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Fleming...

Vance Thompson editor

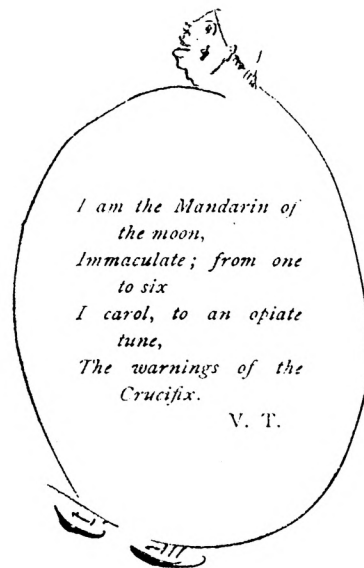
Thomas Fleming art editor
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—in literary work there are two elements; the idea and the style, each independent of the other. The idea sojourns in the grey caves of thought, awaiting its development, its energy, its enlightenment; the style is always ready, the frame in which this product of ideologic travail may be exposed —

—this absurd theory is that beautiful ideas always find a beautiful style; that the pretty woman inevitably has pretty clothes —

—gentle brother, believe it not; be not frightened at the rough pen which writes the truth; be not seduced by the sugared sentences of the hollow, wicked person, expert in rhetoric. Think, then, of the magnificent flowers, odourless, fatal; of the women, whose robes, golden and splendid, serve but to cover rancid flesh; gentle brother, applaud only when the style and the idea are worthy one of the other — and worthy of you —

LEADER



O Helen, godlike of women, taste a petite verre of thy nepenthe and dream of the days of thy youth. Look down from the heights of snowy Olympus towards the plains of windy Troy and the straits where Helle perished. Dost thou once more see the Sons of the Achaians? Tens of thousands are they from all the Achaian land, and thousands of many-oared ships transport them as they come, with Western civilization, to ravish thee from thy lover of the Morning Land. Dark, cyanean dark, were thy locks—was not thy spouse Xanthous? Hell of ships, hell of men, hell of cities—for so hast thou been named—and thy husband wore short petticoats and brazen greaves, and thy lover wore bright-coloured bloomers—parti-coloured bags, one of thy foes called them—and one was of the West and the other of the East. And where are the Sons of the Achaians? Oust le preux Charlemagne? The fair Rhodope is dead, and her pyramid is a pile of bricks in a desert of sand. Thou art dead—no, thou diest not, thou ever art—and to-day haply, as thy bard singeth, someone of the latter-born races of mankind, sailing in a three-screw torpedo-boat over the wine-dark sea, says yon is the tomb of a man long dead. He speaks of the tomb of Achilles.

Years pass, centuries pass, and once more the West must civilize the East. Beautiful, bright, strong, the civilizer begins his work. He begins like a missionary, with a whiskey-bottle and a harlot. Once more the East is at the feet of the West, and the civilizer dies of the jim-jams in that mother city which is called the Gate of God. Dusky princes still call themselves "Equal to Iskander," and the horns of Iskander can still be heard when night is dark with tempest, blowing in the Caspian gorges. Still stands the city, O son of Philip, thy Candahar in the Afghan hills; still sleeps thy Samarcand in the Steppes. But where is Western civilization? Gone where the woodbine twineth.

Years pass, centuries pass, and once more, O Helen, child of Zeus, beloved of Paris, aeigyne, look down from snowy Olympus. Thou seest a thousand ships once more ploughing the wine-dark sea; thousands of thousands are men therewith, men from lands thou never heardest of, whose names thy tongue can not frame itself to utter; and lo, they too are come to civilize the land to which thou gavest thy love, the mysterious, unchangeable, ineffable Orient. Great was their success. But where to-day are the kings of Jerusalem? Where are the princes of Edessa, of Antioch, the counts of Tripoli? Where is the fair countess for whom, a reincarnation of thee, the bard Rudello died?

Haply to-day, some traveller from Chicago, taking a Pullman sleeper from Joppa to Jerusalem, may say as he chews his cut-plug, "Here is a church built by the Crusaders. Who were the Crusaders, anyhow?"

