighteen, graceful in her deportment, and of a grave but gracious aspect. Her countenance was rather of the oval–beautiful and intelligent; her eyes were large and black as jet, not without a certain expression

of tenderness and languor; arched and finely marked eyebrows, long dark eyelashes, and on her cheeks a delicate glow of carnation. Her tresses, of a bright auburn, flowed in graceful curls round brows of snowy whiteness, combined with a fine delicate complexion, etc., etc.; and she had on a sarcenet mantle; a bodice of Flemish stuff; her sandals were of black velvet, enriched with gilt fastenings and silver fringe; fine scented gloves, not only fragrant with common essence, but with the richest amber.

Though her demeanour was grave, her step was light and easy: in each particular she appeared to advantage, and in her *tout ensemble* still more attractive. In the eyes of the young scholars she appeared little less than a goddess, and, with half the dazzling charms she boasted, would have riveted her fetters on the hearts of older and more experienced admirers. As it was, they were completely taken by surprise–astonished, stupefied, overwhelmed, and enchanted. They stood gazing at so much elegance and beauty as if their wits had left them; it being one of the prerogatives of beauty, like the fascination of the serpent, first to deprive its victims of their senses, and then to devour them. Behind this paragon of perfection walked two ugly old duennas (like maids-of-honour), arrayed, if we only allow for their sex, much in the obsolete manner of their knight companion, the ancient squire.

With this formal and imposing escort, the venerable chaperon at length arrived at the house–the good squire took his station at the door, and the whole party made their entry. As they passed in, the young students doffed

their caps with extraordinary alacrity and politeness, displaying in their air and manner as much modesty and respect as they could muster for the occasion.

The ladies, however, took no notice of them, shutting themselves in, and the young gentlemen out: who were left quite pensive and half in love, standing in the middle of the street. From this want of courtesy they ingeniously came to the conclusion that these fair disturbers of their peace had not come to Salamanca for the purpose of studying the laws of politeness, but studying how to break them. In spite, however, of their ingratitude, they agreed to return good for evil, and to treat them on the following night to a little concert of music, in the form of a serenade–for this is the first and only service which poor students have it in their power to offer at the windows of her who may have smitten them.

Seeking some solace, however, for their disappointment just at present, they repaired to a restaurateur's; and having partaken of what little they could get, they next betook themselves to the chambers of some of their friends. There they made a collection of all the instruments of musical torture they could find, such as old wire-worn guitars, broken violins, lutes, flutes, and castanets; for each of which they provided suitable performers, who had at least one eye, an arm, and a leg among them.

Not content, however, with this, being determined to get everything up in the most original style, they sent a deputation to a poet, with a request that he would forthwith compose a sonnet. This sonnet was to be written for, and precisely upon, the name of *Esperanza,* such being

the Christian appellation of the hope of their lives and loves; and it was to be sung aloud on that very same night. The poet undertook the serious charge; and in no little while, by dint of biting his lips and nails, and rubbing his forehead, he manufactured a sonnet, weaving with his wits just as an operative would weave a piece of cloth. This he handed to the young lovers; they approved it, and took the author along with them to repeat it to the musicians as they sung it, there being no time to commit it to memory.

Meantime the eventful night approached–and at the due hour there assembled for the solemn festival nine knights of the cleaver, four vocal performers with their guitars, one psaltery, one harper, one fiddler, twelve bell-ringers, thirty shield-sounders, and numerous other practitioners, divided into several companies; all, however, better skilled in the music of the knife and fork than in any other instrument. In full concert they struck up on entering the street, and a fresh peal on arriving at the lady's house, the last of which made so hideous a din as to rouse all within hearing from their quiet slumbers, and bring them to their windows half dead with wonder and alarm.

This was continued some time just under the lady's window, till the general concert ceased, to give room for the harp and the recital of the poet's sonnet. This was sung by one of those musicians who never wait to be invoked; nor was the poet less on the alert as prompter on the occasion. It was given with extreme sweetness and harmony of voice, and quite accorded with the rest of the performance. Hardly had the recitation of this

wonderful production ceased, when a cunning rogue among the audience, turning to one of his companions, exclaimed in a loud, clear voice:

"I vow to Heaven I never heard a viler song worse sung in all my born days! Did you note well the harmony of the lines, and that exquisite adaptation of the lady's name; that fine invocation to Cupid, and the pretty mention of the age of the adored object–the contrast then between the giant and the dwarf–the malediction–the imprecation–the sonorous march of the whole poem. I vow to God that if I had the pleasure of knowing the au-thor I would willingly, to-morrow morning, send him a dozen pork sausages, for I have this very day received some from the country."

At the word sausages, the spectators were convinced that the person who had just pronounced the encomium meant it in ridicule; and they were not mistaken; for they afterwards learnt that he came from a place famous for its practical jokers, which stamped him in the opinion of the bystanders for a great critic, well qualified to pass judgment upon poets, as his witty analysis of this precious morsel had shown.

Notwithstanding all their endeavours, the windows of the house they were serenading seemed the only ones that remained closed, a circumstance at which our young adventurers were not a little disappointed. Still, however, they persevered; the guitars were again heard, accompanied by three voices, in a romantic ballad chosen for the occasion. The musicians had not proceeded far before they heard a window opened, and one of the duennas


Cervantes

whom they had before seen made her appearance. In a whining hypocritical tone she addressed the serenaders: "Gentlemen, my mistress, the Lady Claudia di Astudillo y Quinones, requests that you will instantly repair to some other quarter, and not bring down scandal upon this respectable neighbourhood by such violent uproar; more particularly as there is now at her house a young lady, her niece, my young mistress, Lady Esperanza di Torralva Meneses y Pachico. It is very improper, therefore, to create such a disturbance among people of their quality. You must have recourse to other means, of a more gentlemanly kind, if you expect to meet with a favourable reception."

On hearing these words, one of the young gallants quickly retorted, "Do me the favour, most venerable mistress, to request your honoured Lady Donna Esperanza to gladden our eyes by presenting herself at the window. I wish to say a few words, which may prove of the greatest consequence."

"Oh, shocking!" exclaimed the duenna. "Is it the Lady Esperanza you mean? You must know, my good sir, she is not thus lightly to be spoken of–she is a most honourable, exemplary, discreet, modest young person, and would not comply with such an extravagant request, though you were to offer her all the pearls of the Indies."

During this colloquy with the ancient duenna, there came a number of people from the next street; and the musicians, thinking the alguacils were at hand, sounded a retreat, placing the baggage of the company in the centre; they then struck up some martial sounds with the help of

their shields, in the hope that the captain would hardly like to accompany them with the sword dance, as is the custom at the holy feast of San Fernando at Seville, but would prefer passing on quietly to risking a defeat in the presence of his emissaries.

They therefore stood their ground for the purpose of completing their night's adventure; but one of the two masters of the revels refused to give them any more music unless the young lady would consent to appear at the window. But not even the old duenna again honoured them with her presence there, notwithstanding their repeated solicitations, a species of slight which threw the whole company into a rage, and almost incited them to make an attack upon the Persian blind, and bring their fair foes to terms. Mortified as they were, they still continued their serenade, and at length took their leave with such a volley of discordant sounds as to make the very houses shake with their hideous din.

It was near dawn before the honourable company broke up, to the extreme annoyance and disappointment of the students at the little effect their musical treat seemed to have produced. Almost at their wits' end, they at last hit upon the expedient of referring their difficulties to the judgment of a certain cavalier, in whom they thought they could confide. He was one of that high-spirited class termed in Salamanca *los generosos*.

He was young, rich, and extravagant, fond of music, gallant, and a great admirer of bold adventures; in short, the right sort of advocate in a cause like theirs. To him they recounted very minutely their prodigious exertions and

their ill-success; the extreme beauty, grace, and attractions of the young, and the imposing and splendid deportment of the old lady; ending with the small hope they had of ever becoming better acquainted with them. Music, it was found, boasted no charm for them, "charmed they ever so wisely"; nay, they had been accused of bringing scandal upon the whole neighbourhood.

Now their friend the cavalier, being one who never blinked danger, began to reassure them, and promised that he would soon bring their uncourteous foes to conditions, *coûte que coûte*; and that, as he was himself armed against the keenest shafts of the little archer-god, he would gladly undertake the conquest of this proud beauty on their account.

Accordingly, that very day he despatched a handsome and substantial present to the lady-aunt, with his best services; at the same time offering all he was worth–life, his person, his goods and chattels, and–his compliments. Such an offer not occurring every day, the elder duenna took on her the part of the Lady Claudia, and, in her mistress's name, was curious to hear from the page something of the rank, fortune, and qualifications of his master. She inquired especially as to his connections, his engagements, and the nature of his pursuits, just as if she were going to take him for a son-in-law. The page told her everything he knew, and the pretended aunt seemed tolerably well satisfied with his story.

