THE·ROSE·ON·ROSES·FEEDS;·THE·LARK·ON·LARKS=THE·SEDENTARY·CLARK
ALL·MORNING·WITH·A·DILIGENT·PEN;·····MURDERS·THE·BABES·OF·OTHER·MEN·
R. L. STEVENSON.

The Lark; No. 18

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EARTH-SONG.

the breast of our Mother is warm
Though her face it be dark —
Hush and hark,
Safe of harm,
To her breathing — the wind!
None may bind! —
Bows the tree — drives the wave —
That man's toy, the slim ship has to brave!

We are children, the fruit of her dust,
The flames of her hidden fire:
And we burn out the flesh in desire,
That our souls may be free to aspire!

And we know not the end nor the start,
Yet we cherish the hope of the heart,
And we love, and we work, and we weep,
And we lie down in faith to our sleep.

O the breast of our mother is warm,
Though her face it be dark.

THE SENSE OF HUMOUR:

UCH as one may look through the small end of a telescope and find a unique and intrinsic charm in the spectacle there offered, so to certain eyes, the whole visible world is humourous. From the apparition of this dignified little ball, rolling soberly through the starry field of the firmament, to the unwarrantable gravity of a neighbor's straw hat, macrocosm and microcosm may minister to the merriment of man. There is more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in the philosophy of the Philistine.

It is one attribute of a man of parts that he shall have in his mental vision what corresponds to the "accommodation" of his eye; a flexibility of observation that enables him to adapt his mind to the focus of humour. Myopia and Strabismus and Astigmatism we know, the dullard can point their analogues in the mental optics, but of this other misunderstood function we have no name, and yet failing that, have dignified it as a sense apart,— the sense of humour. But no form of lens has been discovered to correct its aberration and transfer the message in pleasurable terms to the lagging brain, and, unless we attempt Hypnotism as a last resort, the prosaist must go purblind for life, missing all but the broadest jokes of existence.

Is it not significant, that from the ancient terminology of leechcraft, this word *humour* has survived in modern medicine to be applied only to the vitreous fluid of the eye? For humour is a medium through which all the phenomena of human intercourse may be witnessed, and for those normal minds that possess it, tints this world with a rare colour,— like that of the mysterious ultra-violet rays of the spectrum. And, indeed, to push further into modern science and speculation, perhaps this ray does not undulate, but shoots forth undeviating as Truth itself, like that from the Cathode pole. Or, does it not enter our mental retina from some secret Fourth Direction?

But this is mere verbiage: similes flattering to the elect, but unconvincing to the uninitiate. Yet, as I am resolved that humour is essentially a point of view, I would have a try at proselytizing for the doctrine. For here is a religion ready made to my hand; I have but to raise my voice and become its prophet. The seeds are all sown, the Fraternity broods secluded in hidden chapters, guarding the grand hailing sign; who knows but a spark would touch off this seasoned fuel, and the flame carry everything before it? O, my Readers, I give you the Philosophy of Mirth,— the Religion of Laughter! Yet 't is an esoteric faith, mind you, unattainable by the multitude; not of the "*te-he,— Papa's dead!*" school, nor of the giggling punster's are its devotees. No comic weekly shall be its organ. It must be hymned not by the coarse guffaw, but in the quiet, inward smile,— and, for its ritual, I submit the invisible humour of the Commonplace,— O paradox!