Again to-day, O Helen, thou seest a thousand ships and ten thousand warriors coming to tear thee from thy rosy East! Take a deep draught of the care-dispelling nepenthe. Slumber again, and when thou wakest ask, "Where are they?" Thou wilt find the East is still the East, the West is still the West. For one believes that God is God and says, "Thank God for beautiful women"; the other cries, "God is a trolley-car, guai a chi la tocca," and "Woman is made by her dressmaker."

HELEN INVOKED HUGH CRAIG



*When the night is old and sorrowed,
And the gas-lamps, blurred and blue,
Cast long lanes of light unhallowed
On the streets, by one and two
The women pass and turn and idle,
Idle strenuously for you;
Pass and pause and purr and sidle,
Urgent there—for you!*

POEMS



THE DUEL

*Low in the west a star,
And where the sand-hills slope afar,
To the unseen sea a hint of day
(Like the faint, hard glint of a scimitar,
That the dreaming warrior turns
In the mid-tent's night
When, in sleep, his spirit burns
For the fight).*

*Hark to hurried beat,
The steady rush of horses' feet!
Ah, he is true to the hour and day,
This old, true friend I come to meet;
Brave and true, this friend of mine —
I remember well
How he faced that damned red line
When France fell.*

*Dearest old friend and true,
'Tis strange, I think, that I and you,
Who faced death twice for each, to-day
Should claim each other's life as due
For a woman's fault — or mine!
You are my friend still —
Shake hands — so — when they give the sign,
Fire to kill.*



OLD DAYS

*Whe life was sweet and young
What roaring songs we sung,
Dear boy, when life was young.*

*How red the wine and rare,
How sweet the kisses were,
Dear boy, when youth was fair.*

*But life is sere and dead,
The wine is duller red,
Dear boy, since youth is dead.*

*We have no kisses more,
The path is grey before,
Dear boy, for youth is o'er.*



*O Woman, violently chaste,
With anti-nuptial eyes,
And kisses unreleased,
Think how the vagrom rose is pleased
When the bee ignites her tepid waist,
With the pollen from his thighs.*

The light waned as he turned with tense fingers the round, bevelled-edge screw of the lamp. Darkness—immitigable, profound, soft, and noiseless—must soon succeed yellow radiance. To face this gloom, to live in it and breathe of it, set his heart harshly ticking. Yet he slowly turned with tense fingers the bevelled-edge screw of the lamp. He would be forced presently to a criticism of the day, that day which must flame brilliantly when night closed in upon him. As in the vivid agony which can be endured between two bell-strokes of a clock he strove to answer the oppressing shape that threatened him. And his fingers revolved lingeringly the lamp-screw with its brass and bevelled edge. If only some gust of resolution would arise, like the sudden scud of the squall that whitens far-away level summer seas, and drive forth pampered procrastination, then might his fingers become flexile and his mind untied. Poor drab seconds that fooled with eternity and supped on vain courage as they went trooping by, why could not one keen point of consciousness abide? Why must all go humming into oblivion as if of untuned value?

He grasped at a single strand of recollection; he saw her parted lips and the passionate reproach of her eyes and felt her strenuous, tacit acquiescence; he sensed the richness of her love, and now he stood, unstable, vacillating, and an ineluctable groper amidst cruel shards of a treacherous memory, powerless to stay the fair phantom and fearful of looking night squarely in the front. So he remained a dweller in the shadows as he faintly fingered the bevelled-edge screw of the lamp.

INELUCTABLE

J. G. H.



The death of Joao de Deus (John-of-God Ramos) removes the greatest lyric poet that has written the Portuguese tongue since Camoens. His life was passed among the green hills and laughing waters of Algarva. He transcribed writings and taught children—a shameful necessity, Epictetus would have said. He was the precursor and originator of the Portuguese poetry of the last thirty-five years. He loved God and women. He sang of kisses and his native land.