It was not long ere she went, in person, in her mistress's name, as the old duenna, with an answer to the young cavalier, so full and precise, that it re-sembled an embassy

rather than a letter of thanks. The duenna arrived, and proceeded to open the negotiation; she was received by the cavalier with great courtesy. He bade her be seated in a chair near his own; he took off her cloak with his own hands, and handed her a fine embroidered handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from her brow, for she seemed a little fatigued with her walk. He did more; and before permitting her to say a single word on the nature of her errand, he ordered sweet-meats and other delicacies to be set before her, and helped her to them himself. He then poured out two glasses of exquisitely flavoured wine, one for her and one for himself. In short, so delicate and flattering were his attentions, that the venerable guardian of youthful virtue could not have received more genuine pleasure if she had been made a saint upon the spot.

She now opened the object of her embassy with the most choice, demure, and hypocritical set of phrases she could command, though ending with a most flat falsehood to the following purport:

"She was commissioned," she said, "by her excellent young mistress, Donna Esperanza di Torralva Meneses y Pachico, to present to his excellency her best compliments and thanks. That his excellency might depend that, though a lady of the strictest virtue, Donna Esperanza would never refuse to receive so excellent and accomplished a gentleman upon an honourable footing, whenever he were inclined to honour her aunt's house with his presence."

The cavalier replied "that he had the most perfect faith in all he had heard respecting the surpassing beauty,

virtue, and accomplishments of her young mistress, qualities which made him only the more eager to enjoy the honour of an interview."

After an infinite variety of reservations and circumlocutions this proposal was acceded to by the good duenna, who assured him there could be no possible objections on the part of either of the ladies, an assertion than which, however, nothing could be farther from the truth. In short, desirous of discharging her duennal duty in the strictest manner, and not content with intercepting the cavalier's presents, and personating Donna Claudia, the wily old lady resolved to turn the affair to still further account. She ended the interview, therefore, with assuring him that she would, that very evening, introduce him to the ladies; and first, to the beautiful Esperanza, before her aunt should be informed of his arrival.

Delighted with his success, the young cavalier dismissed his obliging guest with every expression of esteem, and with the highest compliments to her fair mistress; at the same time putting a purse into the old duenna's hand, enough to purchase a whole wardrobe of fine clothes.

"Simple young man," muttered the cunning old lady, as she left the house; "he thinks it is all finely managed now; but I must touch a little more of his money; he has certainly more than he knows what to do with. It is all right; he shall be welcome to my lady's house, truly; but how will he go out again, I wonder. The officers will see him home, I dare say, but not till after he has paid me well again for being admitted; and my young lady has made me a present of some handsome gowns for introducing

so pretty a young gentleman; and her foolish old aunt rewarded me well for discovering the secret."

Meantime, the young cavalier was impatiently expecting the appointed hour; and as there is none but sooner or later must arrive, he then took his hat and cloak, and proceeded where the ancient duenna was expecting him. On his arrival she nodded to him out of a window, and having caught his eye, she threw him the empty purse he had presented her with, well filled, in the morning. Don Felix was at no loss to take the hint, and on approaching the door, he found it only a little open, and the claws of the old beldame ready to clutch the offered bait before she granted him admittance. It was then opened wide, and she conducted him in silence upstairs, and through a suite of rooms into an elegant little boudoir, where she concealed him behind a Persian screen, in a very skilful and cautious manner. She bade him remain quite still; her young lady, Esperanza, was informed of his arrival, and from *her* favourable representation of his high rank, fortune, and accomplishments, she was prepared to give him an interview, even without consulting her aunt. Then giving her hand as a token of her fidelity, she left Don Felix couched behind the screen, in anxious expectation of the result.

Meanwhile, the artful old wretch, under the strictest promise of secrecy, and a handsome present of new gowns, had communicated to the aunt the important intelligence of the discovery of so unpleasant an affair, relating to the unsullied reputation and high character of her niece. She then whis-pered her mistress in the ear

that she had actually discovered a man concealed in the house, and what was worse, by appointment with her young lady, as she had learnt from a note she had intercepted; but that she dared not disturb the intruder, as he ap-peared armed at all points. She therefore entreated her mistress to make no noise, lest he should perpetrate some deadly deed before the officers of justice, to whom she had sent notice, should arrive to secure him.

Now the whole of this statement was a new tissue of lies, as the old beldame intended to let the cav-alier very quietly out, and had never yet ventured to acquaint her young lady with his presence at all. Having thus carried her point with the old lady, she declared that if she would promise to stay without disturbing herself in that room, she would go in search of Esperanza, and conduct her to her aunt immediately. This being agreed upon, the duenna proceeded to look for her young lady upstairs, and was not a little puzzled to find her seated in her boudoir, and Don Felix near her, with an expression of the utmost pleasure and surprise in his countenance.

What had been his astonishment on Esperanza's entrance, to behold the beloved girl from whom he had been separated by her aunt's cruelty not many months before. What an ecstatic meeting for both; what a dilemma for the treacherous old duenna, should an explanation have already taken place! She had not been many weeks in the Lady Claudia's service, and she would certainly not be many more if the lovers should be thus discovered together.

What was to be done? Ere they could decide, her mistress's

step was heard on the stairs; she was calling Esperanza in those sharp, bitter tones to which her niece was too well accustomed, and she had already reached the anteroom ere Don Felix was safely ensconced behind the screen. Esperanza hastened towards her, and found her seated in an easy arm-chair, in a sad flurry of mingled rage and alarm.

She cast ominous and perturbed glances towards the boudoir whence her niece had just issued, and then looked out of the window, impatient for the arrival of the police. She did not venture to allude to the cause of her dismay; bidding her niece sit down, a portentous silence ensued. It was now late, the whole household, even their protector, the ancient squire, had retired to rest. Only the old duenna and her young mistress were wide awake, and the latter was particularly anxious for her aunt to retire. Though only nine, she declared she believed the clock had struck ten; she thought her aunt looked jaded and unwell; would she not like to go to bed? No reply; but dark, malignant glances sufficiently attested what it would have been had she dared to speak out. Though unable, however, to deal in particulars, she could not refrain from mak-ing some general observations which bore upon the case.

In a low tone, therefore, she addressed her niece as follows: "I have often enough warned you, Esperanza, not to lose sight of the exhortations I have invariably made it my business to give you. If you valued them as you ought, they would be of infinite use to you, as I fear time and experience will, ere long, sufficiently show"; and

here she again looked out of the window.

"You must not flatter yourself we are now at Placentia, where you were born; nor yet at Zamora, where you were educated; no, nor at Toro, where you were first introduced. The people of those places are very different from what they are here; there are no scandals, no jealousies, no intriguing, my dear; and (in a still lower tone) no violence and uproar such as we heard in the street last night. Heaven protect us from all violent and deceitful men; from all house-breaking, robbery, and assassinations. Yes, I say, I wish we were well out of Salamanca! You ought to be aware in what a place you are; they call it the mother of sciences, but I think it is the mother of all mischief; yes, of everything bad, not excepting some people whom I know; but I mention no names just now," she added, with a look of suppressed malice and vexation; "though I could if I pleased. But the time will come!" and she here muttered some low unintelligible threats about grates and convents. "We must leave this place, my dear; you perhaps don't know there are ten or twelve thousand students here, young, impudent, abandoned, lost, predestined, shameless, graceless, diabolical, and mischievous wretches, the scum of all parts of the world, and addicted to all evil courses, as I think we had pretty good proof only last night. Though avaricious as misers, when they set their eyes upon a young woman, my dear, they can be extravagant enough. The Lord protect us from all such, I say! Jesu Maria save us from them all!"

During this bitter moral lecture, Esperanza kept her eyes

fixed upon the floor, without speaking a word, and apparently quite resigned and obedient, though without producing its due effect upon her aunt. "Hold up your head, child, and leave off stirring the fire; hold up your head and look me in the face, if you are not ashamed, and try to keep your eyes open, and attend to what I say. You re-quire all the senses you have got, depend upon it, to make good use of my advice; I know you do."

Esperanza here ventured to put in a word: "Pray, dear aunt, don't so fret yourself and me by troubling yourself to say any more. I know all you would say, and my head aches shockingly–do spare yourself, or I think my head will split with pain."

"It would be broken with something else, perhaps, if you had your deserts, young miss, to answer your affectionate aunt in such a way as that! To say nothing of what I know–yes, what I know, and what others shall know, when somebody comes", and she glanced very significantly towards the door.

Of this edifying conversation Don Felix had partly the benefit, as it occurred so near his place of concealment. The old duenna, meantime, being desirous, after the discovery that had taken place, of ingratiating herself with the lovers, and finding there was no hope of Donna Claudia retiring to rest till the arrival of the police, thought it high time to bring the young cavalier out of his dilemma. It was her object to get him safe out of the house, and yet preserve the good opinion of her venerable mistress, who might wait, she thought, till doomsday for the police.

