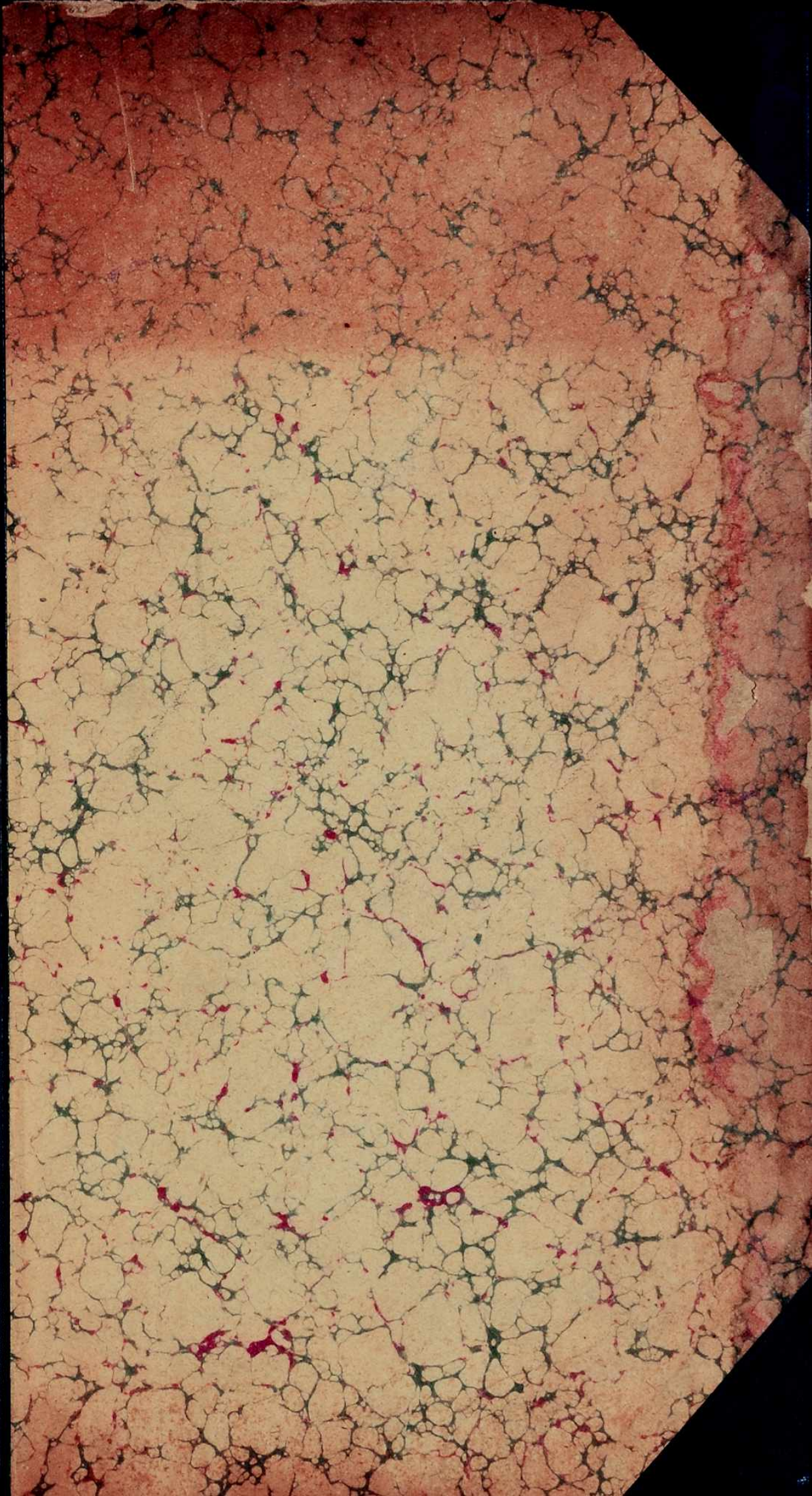


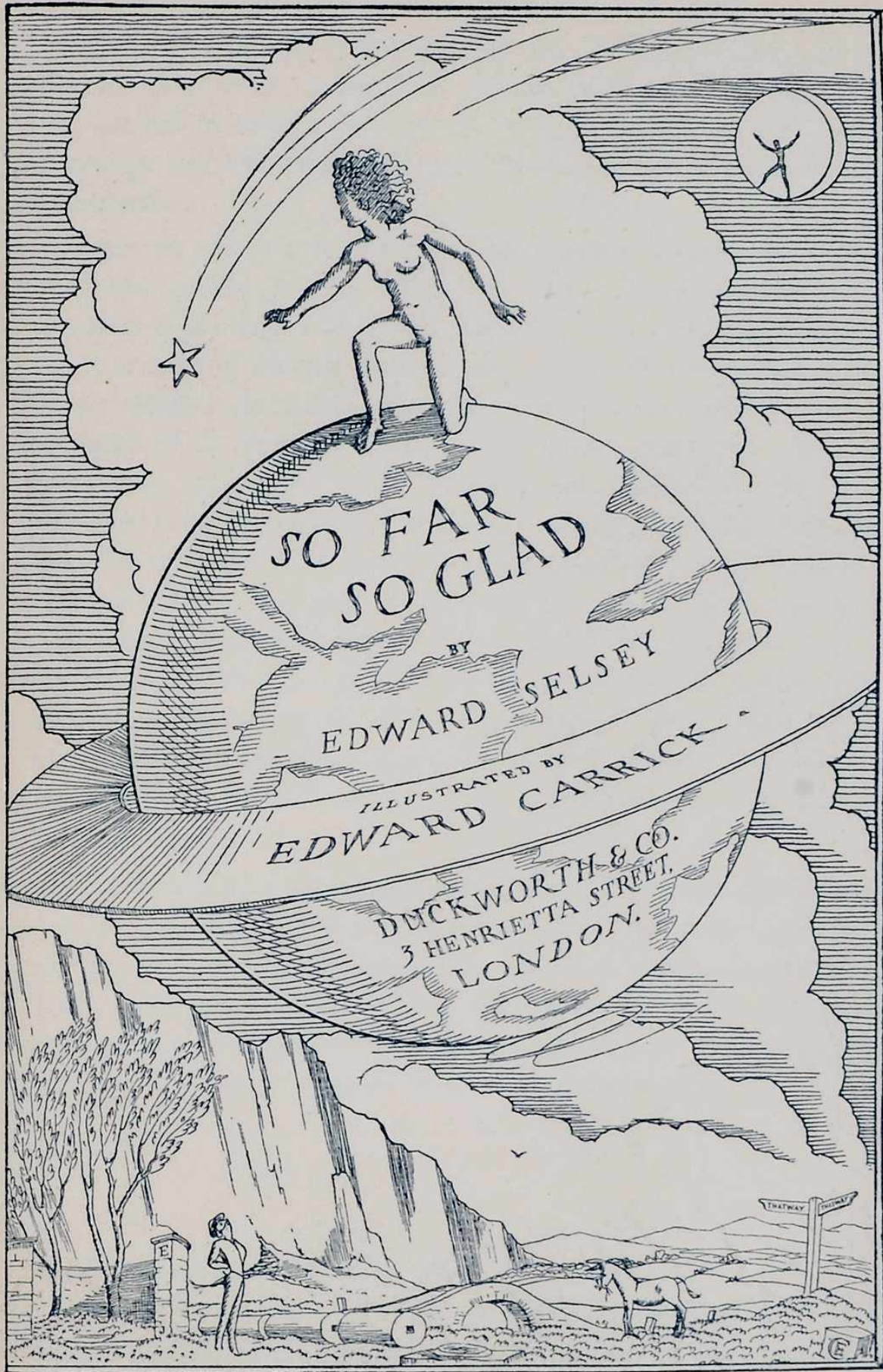
SO FAR SO GLAD -- EDWARD SELSEY



SO FAR
SO GLAD

BY

EDWARD SELSEY



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ILLUSTRATED BY
EDWARD CARRICK

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LONDON.

TRAYWAY
FOOTWAY

E.A.

PREFACE.

IN the month of May of last year there was so brilliant a star in the sky that even those whose nature it is to have their noses bent earthwards could not fail to notice a point unusually bright reflected in every puddle at evening, and this might have constrained them for a moment to look heavenwards.

It was no new star however, but just constant Hesperus, the Abendstern, and equally familiar Phosphorus, known to the ancients as the companion of the dawn—in fact the planet Venus : she is the second of the planets in order of distance from the sun. She revolves in an orbit which has the smallest eccentricity (0.007) in the planetary system, and an inclination to the ecliptic of $3^{\circ} 24'$. Her mean distance from the sun is 67,200,000 miles ; and she is probably not inhabited for the vapour around her is not the right kind of vapour ; and her cloud-laden atmosphere not particularly conducive to anything but uncertainty. The increase in her brightness was due to the fact that last year she was (so I read in the "The Times") nearer to the earth than she had ever been, since since the last time that she got nearest to the earth. So let us take this opportunity of turning away from all the very improbable fiction which has been written during the last twenty years about Mars (not excluding Edgar Rice Burroughs) and abandon ourselves to an altogether impossible fiction about the planet Venus.

The following is a semaphore message which I received only yesterday from that orb, after gazing very long indeed down one of the longest telescopes in one of the highest observatories, until the lens was covered with breath. It came in a series of short, sharp flashes from what I judged to be the northern hemisphere of that planet, unless I was looking at it upside down in which case it would be from the southern hemisphere.

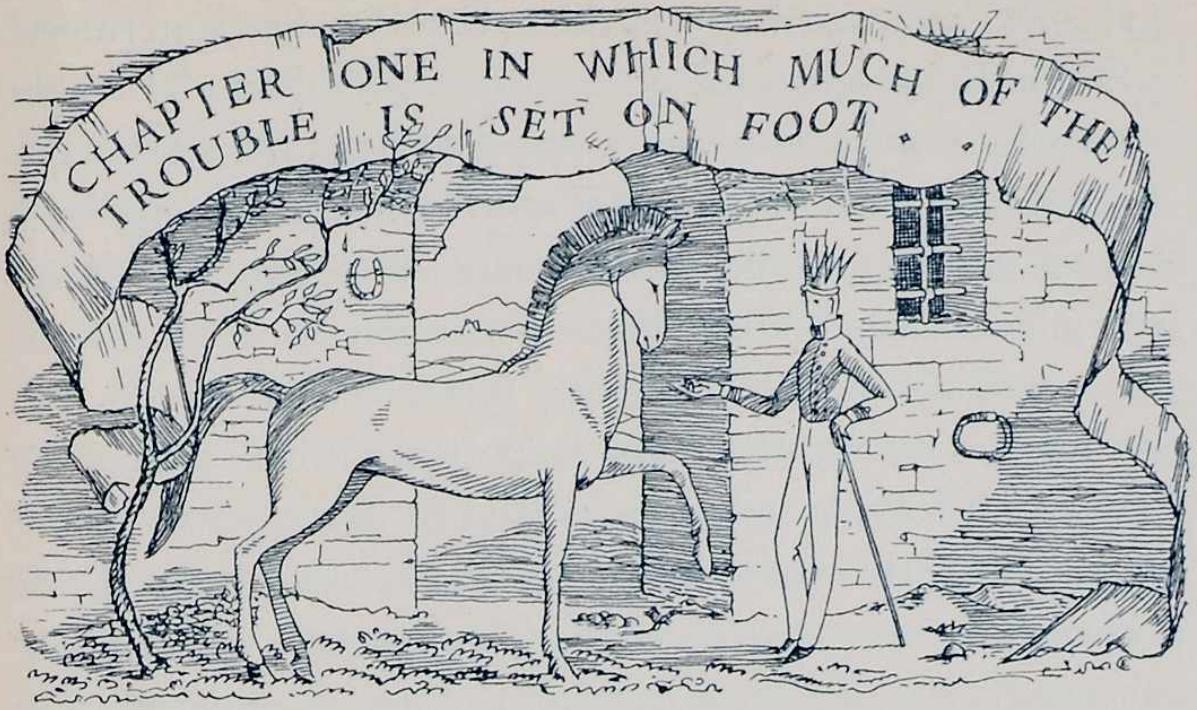
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The message appears to be in code. I give it you for what it is worth. I afterwards noticed that by leaning too heavily I had cracked one of the lenses, for which I had to pay the observatory a very great deal of money.

DEDICATION

TO EMILINE ADELAIDE SUSAN BOCK
I TRUST THIS BOOK WILL COME AS A SHOCK
AND EVEN THOUGH THAT WAS NEVER HER NAME
IT'S AN EXCELLENT PSEUDONYM ALL THE SAME.





THE land was filled with men so gallant that they were constantly jumping into the lion's cage to fetch a glove and women so fastidious that they would scream and faint if they found skin on the surface of their breakfast coffee.

Of this land everybody liked Cyrus the King, because Cyrus liked horses ♦ And Cyrus liked everything to do with horses ♦ He even liked veterinary surgeons ; and as a little boy had once professed that the profession of Veterinary Surgeon was his highest ambition, when other little boys of his age had set their aims no higher than the smuts of an Engine Driver's life or the snows of a Pole Explorer's ♦ But poor Cyrus, who *really* wanted to be a vet, was alas only born to be a prince to begin with and monarch afterwards.

I must not forget to mention that his kingdom was not on this earth, but on the planet Venus.

Venus is a world very much entirely the same as the earth only more so.

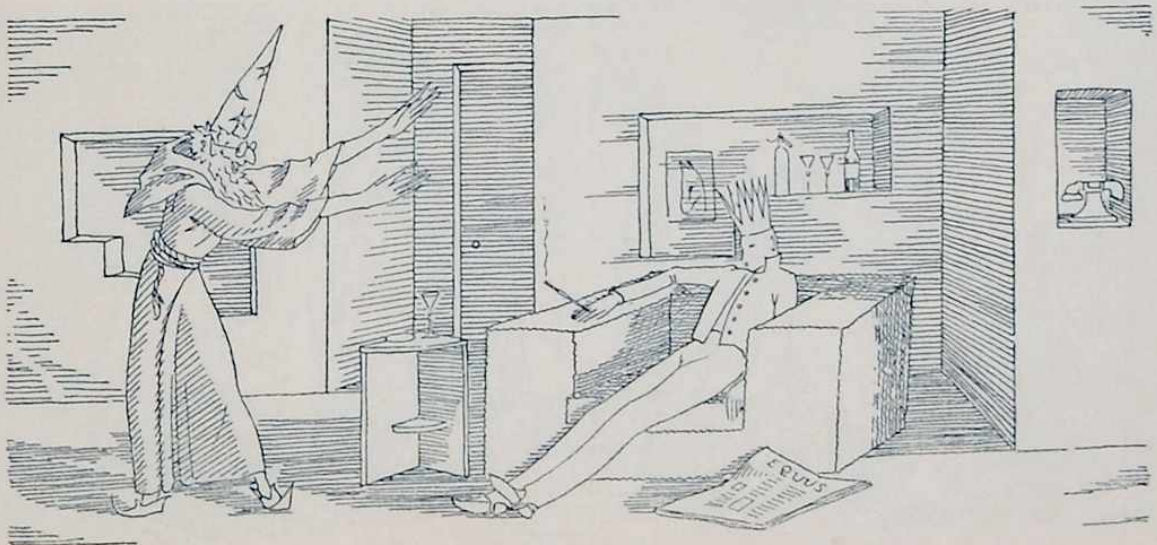
One night when Cyrus, more in bed than winter, lay long

and curled and tucked up and thinly breathing like a greyhound or a thin Saluki in its basket, he dreamed a dream ♦ The night was cool ♦ And Cyrus dreamt a deep and beautiful dream ♦ His dream showed him a large number of white horses, thoroughbred, with almost volcanically sensitive nostrils dilating with every new impression ♦ For they appeared certainly to be as fleet as they were high-spirited ♦ Moreover Cyrus counted no less than two hundred tossing the foam-white manes which crested the swoop of each finely arched neck ♦ And in this exquisite vision, the horses lightly caparisoned in metallic looking trappings of platinum tone, were caracoling in an unbroken circle—turning now left now right to the sounds of soft and unseen music—rearing up when a hidden cymbal clashed high together stretching up to paw with their fore hoofs the air above their heads—and stepping high too, pacing, treading, always in time to the viewless band.

Next morning on waking Cyrus called the first court psycho-analytical specialist to interpret his dream ♦ The expectation was breathless ♦ The psycho-analytical doctor asked the young monarch what was his earliest recollection of a horse: to which Cyrus replied that it was his sister falling off one ♦ The psycho-analyst then explained to Cyrus that of course the dream



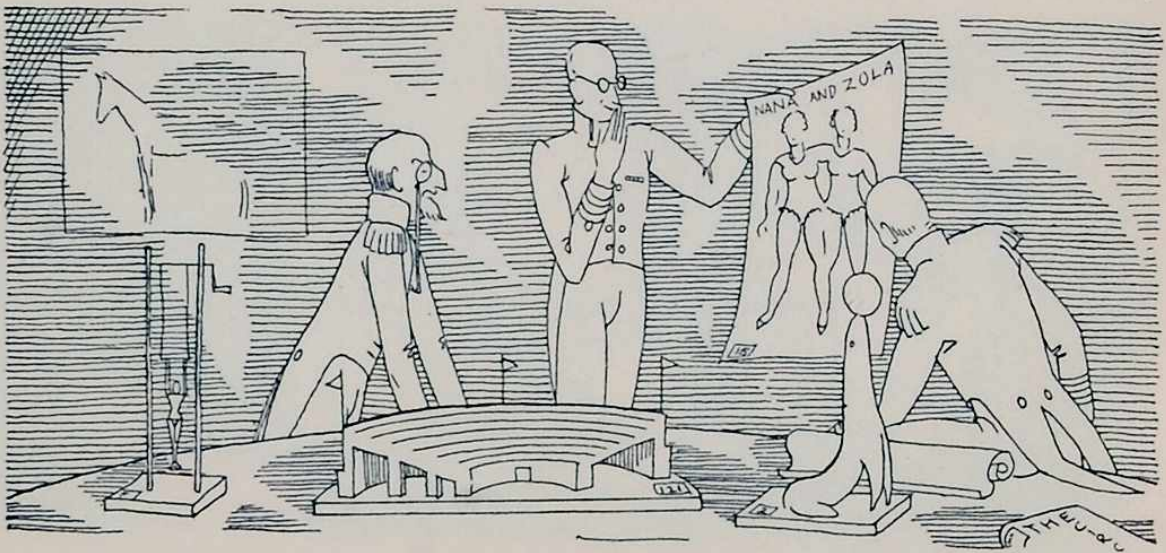
signified clearly that he had a repressed desire to
. . . . with his sister because to dream of horses always
meant *that*, even if one hadn't got a sister because the most
important professor in Venus whose name everybody tried to
remember had proved it conclusively which is what psycho-
analysis really means of course ♦ Yet Cyrus knew all the same
that the psycho-analytical specialist was wrong because he
really didn't want to sleep with his sister because she was
rather skinny really and had a bad cast of the left eye and
didn't like horses either which was unsympathetic and tactless
for the King's only sister ♦ So he summoned a soothsayer which
is an antiquated variety of psycho-analytical specialist which
existed long before psycho-analysis was thought out ♦ And the
soothsayer who was also an astronomer which is the same thing
interpreted his dream to the effect that His Majesty Cyrus liked
horses ♦ And Cyrus decided that this was the really true interpreta-
tion of the dream and he rewarded the soothsayer with seven
bags containing quite a lot of money really ♦ The soothsayer was
pleased to get the money and added free of charge that perhaps
the dream also meant that Cyrus might like to see a circus ♦ But
Cyrus didn't know what a circus was because the queen dowager



his mother hadn't till then allowed any such thing in the kingdom. But she was dead by that time really so it didn't matter so much any more ♦ Besides all this, the country had just been suffering from a serious inflation of its currency which made everybody feel very extravagant and created a sudden new demand for circuses.