THE DEATH OF JOAO DE DEUS

(1830-1896)



IMPROVISATION

JAMES GIBBONS
HUNEKER

MAD MULIEBRITY



This was my dream. The Plain, vast, implacable, illimitable; for it ran over the edges of eternity and on it surged and shivered multitudinous women, elemental, white, dazzling, and naked. As waves that, lap on lap, sweep fiercely across the skyline, as bisons charge furiously, so these hordes of savage women rose and fell in their mad flight across the Plain. No sudden little river, no harsh accent of knoll or hill broke the immeasurable whiteness of bared shoulders, of glancing hips, of ivory breasts. It was a white whirl of women, a ferocious vortex of frightened women, and as I stood at the edge of the Pit I saw the petrified fear on the faces of them that went into it. Faces blanched by regret, sunned by crime, beaming with lust; faces marked by virtue as by the smallpox; faces of mothers whose children were yet unborn, and the faces of virgins untainted by vain virtues; wan faces and weary faces, and the triumphant regard of the vicious — all wore the one capital look. The maelstrom of the cloven sex bore this look as it boiled vertiginously by me. The devouring look of the woman who saw for the last time the last man. I trembled as the vibrant look smote me. All the women of the world passed at my feet, radiant, guilty, white, conquering, dazzling women, and yet I was powerless, futile, and impotent. Not a sign could I make, not a sound to hail the last despairing face as it dashed forever down the gulf of time, leaving me lost, lonely, with pulses jangled, with eyes strained, and lasciviously sorrowful.



THE RECURRING STAIRCASE

I saw her first on the recurring staircase. I had sharply turned the angle of the hall and placed my foot upon the bottom step, and then I saw her. She was motionless, her back to me. And oh, the grace of her neck! The glory of her arrested attitude! I feared to move; but some portent, silent, inflexibly eloquent, bade me up the staircase. That was years ago. I called to her strange calls, beautiful-sounding titles; I besought her to turn, to bend her head, to make some motion to my signal of urgency. But her glance was aloft, where, illumined by the scarlet music of a setting sun, I saw a rich, heavy-mullioned embrasure of multi-coloured glass shot through with drunken, despairing daylight. That was many years ago. Again I prayed My Lady of the Recurring Staircase to look down and give me hope. At last I conjured her in Love's fatal name, and she moved languorously up the steep slope of stairs. As if the spell had been thwarted, I followed her melodious adagio. That was years ago. She never mounted to the heavy-mullioned embrasure of multi-coloured glass shot through with drunken, despairing daylight; I never touched the hand of My Lady of the Recurring Staircase. For the stairs were endless, and I stood ever upon the bottom step, and the others slipped below into eternity. And all this was many years ago, and I have never seen the glorious glance of My Lady of the Recurring Staircase.

THEN AND NOW

Let us state the case plainly, my friend,
From beginning to end.
Here's a man who has injured us both;
You have taken an oath
To return him the better for worse,
Barter blessing for curse.
Let it be for yourself, not for both;
I draw back and am loth.
It was ten years ago that the lie
First worked in his eye
And wrinkled his lean lips with glee
Ere he loosed it at me.
Aye, it rankled, and weak with the hurt,
I crawled back to my dirt —
Wolf's den in the furze-glutted ground —
And nursed my raw wound.
So again when I came to the light
He was there in my sight,
Forging lies as of old, keen to slay
What stood in his way.
And I waited. I said, "Let him gain
The prize for his pain!"
And to-day he has won it and stands
With the world in his hands,
Thinking, "Now I have garnered and best
Can take honour and rest."
And my purpose joins here with my power,
And this hour is my hour.
He has toiled, and I snatch him away
From his life's fee to-day.
He is old now, old. Can he face
Defeat and disgrace?
I have waited, my friend, winning fame
And fortune and name,
And struggling on up to the height,
But for this — that I might
Hurl him down the long steep of the rise
As he clutched at the prize.
And you bid me hold hand now? Let God
In His way use the rod?
Did God know when the lie was first sped?
'Thro' these years was He dead?
Then what if this old man should yet
Cheat hell of the debt —
Buy forgiveness of God for the lie?
Who's to punish but I?
And my vengeance wipes out as with flame
His lie and my shame!
I have put the case plainly, my friend,
And to-night is the end.

Vance Thompson



THE DIARY OF A DEGENERATE

J. G. H.



Marie Bashfulskirts was a young pianist of twenty summers. Early in life she displayed such a remarkable aptitude for winding up the big musical box that reposed under a glass case in the paternal drawing-room that her parents (her father, mother, and family friends) resolved to send her to Saint Petersburg to study the piano. For many years she worshipped at the pianistic shrines of Henselt and Rubinstein. So, when she was budded into early womanhood (they bud early in Russia), she could purl like the "Brook" etude of Henselt or flash with vividity a big scarlet flash across the keyboard, like Anton, the only Rubinstein. In a word, she was a phenomenon, and, in a word, she was unhappy and always nervous.