As it was impossible to speak to Don Felix, she hit upon the following expedient to make him speak for himself, trusting to her own and her young lady's discretion for bringing him off safely. She took her snuff-box, and approaching his hiding-place very slyly, threw a good handful into his face, which taking almost immediate effect, he began to sneeze with such a tremendous noise that he might be heard in the street.

She then rushed, in apparent alarm, into the next room, crying out: "He is coming! he is here;–guns and pistols–pistols and guns–save yourselves, my dear ladies! Here, you go into this closet"; she pushed the old aunt into it, almost dead with fright and closed the door. "You come with me," she continued to Esperanza, "and I will see you safe here." Saying which, she took the young lady with her, and joined her lover, who had already found his way downstairs.

Unluckily, however, to make the scene more complete, and to impose the better upon her old mistress, she opened the window, and began to call out, "Thieves! thieves! help! help!" though in as subdued a tone as possible.

But at the very first cry, the corregidor, who happened to be walking close to the house, entered the door, followed by two of his myrmidons, just as Don Felix opened it to go out.

They instantly pounced upon and secured him before he had time either to explain or defend himself, and, spite of the entreaties of Esperanza and the duenna, he was borne away.

They followed, however, to represent the affair to the

chief alguacil; and they had gone only a little way when they were met by a strong party, headed by the identical two students, who came prepared for a fresh serenade, on the strength of their friend the cavalier's support and assistance. What was their surprise and dismay to behold him in such hands, and followed by the lovely Esperanza herself, the cause of all their anxiety and exertions.

Love and honour at once fired their breasts, and their resolution was taken in a moment. Six friends, and an army of musicians, were behind them. Turning to them, out flew their own swords, as they called on them to draw in aid of honour and beauty, and rescue them from the hands of the vile alguacils. All united in the cry of rescue–the musicians in the rear struck up the din of war; and a hideous peal it was–while the rest rushed on with as much haste and spirit as if they had been going to a rich banquet. The combat was not long doubtful; the emissaries of justice were overpowered by the mere weight of the crowd which bore upon them; and unable to stir either hand or foot, they were mingled in the thick of the engagement, pressed on all sides by halt, and maimed, and blind, and stunned with the din of battle from the rear.

While this continued, Don Felix and his fair companion had been the especial care of the students and their friends, by whom they had been early drawn off into a place of comparative safety. Here a curious scene took place:–After the first congratulations upon their victory, the two students took their friend Don Felix by the hand,

expressing the deep gratitude they both felt for the eternal obligation he had conferred upon them, having so nobly redeemed his pledge of bringing the lady to terms, and placing her in their hands.

The speaker then continued that *he*, having had the good fortune to bear her away in safety from the crowd, was justly entitled to the prize, which he hoped would not be disputed, as he was then ready to meet any rival. The other instantly accepted the challenge, declaring he would die sooner than con-sent to any such arrangement. The fair object of their strife looked at Don Felix, uttering exclamations of mingled terror and surprise, while the young cavalier, just as the students were proceed-ing to unsheath their weapons, burst into a fit of uncontrollable mirth.

"Oh, miracle of love! mighty power of Cupid!" he exclaimed. "What is it I behold? Two such sworn friends to be thus metamorphosed in a moment! Going to fight; after I have so nobly achieved the undertaking! Never,–I am the man you must both run through the body, for verily I am about to for-feit my pledge. I, too, am in love with this lady; and with Heaven's permission and her own, to-morrow she will be mine–my own wedded wife; for, by Heaven! she returns no more to Aunt Claudia and her duennas."

He then explained to the astonished students the story of their love; how, when, and wherefore they had wooed–their separation and sufferings–with the happy adventure that had crowned their hopes. Then, imitating the language of the students, he took their hands, assuring

them of his deep gratitude for the eternal obligation they had conferred upon him.

On the ensuing day, Esperanza gave her hand to Don Felix, and the venerable Aunt Claudia was released from her hiding-place and all further anxiety on her niece's account.

BOSCH

Hieronymus Bosch

's-Hertogenbosch, 1450 - 1516

Dutch mediaeval painter. Born as Jeroen van Aecken in the city of Den Bosch a.k.a. 's-Hertogenbosch (the Duke's forest), major city in the southern province of Brabant. He lives in turbulent times. Europe is haunted by the plague and many fear for the end of times. More tragedy befalls the inhabitants of Den Bosch when much of their city is destroyed in a fire in 1463. These events must have influenced Bosch's work, characterized as it is by fear, horror, sin and disaster. His fantastic style and innovative themes contrast sharply with the realistic and somewhat serene work of his contemporaries. Only such an extraordinary talent as Bosch's could have taken such innovation to the top. His work is greatly admired at the time of his life, nationally and internationally, e.g. at the Castilian court. King Philip the Handsome of Spain himself commissions The Last Judgment.

A member of the prominent Brotherhood of Our Lady, a deeply pious lot, Bosch is probably a very devout man. His work is riddled with religious symbolism. The complete collection of his works comprises 25 paintings and 8 drawings. He produced at least 16 triptychs, of which 8 are fully intact, and another 5 in fragments. His most famous triptych is the The Garden of Earthly Delights. *He only signed a few of his works, with 'Jheronimus Bosch'. He probably spent most of his life in Den Bosch. He was married to Aleid van de Meervenne, a young woman from a wealthy family. He died in 's-Hertogenbosch in August 1516. The exact date of his death is unknown, but a funeral mass was held for him on August 9.*


HIERONYMO BOSCHIO PICTORI.

Jheronimus Bosch

Ecce Homo >>

(1476 ~ OIL ON OAK PANEL, STÄDEL MUSEUM, FRANKFURT)

Jheronimus bolch

The Garden of Earthly Delights >>

(1480-90) ~ OIL ON OAK PANEL, MUSEO DEL PRADO, MADRID)

Jheronimus bosch

Ascent of the Blessed >>

(1500-03 ~ OIL ON OAK PANEL, PALAZZO GRIMANI, VENICE)

Jheronimus bolch

Ship of Fools >>

(1494 ~ OIL ON OAK PANEL, LOUVRE, PARIS)

Jheronimus bolch

The Haywain Triptych >>

(1516 ~ OIL ON OAK PANEL, MUSEO DEL PRADO, MADRID)

Jheronimus bolch

Christ Carrying the Cross >>

(1510-16 ~ OIL ON PANEL, MSK, GHENT)

SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare

Stratford-upon-Avon, 1564 - 1616

English poet and playwright, he is widely considered to be the greatest writer in the English language. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23rd April 1564. His father William was a successful local businessman and his mother Mary was the daughter of a landowner. In 1582 William, aged only 18, married an older woman named Anne Hathaway. They had three children, Susanna, Hamnet and Juliet. Their only son Hamnet died aged just 11. After his marriage, information about the life of Shakespeare is sketchy but it seems he spent most of his time in London – writing and acting in his plays. Due to some well timed investments he was able to secure a firm financial background, leaving time for writing and acting. The best of these investments was buying some real estate near Stratford in 1605, which soon doubled in value.

It seemed Shakespeare didn't mind being absent from his family – he only returned home during Lent when all the theatres were closed. He wrote 154 sonnets *mostly in the 1590s. These short poems, deal with issues such as lost love. His sonnets have an enduring appeal due to his characteristic skill with language and words. His early plays were mainly comedies (e.g.* Much Ado about Nothing, A Midsummer's Night Dream*) and histories (e.g.* Henry V*). By the early 17th Century, Shakespeare had begun to write plays in the genre of tragedy. These plays, such as* Hamlet, Othello *and* King Lear*, often hinge on some fatal error or flaw in the lead character, and provide fascinating insights into the darker aspects of human nature. Shakespeare died in 1616.*

from The Sonets

(1609)

XV

When I consider every thing that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;

When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and cheque'd even by the self-same sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;

Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,
To change your day of youth to sullied night;

And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

XVII

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.

If I could write the beauty of your eyes
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say 'This poet lies:
Such heavenly touches ne'er touch'd earthly faces.'

So should my papers yellow'd with their age
Be scorn'd like old men of less truth than tongue,
And your true rights be term'd a poet's rage
And stretched metre of an antique song:

But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice; in it and in my rhyme.

XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

XXIII

As an unperfect actor on the stage
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart.

So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.

O, let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love and look for recompense
More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.

O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

XXIV

Mine eye hath play'd the painter and hath stell'd
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is the painter's art.

For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies;
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.

Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
Are windows to my breast, where-through the sun
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee;

Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art;
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

XXIX

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,

Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

XLIII

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected;
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright are bright in dark directed.

Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!

How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!

All days are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

XLVII

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other:
When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,

With my love's picture then my eye doth feast
And to the painted banquet bids my heart;
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part:

So, either by thy picture or my love,
Thyself away art resent still with me;
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them and they with thee;

Or, if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

LV

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.