AND the Lord Chancellor, who happened to be Dictator (though an easy-going one) got together with other officials of the Court and organized a circus for Cyrus ♦ They got, first of all, lots of side shows because someone had said that that was the most important part ♦ They got twelve three-legged ladies for the side-shows—they were able to do a three-legged ballet and chose Prokovieff, and there were three and a half pairs of Siamese twins you know what they are one of them always gets married without the other one and people grin when they read about it in the tabloid newspapers because it must be difficult and embarrassing too if it wasn't so droll ♦ That made two different sorts of side-shows already ♦ And then they got an elephant ♦ And that was for the main part of the circus.

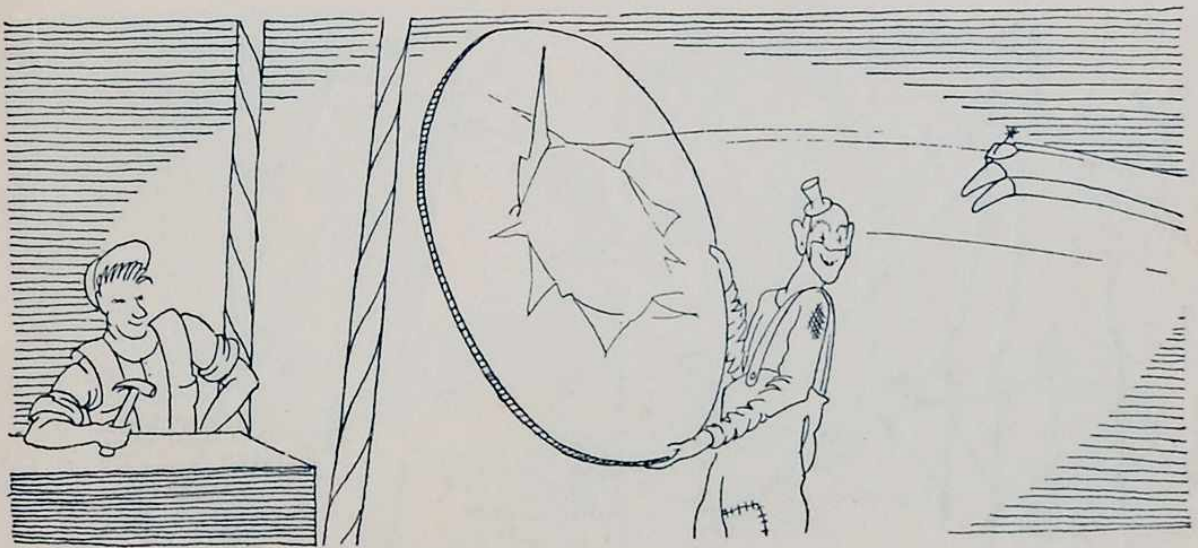
And then they got several performing seals whose chief charm was a lively appreciation of their own tricks even if they



didn't come off very well because they applauded themselves straightway with their two front fins or are they called flippers because they used their hind fins to flip about on or haven't they got any? And they barked a lot and their only other trick was very good when it came off.

And they thought that they might get almost anyone to jump through a hoop so they could leave that until afterwards and if nobody in particular seemed to want to do it one of them could do it themselves it only meant jumping really.

At last arrived the exciting day fixed for the circus and pink crinkly paper was put all around the elephant's tub to make it look even more foolish and fragile, the tub of course because no one wanted the elephant to look fragile even if it could have looked anything but elephantine but at any rate lots of people at the dress rehearsal said it was cunning and so it hardly mattered so much not having any lions especially since they had added three more side shows, a palmist with a Lenglen bandeau, a booth where for twenty pfennig a throw one might hit down little celluloid Jews with small rubber swastikas, and a thing called "Over the Falls" the erection and installation of which was paid for by the Corporation of High Class Milliners to



oblige ladies to buy their high class fancy goods which was coercion perhaps more than anything else because the ladies simply had to spend some more on undergarments if they wanted to go "Over the Falls" a second time and that would be rather fun.

The seals had said that they needed tobacco jars for their one really good trick; but since there was prohibition of smoking all over Venus, they were only given Rye Whiskey bottles with which to perform; this they hated; but at last some bottles labelled White Rock were discovered and the seals consented to perform with these it having been explained to them that it was a friend of theirs called Mr. Scwhswppses who fabricated the White Rock ♦ You see the seals were *au fond* very good natured and obliging and much less slippery than they looked from the five shilling seats which cost only nine dollars a seat because nothing had to be more expensive than one could help even if it really cost more.

The dress rehearsal was on the evening before the next day so everybody was very excited.

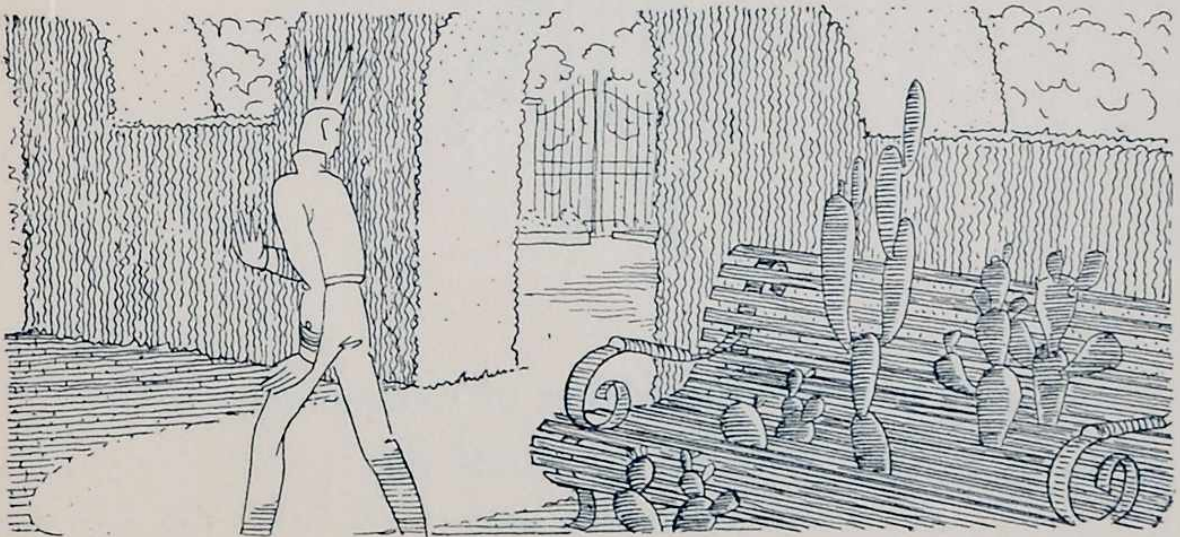
And the next day was fine fortunately and everybody said it was because they had all brought their umbrellas because if one brings



one's umbrella it never rains which I don't believe because I'm sure I remember seeing umbrellas in the rain however it was a good thing it didn't rain because most of the circus wasn't covered in at all.

Now, imagine that it is now already the morning of the day fixed for the circus ♦ Ah, would we were with Cyrus walking in the pleasant garden of his palace! The sky has a cathedral solemnity this day ♦ The hibiscus flowers are outvying in the sweetness of their scent the tuberoses which is rare because a hibiscus does not smell at all and—well—tuberoses do ♦ But that makes it all the more delicious and exciting and the blues of every bell-like blossom are bright with prismatic glintings through the unsunsucked dew ♦ Each of the four winds has brought a rainbow, resemblant to those iron hoops which are in parks to discourage one from walking on to the grass—See how the four rainbows encompass with sentinel severity each of the four quarters of the sky! Between them the heaven bears on its lower turquoise slopes a light harmonious wrack of fleecy clouds as though it were the background of a picture by Giovanni Bellini ♦ “Just the day for a circus,” says the blue lupin to a bluer larkspur, scarcely realizing the full truth of what she says.

Now Cyrus is nearly in the rosegarden wishing that his late



mother had confined her craziness to the paving and not chosen to plant healthy cactuses under the open-wrought iron benches so that one cannot sit down ♦ And Cyrus pauses and mutters to one of his attendants : “ By Gad, shouldn't somebody have asked the Prince and Princess Frigidaire for this afternoon! Didn't I say that I wanted all the neighbours killed with one stone ? ”

“ Well sire,” answered the Master of Ceremonies, “ if runners be sent, there may yet be time for the Princess to be borne hither in a quick litter.”

“ Now, á propos, if we send a messenger, tell him not to mention birth or babies in that house—it's a sore point with them ♦ The Princess is still without a son.”

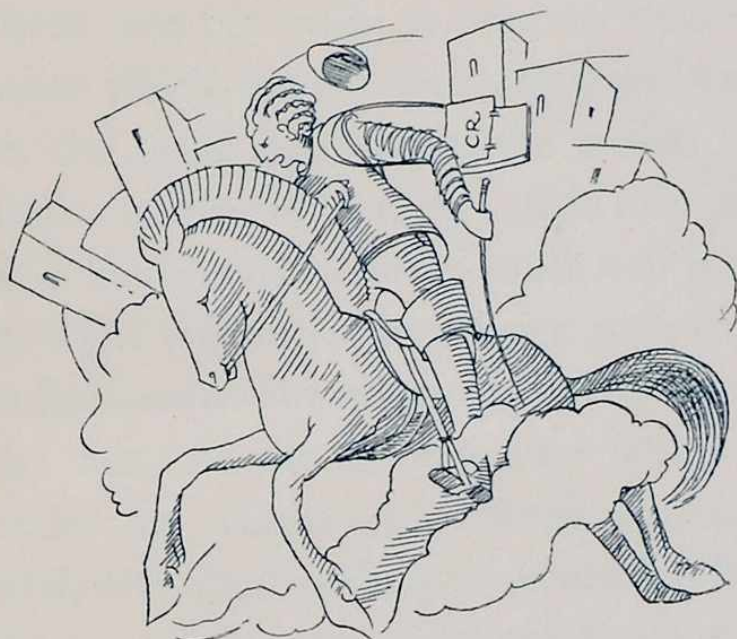
“ Sire,” cooed the Master of Ceremonies, “ who could know better than I how much the Princess Frigidaire and her husband have taken this affliction to heart ? ”

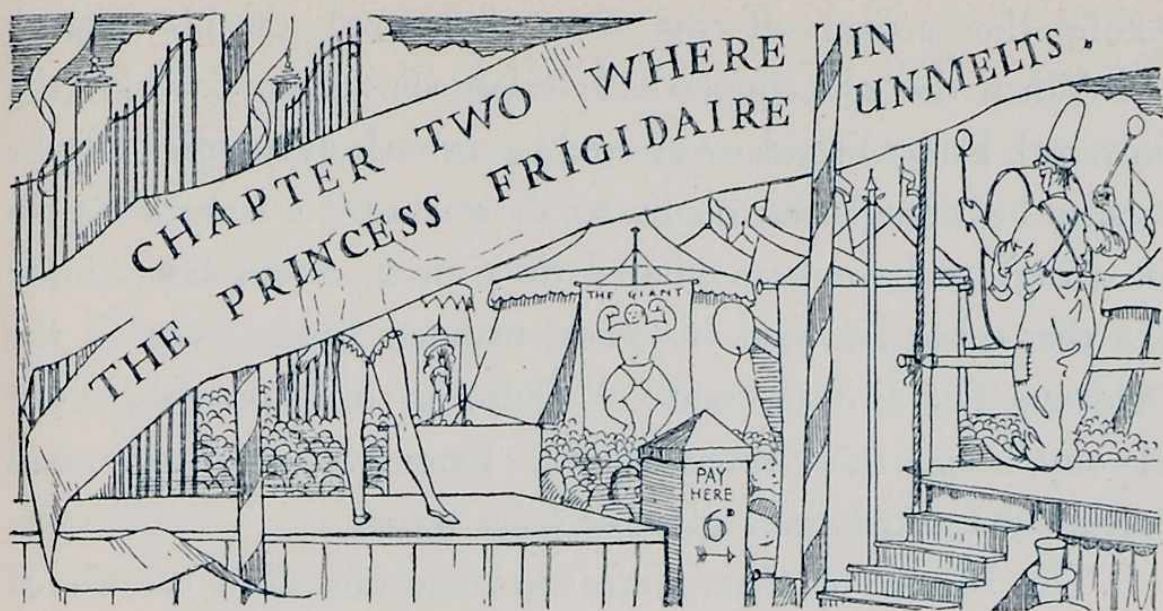


For it was the Master of Ceremonies
who had composed this
celebrated song :

*“ Alas the Princess Frigidaire
Is waiting, waiting for an heir.
The Princely household is forlorn
for seven daughters have been born.
Her fiftieth year has now begun
and still the Princess has no son.”*

“ Anyway send a messenger quick,” cried Cyrus, “ I should like the old couple to be given a treat.”





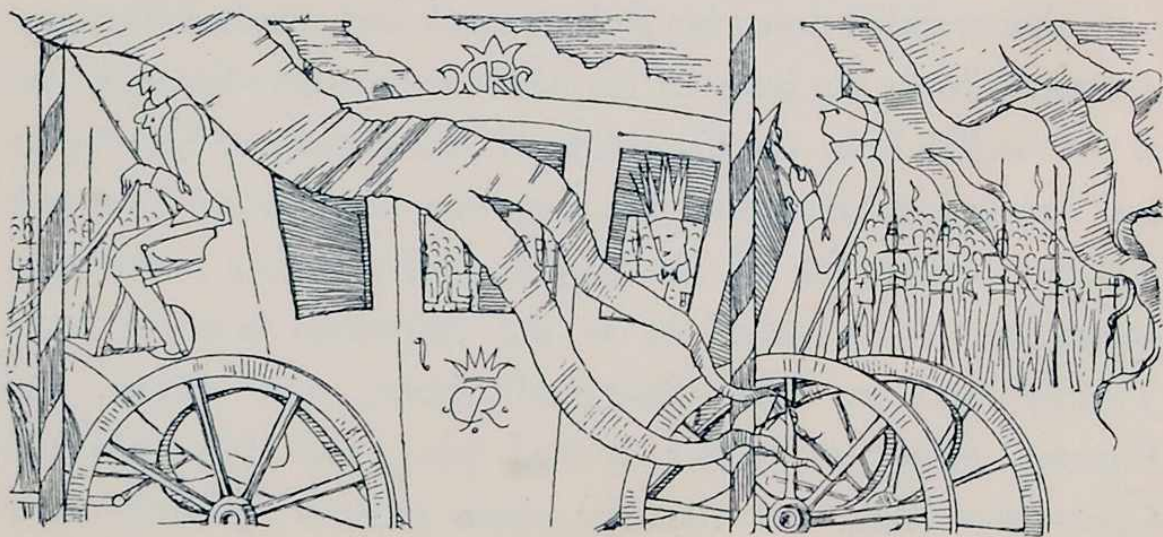
THE circus was not ready to start by three o'clock that afternoon which was the time announced on the posters posted upon the main gate ♦ There the crowds were sure to wait until they were tired of waiting ; then they would wander round to go in by the side entrances which will have been open all the while ♦ The reasons for retardment were several ♦ Firstly the elephant had proved himself during the dress rehearsal too heavy for his tub ♦ At the eleventh hour it had cracked and collapsed under his weight ♦ The bereft elephant had been weeping bitterly ever since ; nothing could comfort him, and three men with three mops were kept busy wiping up the elephantine tears that trickled down his forlorn trunk and splashed like large diamonds from the ivory of his white twin tusks ♦ Secondly and at the twelfth hour the Consolidated Association of Kidnappers and Bootleggers announced that they were not able to cope with enough tobacco for all the crowds, and therefore prohibition agents had to be called in at the thirteenth hour to help. Thirdly and at the fourteenth hour, the Prince and Princess Frigidaire hadn't arrived yet ; and His Majesty, Cyrus the King, said that the circus mustn't possibly start

before the arrival of the most honoured of his guests.

When the old couple had at last shown up, H.S.H. the thirteenth Prince Frigidaire greeted Cyrus rather grumpily, maybe because he thought he ought to show that it was *infra dig* (in for a dig) to have been invited to a circus at the last minute like that ♦ He had had his good manners burnt away in the Soudan ♦ The Princess said: "Quite an occasion this, Your Majesty," and took three aspirins from a reticulously small ridicule and asked for a glass of fishy water.

The Master of Ceremonies then murmured in the ear of Cyrus the King that the barouches were waiting drawn up beneath the long peristyle of the porch ♦ Already the population would be pullulating from the palace gates all along the promenade up which the royal procession was due to pass on its way to the new Stadium which had tentatively been called "Panopticon" to please the prison people who could not participate.