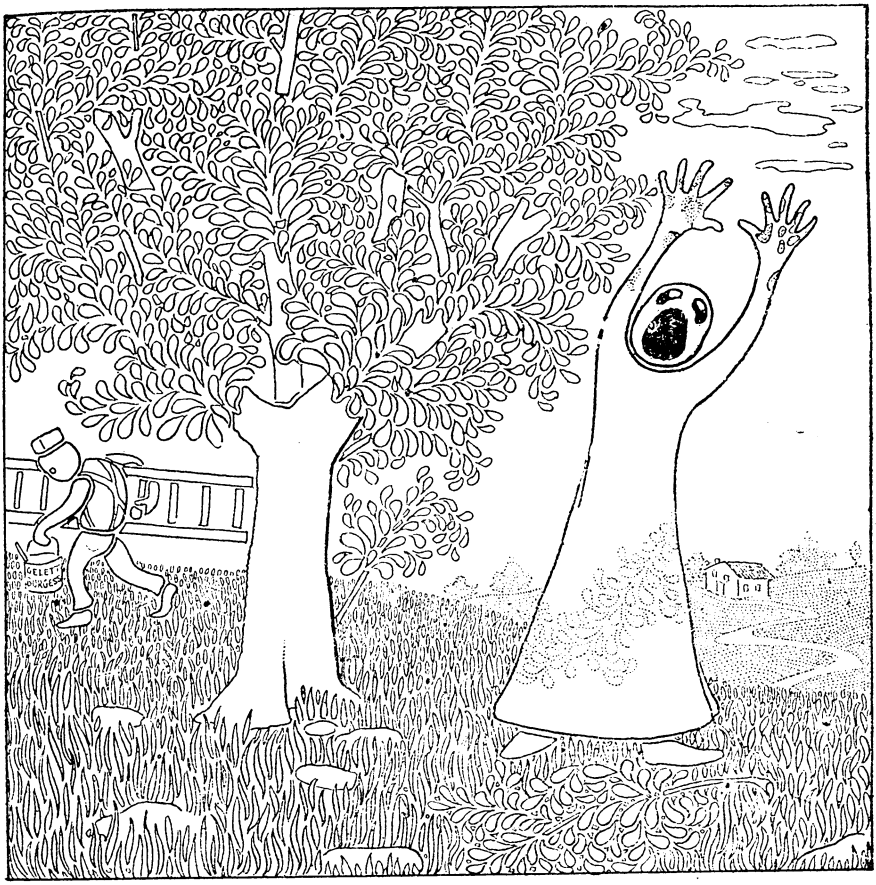
Brethren, from this flimsy pulpit, I assert with sincerity, that everything on two legs (and most on four), sleeping or awake, bow-legged or knock-kneed, has its humourous aspect. The curtain never falls on the diversion. You will tell me, no doubt, that here I ride too hard. Adam, you will say with reason, set aside in the beginning certain animals for our perpetual amusement, to wit: the goose, the monkey, the ostrich, the kangaroo, and, as a sublime afterthought,— symbol of the Eternal Feminine,— the hen. Civilization, you may admit has added to these the goat,— but, save in rare moods of insanity, as when the pup pursues the mad orbit of his tail, the sight of only the aforesaid beasts makes for risibility. The cat, you will say, is never ridiculous. But here again we must hark back to the major premise, unrecognized though it is by the science of Æsthetic. If I could prove it by mere iteration, it would go without further saying, that humour is essentially subjective rather than objective. Surely, there is no humour in Nature, as there is little enough in Art. "The bees, the

trees, the fountains, and the mountains" take themselves seriously enough, and though, according to the minor poets, the fields and brooks are at times moved to laughter, it is from a vegetable, pointless *joie de vivre.* Through the human wit alone, and that too rarely, the rays of thought are refracted in the angle of mirth, and split into whimsical rays of complementary sensations and contrasts.

When we take off the mantle of seriousness and relax the flexors and extensors, if we are well fed, healthy, and of peaceful mind, and capable of indolence, men and women (and we ourselves) should become for us the players on the stage of life. And what then is Comedy, but Tragedy seen backward or downside up? It is the negative or corollary of what is vital in this great game of life. The custom has been, however, to give it a place apart and unrelated to the higher unities, as newspapers assign their witticisms to isolated columns. Rather is it the subtle polarity induced by graver thought,—the reading between the lines of every page. And as to the vigourous intellect, rest does not come through inactivity so much as by change of occupation, the happy humourist is refreshed by the wilful use of this contrast, and sweetens his vicissitudes by the solace of impersonality. He may disincarnate himself as the whim blows, and hang in the air, a god for the time, gazing with amusement at the play of his own inconsistencies. In some such way, perhaps, do the curious turn over the patterned fabric to discover in the reverse, the threads and stitches that explain the construction of the design.

Ohé, la Renaissance! for this is to be the Age of Humour. We travail for the blithe rebirth of joy into the world. The Decadence, with its morbid personalities and accursed analysis of emotion, shall yet refine the simplicity of primary impulse, and increase the whole sum of pleasure with these delicate nuances that amplify the waves of feeling. Hark, O my reader! — Do you not hear them, rising like overtones and turning the melody into a divine harmony?

I picked some Leaves from off a Tree,
And then I nearly Fainted:



For somehow it Astonished me
To find they'd All been Painted!

Profit is not without Honour save in Boston.

A Poet is not without Humour save in San Francisco.

A Lark in the Hand gathers no Moss.

Accessions will happen in the best regulated Families.

One touch of Nature makes the whole World blush.

The Course of true Love is the Route of all Evil.

Flirtation is the Thief of Time.

The Milk of human Kindness never did run smooth.

'T is a mean Door that hath no Key Hole.

Poets are born not Maids.

Western communications corrupt good Manners.

Of two Devils choose the Prettier.

It is always the Unexpensive that happens.

If a Man kiss thee on one Cheek, turn to him the Other also. So shines a good Deed in a naughty Girl.