When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.

So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lover's eyes.

LX

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:

And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

LXXI

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Then you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:

Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot
If thinking on me then should make you woe.

O, if, I say, you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse.
But let your love even with my life decay,

Lest the wise world should look into your moan
And mock you with me after I am gone.

LXXV

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet-season'd showers are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found;

Now proud as an enjoyer and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure,
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure;

Sometime all full with feasting on your sight
And by and by clean starved for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight,
Save what is had or must from you be took.

Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

CIV

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,

Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.

Ah! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure and no pace perceived;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion and mine eye may be deceived:

For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred;
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

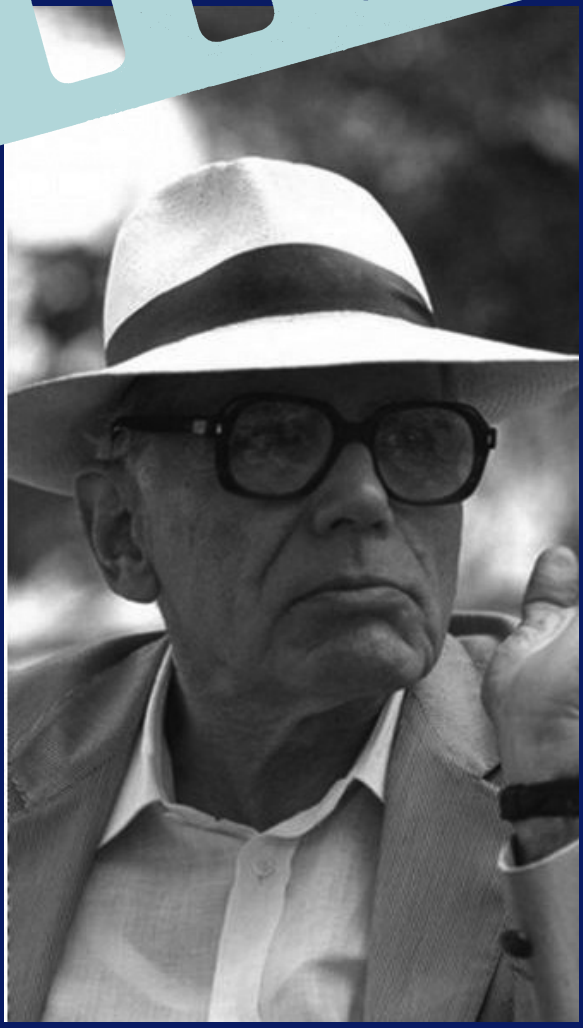
CXXX

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.



Luigi Comencini

Salò, 1916 - Rome, 2007

Luigi Comencini was an Italian film director. Together with Dino Risi, Ettore Scola and Mario Monicelli, he was considered among the masters of the "commedia all'italiana" genre. Comencini was born in Salò. His first successful movie was L'imperatore di Capri *(The Emperor of Capri, 1949), featuring Totò.* Pane, amore e fantasia *(Bread, Love and Dreams, 1953) is considered a primary example of "neorealismo rosa" (pink neorealism). The fortunate pairing of Vittorio De Sica as the philandering middle-aged carabiniere and the pin-up star Gina Lollobrigida as the peasant beauty was a winning formula. Comencini was later to admit: "I was flattered by the success but I shouldn't have agreed to make the sequel."*
But the follow up Pane, Amore e Gelosia *(Bread, Love and Jealousy, 1954), was equally as successful and he had no reason for regrets. After a first work with Alberto Sordi (*La bella di Roma*, 1955), Comencini again directed the Roman actor in what is considered his masterwork,* Tutti a casa *(Everybody Home, 1960), a bitter comedy about Italy after the armistice of 1943. Also set in World War II, but devoted to the Italian partisans, are* La ragazza di Bube *(1963). This was followed by* Incompreso *(Misunderstood, 1966), based on the English novel by Florence Montgomery).*

COMENCINI

Comencini obtainted an outstanding success with what is ranked amongst the best production of Italian television ever, Le avventure di Pinocchio *(1972). In the same year he directed the feature film* Lo scopone scientifico *(Scientific Poker), a moralistic comedy about how money corrupts in which Bette Davis, as a gambling millionairess and Joseph Cotten, are outpaced in histrionics by Alberto Sordi and Silvana Mangano as the impoverished Italian couple who try to outwit them. In 1975 he released the mystery* La donna della domenica, *featuring Marcello Mastroianni, Jacqueline Bisset and Jean-Louis Trintignant. Comencini subsequent works were characterized by the presence of one of most important Italian actors of the time, such as Ugo Tognazzi in* Il gatto *(1977) and Nino Manfredi for his episode of* Basta che non si sappia in giro.

In the 1980s Comencini's movies met with less success but his Cuore *(Heart) television series of 1984 was praised. Another mini-series for RAI – Italy's public broadcaster –* La Storia *(History, 1986), with Claudia Cardinale in a Magnani-like role, was based on Elsa Morante's best-selling novel. For the last three decades of his life he suffered from Parkinson's disease. He is survived by his wife Giulia and four daughters in the business who had all trained under him: Paola, costumier and/or production designer on all his films since 1980; Eleonora, a producer; Cristina (also a novelist) and Francesca, assistants to their father and now established directors in their own right. He died in Rome after a long illness in 2007.*

Umberto Boccioni

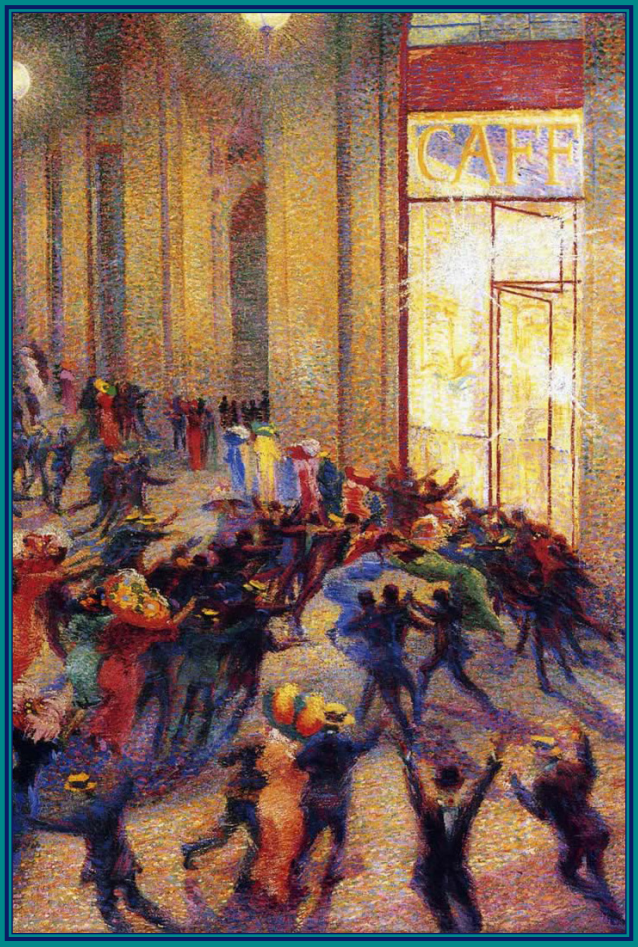
Reggio Calabria, 1882 - Verona, 1916

He was born in Calabria, in the south of Italy. His father was a minor government employee, originally from the Romagna region in the north, and his job included frequent reassignments throughout Italy. In 1897, Umberto and his father moved to Catania, Sicily, where he would finish school. His parents moved to Rome in 1899 where he and Severini were instructed in the Divisionist style by Balla. He continued to be influenced by both Divisionism and Symbolism, travelling to Paris – where he briefly met Modigliani – and through western Russia in 1906. Returning to Italy he worked intensively to devise a pioneering modern art. Impressed by the revolutionary spirit of Marinetti's – 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' – (1909), he was responsible for integrating the visual arts into this literary movement, along with Russolo and Carrà.

The dominant figure of the group and its most important theorist, Boccioni rigorously analysed dynamism and motion in his paintings. He moved away from a Divisionist technique and began to employ the formal vocabulary of Cubism from around 1911. The following year Boccioni became fascinated with sculpture after seeing the works of Medardo Rosso in Paris and he began to experiment with this medium, attempting to unite his subjects with the space and objects surrounding them and advocating the use of a variety of materials in the creation of the work. In 1914 he published his theoretical text 'Futurist Painting and Sculpture' and served with Marinetti and other Futurists in the First World War. He died after falling from a horse during a training exercise in 1916.