Marie sought fame eagerly, hungrily. She lusted after success, and often dreamed of vast audiences swaying before the magic of her touch and worshipping frantically her overwhelming genius. She made humble beginnings in her native town, a small place adjacent to Moscow. Then, emboldened by her genuine success, she arranged for a concert in Moscow, and—happy night! be it ever remembered!—she made her bow before a Saint Petersburg audience—not a large one certainly, but an audience nevertheless. Her triumph was terrific. She had the Calmuck temperament, enormous magnetism; and soon musical Saint Petersburg was at her feet. Engagements and offers of all sorts poured in, and the acme of her bliss was reached when, by imperial command, she played in the great palace of the Czar and royalty beamed upon her, spoke kindly to her, and even decorated her.

It was too much for Marie Bashfulskirts's excitable nerves. And, being a woman, she could not drink. So she wrote a diary.

* * * * *

November 15, 1890.—I had to go to my manager this morning. He tells me the house is completely sold out to-night, so that he had to refuse a stranger who begged him earnestly for a seat. He succumbed, however, to the stranger's entreaty and sold him for the modest sum of five hundred rubles the seat he had reserved for himself. Clever man, my manager is!

I wonder who the stranger is? I know where he will sit, and I think I will just take a little peep to-night, and if he is— I won't anticipate.

November 16, 1890.—I played last night. The house was crowded, but I can't say I did myself justice. A shiver ran all over me when I started the Bach-Tausig toccata, and I almost felt nervous. I—I—I saw the stranger! Funny little man, he seems.

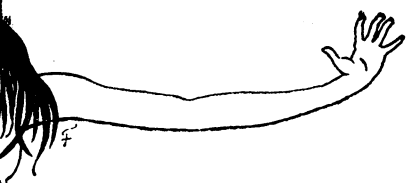
November 30, 1890.—My manager tells me the reason the front row of the hall in which I give my recitals is always empty is because the little stranger buys up the entire row in advance. He must be a prince or an American or a fool—heigh-ho!

December 15, 1890.—I had the queerest recounter to-day with the little stranger (I must call him the thin little stranger, for he looks like a chocolate skeleton, he is so brown and so thin). Our carriage-wheels became locked on the drive, and we had a good look at each other. He is old, ugly, and one of his eyes is a shiny green and the other a dull black. He plays with a thin gold chain all the time, and I could swear there is something alive at the end of it. It kept moving all the time. I felt uncomfortable and eerie when he looked at me. Does the odious little snail love me?

January 2, 1891.—I am so frightened and worried. I broke down last night completely in the middle of a G sharp minor etude of Chopin. An etude I played faster than Pachmann. What can be the matter? An unaccountable depression assailed me when I began the study, and, without knowing why, I looked down and could see the shiny-green stare of the thin little stranger, who regarded me with a sneer. I slipped in my rhythm, and—smash! A fiasco!

My God! The critics remarked to-day that I was becoming careless from too much success and advised temporary retirement. I went to Rubinstein; but the giant pooh-poohed me, and so my fears were temporarily allayed. Who is that little stranger who exercises such a dreadful fascination over me? Is he a ghost or merely a malignant meddler?





February 6, 1891. Vienna.—I have left Saint Petersburg and am in Vienna. There is no denying the truth: either I am the victim of an unfortunate hallucination or else the thin little stranger is the devil.

February 8, 1891.—He is the devil! I played last night, and he sat in the front row and ogled me. I was nearer to him than in the Russian capital, and he had the impertinence to allow the hideous insect he has at the end of his gold chain, and which he fondles in a sickening manner, to run around at my feet. No wonder I was nervous and played badly. The papers spoke of me very unfavourably.

February 9, 1891.—It is a spider the demon has for a pet. My manager told me. A big bloated, scarlet spider, with twenty-three legs, side-whiskers, beautiful teeth, and only one eye.