FROM VIVETTE'S "MILKMAID."

A MAYDE ther was, femely and meke enow
She ſate a-milken of a purpil Cowe:
Roſy hire Cheke as in the Month of Maye
And ſikerly her merry Songe was gay
As of the Larke vprift, waſhen in Dewe;
Like Shene of Sterres ſperkled hire Eyen two.
Now came ther by that Way, a kendy Knight
The Mayde eſpien in morwening Light.
A faire Perſon he was — of Corage trewe
With luſty Berd and Chekes of rody Hewe:
Dere Ladye (quod he) far and wide I 've ſtraied
Uncouthe Aventure in ſtrange Contree made
Fro Berwike vnto Ware. Parde I vowe
Erewhiles I never ſawe a purpil Cowe!
Fayn wold I knowe how Catel thus can be?
Tel me I praie you, of yore Courteſie!
The Mayde hire Milken ſtent.— Goode Sir ſhe ſaide
The Maſter's Mandement on vs ylaid
Decrees that in theſe yclept gilden Houres
Hys Kyne ſhall ete of nought but Vylet Floures!

AN INTERLUDE:——

THE drop had fallen on the second act, and the attention of the audience relaxed in a rustle of conversation.

"Heroines of Romance are so stupid," she said impatiently, "they never find out that a man is in love with them till he explains it with a diagram!"

"I don't see how this one could know it very well," he said, picking up her opera-glasses for the fourth time. "What 's-his-name — Sir Guy, only shows it when she's off in her dressing room. The minute she comes back to the stage, he buries it in his heart."

"But in life, one knows it by instinct" she said, bowing to some one on the other side of the house. "One finds it out as soon as the man does, and sometimes a little sooner."

"Do you mean to say that I could be in love with some one—with you, for instance,—and you 'd know it before I did?"

"Miss Waters is trying to bow to you,—no, further down, — the second seat from the end. Why, yes, it is quite possible."

"How discouraging of you — I've always dreamed of the look of glad surprise that would dawn on some girl's face when I confessed to her my long-hidden love. So all that 'This is so sudden — so unexpected' business is all fraud?"

"Girls don't say that sort of thing any more. It's evident you haven't proposed to one for ten years at least."

"I don't believe I have. I haven't been in love since I was in college — or if I was, no girl was good enough to tell me so."

"How about Alice,— I believe you have been more in love with her than you ever realized," she hazarded.

"No, that's not so, really,— I know you've always thought so. Of course we're awfully good friends, and

all that, but that's all. Do you know, you may think it's a queer thing to say, but I have come nearer to it with you than with any other girl. I don't think I ever got there though. Did you ever suspect that?"

"Oh dear, I've dropped them again," she murmured.

"If you ever see me in that pitiable state, please let me know," he insisted.

"Shall I?" she said, half laughing.

"Yes, I mean it!"

"Very well, then. What is that waltz they are playing?" and she reached for his programme.

"It's a promise," he said, with seriousness. "You must tell me the minute you see it!"

"You might not like it."

"Why not?"

"Because I should have to tell you —— now!" she said, meeting his eyes fairly.

The curtain rose on the third act with a slow swish.

Sir Guy came down to the footlights slapping his hunting boots with his crop.

"Women are so blamed skittish when it comes to love making," he began. "One word, and they're off, over the traces. How does a chap ever get a chance to propose, anyway?"

VIRELAI OF THE WITCHING SEA.

O, for the Sea at night,
Shining in ghostly light!
Ho, for the Sea!
Billowed, and foam bedight,
Moonlit all black and white,
Wanton is she!
Heaving her bosom bright,
Wicked and full of might,
Calling for me!

I am no longer free—
Hark, how she shouts in glee!
Sirens sang so.
Now in a sandy lee
Passionate lovers, we,
Reckless I grow.
And for the hour I'll be
Hers, with my soul in fee,
While her winds blow.

Tiger-love hers, I know,
Fair friend, and subtle foe:—
Hid out of sight
Deep in her caverns low
Lurks her reward of woe!
Come love, come spite,
Into her waves I go,
Daring her undertow,
Ho, for the fight!

DE GUSTIBUS NON DISPUTANDUM EST:

IT had come. The long promised manuscript from a Very Distinguished Personage was at last in the hands of the young Editor of the *Nightingale*. As he held the sealed envelope in his hand, he fell to imagining the curiosity with which his subscribers would scan the unsigned pages of the *Nightingale*, after their wonder at the appearance of this celebrated name among those of the other contributors to No. 18. He reviewed his doubts that his famous friend might indeed have suspected him of wanting the prestige of the name, rather than the contribution, but dismissing these fears, he at length opened the letter.