Self-Portrait

Boccioni



Riot in the Galleria >>

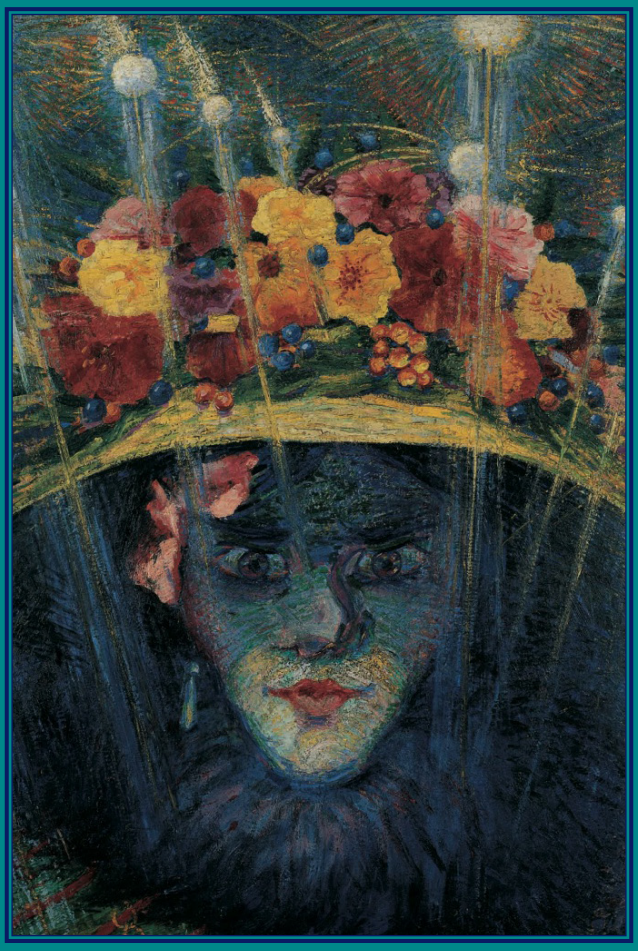
(1910 ~ OIL ON CANVAS, PINACOTECA DI BRERA, MILAN)

Boccioni

The Laugh >>

(1911 ~ OIL ON CANVAS, MoMA, NEW YORK CITY)

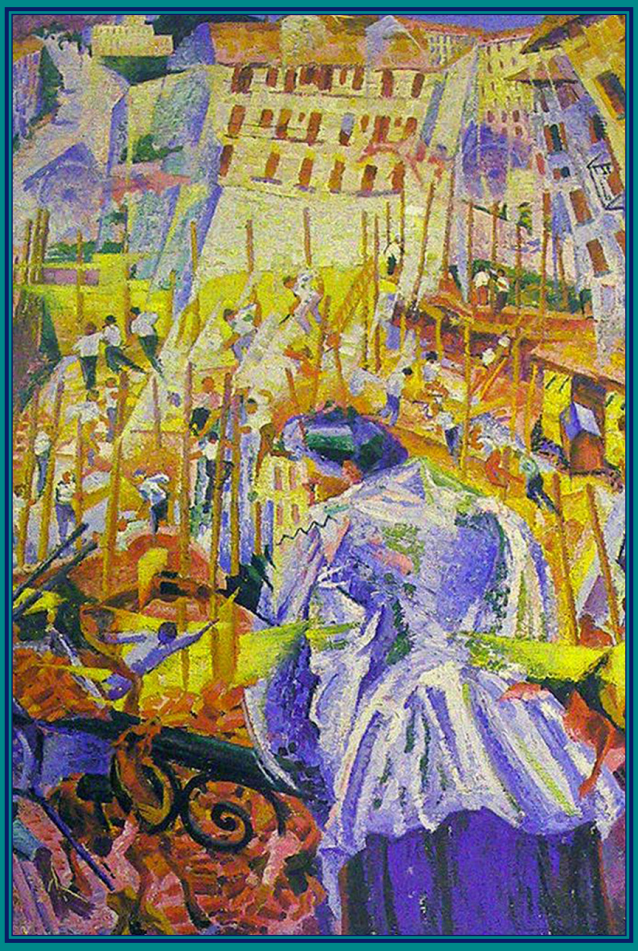
Boccioni



Modern Idol

(1911 ~ OIL ON PANEL, ESTORICK COLLECTION, LONDON)

Boccioni



The Street Enters the House >>

(1911 ~ OIL ON CANVAS, SPRENGEL MUSEUM, HANOVER)

Boccioni

Forces of the Street >>

(1911 ~ oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, Osaka)

Boccioni

Unique Forms of Continuity in Space >>

(1913 ~ BRONZE, MoMA, NEW YORK CITY)

150°

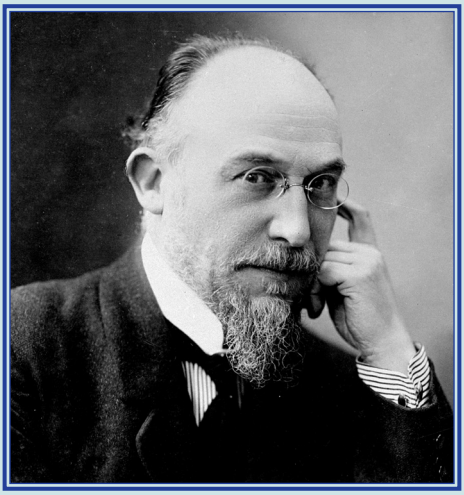
Erik Satie

Honfleur, 1866 - Paris, 1925

Alfred Erik Leslie Satie was born in Honfleur (Normandy) in 1866. His mother was Scottish and his father was a ship broker. He started playing the piano at age 7. At 17 he spent a year at the Paris Conservatory. At age 40, already an accomplished musician, he entered the Schola Cantorum. Here he studied counterpoint and orchestration with Albert Roussel and Vincent D'Indy. After three years he received a Diploma marked "tres bien" (very good). Satie was a composer who feared no man, but always did what was right in his own eyes. He was an exponent of several important trends in the 20th Century composition including bitonality, polytonality, Jazz and non-triadic harmony. He was one of music's great originals, both personally (an eccentric) and artistically. From his one-room flat in a working class suburb in Paris, he exercised a remarkable influence over a generation of composers who were seeking to escape the dominance of Richard Wagner. His simplicity, innovative harmonies, freedom of form and mastery of musical understatement

SATIE

made a strong impression on composers like Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and later younger composers such as Poulenc, Milhaud and Cage. His strange sparse scores, often written without bar lines in red ink are peppered with whimsical



instructions: "Light as an egg", "Here comes the lantern", "Open your head", "Muffle the sound", "With astonishment", "Work it out yourself", etc. Satie's early interest in Mediaeval music shows in the simple plainsong like harmonies of his famous Gymnopédies and Gnossiennes. In the 1890s he became interested in, and the official composer for, the religio-mystic-occult sect of Rosicrusianism which also had a strong Mediaeval leaning. He was a close friend of Debussy, and during World War 1 also befriended Cocteau, Diaghilev and Picasso. This association with the Cubists resulted in the ballet Parade which he wrote in collaboration with Cocteau and Picasso. An eccentric and humorist, he was not well accepted by the general public of his time, despite efforts by Debussy and Ravel to promote his works. He died in Paris in 1925, aged 59.

Henryk Sienkiewicz

Wola Okrzejska, 1846 - Vevey, 1916

The most outstanding and prolific Polish writer of the second half of the nineteenth century was born in Wola Okrzejska, in the Russian part of Poland. He studied in Warsaw, but without any visible results. His talent as a writer was soon discovered. His early works are satirical sketches, betraying a strong social conscience. He made a trip to America in 1876 and travelled as far as California. His impressions were published in Polish newspapers and received very favourably. His travels provided him with material for several works, among them the brilliant short story The Lighthouse Keeper *(1882). After his return to Poland, he devoted himself to historical studies, the result of which was his great trilogy about Poland in the mid-17th century. With* Fire and Sword, The Deluge *and* Pan Michael *were published in 1884, 1886, and 1888 respectively.*

The historical novels were followed by works on contemporary subjects: Without Dogma *(1891), a psychological study of a sophisticated decadent man, and* Children of the Soil *(1894), a peasant novel. In 1895 he published his greatest success,* Quo Vadis?*, a novel of Christian persecutions at the time of Nero. Sienkiewicz was immensely popular. In 1900, a national subscription raised enough funds to buy for him the castle in which his ancestors had lived. The complete edition of his works, published 1948-55, runs to sixty volumes. The Trilogy and Quo Vadis have been filmed, the latter several times, with Hollywood's 1951 version receiving the most international recognition. Henryk Sienkiewicz died on 15 November 1916, at the Grand Hotel du Lac in Vevey, Switzerland.*

Sienkiewicz

The Lighthouse Keeper of AspinWall

(1882)