When the pullulating populace beheld Cyrus sitting so nobly—so truly one of nature's guardsmen in the first barouche, they began to ululate with loyalty and affection ♦ Now Cyrus's sister, who sat in the second carriage, imagined that she was



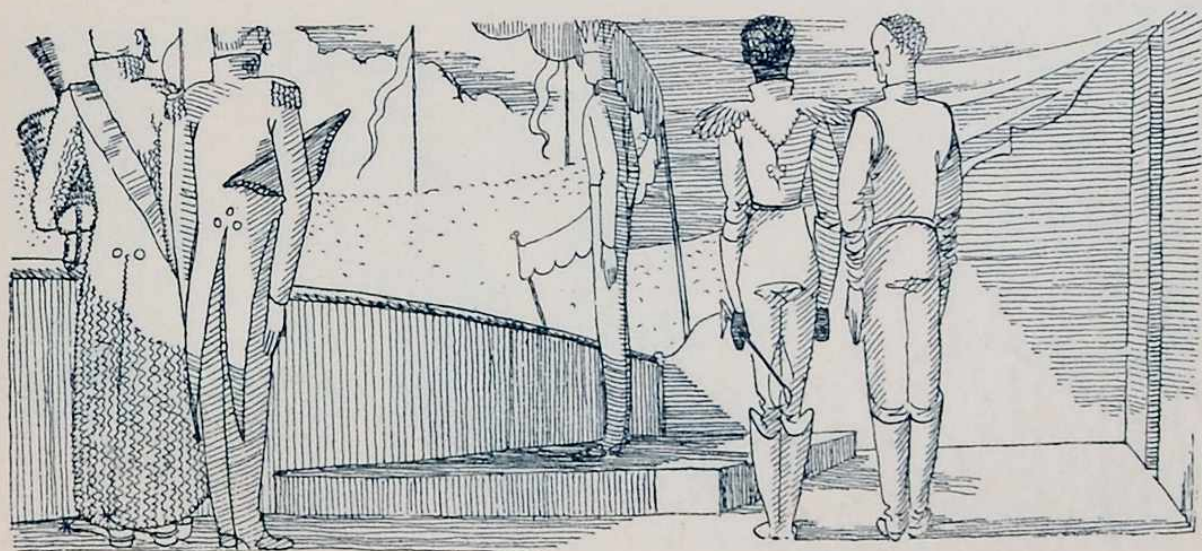
one of nature's guardswomen; though she managed merely to give the impression of one of culture's schoolma'ams ♦ She had a way of squinting down her long, insouciant nose that was all her own—the way and the nose all her own ♦ It was currently supposed that she had been born with a silver lorgnette in her mouth.

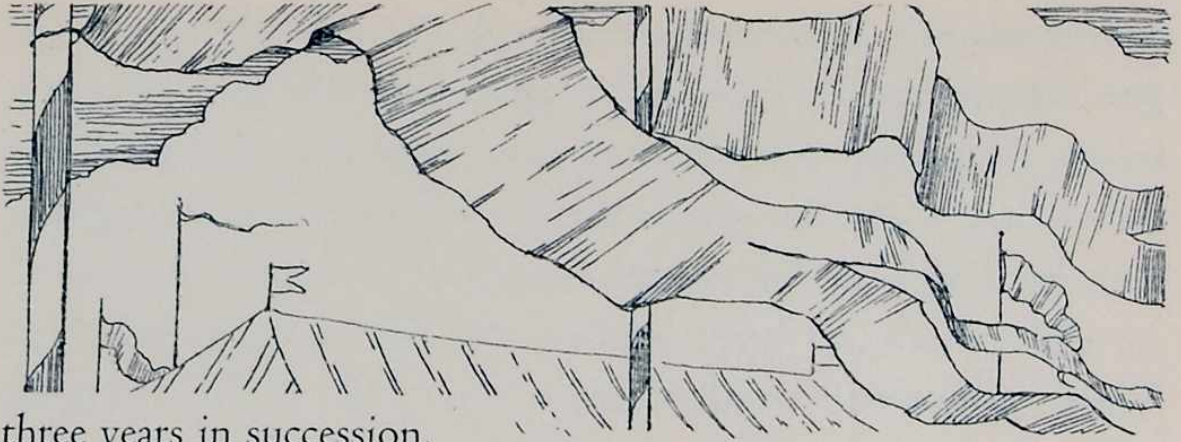
The route had been decorated for eight furlongs (which in Venus is one mile) with window-boxes full of green spitunia and orange nasturtiums; but Cyrus' sister was not at all appreciative ♦ She merely cast aspersions at the nasturtiums ♦ All her life she had been casting them.

In the Stadium the multitude stood up as one man stands up and shouted: "Ra, ra and again ra!"

"Very satisfactory loyalty," murmured the Master of Ceremonies to the General di Bussoliera, the Lord Chancellor.

The General di Bussoliera, as the people of that part of the planet seldom had a chance to forget, held besides the post of Lord Chancellor the position of Dictator; yet he owed the greater part of his fame abroad to the still greater notoriety of his son, Reginaldo di Bussoliera, aged sixteen who had covered his years of puberty with observation and obliquity as the first inter-continental lecturer to hold nonstop loquacity championship for





three years in succession.

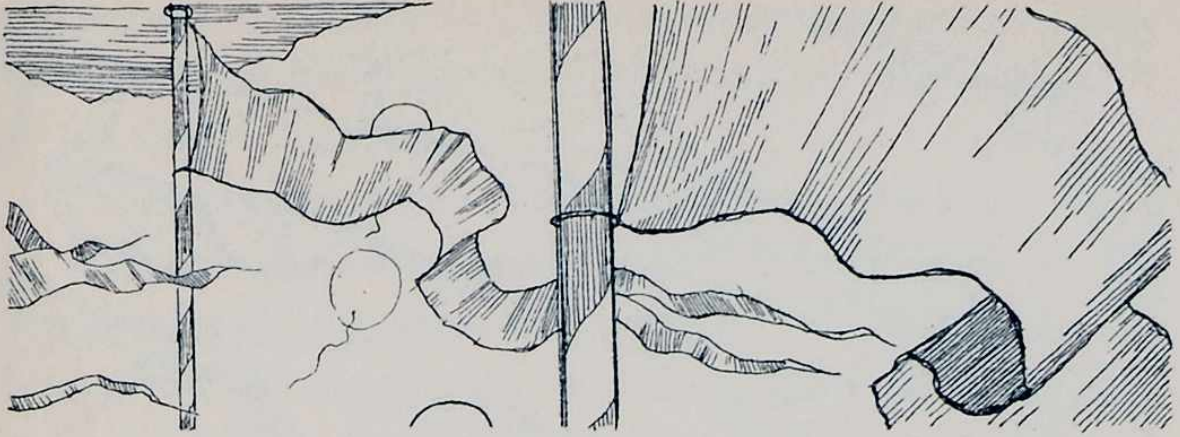
“ I can only see six horses in the whole bl—dy place ! ”
muttered Cyrus fiercely under his breath. And he smiled an
abstract but a winning smile.

A numerous but distant group of brass bands to the north
west of the arena now struck up a dreary but time-honoured
anthem of which the refrain was—

*“ God rest the late Queen Mother
We’ll never get another.
God rest her Royal bones.”*

Cyrus with a flial and well timed click of his spurs drew
himself to attention, in which exemplary but strained position





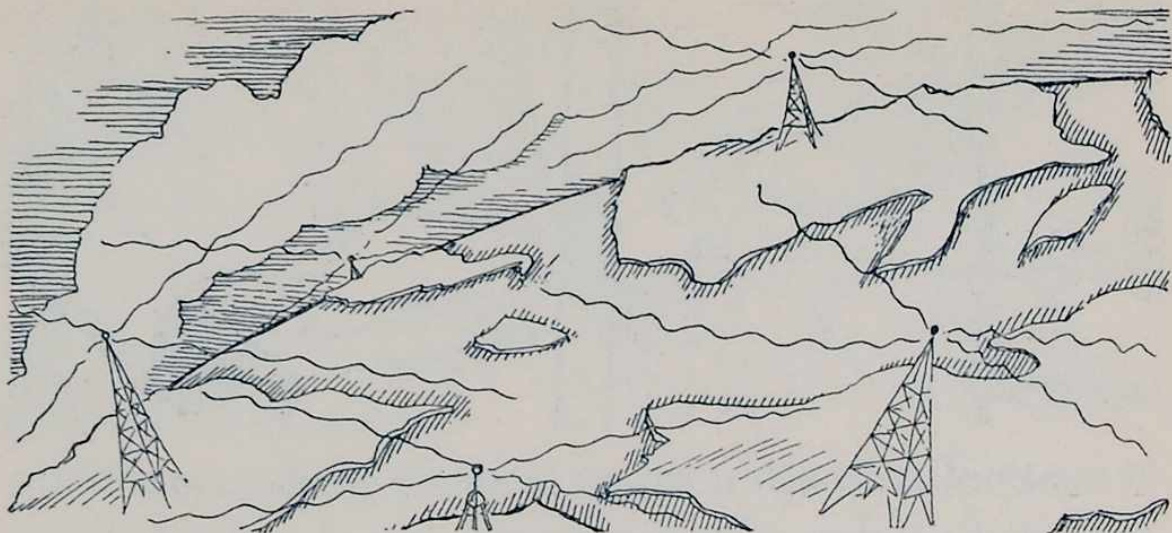
he remained as though overcome by timely petrification until the close of the anthem ♦ He then saluted, bowed and smiled.

In the silence that followed one could hear the elephant trumpeting off stage ♦ “What’s eating *him*?” reflected the masses.

“Sire,” said the stern Lord Chancellor with honest pride “you stand now indeed in close communion with a loyal people.”

“And a scurvy looking lot of rats, I should say!” grunted the impatient monarch with the mildest and most benign expression expanding upon his popular countenance ♦ “What’s that god-confounded thing dangling here just in front of my nose?” he snorted in a savage but clear undertone to the Master of Ceremonies ♦ “I have bumped my forehead against the lousy thing twice already.”

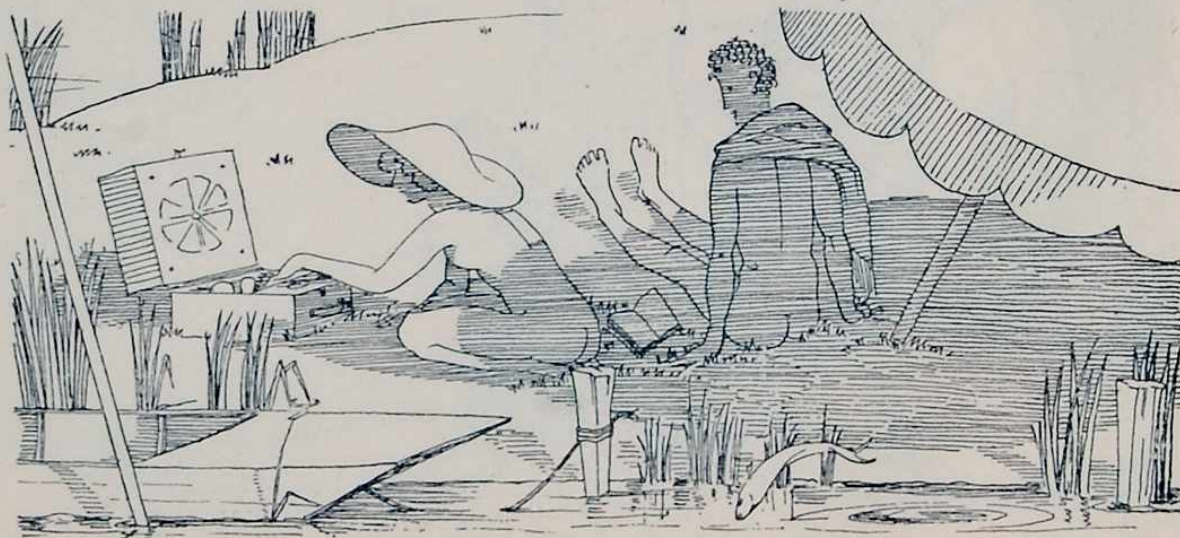




“It is a microphone,” replied General di Bussoliera, the Lord Chancellor ♦ “Your Majesty is in communion by wireless with the whole nation ♦ Would not Your Majesty like now to express a few well chosen words of greeting to his joyous and fortunate subjects.”

“Are you sh-sh-sh-sure th-that it is expected of me?” stuttered Cyrus with a look of dark alarm ruffling his frank and childlike gaze ♦ “I am sure I shall st-st-st—terribly if I have to speech—”

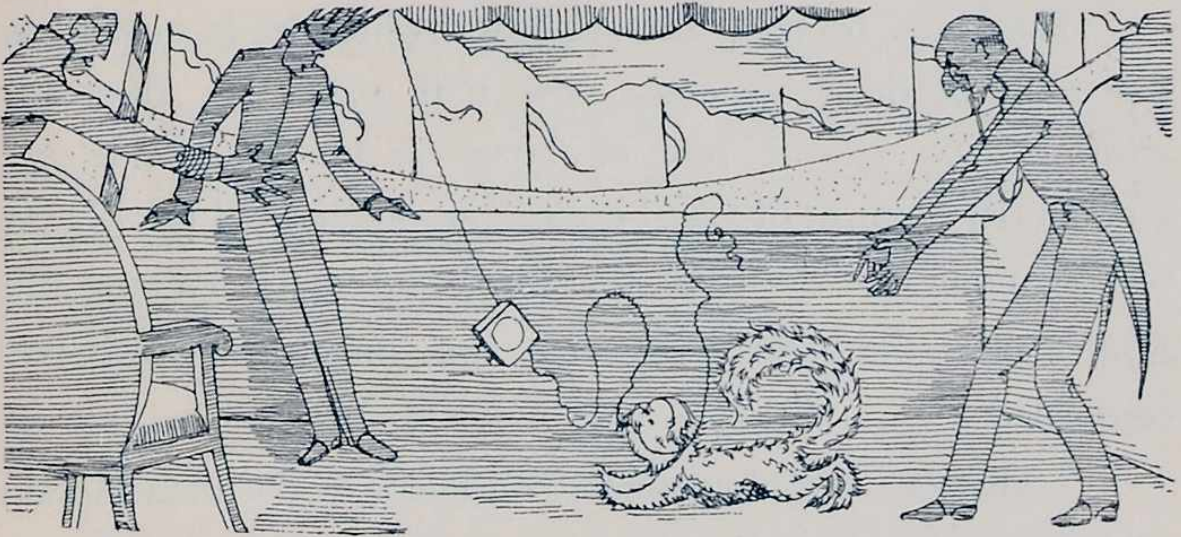
“But Majesty, you need not move or raise your voice,” admonished the General di Bussoliera, the Dictator, with a ‘meaning’ twitch of the muscles of his left cheek ♦ “Thanks to the wonderful progress of the scientific arts,” he explained, “the



whole nation has all this time been fortunate enough to be listening to even the slightest gasp of their Sovereign's august breath."

"Ouch!" said Cyrus.

Suddenly one of the Princess Frigidaire's pekineses, unable to stand the suspense any longer relieved the strain of the situation by leaping upon the puce plush draping of the royal box and biting right through the coils by which the microphone was suspended ♦ Amazing agility and trenchancy for one so obviously pampered! The emasculated microphone fell with a rattle on to the floor-boards of the royal box.



"Somebody give that dog a bone with my thanks," said Cyrus easing the collar of his official uniform with a visibly trembling hand.

"Who are those young females in the next but one box there, blushing and swaying like full blown peonies?" asks Cyrus after a searching look at the young women in question.

"They are my daughters," answers the Prince Frigidaire.

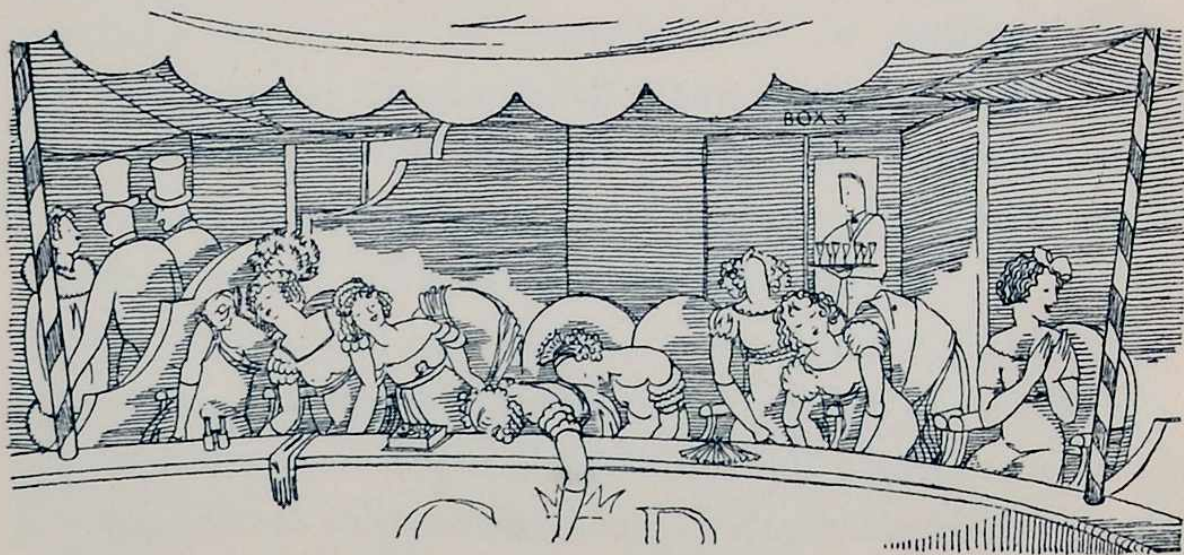
"Since nothing has so far happened in the arena," snorts the Princess Frigidaire, "His Majesty must permit me to withdraw and inspect the side-shows" ♦ She steps stiffly to the door of the creaky royal box and disappears with the astonishment

of all present, but without the company of a single lady in waiting.