February 20, 1891. Paris.—I am in the French capital. I am a coward, and I fled Vienna because I couldn't stand that old man any longer. He was hypnotizing me, and I played badly whenever I looked at him; and I had to look at him, for I was in mortal dread of that spider crawling over me.

My manager, who has abandoned me in disgust, told me before he left me that the thin little stranger was very wealthy, hated Chopin, loved Czerny and spiders, and had a glass eye, green in colour. Oh, I know something is going to happen!

April 10, 1891. Montivideo.—Here I am in the Argentine Republic, forced against my will by the unknown power that is disturbing my peace and my pianism.

Of course he is here. And of course he was at my first concert, and of course I broke down. My God! I shall go mad!

June 5, 1891. Dublin.—I have made a discovery. Whenever I omit Chopin from my programme no accident happens. The thin little stranger merely scowls, and his baleful influence seems powerless for harm. I will never play Chopin again in public.

June 7, 1891.—Am I only a Chopin player? The critics make fun of my Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms and advise me to stick to Chopin. What shall I do? In addition to my other troubles I received only yesterday a letter from the firm on whose piano I play advising me to play only Chopin, as my touch is too light for Schumann or Liszt. The Epsteins are a hard firm to deal with.

June 12, 1891.—I am about to follow the Messrs. Epstein's advice and only play Chopin; and if I am annoyed any more by the thin little stranger I will call in the aid of the police, or, if that failing, I will—

June 15, 1891.—Misery! I will never play in public again. I am dying from pique and a spider's bite. Recklessly last night I played a Chopin programme before a large audience, and all went well until I reached the middle of the phantasy in F minor, when suddenly I heard a hissing sound. And before I knew what was about to happen I felt a keen, burning bite in my right foot, and screaming with pain, I jumped from my seat and saw the thin little stranger, with his gold chain in his hand and hissing his pet spider at me. But the damage had been done, for I was already bitten, and fatally, too. The audience was in disorder, my head was reeling, and I swooned. I am dying, the medical men tell me, of blood-poisoning, and the police have arrested the thin little stranger; but it is too late for revenge. I think he is the ghost of Carl Czerny.

* * * * *

The diary ends here, but the public was told of the arrest and examination of the thin little stranger, who, on being pressed hard, confessed that he was an agent of the Golconda piano manufacturers, the bitter business rivals of the Epsteins. When the Golcondas discovered that the Epsteins had secured the services of the great Russian Chopin player, Marie Bashfulskirts, they plotted for her downfall and hired an agent with a spider and a glass eye to follow her about and worry her whenever she played Chopin, but to let her be if she played any other composer's compositions, for the Epstein piano only sounded when Chopin was played upon it. The thin little stranger succeeded in his design only too well, and the sad result may be gleaned from the above narrative. The thin little stranger committed suicide, and the Golconda Brothers, owing to public odium, went out of business and now manufacture xylophones at Rangoon for the Brazilian trade.



JUBES RENOVARE DOLOREM

HAMILTON
WILLIAMS, M.D.