I

On a time it happened that the light-house keeper in Aspinwall, not far from Panama, disappeared without a trace. Since he disappeared during a storm, it was supposed that the ill-fated man went to the very edge of the small, rocky island on which the light-house stood, and was swept out by a wave. This supposition seemed the more likely as his boat was not found next day in its rocky niche. The place of light-house keeper had become vacant. It was necessary to fill this place at the earliest moment possible, since the light-house had no small significance for the local movement as well as for vessels going from New York to Panama. Mosquito Bay abounds in sandbars and banks. Among these navigation, even in the daytime, is difficult; but at night, especially with the fogs which are so frequent on those waters warmed by the sun of the tropics, it is nearly impossible. The only guide at

that time for the numerous vessels is the light-house. The task of finding a new keeper fell to the United States consul living in Panama, and this task was no small one: first, because it was absolutely necessary to find the man within twelve hours; second, the man must be unusually conscientious,–it was not possible, of course, to take the first comer at random; finally, there was an utter lack of candidates. Life on a tower is uncommonly difficult, and by no means enticing to people of the South, who love idleness and the freedom of a vagrant life. That light-house keeper is almost a prisoner. He cannot leave his rocky island except on Sundays. A boat from Aspinwall brings him provisions and water once a day, and returns immediately; on the whole island, one acre in area, there is no inhabitant. The keeper lives in the light-house; he keeps it in order. During the day he gives signals by displaying flags of various colors to indicate changes of the barometer; in the evening he lights the lantern. This would be no great labor were it not that to reach the lantern at the summit of the tower he must pass over more than four hundred steep and very high steps; sometimes he must make this journey repeatedly during the day. In general, it is the life of a monk, and indeed more than that,–the life of a hermit. It was not wonderful, therefore, that Mr. Isaac Falconbridge was in no small anxiety as to where he should find a permanent successor to the recent keeper; and it is easy to understand his joy when a successor announced himself most unexpectedly on that very day. He was a man already old, seventy years or more, but fresh, erect, with the movements and bear-

ing of a soldier. His hair was perfectly white, his face as dark as that of a Creole; but, judging from his blue eyes, he did not belong to a people of the South. His face was somewhat downcast and sad, but honest. At the first glance he pleased Falconbridge. It remained only to examine him. Therefore the following conversation began:

"Where are you from?"

"I am a Pole."

"Where have you worked up to this time?"

"In one place and another."

"A light-house keeper should like to stay in one place."

"I need rest."

"Have you served? Have you testimonials of honorable government service?"

The old man drew from his bosom a piece of faded silk resembling a strip of an old flag, unwound it, and said:

"Here are the testimonials. I received this cross in 1830. This second one is Spanish from the Carlist War; the third is the French legion; the fourth I received in Hungary. Afterward I fought in the States against the South; there they do not give crosses."

Falconbridge took the paper and began to read.

"H'm! Skavinski? Is that your name? H'm! Two flags captured in a bayonet attack. You were a gallant soldier."

"I am able to be a conscientious light-house keeper."

"It is necessary to ascend the tower a number of times daily. Have you sound legs?"

"I crossed the plains on foot."

"Do you know sea service?"

"I served three years on a whaler."
"You have tried various occupations."
"The only one I have not known is quiet."
"Why is that?"
The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Such is my fate."
"Still you seem to me too old for a light-house keeper."
"Sir," exclaimed the candidate suddenly in a voice of emotion, "I am greatly wearied, knocked about. I have passed through much as you see. This place is one of those which I have wished for most ardently. I am old, I need rest. I need to say to myself, 'Here you will remain; this is your port.' Ah, sir, this depends now on you alone. Another time perhaps such a place will not offer itself. What luck that I was in Panama! I entreat you–as God is dear to me, I am like a ship which if it misses the harbor will be lost. If you wish to make an old man happy–I swear to you that I am honest, but–I have enough of wandering."
The blue eyes of the old man expressed such earnest entreaty that Falconbridge, who had a good, simple heart, was touched.
"Well," said he, "I take you. You are light-house keeper."
The old man's face gleamed with inexpressible joy.
"I thank you."
"Can you go to the tower to-day?"
"I can."
"Then good-bye. Another word,–for any failure in service you will be dismissed."
"All right."

That same evening, when the sun had descended on the other side of the isthmus, and a day of sunshine was followed by a night without twilight, the new keeper was in his place evidently, for the light-house was casting its bright rays on the water as usual. The night was perfectly calm, silent, genuinely tropical, filled with a transparent haze, forming around the moon a great colored rainbow with soft, unbroken edges; the sea was moving only because the tide raised it. Skavinski on the balcony seemed from below like a small black point. He tried to collect his thoughts and take in his new position; but his mind was too much under pressure to move with regularity. He felt somewhat as a hunted beast feels when at last it has found refuge from pursuit on some inaccessible rock or in a cave. There had come to him, finally, an hour of quiet; the feeling of safety filled his soul with a certain unspeakable bliss. Now on that rock he can simply laugh at his previous wanderings, his misfortunes and failures. He was in truth like a ship whose masts, ropes, and sails had been broken and rent by a tempest, and cast from the clouds to the bottom of the sea,–a ship on which the tempest had hurled waves and spat foam, but which still wound its way to the harbor. The pictures of that storm passed quickly through his mind as he compared it with the calm future now beginning. A part of his wonderful adventures he had related to Falconbridge; he had not mentioned, however, thousands of other incidents. It had been his misfortune that as often as he pitched his tent and fixed his fireplace to settle down permanently,

some wind tore out the stakes of his tent, whirled away the fire, and bore him on toward destruction. Looking now from the balcony of the tower at the illuminated waves, he remembered everything through which he had passed. He had campaigned in the four parts of the world, and in wandering had tried almost every occupation. Labor-loving and honest, more than once had he earned money, and had always lost it in spite of every prevision and the utmost caution. He had been a gold-miner in Australia, a diamond-digger in Africa, a rifleman in public service in the East Indies. He established a ranch in California,–the drought ruined him; he tried trading with wild tribes in the interior of Brazil,–his raft was wrecked on the Amazon; he himself alone, weaponless, and nearly naked, wandered in the forest for many weeks living on wild fruits, exposed every moment to death from the jaws of wild beasts. He established a forge in Helena, Arkansas, and that was burned in a great fire which consumed the whole town. Next he fell into the hands of Indians in the Rocky Mountains, and only through a miracle was he saved by Canadian trappers. Then he served as a sailor on a vessel running between Bahia and Bordeaux, and as harpooner on a whaling-ship; both vessels were wrecked. He had a cigar factory in Havana, and was robbed by his partner while he himself was lying sick with the vomito. At last he came to Aspinwall, and there was to be the end of his failures,–for what could reach him on that rocky island? Neither water nor fire nor men. But from men Skavinski had not suffered

much; he had met good men oftener than bad ones.
But it seemed to him that all the four elements were persecuting him. Those who knew him said that he had no luck, and with that they explained everything. He himself became somewhat of a monomaniac. He believed that some mighty and vengeful hand was pursuing him everywhere, on all lands and waters. He did not like, however, to speak of this; only at times, when some one asked him whose hand that could be, he pointed mysteriously to the Polar Star, and said, "It comes from that place." In reality his failures were so continuous that they were wonderful, and might easily drive a nail into the head, especially of the man who had experienced them. But Skavinski had the patience of an Indian, and that great calm power of resistance which comes from truth of heart. In his time he had received in Hungary a number of bayonet-thrusts because he would not grasp at a stirrup which was shown as means of salvation to him, and cry for quarter. In like manner he did not bend to misfortune. He crept up against the mountain as industriously as an ant. Pushed down a hundred times, he began his journey calmly for the hundred and first time. He was in his way a most peculiar original. This old soldier, tempered, God knows in how many fires, hardened in suffering, hammered and forged, had the heart of a child. In the time of the epidemic in Cuba, the vomito attacked him because he had given to the sick all his quinine, of which he had a considerable supply, and left not a grain to himself.
There had been in him also this wonderful quality,–