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The seventeenth monthly dinner of the *Nightingale* was nearing its end, and the Editor, arranging his proofs and copy beside his plate, assigned to each contributor his share in the profits. Upon his left hand were the accepted Mss. for No. 18, and the pile of gold he was to distribute *pro rata.*

At the upper end of the table, Charley King, the moralist, was the centre of a gale of enthusiasm, and, egged on by the romantic Blackworth, was wagering his ability to run down the table and kick off without a miss, the thirteen brass candlesticks that lighted the spread. The Art Manager took a short end of the bet, and the giddy Marrion hoisted the hero to the board and pushed him down the track. One by one the lights flew out, the visitors cheering the hero on. The Editor at length awoke from his abstraction, and rushed wildly to save the light. The coin jumped right and left as he rose, and the maddened Staff lurched greedily at the treasure. Seizing the last candlestick, the Chief flung it among the papers, and by the light of the conflagration held his subordinates at bay.

But when order was restored, it was found that, except the signature, every vestige of the important article had been destroyed!

* * * * * *

Or, at least, this is the way the Editor accounted to the Very Distinguished Personage for his failure to publish an impossible article in the eighteenth *Nightingale.*

NORTH, five-one-three-seven.

Hello; will you please ask Miss Bradford to come to the telephone?

All right.

Hello; is this Miss Bradford?

I have a great favor to ask of you, Miss Bradford.

Will you forgive me for a few moments, if I don't tell you who I am?

Please don't cut me off till I have a chance to say what I want.

Yes; I know it is a great deal to ask of you; and, really, I've hesitated a long time before I decided to call you up.

Please listen to me just a few moments! Will you promise you won't hang up your telephone until I have said a little more? You may hear something very interesting, you know.

Yes; of course. But I have to ask you to take the risk that it isn't a joke. If there were any way to prove it, I would do anything to convince you. But, at any rate, you don't have to say anything at all, and if I say anything offensive, you can cut me off immediately.

Not at all. It's your common sense I'm relying on, not your curiosity. I don't know whether you are curious or not,—are you?

No; I do n't want to tell you, yet, — I will, though, perhaps, later.

No; I am all alone — at a public telephone.

Why, my name would n't help you at all. You 've never heard of me, that I know, and I do n't know any of your friends.

Yes; three times, I think. But I 've never spoken to you before this.

Well, I am rather amazed at my own audacity. I assure you this is just as exciting to me as it is to you. Really, I 'm nervous myself. But I simply want to ask you if I may talk to you, — every day?

I do n't see why it is n't simple. Of course, it is a very extraordinary proposition, but I do n't think you 're the girl to refuse on that ground, if it is 'nt morally wrong. It all depends upon whether it is safe for you to trust that I 'm a gentleman, and whether I 'm interesting enough.

Why, I heard you say so, once. That was the first time I saw you; it was on a street car. I did n't try to listen, but I heard that, and I 've thought ever since, I 'd like to try you, and see if you really meant it. I have only just found out your name. I have such a strong feeling that I understand you.

I was afraid you 'd say that. I can 't blame you, of course. And yet it seems as if I ought to be able to convince you, some way. I 've thought it all out, long ago, and I 'm certain you would n't mind a mere conventionality, if you were sure of me. I think it will be an interesting experiment. I am not conceited, but I 'm sure I 'm worth while knowing. The fact of my doing this ought almost to prove that.

No; that's absolutely impossible, for a great many reasons. I have given up all idea of that. I know it can never, never happen. It's pretty hard for my pride, but I'll have to tell you I'm utterly unpresentable. If you consent to my knowing you, — this way — you and I may occasionally see each other, but you'll never know it's I. That will give me an advantage, of course, but it's the only way possible.

No, never! I hope you won't be offended, but I ought to tell you, too, that I care a great deal for you. Too much. I watched you pretty carefully, the three times I saw you, and I'm quite sure I haven't been mistaken. Of course, I know it's absolutely hopeless. I shall never expect anything, but this is the only chance I shall ever have of knowing you at all.

Yes. If you'll feel safer, I'll tell you that you will always have it in your power to find me out by complaining at the Central Office, for you'll know when I am to call you up. But I'm perfectly willing to trust you not to do that.

Why, I shall have a telephone put in my room, without a number in the book. But I'll tell you the number as soon as I get it. Tell me, do you trust me?

No; I'll never mention it again. It was hard enough to say it, I'm sure. But you don't know what it means to me. I feel as if I'd won a battle. I'm trembling.

Well, at three o'clock, then. Of course, I'll not try to thank you. But I'm sure you'll never regret it.

Good bye!