Cyrus unconcerned perhaps even relieved by the departure of the Princess raises his opera glasses and takes a good long look at her eight blooming daughters in the neighbouring box. Conscious of the royal gaze, the eldest two of these young noble women faint and the next five swoon ♦ But the youngest who is only seventeen years old claps her hands and laughs—she immediately suffers, for her rash irreticence, partial suffocation in the flounces of her indignant sisters.

The King, realizing the confusion which he is causing in the ranks of those maidens, now with more tact turns his scrutiny away to the row of boxes on his other side and after a brief moment of visual exploration inquires of the Master of Ceremonies: “Who is the faded and moist looking old gentleman at the back of the—one, two, three, four—fifth box to our left?”

“That is a ruined commercial magnate, a thwarted captain of industry, Sire,” replies the Master of Ceremonies ♦ “It was for him, Sire, that I wrote that lament of which the refrain is:

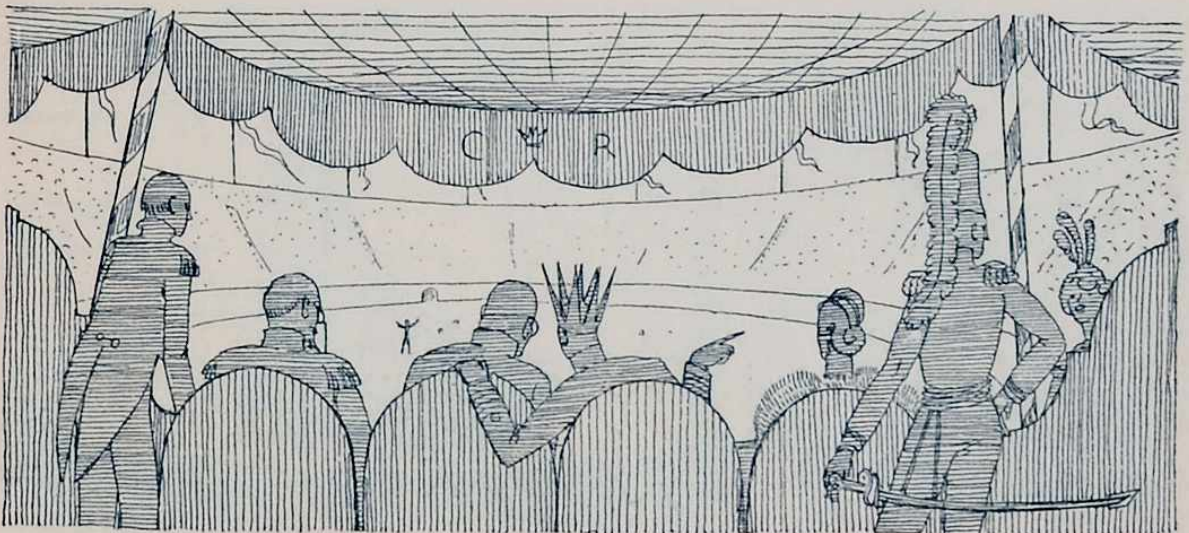


*“In my youth said the sage
with sighing and moans
I had five thousand rubber bands
nine telephones,
and a number of files
to make ‘whoopee’ and fun.
But now they have disappeared,
all, everyone!”*

“Poor old man,” sighs Cyrus sympathetically lowering his opera glasses ♦ “Can nothing be done for him?”

“Nothing, Sire, he is too old now to recover financial prestige ♦ But in any case he never was a man who knew how to handle his fellow humans” ♦ The Master of Ceremonies went on with the melancholy refrain, chanting:

*“Who took my green pencil
which had the sharp point?
Say boys you forget
I’m the boss of this joint!”*



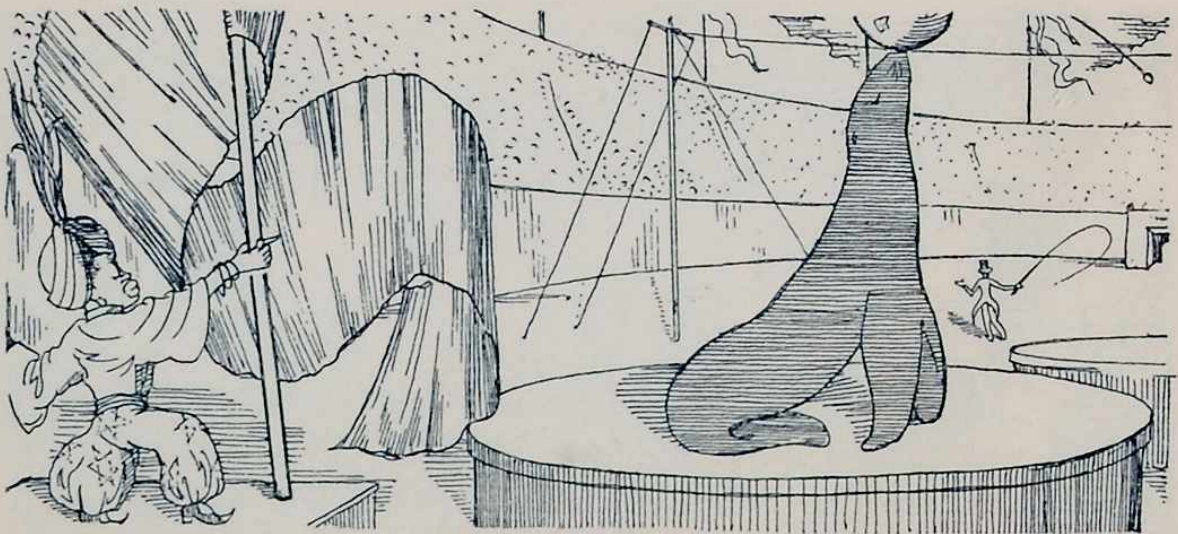
*I've been cheated and slighted
and robbed by you all ;
I feel like poor Humpty
soon after his fall."*

" Good ♦ You should have been Poet Laureate ! " cried Cyrus, slapping him with bonhomie across the shoulder blades.

At which moment a sound like whooping-cough at large arrests the attention of the whole multitude and the seals flounder into the arena ♦ The circus has begun.

Cones, they balance as well as white-rock bottles ♦ It is all very exciting ♦ Children say, " Why do they do that, Mummy ? " And Mummies reply, " Because it is so difficult, darling." Children ask, " Could I do that, Mummy ? " Mummies answer, " I shouldn't try, darling " ♦ Children inquire, " Why not, Mummy ? " Mothers explain, " Because you might break the bottles and make a mess, darling " ♦ Children insist, " But look there's a seal who broke a bottle too, just then " ♦ Mothers capitulate with, " Yes darling ♦ Hush ! "

Suddenly one of the female seals drops three billiard balls which she has been balancing on a cylinder on a cone on her nose, and gives birth to three young.



“ Ah, a quick litter ! ” exclaims the Master of Ceremonies. —Taking a megaphone the Master of Ceremonies proclaims to the seated multitude : “ The seats have all gone up fifteen cents in price.”

“ Oh yeah ! ” answers the assembled hosts.

Two of the male seals then commence to bark ♦ They both begin to strut in a manner more conceited than ever ♦ The seal tamer says, “ Shuh ! ” but they pay no heed.

“ Tell me,” whispered Cyrus who did not appear to be paying any attention to the public clamour, “ what,” he whispered absent-mindedly in the ear of the Master of Ceremonies, “ are those five men down there doing with those things which look like machine guns ? ”

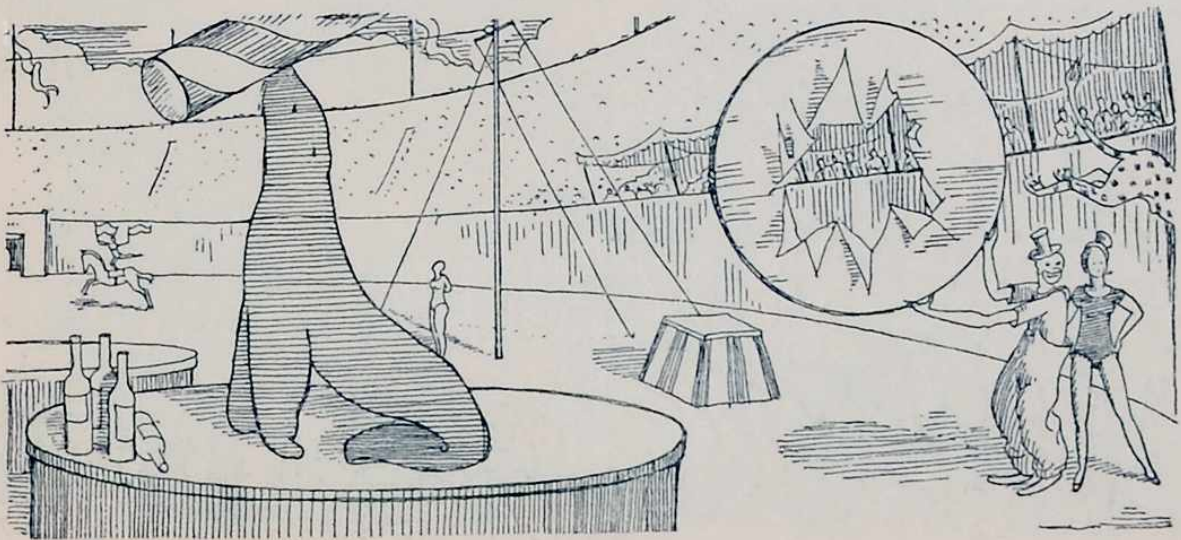
“ Sire, they are shooting the moment.”

“ Really,” sighs Cyrus ponderously, “ what a moment to choose ! ”

It was really.

“ Are they criminals ? ” continued Cyrus in the same shy undertone, “ anarchists or is it merely Sabotage ? ”

“ They are shooting it with a talkie-movie-tone camera,” explained the Master of Ceremonies.



"Then I supposed right," sighed Cyrus + "They are criminals."

The seals were now all barking, but the multitude barked louder and evidently had learnt no economy of gesture.

The uproar between the seals and the people was getting to such a pitch that even Cyrus began to notice it seriously.

"Hadn't something better be arranged?" he commented.

"How about getting a crooner to come and croon to them," suggested the Lord Chancellor.

"But we haven't got a crooner," said the Master of Ceremonies.

The Lord Chancellor now arose, made and received the Fascist salute, then taking the megaphone politely out of the hand of the Master of Ceremonies, addressed the multitude thus:

"Is there anyone in the audience who is a crooner?"

Four men and a Phillipino stood up, holding up their hands: the Phillipino held up his wife.

"Well + Draw lots quickly," cried the Lord Chancellor, "and thus decide which of you shall have the right to croon first."

"Above all," shouted the Master of Ceremonies, "don't you all croon at once."



“ But we none of us want to croon,” said all five in perfect unison.

“ Come, come ! ” cried out the Lord Chancellor, “ I thought all crooners always wanted to croon.”

Three of them sat down.

“ We refuse to,” unisoned the remaining two.

“ What are your names ? ” said the Lord Chancellor (whose own name was General di Bussoliera, as you must not forget).

“ What’s the good of that ? ”

“ What’s the good of that ? ” they both scoffed in the

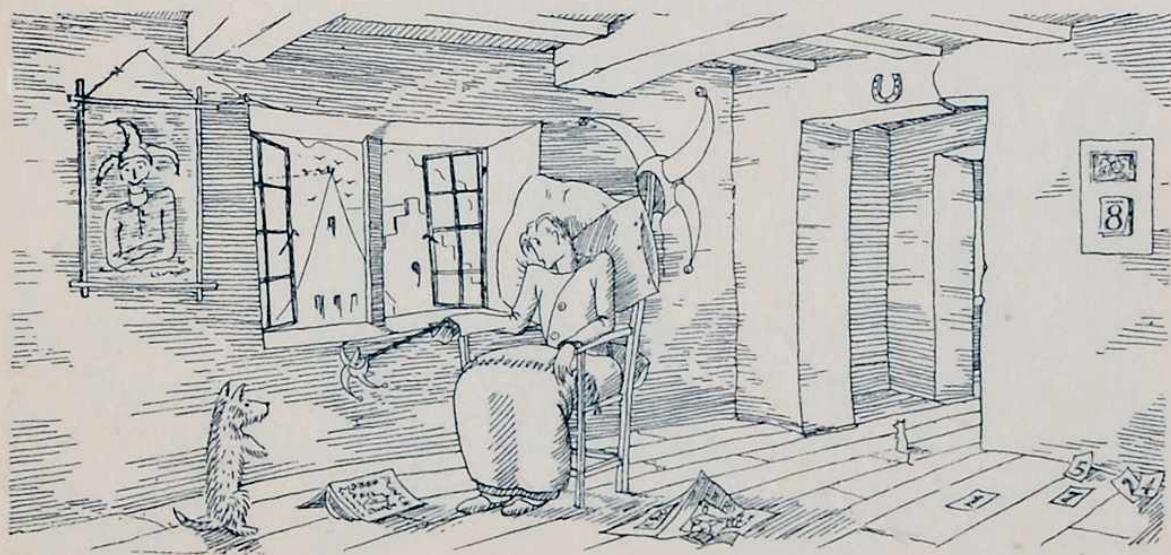
same absolute unison as before ♦ “ What’s the good of asking that ? We aren’t going to croon.” ♦ “ What’s the good of asking that ? We aren’t going to croon.”

“ They must be Rosenkranz and Guildenstern,” said the Master of Ceremonies with a cough, “ Perhaps the Fillipino will croon.”

“ No sir,” said the Fillipino’s wife.

“ Have you no Court Jester ? ” grunted the Prince Frigidaire.

“ Hush,” murmured the Master of Ceremonies in the Prince’s ear ♦ “ That is a sore point with His Majesty ♦ The last



jester died of melancholia two months ago."

At last somebody believed that the husband of one of the Siamese Twins was a crooner.

A menial was dispatched to fetch him.

"By the way, you might have a look for the Princess Frigidaire 'ong passong' the side-shows," said the old Prince over his shoulder to the menial.

"Yes, Your Highness," replied the menial with a vanish.

"Prince," said Cyrus, "à propos of your family, your youngest daughter in the box over there is quite young, isn't she?"

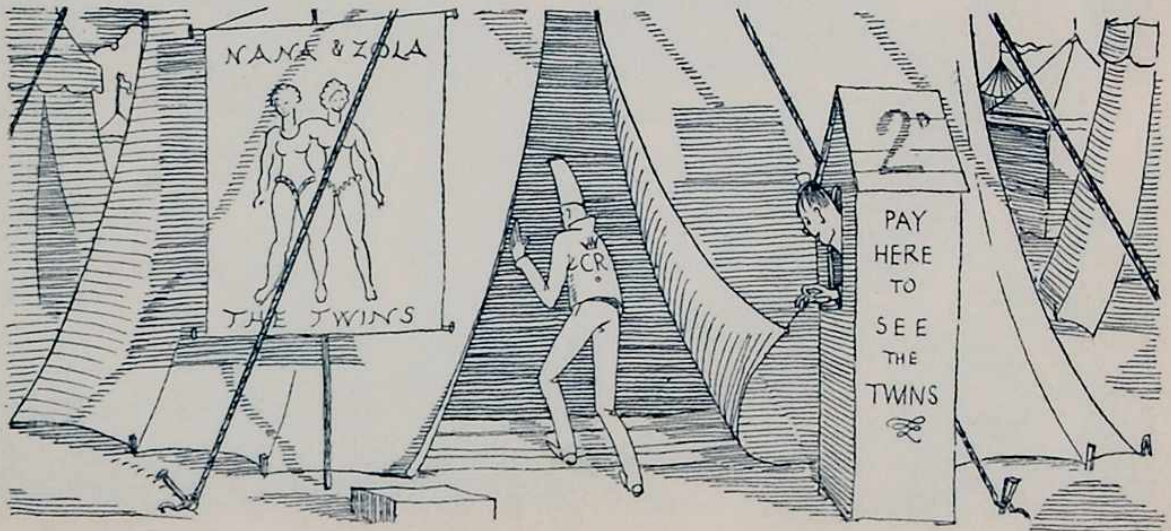
"Yes," said the old Prince, knowing his queue (pardon me, 'cue') "and marriageable."

"Why is her mouth three cornered?" asked Cyrus, naïvely.

"Because she has a dual personality," answered the father. "She prefers men of about forty to boys of her own age."

"I am thirty-two years old," said Cyrus, "and was born besides, a whole week earlier than I should have been."

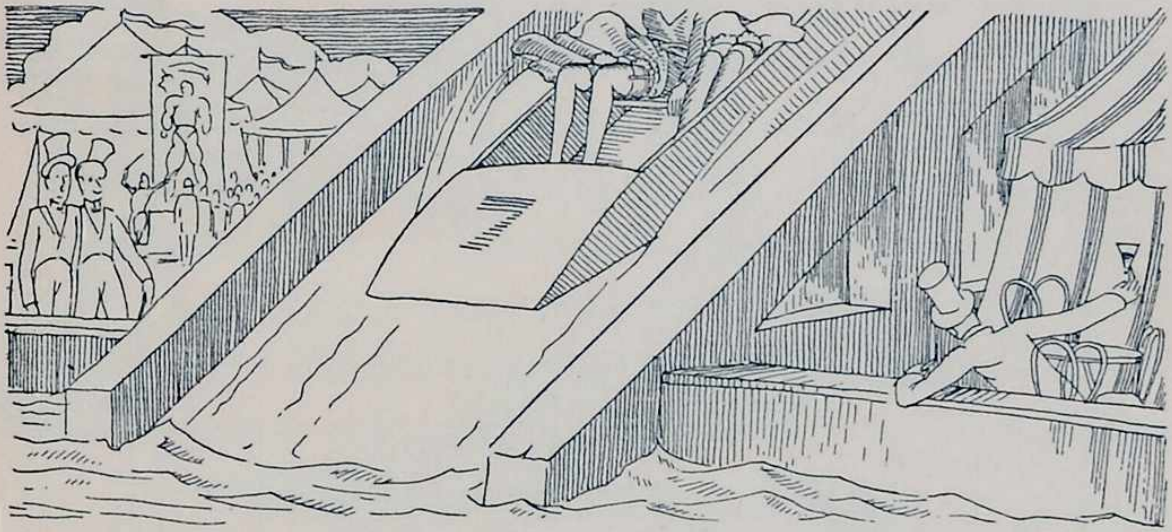
"Oh! my daughter prefers men of about thirty," continued the Prince Frigidaire "Her name is Aminta, and she



prefers men who were born a week too early."