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that after so many disappointments he was ever full of confidence, and did not lose hope that all would be well yet. In winter he grew lively, and predicted great events. He waited for these events with impatience, and lived with the thought of them whole summers. But the winters passed one after another, and Skavinski lived only to this,–that they whitened his head. At last he grew old, began to lose energy; his endurance was becoming more and more like resignation, his former calmness was tending toward supersensitiveness, and that tempered soldier was degenerating into a man ready to shed tears for any cause. Besides this, from time to time he was weighed down by a terrible homesickness which was roused by any circumstance,–the sight of swallows, gray birds like sparrows, snow on the mountains, or melancholy music like that heard on a time. Finally, there was one idea which mastered him,–the idea of rest. It mastered the old man thoroughly, and swallowed all other desires and hopes. This ceaseless wanderer could not imagine anything more to be longed for, anything more precious, than a quiet corner in which to rest, and wait in silence for the end. Perhaps specially because some whim of fate had so hurried him over all seas and lands that he could hardly catch his breath, did he imagine that the highest human happiness was simply not to wander. It is true that such modest happiness was his due; but he was so accustomed to disappointments that he thought of rest as people in general think of something which is beyond reach. He did not dare to hope for it. Meanwhile,

unexpectedly, in the course of twelve hours he had gained a position which was as if chosen for him out of all the world. We are not to wonder, then, that when he lighted his lantern in the evening he became as it were dazed,–that he asked himself if that was reality, and he did not dare to answer that it was. But at the same time reality convinced him with incontrovertible proofs; hence hours one after another passed while he was on the balcony. He gazed, and convinced himself. It might seem that he was looking at the sea for the first time in his life. The lens of the lantern cast into the darkness an enormous triangle of light, beyond which the eye of the old man was lost in the black distance completely, in the distance mysterious and awful. But that distance seemed to run toward the light. The long waves following one another rolled out from the darkness, and went bellowing toward the base of the island; and then their foaming backs were visible, shining rose-colored in the light of the lantern. The incoming tide swelled more and more, and covered the sandy bars. The mysterious speech of the ocean came with a fulness more powerful and louder, at one time like the thunder of cannon, at another like the roar of great forests, at another like the distant dull sound of the voices of people. At moments it was quiet; then to the ears of the old man came some great sigh, then a kind of sobbing, and again threatening outbursts. At last the wind bore away the haze, but brought black, broken clouds, which hid the moon. From the west it began to blow more and more; the waves sprang with rage against the rock of the light-

house, licking with foam the foundation walls. In the distance a storm was beginning to bellow. On the dark, disturbed expanse certain green lanterns gleamed from the masts of ships. These green points rose high and then sank; now they swayed to the right, and now to the left. Skavinski descended to his room. The storm began to howl. Outside, people on those ships were struggling with night, with darkness, with waves; but inside the tower it was calm and still. Even the sounds of the storm hardly came through the thick walls, and only the measured tick-tack of the clock lulled the wearied old man to his slumber.

II

Hours, days, and weeks began to pass. Sailors assert that sometimes when the sea is greatly roused, something from out the midst of night and darkness calls them by name. If the infinity of the sea may call out thus, perhaps when a man is growing old, calls come to him, too, from another infinity still darker and more deeply mysterious; and the more he is wearied by life the dearer are those calls to him. But to hear them quiet is needed. Besides old age loves to put itself aside as if with a foreboding of the grave. The light-house had become for Skavinski such a half grave. Nothing is more monotonous than life on a beacon-tower. If young people consent to take up this service they leave it after a time. Light-house keepers are generally men not young,

gloomy, and confined to themselves. If by chance one of them leaves his light-house and goes among men, he walks in the midst of them like a person roused from deep slumber. On the tower there is a lack of minute impressions which in ordinary life teach men to adapt themselves to everything. All that a light-house keeper comes in contact with is gigantic, and devoid of definitely outlined forms. The sky is one whole, the water another; and between those two infinities the soul of man is in loneliness. That is a life in which thought is continual meditation, and out of that meditation nothing rouses the keeper, not even his work. Day is like day as two beads in a rosary, unless changes of weather form the only variety. But Skavinski felt more happiness than ever in life before. He rose with the dawn, took his breakfast, polished the lens, and then sitting on the balcony gazed into the distance of the water; and his eyes were never sated with the pictures which he saw before him. On the enormous turquoise ground of the ocean were to be seen generally flocks of swollen sails gleaming in the rays of the sun so brightly that the eyes were blinking before the excess of light. Sometimes the ships, favored by the so-called trade winds, went in an extended line one after another, like a chain of sea-mews or albatrosses. The red casks indicating the channel swayed on the light wave with gentle movement. Among the sails appeared every afternoon gigantic grayish feather-like plumes of smoke. That was a steamer from New York which brought passengers and goods to Aspinwall, drawing behind it a frothy

path of foam. On the other side of the balcony Skavinski saw, as if on his palm, Aspinwall and its busy harbor, and in it a forest of masts, boats, and craft; a little farther, white houses and the towers of the town. From the height of his tower the small houses were like the nests of sea-mews, the boats were like beetles, and the people moved around like small points on the white stone boulevard. From early morning a light eastern breeze brought a confused hum of human life, above which predominated the whistle of steamers. In the afternoon six o'clock came; the movement in the harbor began to cease; the mews hid themselves in the rents of the cliffs; the waves grew feeble and became in some sort lazy; and then on the land, on the sea, and on the tower came a time of stillness unbroken by anything. The yellow sands from which the waves had fallen back glittered like golden stripes on the width of the waters; the body of the tower was outlined definitely in blue. Floods of sunbeams were poured from the sky on the water and the sands and the cliff. At that time a certain lassitude full of sweetness seized the old man. He felt that the rest which he was enjoying was excellent; and when he thought that it would be continuous nothing was lacking to him.

Skavinski was intoxicated with his own happiness; and since a man adapts himself easily to improved conditions, he gained faith and confidence by degrees; for he thought that if men built houses for invalids, why should not God gather up at last His own invalids? Time passed, and confirmed him in this conviction.

The old man grew accustomed to his tower, to the lantern, to the rock, to the sand-bars, to solitude. He grew accustomed also to the sea-mews which hatched in the crevices of the rock, and in the evening held meetings on the roof of the light-house. Skavinski threw to them generally the remnants of his food; and soon they grew tame, and afterward, when he fed them, a real storm of white wings encircled him, and the old man went among the birds like a shepherd among sheep. When the tide ebbed he went to the low sand-banks, on which he collected savory periwinkles and beautiful pearl shells of the nautilus, which receding waves had left on the sand. In the night by the moonlight and the tower he went to catch fish, which frequented the windings of the cliff in myriads. At last he was in love with his rocks and his treeless little island, grown over only with small thick plants exuding sticky resin. The distant views repaid him for the poverty of the island, however. During afternoon hours, when the air became very clear he could see the whole isthmus covered with the richest vegetation. It seemed to Skavinski at such times that he saw one gigantic garden,–bunches of cocoa, and enormous musa, combined as it were in luxurious tufted bouquets, right there behind the houses of Aspinwall. Farther on, between Aspinwall and Panama, was a great forest over which every morning and evening hung a reddish haze of exhalations,–a real tropical forest with its feet in stagnant water, interlaced with lianas and filled with the sound of one sea of gigantic orchids, palms, milk-trees, iron-trees, gum-trees.

Through his field-glass the old man could see not only trees and the broad leaves of bananas, but even legions of monkeys and great marabous and flocks of parrots, rising at times like a rainbow cloud over the forest. Skavinski knew such forests well, for after being wrecked on the Amazon he had wandered whole weeks among similar arches and thickets. He had seen how many dangers and deaths lie concealed under those wonderful and smiling exteriors. During the nights which he had spent in them he heard close at hand the sepulchral voices of howling monkeys and the roaring of the jaguars; he saw gigantic serpents coiled like lianas on trees; he knew those slumbering forest lakes full of torpedo-fish and swarming with crocodiles; he knew under what a yoke man lives in those unexplored wildernesses in which are single leaves that exceed a man's size ten times,–wildernesses swarming with blood-drinking mosquitoes, tree-leeches, and gigantic poisonous spiders. He had experienced that forest life himself, had witnessed it, had passed through it; therefore it gave him the greater enjoyment to look from his height and gaze on those matos, admire their beauty, and be guarded from their treacherousness. His tower preserved him from every evil. He left it only for a few hours on Sunday. He put on then his blue keeper's coat with silver buttons, and hung his crosses on his breast. His milk-white head was raised with a certain pride when he heard at the door, while entering the church, the Creoles say among themselves, "We have an honorable light-house keeper and not a heretic, though he is

a Yankee." But he returned straightway after Mass to his island, and returned happy, for he had still no faith in the mainland. On Sunday also he read the Spanish newspaper which he brought in the town, or the New York Herald, which he borrowed from Falconbridge; and he sought in it European news eagerly. The poor old heart on that light-house tower, and in another hemisphere, was beating yet for its birthplace. At times too, when the boat brought his daily supplies and water to the island, he went down from the tower to talk with Johnson, the guard. But after a while he seemed to grow shy. He ceased to go to the town to read the papers and to go down to talk politics with Johnson. Whole weeks passed in this way, so that no one saw him and he saw no one. The only signs that the old man was living were the disappearance of the provisions left on shore, and the light of the lantern kindled every evening with the same regularity with which the sun rose in the morning from the waters of those regions. Evidently, the old man had become indifferent to the world. Homesickness was not the cause, but just this,– that even homesickness had passed into resignation. The whole world began now and ended for Skavinski on his island. He had grown accustomed to the thought that he would not leave the tower till his death, and he simply forgot that there was anything else besides it. Moreover, he had become a mystic; his mild blue eyes began to stare like the eyes of a child, and were as if fixed on something at a distance. In presence of a surrounding uncommonly simple and great, the old man

was losing the feeling of personality; he was ceasing to exist as an individual, was becoming merged more and more in that which inclosed him. He did not understand anything beyond his environment; he felt only unconsciously. At last it seems to him that the heavens, the water, his rock, the tower, the golden sand-banks, and the swollen sails, the sea-mews, the ebb and flow of the tide,–all form a mighty unity, one enormous mysterious soul; that he is sinking in that mystery, and feels that soul which lives and lulls itself. He sinks and is rocked, forgets himself; and in that narrowing of his own individual existence, in that half-waking, half-sleeping, he has discovered a rest so great that it nearly resembles half-death.