"Why have you kept away so long, Doctor?" began a letter found upon the body. "Can you do nought to down the baleful horrors, those unbidden guests which rise within my morbid consciousness? Last night again I went to the gates of hell. The day had come and gone with an exertion more than wonted, for I was busied in the preparations for the visit to my daughter's tomb. Towards fall of night was lassitude and much prostration, and so on a light meal I sought my bed. Rest of body I might have had—of mind, none. Mind and body refused to work in double harness. My brain was in a whirl; it seemed as if its tens of thousands of constituent molecules were swirling in the eddying mazes of some Saharan sand-storm. As a matter of fact, the recumbent posture appeared to intensify this mental hyperexcitation. The weirdest, wildest products and creations of this frenzied cerebration fought amongst themselves for mastery, whilst I perforce must rest content amid the tempest, to keep a desperate hold upon my psychic unity. My nerves, overstrung, imparted such a supersensitiveness to my whole physical being that the very touch of my clothes was torturous. I was at length about to rise, weary in the bootless effort to compose myself, and had resolved to seek relief in the resumption of my work of preparation, when suddenly I was conscious of what seemed some strange atmospheric disturbance. The air had become, as it were, tremulous or vibratory, and I fancied I could hear a gentle murmur, as of the sound of the falling sands of an hour-glass held close to the ear. The darkness was complete, save for the faint glow from the blazeless embers in the fireplace of the great hall and for the shimmering flamellet of the one small lamp left unextinguished in my sleeping-chamber. And now all atmospheric movement ceased, and a silence, not merely the absence of sound, but its absolute negation, supervened. My heart's rhythmic beating took on a horrible distinctness, startling in its unwonted self-assertion. An indefinable sense of dread all enfused me, coupled with a nauseating gastric instability and a despairing vertiginousness. Were there assistance anywhere within reach I should have called; and withal that I knew there was none, I sought instinctively to leave my couch and move around, as if fearing to await in its passivity a hostile approach by this time somewhat affirmatively, if vaguely, foreboded. I had put one foot over the side and out of the bed, and in a feeble and hesitating fashion had raised myself into a semi-erect sitting posture, preparatory to my final movement and quitting. All at once, whilst my forehead streamed with a clammy sweat, and my hair, dank and matted, hung around my head like a wet cloth, and the very skin of my flesh crept all over me with a sort of vermicular motion, I saw with speechless horror a minute tongue of phosphorescent flame make its appearance from out the inky darkness of the corner of the great hall farthest from me. This weird, uncanny object by the suddenness of its apparition served to petrify me in my half-risen attitude. I could neither think, nor speak, nor move. I gazed aghast and charmed. It was now clearly moving towards me. Its approach was noiseless and, though slow, sure and deliberate. Every now and then it appeared to stop, as a cat will in her steady advance upon her prey. Withal it was growing apace manifestly. I can scarce hold my pen as I seek its further developments. By this time the original tiny speck of phosphorescent flame had grown to the dimensions of an orange, and playing upon its surface, like tar on rippling water, ever changing in hue and figure, there appeared in kaleidoscopic fashion such forms as only may be found moving in the ooze of some tropical stagnant pool. A sickening sense of horror, with a consciousness of utter helplessness under the fascination of this grewsome phenomenon, grew upon and into me with a fierce intensity. Presently the fearsome, creeping forms seemed moving over a face as if of the dead, and in and out through its mouth and nostrils. I fain would cry aloud, but the breath froze within my throat. Gaining speed, the spectre fast drew near me, outlining itself the more distinctly with each second's progress. And now—my God! It shows a human head and face, with hands placed on either side as if about to tear the hair; and from the mouth, in drooling monotone, came the words, 'Forever—aye, forever.' A body, too, showed now, of a dull red, but seeming all but black by contrast with what was by this time the flaming sulphurous incandescence of the



head and hands. Hitherto the eyes seemed downcast, or with eyelids closed; but now upraised, with eyelids opened wide, they fix their awful gaze upon me; and the right hand of the spectre, leaving the head, is extended towards me with protruded arm. I had but time to recognize and call her name when with a bound the awful form sprang upon me, and its hand of iron flaming pierced my breast and caught my heart within its crushing grasp of fire. I knew no more. When next I came within the conscious and awoke to the recognition of my surroundings the night had gone, and the unmocking day, with all its gracious flood of lavished sunlight, was flooding through the windows of my chamber. Without one word or thought, in the twinkling of an eye I had bounded from the couch and torn open the bosom of my night-dress. Surely there must be some evidence, through ashen-bordered, mayhap still smouldering, aperture in my breast, some trace of the spectre's fearsome deed; for my heart still felt, though rather as a memory, the pang of the crushing hand-grasp. But no! Was no breakage of the surface, and my form, unharmed to all outward seeming, served by its material silence to hide a past which somehow will not wholly down for long. . . ."

"As I had many times forewarned him, angina pectoris," said the doctor. "A later seizure took his life away."

* * * * *

An aged recluse, stern and forbidding, was the solitary occupant of a storm-bound tower on a beetling cliff in the Orkneys. An only and unwedded daughter years ago had died in childbirth. No one knew for certain her betrayer, but some guessed and shuddered.