"She doesn't seem so bashful as her eldest sisters," said Cyrus, scrutinizing once more the box in which these young women were swaying hither and thither with the strain of all wishing to appear debutantes at once.

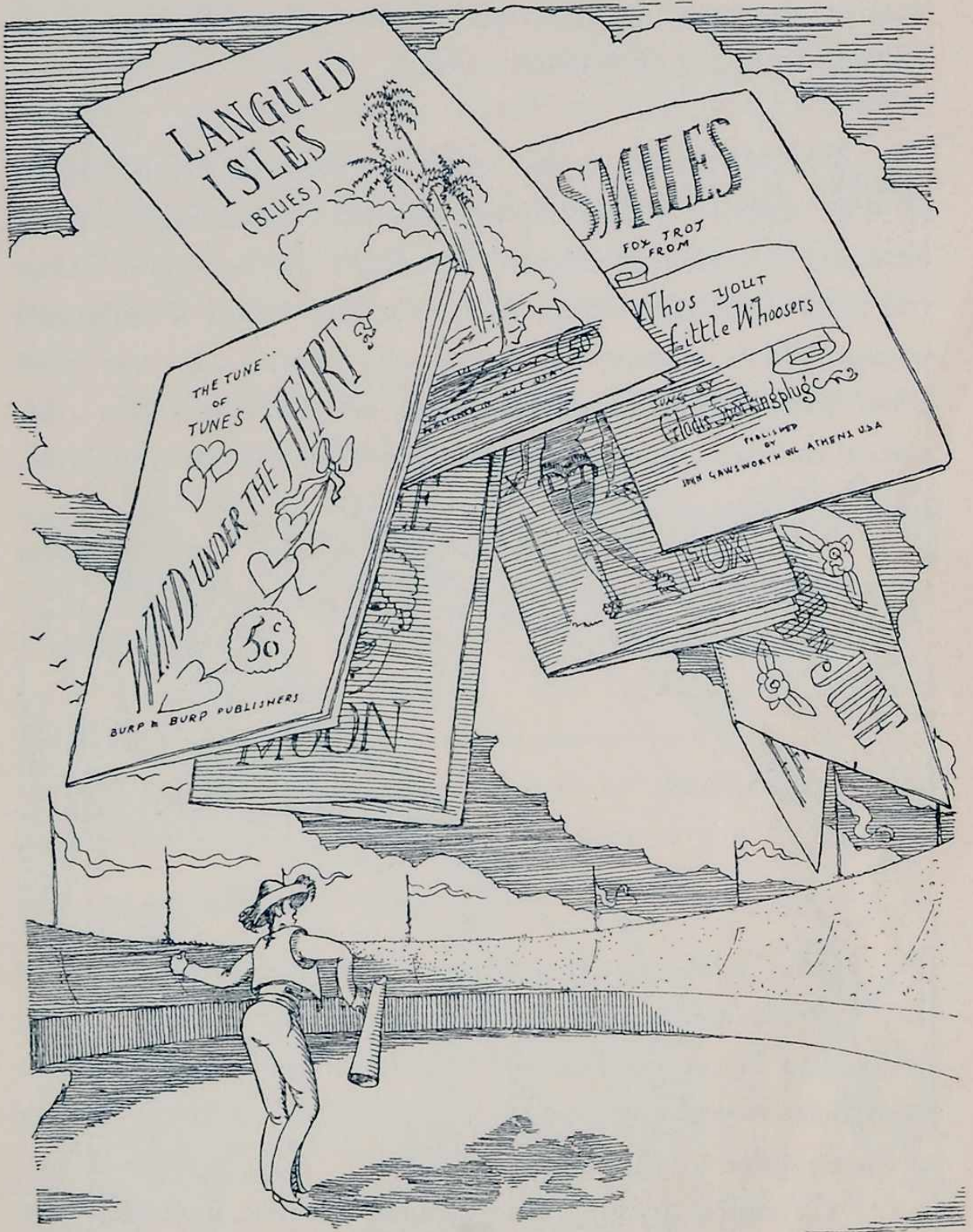
MEANWHILE at this very, very moment and not so far away in a dimly lighted tent the Princess Frigidaire was changing her point of view. When down she had gone "Over the Falls" for the second time, she had found a fair-haired young Adonis waiting for her at the bottom. It was none other than Reginaldo di Bussoliera, the Dictator's son. He was at this very moment showing her all the other side-shows.



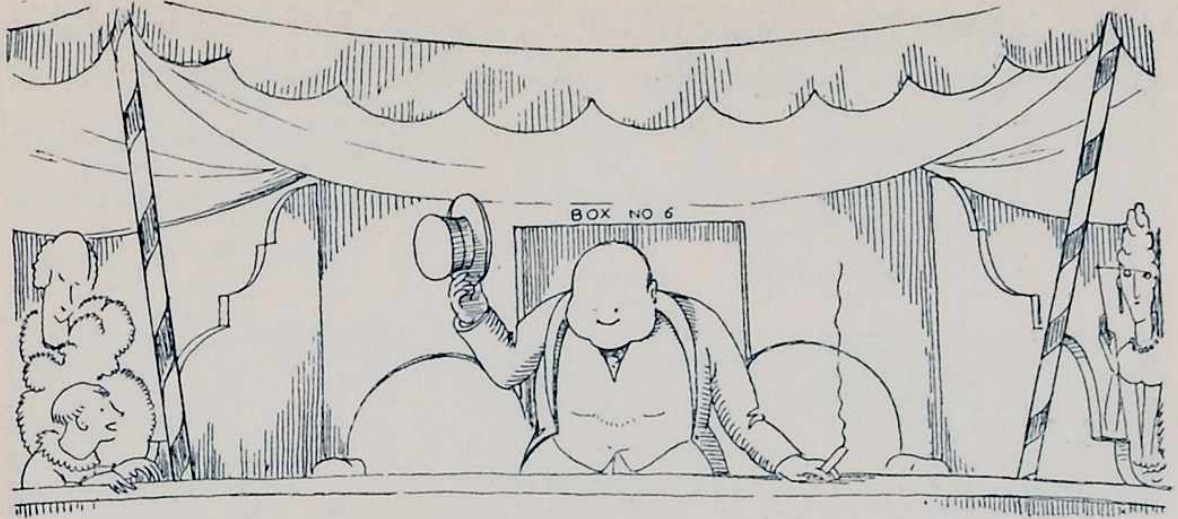
NOW it was not long before the menial returned to the great arena with the husband of the Siamese Twins. "You had better go into the middle of the arena and croon from there if you can stop the seals barking," said the Master of Ceremonies to this latter.

"Of course I can," answered the Siamese husband, confidently, "My crooning could still a tempest. I can sing all the new hit tunes—'Whose Your Little Whoosers?' and 'Wind

Under the Heart,' as sung on the phonograph by Miss Gladys Sparkingplug ♦ The lion and the lamb lie down together when I croon."

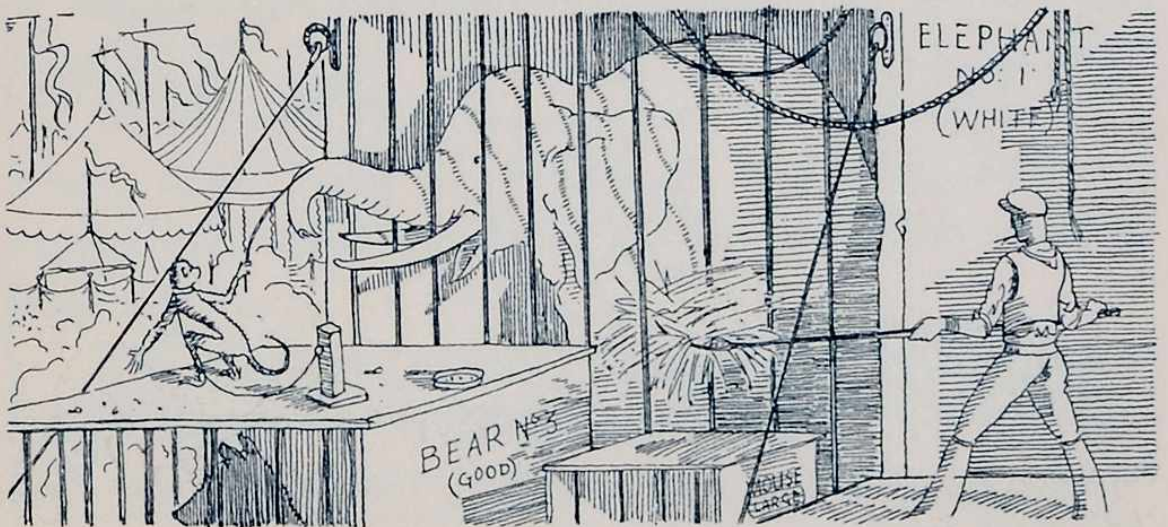


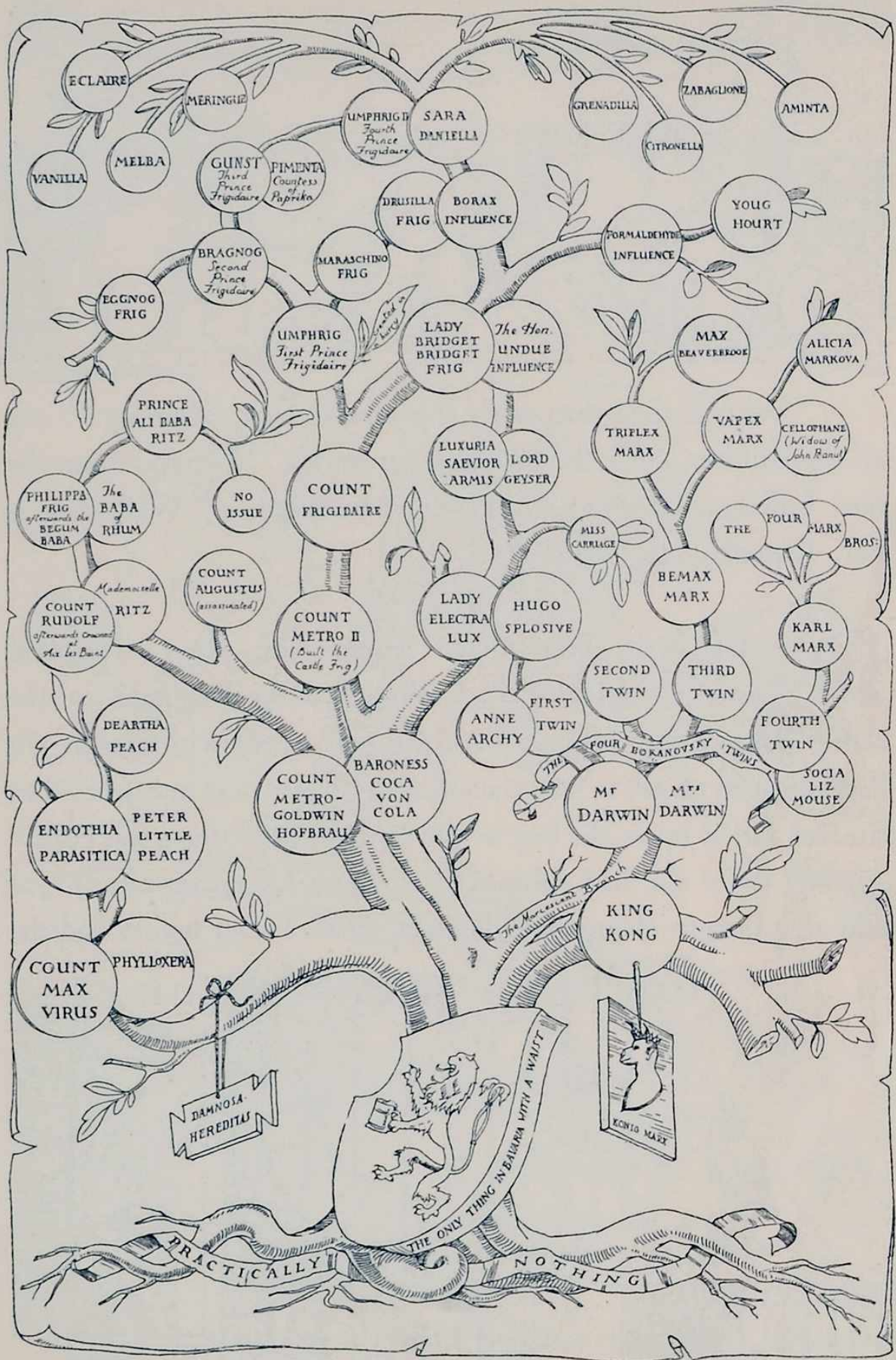
This crooner also had songs of great novelty, about 'Mammie and where was she hiding?' He sang this largely with his hip for he wore a bolero.



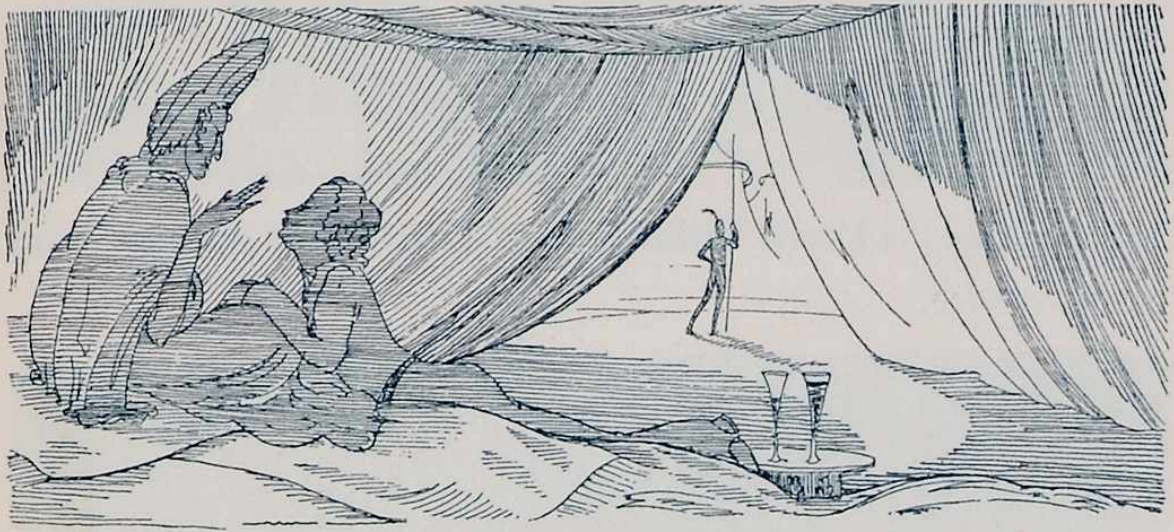
“ Who is that man with the jumbo face, Mummy ? ” say all the children ♦ All the mummies answer : “ Do you mean the one bowing, darling ? ” “ Yes, Mummy ” ♦ “ Well that is Mr. Rosenslump, darling.”

DO all little boys have manes like you ? the aged Princess Frigidaire was asking young Reginald in the dimly lighted tent ♦ These were the first words which even she had managed to get in edgeways since the very first moment when she had fallen upon the boy at the bottom of “ Over the Falls.” Already twice she had submitted to the exhilarating pleasure of allowing him to change her point of view ♦ Never before had she





experienced such a torrent of words against the rugged bluffs of her bleak dignity ♦ Never had such cascades of talk dared to shower upon her harsh escarpments ♦ It was this adolescent, this stripling who was getting it all in edgeways ♦ Perhaps we are at the climax of my story.

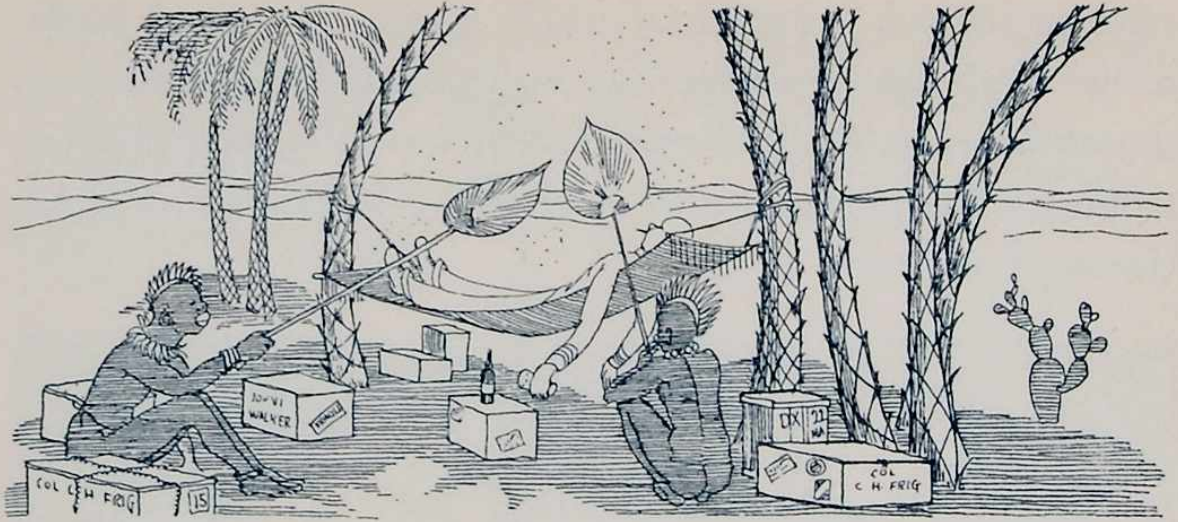


EVEN to the dim verges of that shadowy tent stray snatches of crooning slid on their far adventures from the yawning megaphone ♦ The crooner was singing a “blues” which he quickened until it became a “paso doble.”

This quickening communicated itself as far as the luminous twilight of that canvas tent and incited that young companion of the elderly Princess to peptonize still further the tenure of his talk.

The Princess Frigidaire recounted to Reginald the whole history of her family way back to the heraldic era of ancestry, in which period her ancestors claimed to have been descended from wild beasts.