III

But the awakening came.

On a certain day, when the boat brought water and a supply of provisions, Skavinski came down an hour later from the tower, and saw that besides the usual cargo there was an additional package. On the outside of this package were postage stamps of the United States, and the address: "Skavinski, Esq.," written on coarse canvas.

The old man, with aroused curiosity, cut the canvas, and saw books; he took one in his hand, looked at it, and put it back; thereupon his hands began to tremble greatly. He covered his eyes as if he did not believe

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them; it seemed to him as if he were dreaming. The book was Polish,–what did that mean? Who could have sent the book? Clearly, it did not occur to him at the first moment that in the beginning of his light-house career he had read in the Herald, borrowed from the consul, of the formation of a Polish society in New York, and had sent at once to that society half his month's salary, for which he had, moreover, no use on the tower. The society had sent him the books with thanks. The books came in the natural way; but at the first moment the old man could not seize those thoughts. Polish books in Aspinwall, on his tower, amid his solitude,–that was for him something uncommon, a certain breath from past times, a kind of miracle. Now it seemed to him, as to those sailors in the night, that something was calling him by name with a voice greatly beloved and nearly forgotten. He sat for a while with closed eyes, and was almost certain that, when he opened them, the dream would be gone.

The package, cut open, lay before him, shone upon clearly by the afternoon sun, and on it was an open book. When the old man stretched his hand toward it again, he heard in the stillness the beating of his own heart. He looked; it was poetry. On the outside stood printed in great letters the title, underneath the name of the author. The name was not strange to Skavinski; he saw that it belonged to the great poet, [Footnote: Mickiewicz (pronounced Mitskyevich), the greatest poet of Poland.] whose productions he had read in 1830 in Paris. Afterward, when campaigning in Algiers and Spain,

he had heard from his countrymen of the growing fame of the great seer; but he was so accustomed to the musket at that time that he took no book in hand. In 1849 he went to America, and in the adventurous life which he led he hardly ever met a Pole, and never a Polish book. With the greater eagerness, therefore, and with a livelier beating of the heart, did he turn to the title-page. It seemed to him then that on his lonely rock some solemnity is about to take place. Indeed it was a moment of great calm and silence. The clocks of Aspinwall were striking five in the afternoon. Not a cloud darkened the clear sky; only a few sea-mews were sailing through the air. The ocean was as if cradled to sleep. The waves on the shore stammered quietly, spreading softly on the sand. In the distance the white houses of Aspinwall, and the wonderful groups of palm, were smiling. In truth, there was something there solemn, calm, and full of dignity. Suddenly, in the midst of that calm of Nature, was heard the trembling voice of the old man, who read aloud as if to understand himself better:

"Thou art like health, O my birth-land Litva[*]!
How much we should prize thee he only can know who has lost thee.
Thy beauty in perfect adornment this day
I see and describe, because I am yearning for thee."

His voice failed Skavinski. The letters began to dance before his eyes; something broke in his breast, and went

[*] Lithuania.

like a wave from his heart higher and higher, choking his voice and pressing his throat. A moment more he controlled himself, and read further:

"O Holy Lady, who guardest bright Chenstohova,
Who shinest in Ostrobrama and preservest
The castle town Novgrodek with its trusty people,
As Thou didst give me back to health in childhood,
When by my weeping mother placed beneath Thy care
I raised my lifeless eyelids upward,
And straightway walked unto Thy holy threshold,
To thank God for the life restored me,–
So by a wonder now restore us to the bosom of our birthplace."

The swollen wave broke through the restraint of his will. The old man sobbed, and threw himself on the ground; his milk-white hair was mingled with the sand of the sea. Forty years had passed since he had seen his country, and God knows how many since he heard his native speech; and now that speech had come to him itself,–it had sailed to him over the ocean, and found him in solitude on another hemisphere,–it so loved, so dear, so beautiful! In the sobbing which shook him there was no pain,–only a suddenly aroused immense love, in the presence of which other things are as nothing. With that great weeping he had simply implored forgiveness of that beloved one, set aside because he had grown so old, had become so accustomed to his solitary rock, and had so forgotten it that in him even longing had begun to disappear. But now it returned as

if by a miracle; therefore the heart leaped in him.

Moments vanished one after another; he lay there continually. The mews flew over the light-house, crying as if alarmed for their old friend. The hour in which he fed them with the remnants of his food had come; therefore, some of them flew down from the light-house to him; then more and more came, and began to pick and to shake their wings over his head. The sound of the wings roused him. He had wept his fill, and had now a certain calm and brightness; but his eyes were as if inspired. He gave unwittingly all his provisions to the birds, which rushed at him with an uproar, and he himself took the book again. The sun had gone already behind the gardens and the forest of Panama, and was going slowly beyond the isthmus to the other ocean; but the Atlantic was full of light yet; in the open air there was still perfect vision; therefore, he read further: "Now bear my longing soul to those forest slopes, to those green meadows."

At last the dusk obliterates the letters on the white paper,–the dusk short as a twinkle. The old man rested his head on the rock, and closed his eyes. Then "She who defends bright Chenstohova" took his soul, and transported it to "those fields colored by various grain." On the sky were burning yet those long stripes, red and golden, and on those brightnesses he was flying to beloved regions. The pine-woods were sounding in his ears; the streams of his native place were murmuring. He saw everything as it was; everything asked him, "Dost remember?" He remembers! he sees broad fields;

between the fields, woods and villages. It is night now. At this hour his lantern usually illuminates the darkness of the sea; but now he is in his native village. His old head has dropped on his breast, and he is dreaming. Pictures are passing before his eyes quickly, and a little disorderly. He does not see the house in which he was born, for war had destroyed it; he does not see his father and mother, for they died when he was a child; but still the village is as if he had left it yesterday,–the line of cottages with lights in the windows, the mound, the mill, the two ponds opposite each other, and thundering all night with a chorus of frogs. Once he had been on guard in that village all night; now that past stood before him at once in a series of views. He is an Ulan again, and he stands there on guard; at a distance is the public-house; he looks with swimming eyes. There is thundering and singing and shouting amid the silence of the night with voices of fiddles and bass-viols "U-ha! U-ha!" Then the Ulans knock out fire with their horseshoes, and it is wearisome for him there on his horse. The hours drag on slowly; at last the lights are quenched; now as far as the eye reaches there is mist, and mist impenetrable; now the fog rises, evidently from the fields, and embraces the whole world with a whitish cloud. You would say, a complete ocean. But that is fields; soon the land-rail will be heard in the darkness, and the bitterns will call from the reeds. The night is calm and cool,–in truth, a Polish night! In the distance the pine-wood is sounding without wind, like the roll of the sea. Soon dawn will whiten the East. In

fact, the cocks are beginning to crow behind the hedges. One answers to another from cottage to cottage; the storks are screaming somewhere on high. The Ulan feels well and bright. Some one had spoken of a battle to-morrow. Hei! that will go on, like all the others, with shouting, with fluttering of flaglets. The young blood is playing like a trumpet, though the night cools it. But it is dawning. Already night is growing pale; out of the shadows come forests, the thicket, a row of cottages, the mill, the poplars. The well is squeaking like a metal banner on a tower. What a beloved land, beautiful in the rosy gleams of the morning! Oh, the one land, the one land!

Quiet! the watchful picket hears that some one is approaching. Of course, they are coming to relieve the guard.

Suddenly some voice is heard above Skavinski,–

"Here, old man! Get up! What's the matter?"

The old man opens his eyes, and looks with wonder at the person standing before him. The remnants of the dream-visions struggle in his head with reality. At last the visions pale and vanish. Before him stands Johnson, the harbor guide.

"What's this?" asked Johnson; "are you sick?"

"No."

"You didn't light the lantern. You must leave your place. A vessel from St. Geromo was wrecked on the bar. It is lucky that no one was drowned, or you would go to trial. Get into the boat with me; you'll hear the rest at the Consulate."

The old man grew pale; in fact he had not lighted the lantern that night.

A few days later, Skavinski was seen on the deck of a steamer, which was going from Aspinwall to New York. The poor man had lost his place. There opened before him new roads of wandering; the wind had torn that leaf away again to whirl it over lands and seas, to sport with it till satisfied. The old man had failed greatly during those few days, and was bent over; only his eyes were gleaming. On his new road of life he held at his breast his book, which from time to time he pressed with his hand as if in fear that that too might go from him.

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