THE TORCH

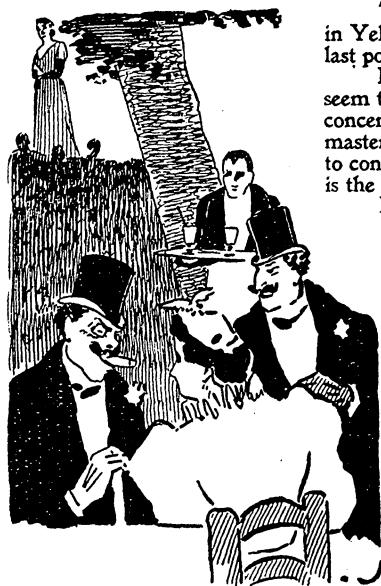
*The torch at midnight wavering burned ;
The censer's circling smoke-wreaths crept ;
Love, that for Love's possession yearned,
Held captive Love, while yet it slept,
With lips to kisses turned.*

*Slow wound the sinuous altar-flame
That upward sent its perfumed cloud ;
The sacrifice, all steeped in shame,
Shrank nude within the fiery shroud ;
Love called aloud a name.*

*Afar the dawn bent down and blushed ;
The stars, aghast, fled back to night ;
The cry a pitying silence crushed,
And Love had vanished on the light.
Anon and all was hushed.*

*Sudden there swept an arid wind ;
The torch, burned out, lay blackened, bare ;
Possession, like a serpent, twined
And stung a soul with fanged despair
Love left to find.*

MARIE PETRAVSKY



Through the courtesy of Mr. Robert W. Chambers, the urbane and erudite author of "The King in Yellow" and "The Red Republic," "Mlle New York" has received copies of Maurice Maeterlinck's last poem, "Les Extases." (Paul Lacomble, Brussels.)

Maeterlinck, I need hardly say, is the chief of the electro-suggestive school. This last poem would seem to be the ultimate realization of the dream he has so long pursued: immensity of idea and infinite concentration of form. Despising the tawdry and diffuse art of the common rhymester, the great Belgian master has stripped his theme of all verbal redundancies and of all those rhetorical trappings which serve to conceal indigence of thought. One word suffices his Himalayan genius—one word?—one syllable is the sympathetic and isothermal current with which he links the reader's soul to his own.

I quote the entire volume in all its gigantic simplicity:

LES EXTASES

POÈME MONOSYLLABE

PAR

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

OH!!!

FIN

MAURICE MAETERLINCK'S NEW POEM

V. T.

It would be superfluous to paraphrase the thought of the author, which is indeed sufficiently clear. And yet this timid and summary gloss may not be impertinent. Note, then, in the poem "Oh":

1. Sonority—as of the deep monotone of inland waters; or the mysterious harmony of mountains, vague and veiled.
2. Colour—violet-hued, effaced, hinting of twilight horizons along which melancholy autumn dies; or the shadows of dim woods in tepid April days.
3. Odour—anonymous and delicate, like sublimated vanilla; or the suave perfume of the young girl, startled at the first intimacies of love.
4. Articulation—sweet, tender, ending in a quasi-mute sigh, signifying palpitation, unreserved avowal, worship, and adoration; or pronounced rudely, harshly, with a final gasp, expresses suffering of the soul or the keen distress which arises from a disordered pneumogastric nerve.
5. The immediate interpretations—prayer, admiration, dream, drunkenness, joy, indifference, doubt, horror, suffering, rage, contempt, reproach, terror—with all their shades of meaning.
6. The hermetic or symbolic interpretation—"O," cryptogram of the homunculus or microcosm, suggesting the mysteries of the alchemist and the speculations of the roguish scientists.
7. Chemical notation—"O," oxygen, indestructible principle of organized life; suggests advertising doctors, the press, the monstrous eye of civilization.
8. Algebraic notation—"O," zero, symbol of nothing, the negation of the Universal, which is the germ of nothing.
9. All these suggestions reversed.

These are only a few vagrom records of the impressions made by reading this wonderful electro-suggestive poem. Let us read it again: "Oh!" How marvellously simple is the mechanism, how infinitely varied the images, suggestions, sensations of this poem, at once hieratic and blasphemous, tender, voluptuous, gluttonous, hilarious, philosophical, intense in its realism and profound in its symbolism. Think, then, that this one poem—one word, one syllable—suffices to carry the soul through all the splendours of the visible universe; to drench it with odorous recollections of amorous hours, hinting of dishevelled tresses, all gold; to plunge it into the ecstasies of precious wines; to lead it into the sacerdotal arcana of nature. Is this not the highest expression of poetry, the hyperesthesia of the possible, the condensation, radiant and eternal, of the Universal?