The Frigidaires as you may see from their family tree (which is given on the previous page) had always intermarried with other Frigidaires ♦ Hence the present Princess was her husband’s second cousin ♦ The Princess admitted that, alas,



her husband had been rather burnt up while in the desert on active service.

THE eight daughters of the Prince Frigidaire had never heard a crooner before. When he got to the part about the moon they proceeded to swoon, which rhymed with "June"—though they may not have known it. His song had become a tango. Hearing but fragments of it and not having seen the crooner's bolero, the Princess did not know why the ether had become so Spanish.

She asked Reginald if he had a penny to put in a slot machine which stood at the more brightly lighted extremity of their tent.

It was a machine composed of rusty metal bars and knobs and tarnished bits of mirror, but it bore the superscription :



wherewithal it was a not unimposing object of sortilage, and quite a competitive menace to the practice of a gypsily beringed palmist two booths to the back.

The penny having been duly inserted and the various knobs earnestly clasped as specified, the surfaces of the tarnished mirror began to slide to and fro and screech until a green-printed ticket dropped into view out of another slot ♦ A great whirring sound accompanied this brief but engaging performance ♦ The print upon the green ticket was in four languages—thus :

VOUS ÊTES RIEUSE, MAIS DANS LE COEUR VOUS N'ÊTES PAS GAIE-VOUS AVEZ QUELQUE CHOSE QUI VOUS TOURMENTE. VOUS ÊTES ENTOURÉS DE BEAUCOUP DE MAUVAISES LANGUES. IL Y A QUELQU'UN QUI VOUS AIME MAIS QUI NE VOUS LE DIT PAS.

DAS GLUCK IST DEM KUHNEN HOLD: ABER VORSICHT SCHADET NICHT. ULKI ULKI!

O CHE GELIDA MANINA! E PERICOLOSO SPORGERSI, SENSA PERMESSO DI SOJORNO, (ÈIRE 350), NON SI PUO FAR' NULLA. E COSIFAN TUTTI. DUX. REX ZINGONE.—VESTITA TUTTA ROMA.

YOUR VIBRATIONS DENOTE A RATHER MASTERFUL NATURE; HAUGHTY, NOT FOND OF BEING TOLD HOW TO DO THINGS, AND YOU PREFER TO BE A MASTER THAN A SERVANT. VERY OUTSPOKEN, WHICH MAY LEAD TO TROUBLE UNLESS YOU EXERCISE GREATER DISCRETION. THE PORES OF YOUR SKIN SHOW A MOST OBEDIENT AND TIMID CHARACTER, RATHER NERVOUS. DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE THE UNDER-DOG. YOU MAY REGRET IT. USE ODORONO. FOUR OUT OF EVERY FIVE HAVE IT.

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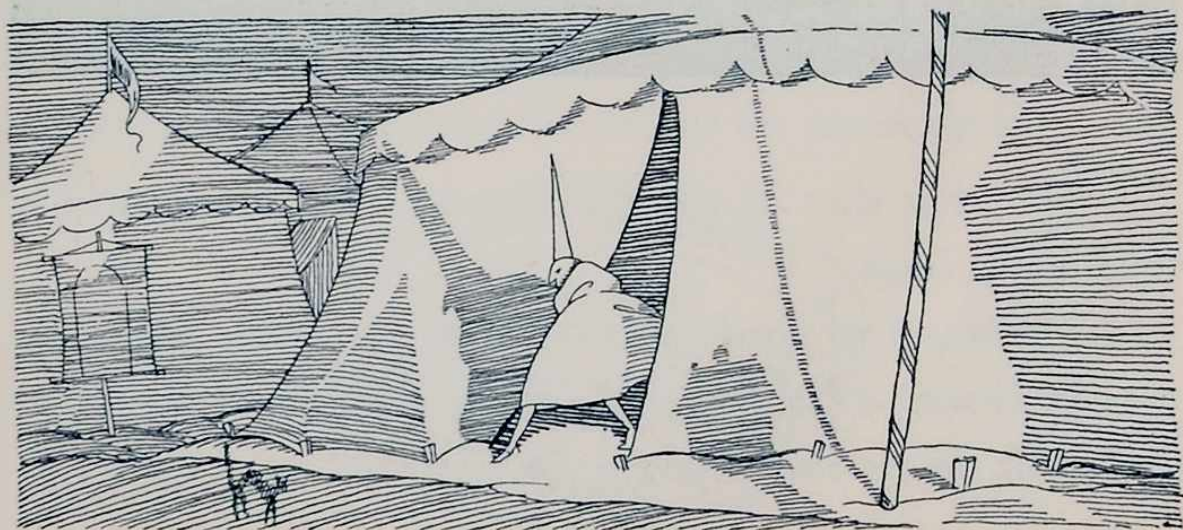
This thin slice of theurgical wisdom was greeted with a loud united laugh.

The sound of their guffaw reached the arena where the crowds, banked about the sides of the stadium, heard it ♦ And at this point the crooner swooned too.

I NEVER heard how the Circus finished ♦ Nobody suspected that the trapeze artist who had hung by her teeth for so achingly long was really the mother of five children, had translated a lot of Dostoïewski into Swedish and grew prize dahlias in her garden.

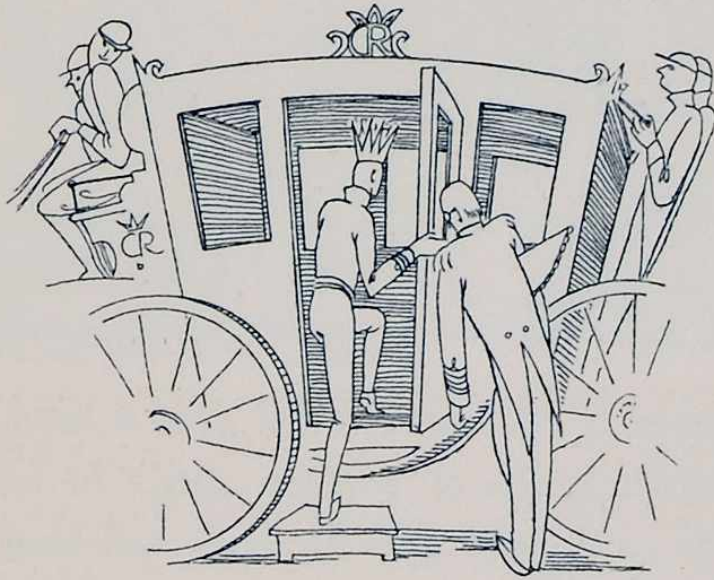
BUT I do remember that at about seven o'clock the psychologist, who had tried to interpret that dream of Cyrus' about the horses, was seen issuing from the palmist's little spangled booth ♦ He had exchanged his normal headgear (which had always been a dark green Homburg hat) for a tall cone-shaped one made of cardboard and adorned with stars in imitation of the headdress of his rival the astrologer, conceiving this to be the secret of astrology's superior success with the King ♦ Following close upon his heels came Rosenslump, ruined captain of industry. Cyrus caught sight of the pair of them as he was about to mount into his barouche ♦ "What is the name of that extraordinary charlatan, the pss-psy-psych . . .?" he stuttered into the ear of the Master of Ceremonies.

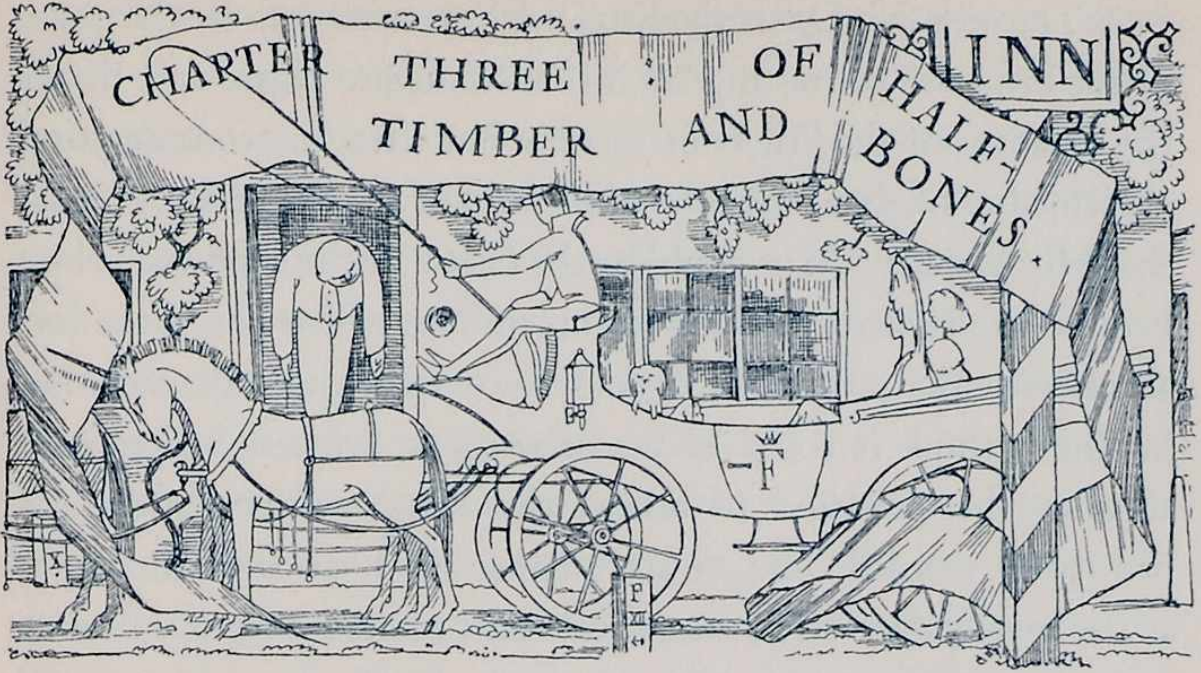
"Your Majesty, he is called Professor Stigler," answered the good courtier, wiping his ear with an embroidered kerchief.



“ He looks sad,” remarked Cyrus ♦ “ Is he also ruined ? ”

“ No, Sire,” said the good Master of Ceremonies, “ but he thinks that it is a folly to be gay.”



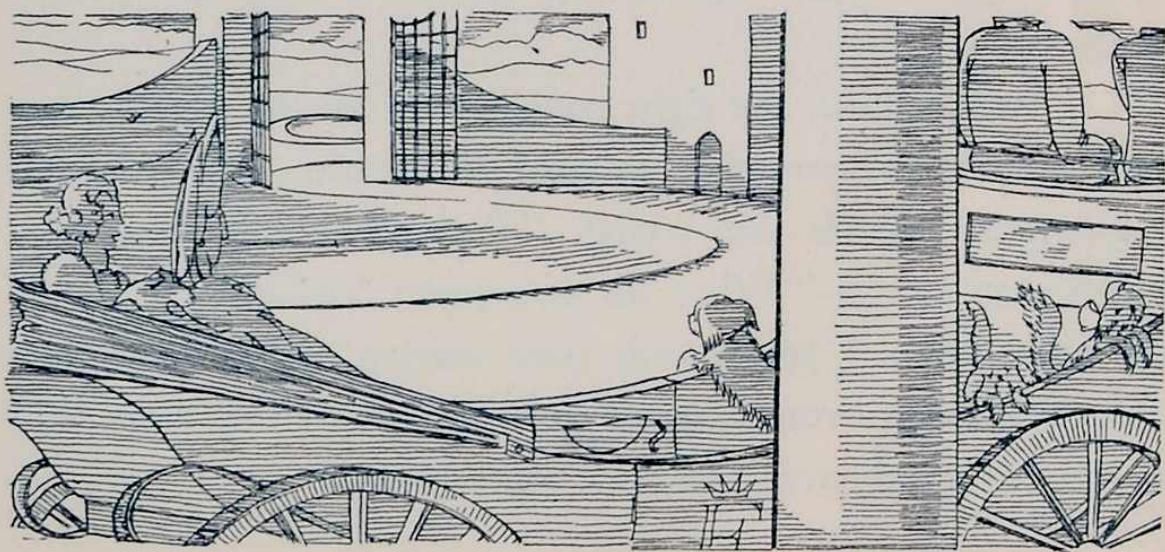


THE Circus is over, but the smell of it lingers on ♦ In the Capital of Cyrus everyone is asking where the Princess Frigidaire could have been all that time, from the minute she left the royal box, unattended, until she turned up (with a new point of view) at the palace four hours later, and asked that her carriage, her pekineses, her daughters and her husband be brought around to the door at once.

They are all asking where she could have been, to *alter* her outlook so much during those four hours ; moreover upon her return to the Castle Frigidaire on the River Frig she became pregnant.

Her daughters, the eight youngish Princesses, during those nine months ran around in agitated anticipation—the youngest clapping her hands and crying, “Perhaps it will be a baby brother at last”—“What do you mean ‘at last’?” echoed the other seven, “you’ve only been waiting sixteen years for a baby brother, whereas some of us have been waiting more than twenty years and haven’t had one yet, *thank God!*”

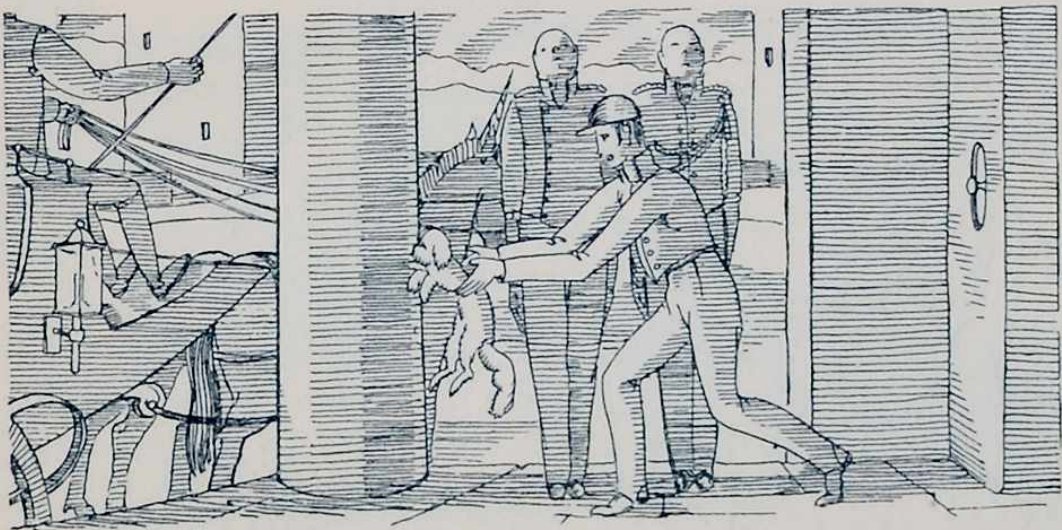
The idea that Cyrus the King might conceivably be the cause of the Princess' interesting condition seemed to please and flatter the tenantry of the Frigidaire estate ♦ But after due consideration it seemed unlikely even to the most loyal of the Frigidaire tenants, that His Majesty Cyrus could be the father of the expected baby ; because the Princess had during no minute of her stay been left alone with the monarch ♦ Besides Cyrus said quite gravely that he didn't think it could be his baby ♦ The Princess had refused to allow her husband to accept the King's invitation (which had been worded 'by royal command') to stay the night at the royal palace ♦ The command had been ungraciously broken and without even waiting for dinner the Princess and her suite—her daughters, pekineses, etc.—had started homeward ♦ Yet Cyrus had, by dint of hints from the Lord Chamberlain, been so diplomatically inclined as to insist upon an escort of his own retainers going with the Frigidaires for, at any rate, part of the way ♦ As chief members of this escort Professor Stigler the psycho-analyst (in cone-shaped hat) and Rosenslump, ruined captain of industry, had been chosen ; since everyone was glad to get two such gloomy individuals out of the city, even if only for one night.



Now it so happened that suspicion for a long time rested upon Professor Stigler as a possible—though not probable—instrument in the Princess Frigidaire's interesting change of outlook ♦ But the Professor had been author of three pamphlets upon Birth Control ; this lessened the likelihood of his authorship on this occasion ♦ The only reason for deeming it for one moment imaginable, was that deep night had overtaken the returning Frigidaire party before they had had time to get in front of more than half of their homeward journey ♦ The moonlessness of the night was so obliterating and the way so wiggly, that there was nothing for it but to go into an inn ♦ Torches were kindled from the flame of the carriage lamps ♦ With quivering rushlights, serving-maids rustled hither and thither, emitting anon a timorous squeak when pinched by a petulant postillion.

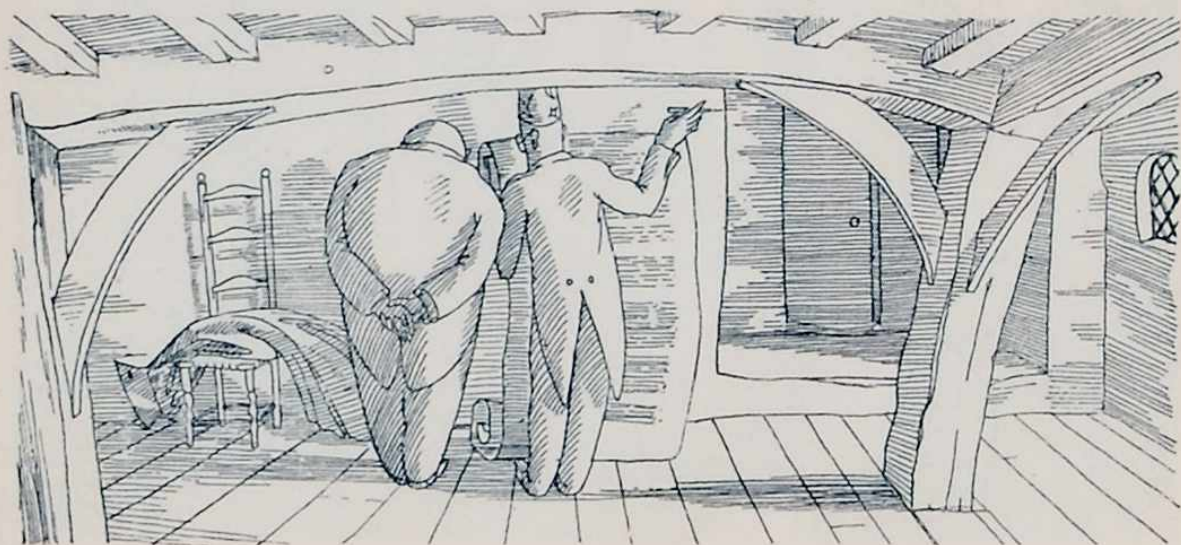
The Princess and her pekineses were ushered up creaking corridors which cavernously crept around draughty corners, to an upper closet wherein she made ready to retire to rest ♦ This consisted of taking off her yellow wig and dusting it with a feather duster which she kept in the bodice of her dress for this purpose.