Is it not, Mr. Chambers?



SYMBOL

*In the dim west a pallid child
Is racing with a stallion wild.
And which will win? The horse,
Of course.*



THE QUILL TOOTHPICKS

(THEY CHANT AND RECALL HAPPIER DAYS)

*We are the sad and melancholy toothpicks
In the restaurants where the table d' hote is served.*

*Always near us is the banal water-bottle,
As we dare say you have frequently observed.*

*Near us, too, the pot—the little pot disgraceful,
Wherein the mustard blackens day by day.*

*Ah! the old dreams of destinies exalted,
And all the splendid parts we hoped to play;*

*Dreams that we also, like our slender sisters,
Should be the quills with which pale poets write.*

*Fruitless all our dreams—the famished table d' hote
Now takes out on us his appetite and spite.*

*Forced are we now to explore the mouldy molars
Of lean and powdered women when they dine;*

*Pick from the teeth of roguish scientists the gristle
Which they have soaked in red and rancid wine.*

*Ofttimes we find in the teeth of Hebrew artists
Small tufts of gooseflesh—dear, O once so dear!*

*Then do we dream of old-time autumn evenings
On the dear old farm so far away from here,*

*When by the door the farmer's wife sat plucking
The feathers from our angel mother's wings.*

*"And when I close my eyes at night
"I see the meadow full of light,
"The farmer tossing up the hay,
"And caroling a joyous lay"*

(As Watson Gilder so divinely sings).

*We are the sad and melancholy toothpicks
In the restaurants where table d' hote is served,*

*Chewed and re-chewed by famished table d' hoters,
As we dare say you have frequently observed.*

VANCE THOMPSON



DOCTOR
W. C. COOPER'S
CLINIC ON
"M'LE NEW
YORK"



Tom McGill

I quote the following from the "Eclectic Medical Gleaner":

"Talk about fin-de-siecle literature—did you ever see 'M'le New York?' It is edited by Vance Thompson, assisted by James Gibbons Huneker. Thomas Fleming edits the art department. Where else should it be published than in New York?"


"Thompson easily out-satans the devil in virulent pessimism, and he festoons this with black-and-blue misogyny and a comprehensive whoop-up of general hell-bentness. His dissatisfaction comprehends all that is interstitial to the banal of socialdom and the cosmic procession. His egotism reaches to Kingdom-Come, but so does his pen. Write? That pen of his is tipped with the odylic essence of the divine energos, and it has the hyperian sweep of a comet. His method, without being Maeterlinckish, contains dubious hints of that maniac's mode. The yawning difference depends upon the literary sanity of Thompson's utterances and their possible intelligibility. He writes with his nates on belles-lettres convention and his feet on the exiguities of rhetoric. He is a literary recidivist—nonpareil and impeccable in his delightfully atrocious outlawry. He can write you into catalepsy, and he does it—does it with a naive, grotesque, and diabolic abandon that tilts His Horned Nibs into an erethism of infernal ecstasy. His style is tensive, vervy, Gallic, fetching, ultramodern.

"Vance Thompson's poetry easily places Walt Whitman's masterpieces in perspectivity. It is epanthrous in the Heleconic flower-garden. Its altruistic edge seems keenest when tempered with diabolism—it will float a maledictory maelstrom on white wings. It is astral and empyrean in cleanness, literary chastity, and lofty mightiness.

"Mr. Huneker, without being less brilliant, is much less an iconoclast and has less seething sulphur in his system. He is frenetic, and rather more inclined to the obfuscatory nebulosity of that devastating fatuity which isolates the Maeterlinck brood. He delights to precipitate you into subpsychic dankness or troll you through a clammy undertone of ideation. Again, he will work a supernal startle on you that nearly nullifies the spiritual cohesiveness of you. His is a master pen indeed, and it has found its place.

"The picture-work is ultraspecifically outre, deriving its motif and spirit from far Oriental art. 'M'le New York' is the Gila monster in the menagerie of letters, but it is decked with a diamond crown."





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