Downstairs in the hallway the Professor was digressing



to Rosenslump upon a theory of his for cataloguing all hotels under three headings ♦ The Professor owed the success of his entire career to a mania for analysing and classifying anything and everything ♦ He would not be able to look at the merest moonshine or the most trifling treacle without wanting to split it up into its component parts ♦ It was patently evident to everybody who passed them in the passage that Rosenslump was a reluctant and very weary listener ♦ Painfully, he was casting glances about him for something to sit down on ; but all the furniture looked so half-timbered that he feared that if he seated himself he might find his person punctured by an inextricable splinter for the rest of his natural life.

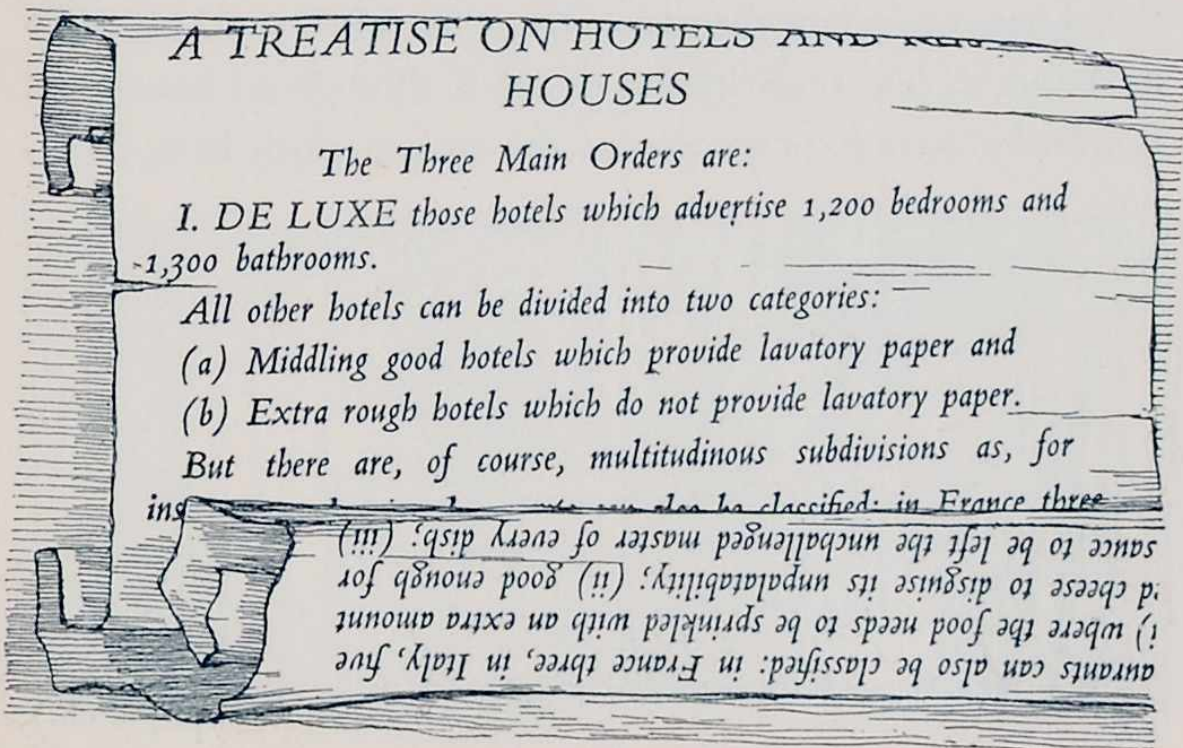
“ T’is truly rural ! ” soliloquised one of the youngish Princesses, as they picked their way down an angular corridor. “ Yes, ravishingly rustic,” replied her elder sister—“ two steps up and mind the crack for the mice, two steps down and bump your head on a beam ” ♦ There was a whirr ! ! ! “ What was that ! ” gasped the youngishest of these two sisters ♦ “ Perhaps,” said the elder pallidly, “ it may have been a spook ” ♦ But it proved to be merely the premeditation of a cuckoo clock about to call the hour of 11.35 ♦ “ Cuckoo ! Cuckoo ! ” it reiterated in



a cracked Bohemian accent + “Cuckoo!” it said eleven times. It then paused + “Made in Prague,” read the eldest princessling, lifting her rushlight to distinguish the lettering on the clock’s number plate; whereupon it whirred again and then began to blurt a monotonous “oo-oo-oo-oo-oo” thirty-five times. “It evidently strikes the minutes as well as the hours,” conjectured the eldest princessling intelligently + But the oo-oo-oo-oo-ooing carried on almost until midnight.

Meanwhile further down the hallway Professor Stigler was producing a scroll from the lining of the cone-shaped hat which he wore; this he handed to the yawning Rosenslump. Uncoiled it was seen to be headed, with florid but elegant calligraphy:

“A TREATISE ON HOTELS AND REST HOUSES.” This was underlined nine times with polished eighteenth century flourishes + The paper had the egg-shell tone and texture of parchment + The script had all been written in India ink and undoubtedly with quill pens + It read as follows:

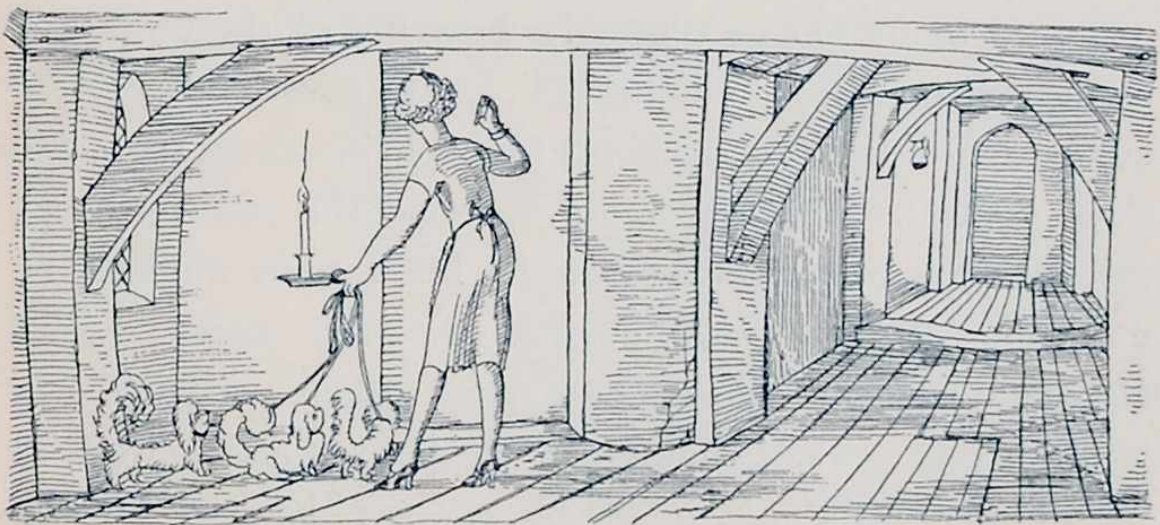


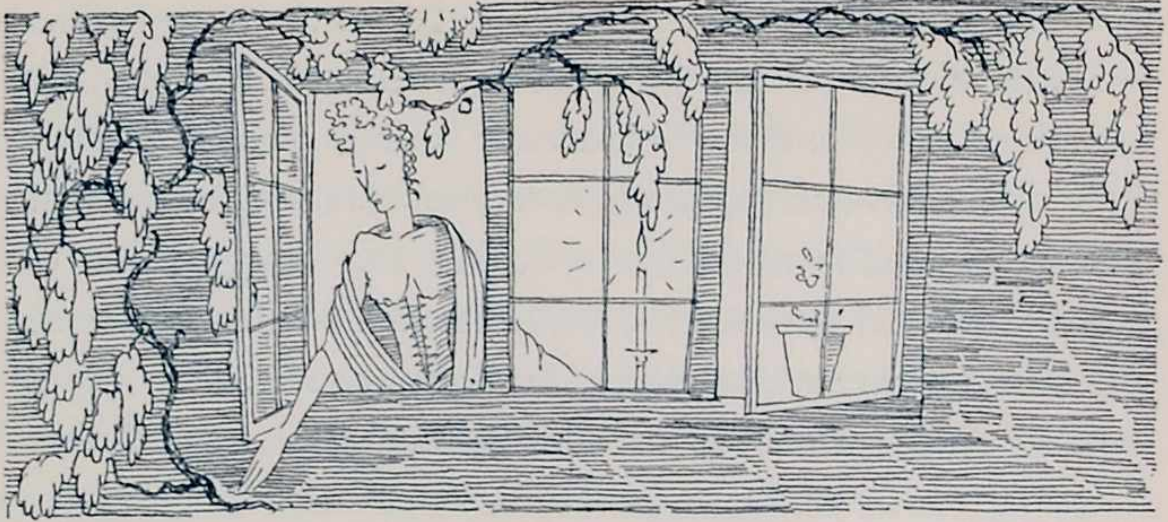
The Professor Stigler, whose face was bland as a full moon, and whose friends called him "Doctor Bummelzug," had a largely developed sense of irony, but no sense of humour ♦ His sense of irony was enlarged (as an "enlarged" spleen is enlarged), yet his humour had somehow been mislaid in the post ♦ He left Rosenslump alone with the weighty scroll ♦ But before Rosenslump had fully uncurled the scroll, sleep came and extinguished him in a little heap on the floor ; and he slept like a cooling puddle of tallow sleeps after the last remnant of the candle wick has burnt itself away.

Upstairs the Princess lay extended on the outside of the patchwork coverlet which quilted the bed ♦ She had loosened her corsets but had, as yet, felt too fatigued after the rigours of the journey to shift herself into her shift ♦ Thus she lay counting the dimly discerned cobwebs which many months of undusted calm had woven like a rare canopy above the gaunt bed ♦ The only sound that could be heard was the creaking of the floor turning over in its sleep ♦ But after a little while another sound began to pierce the silence from afar ♦ It was maddeningly monotonous like the trickling of sands through an hour-glass. It was the oo-oo-oo-oo-ooing of the cuckoo clock from some-



where far below ♦ It seemed an eternity before this ceased ♦ Then in a little while she heard the voices of her eight daughters passing into silence on the floor beneath and a door close upon them. This silence was next broken by a very low moaning of the south west wind among the gables ♦ Rising and dragging her old bones across the floor to the wanly latticed window she peered out into the intense blackness ♦ Her breath condensed in splodgy patterns on the panes ♦ In the dim light of a torch which flared in the far corner of the room she could just see enough to write her name sharply in the moisture of her breath with the point of the keenest facet of her solitaire diamond ring—" Sarah Daniella Frigidaire " ran the needle-thin script—(though " Sarah " trickled before " Frigidaire " had been terminated it can be read to this day) ♦ Her French maid came in with the three pekineses who returned now gleefully to their mistress after their needed bout of nocturnal exercise ♦ " Hush, my chickens ! " she cooed ♦ " Mettez-les sur le lit," she told the maid, " et vous pouvez vous retirer maintenant " ♦ The maid closed the door and her steps died away down the dim vistas of hostel passages ♦ The Princess undid the catch of the window and flung open its two sheets of intricately dove-tailed panes—flung them into the moist but fragrant





night ♦ It was summer ♦ A wet and chilly summer ♦ The south west wind was stirring the branches of apple trees beneath her ; the breeze had slit a hurried rift in the dense woof of clouds overhead ♦ Through that one patch where the wind had rubbed threadbare the garment of darkness, three points of light, three stars, were faintly piercing ♦ From somewhere not so far away a stallion neighed in the stables ♦ Looking up at the dark roof of the heavens the Princess sighed to herself : “ What a welkin, what a welkin ! ”

The silence without and the silence within was only intensified by such occasional noises as a momentary crumbling of the dying embers in the hearth or the sputter of the torch as it burned to its roots ♦ When the lithe life of the torch had burnt itself to a close, only the red glow of a scarcely flickering fire was left to light the chamber ♦ Midnight struck on the stable clock drowning with its deeper booming the small, raucous cuckoo clock which might just be heard again muffled by intervening stairways ♦ The notes of these stable chimes stirred through the deep pool of night in ever widening, ever weakening circles ♦ After the last ripple of sound had lapped against the softly groaning lattice where the aged Princess

leaned her haggard shoulders, a redoubled silence which seemed to her almost as intense as death crept coldly through the gnawing sightlessness of the cosmos.

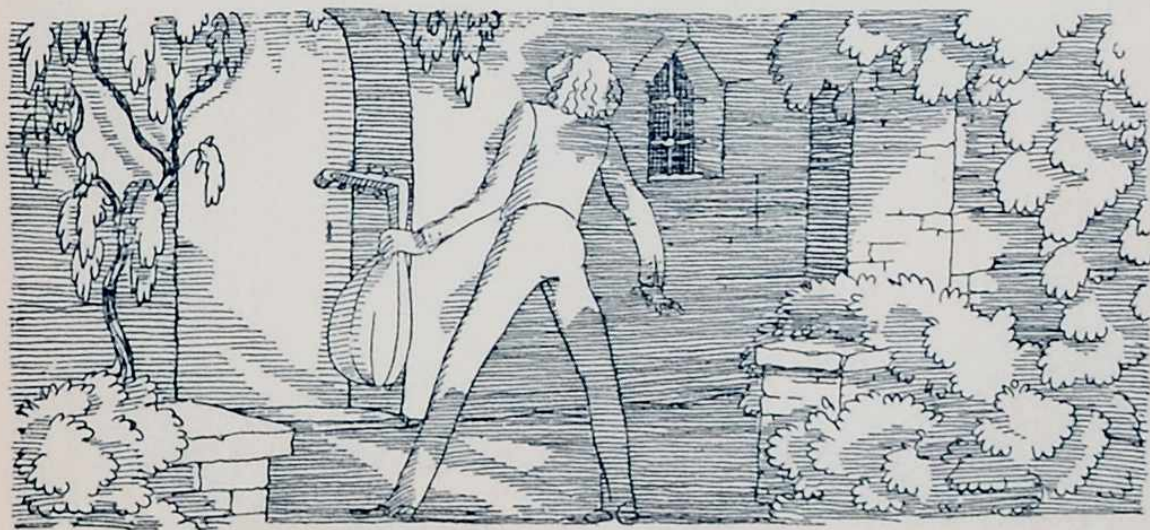
Suddenly a small cough was heard beneath the apple trees. In the utter stillness it sounded like a cannon.

“What was that?” shuddered the aged Princess, an admixture of terror and wild, passionate desire convulsing the muscles of her throat so that if there had been any salt in the salt cellars of her neck it would most surely have been shaken out ♦ For in her heart she knew whose the cough must be ♦ There was but one larynx in the whole world which could suggest such *copia verborum* with a mere cough.

“Is that you my ‘light headed’ boy, my darling with the golden mane?” she whispered hoarsely, feverishly.

A second time and somewhat louder than before cracked out that young but fruity cough, fraught with so much potential garrulity ♦ This time it must have disturbed a number of other inmates in the Inn; four or five windows around and about were urgently thrust open and night-capped heads popped out.

“Speak! Oh, how *can* you be so silent?” queried the querulous Princess ♦ “Speak, and say who you are.”



“Yes, who is that down there?” supplemented several other drowsy but alarmed voices from the opened windows.

“It’s only an invisible mender,” retorted a face at a casement near to the Princess.

“But I can’t see him,” quavered the still unsatisfied Princess.

“Of course not, Ma’am, he’s invisible,” explained the face at the next window; and before the Princess had had time to throw anything at it, it had popped itself in and closed its casement ♦ Yawning, all the other heads retreated one by one.

YOU may like to think that this was all for that night ♦ Yet who can say but that in the small hours some strange, unusual romance of youth and age may not have sailed a rapid course across the ocean of Eros, tacking beneath gusty winds of glib multiloquence, bending before breezes of arrant volubility. There was certainly, until dawn within that house, some *cacoethes loquendi* which was not the cuckoo clock, and which disturbed from time to time the sleep of Professor Stigler two floors below ♦ It was a recurrently audible *caquet*, and its reiterations

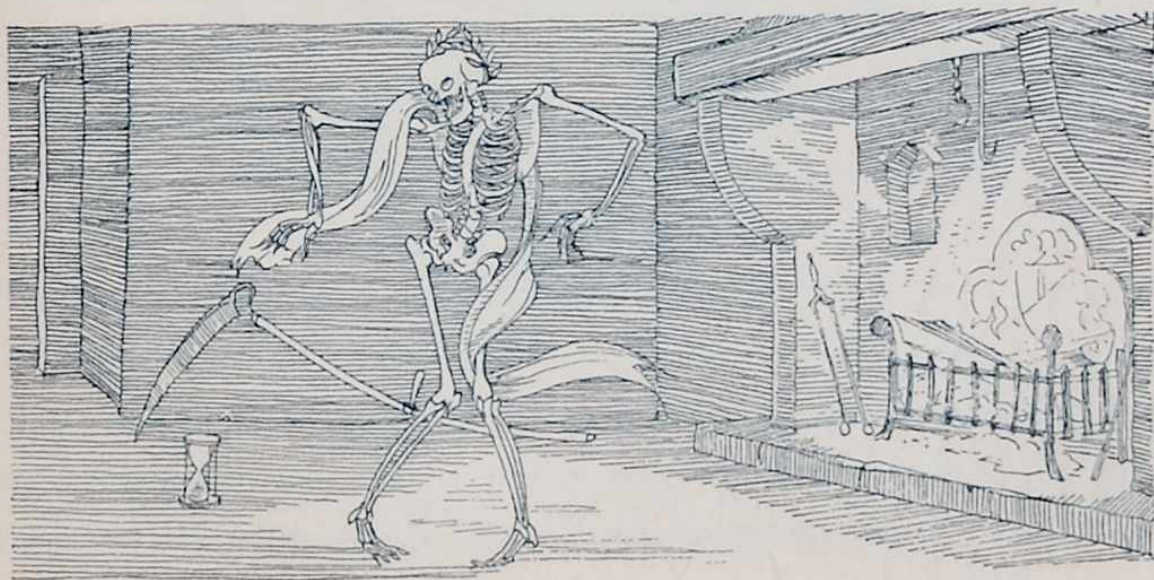


haunted the Professor's dreams until they became nightmares for him, full of verbose political speeches ♦ He decided to psychoanalyse himself as soon as the dreams should be finished.

THOUGH the skin of the Princess Frigidaire was more distressed than the most elaborately sham antiqued velvet, and though her nose and brows were more hooked than an umbrella handle, yet Reginald saw nothing amiss in this woman ♦ For he was always too busy talking to look at her. He considered the business of Love something to be got through in a businesslike way.

AMINTA also was kept awake by that far sound of talking ♦ And what should a girl of sixteen with insomnia think about?

'What can be love? What is love like?' she wondered—the sparkle of some bright warmth, a concentration of life, she thought, like that essence of jasmin which she had been given in a thin phial of a bottle for her birthday.



'But can the old also feel love?' she pondered, and as she puzzled over this, all fashions, periods, styles, centuries and political systems became to her drowsing consciousness more confused than they are already in this story + 'Love,' she thought, 'Isn't that the same thing as youth + Young Artaxerxes, muscularly golden! A young King, brilliant with vigour and with a smile!' She lulled her childish ill-ease with a vision of a youthful male indefinite from perfection—there had been a good-looking groom in her father's stable, ripe ruddy with life, and an even better-looking bronze in the library, but cold—so she beguiled the restlessness of her mind until the years were become as moments and the moments as years: the air became full of hawthorn blossom perfuming cool garden lanes, with diamonds of dew on fruit, tears on nectarines, glow-worms among the watching leaves, and a soft familiar melody of Offenbach breathed to her—

*"Sleep, now sleep, for the time is short for sleeping,
The stars have gone and the spies of day are peeping."*





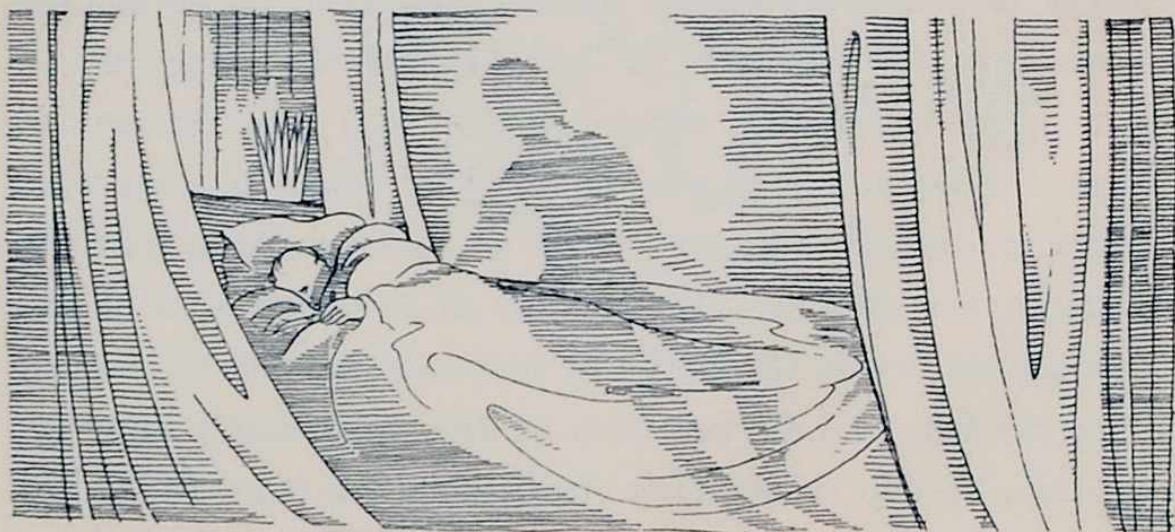
THE Professor Stigler was not the only one to have nightmares that night ; for during the same hours, back in the great draughty palace of the capital, the sleeping mind of Cyrus pursued down the long corridors of troubled dreams the shadows of his waking fears and desires ♦ As we have seen, Cyrus was as great a prey to dreams as any Pharaoh of Egypt.

Cyrus was one of those people who are born lonely ; and doomed to live among crowds and assemblies, he was always spiritually alone ♦ He possessed an untalkative, uncommunicative nature that found it a very hard and uncertain thing to make human contact or to express in any mode his feelings ♦ Moreover of late years he had become scared of trusting even to his own wants and inclinations, for whenever he had plucked the grapes of his desires they had always turned to dust and ashes against his palate ; while, as for people, he had long ceased to trust *them*. He was not exactly a misanthrope ; he merely suffered from the common curse of Kings, the bane of all rich men, that he was never approached in all his life by one soul, whether old sage or young maiden, who did not seem to have immediately some axe to grind ♦ So that in his Welt Anschauung the word friend had

become synonymous with "sponger," "borrower" or "ambitious snob"; and women all showed themselves to him as "tarts" or "adventuresses" hungry to serve by association with the monarch the exacting needs of vanity.

Cyrus was many years older than he seemed or looked. He was twice his age.

At the moment he was regretting that he had not had the courage to speak to that fair youngest daughter of the old Princess Frigidaire—he had let them all go off without even showing, by so much as a smile or a turn of the head, that he had noticed anyone of them in particular—for he dreaded to renew such experiences and disillusionments as had repeated themselves all too often already ♦ That flushed and appetising maiden might turn out to be just a little "gold digger" like all the rest; he would rather not have to go through with the painful process of such discovery again ♦ His entanglements with a notorious blonde, the peroxide Fanny Fanfare, were all too recent and galling ♦ Yet sadly he repeated to the silence of flickering shadows about the walls of the Royal Bedchamber, sotto voce, as his head tossed on the lonely embroidered pillow, he murmured the name of that fair youngest daughter—"Aminta,

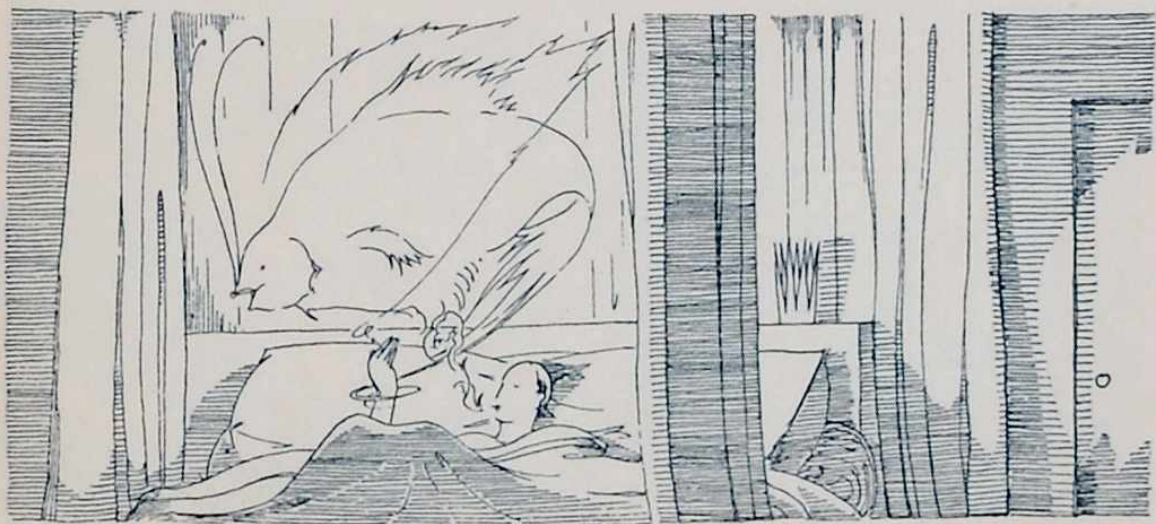


Aminta," until it had the same effect as that reputed to the enumeration of sheep passing through a gate—and he dropt into a troubled sleep.

And in his dream there stood before him a great clump of blushing peonies, and he longed to possess one of these ♦ But he thought how can one possess a beautiful thing more than by gazing at it and devouring it with the eyes ♦ Yet after what seemed a great space of time he found himself constrained by the press of his desire to stoop and pick the fairest of these peonies ♦ Then no sooner had he snapped the base of the long strong stalk beneath his fingers and was lifting up the flower to inhale the perfume of it, than suddenly all of its pink petals began to fall.

With the pain of this disappointment Cyrus woke sharply—he was lying stiffly on his back looking up into the darkness of the draperies above his bed ; he discovered himself to be trembling somewhat ♦ To calm his nerves he lit a cigarette, and as he puffed at it admired the bright glowing point of it in the black night.

“ Ah ! ” sighed the King to his loneliness—“ it is always thus with me ♦ I hesitate too long, and fear to grasp the adored thing until it is so late that the fair object has already fallen



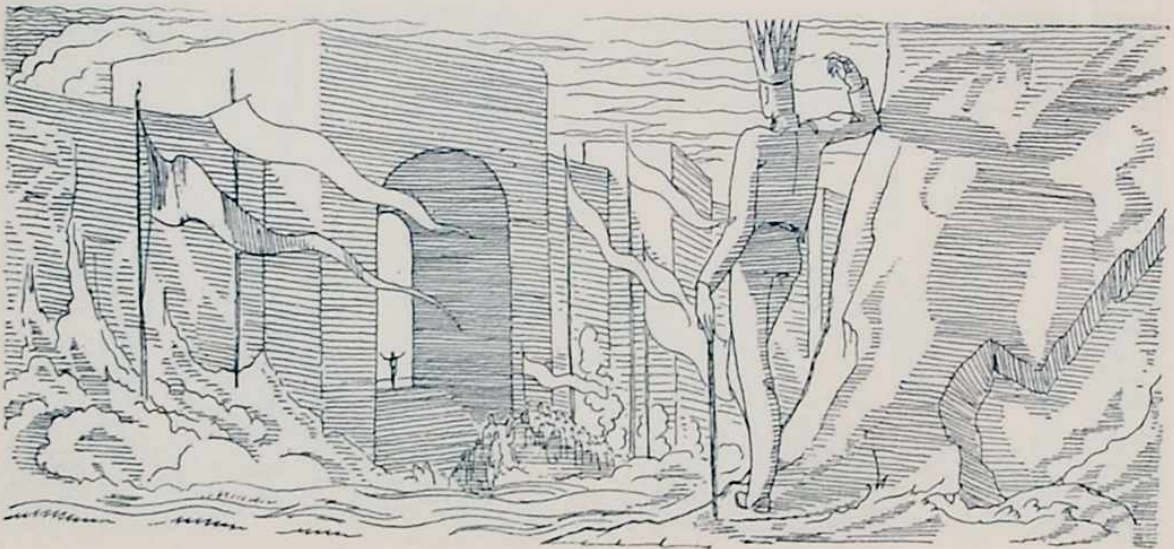
away ♦ I will never hesitate one moment again ” ♦ And he fell once more to sleep.

He dreamed that he saw a sparkling fish, so brilliant that its scales seemed all of amethyst and aquamarine, its fins were two carved zircons and its eyes opals of fire ♦ It swam right before his grasp, dazzling him with every shimmer of its flickering movement ; so out flung Cyrus his hand with passionate appetite to take unto himself the splendour of the fish before it should dart away for ever.

But “ Uh ! ” he cried : for the bright fish had stung him venomously with the slimy point of her tail.

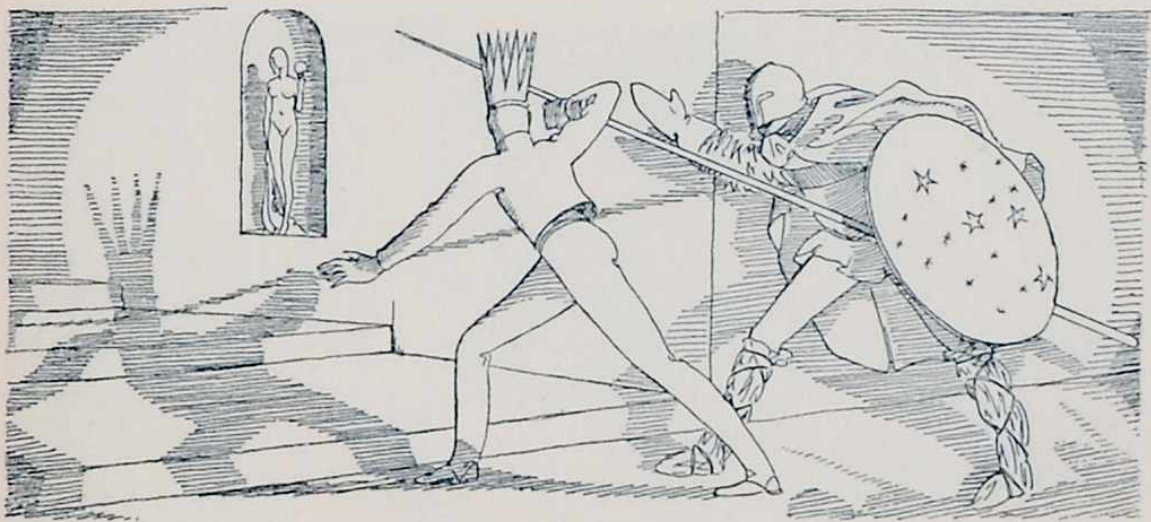
With the pain of this he woke again, to find that his still lighted cigarette had burnt the palm of his hand ♦ He discovered himself to be trembling somewhat ♦ Without troubling to see what damage the cigarette might have done to the sheets, he dropped it into a glass of water, the glossy shape of which could just be distinguished amid the powdery darkness, until the glow of the cigarette sizzled out and no spark at all was left by which to distinguish anything.

For a long while Cyrus lay stiffly on his back, nursing the pain of the burn on his hand ♦ At last he fell once more to sleep.



He dreamed now that he stood before the gate of his own palace, that fine fane which had been built by his grandfather, Ulric the Unsympathetic ♦ But the entrance had grown twice as large and twice as beautiful—and somehow to Cyrus for the first time the place was become really pleasant and desirable ♦ And flags and banners were hung all about the doors, and a great concourse of people were chanting hymns as for some great marriage festival ♦ “It is all thine, O King” sang the great concourse of people ♦ “Lift up your heads, O ye gates and be ye lifted up, O ye everlasting doors!” So Cyrus made as if to enter in ♦ The front hall seemed to open like a long tunnel at the end of which must surely dwell the fulfilment of all desires ♦ But suddenly some of his own guards ran forward crying: “Do not touch, O King! Do not touch the things on the counter darling!” But it was too late ♦ He had already placed his foot upon the first of the stairs, at which instant of contact the whole palace shattered like so much glass falling angrily about his ears.

Whereat for the third time the King, not unnaturally, awoke ♦ He was cold ♦ He discovered himself to be trembling. Beyond the ogival window dawn was just defining the contours of this other dream called Life ♦ Cyrus had knocked the glass



down from the table by his bed ♦ “ Ah ! ” sighed he, “ it is ever thus with me who officially possess so much property, and yet am never able freely to control it or enjoy the wielding of anything ♦ I shall most surely be scolded in the morning by the General di Bussoliera for breaking that toothglass ♦ But I shall not care ♦ I shall tell him that it cannot really have been mine.”

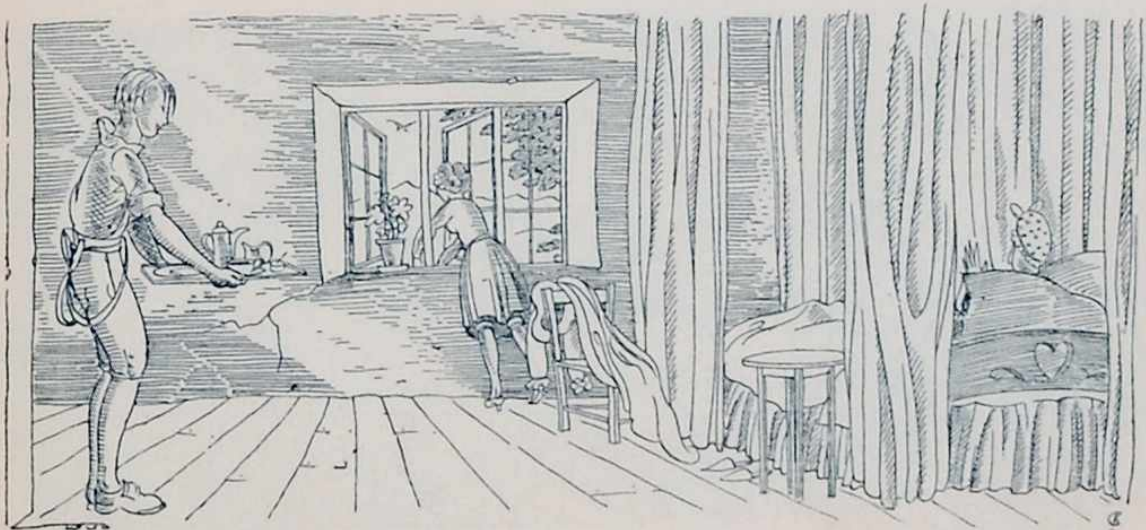
Indeed it seemed to Cyrus that in all his life he had never been able to possess anything truly or entirely.

NOW day crept slowly over all that hemisphere of the planet Venus, visiting also the Inn where the Professor Stigler woke in bed with a headache ; and Rosenslump was found sleeping on the spot where six hours earlier he had subsided in the hallway, the Professor’s treatise on hotels and rest houses still half uncurled in his hand ♦ The first serving-maid, with broom and pitcher, who came upon his huddled form, mistook him in the half light of morning for the bundle of rags with which they were wont to polish the mahogany top of the dresser ♦ She began to sweep him away ; this woke him up ♦ He yawned, gaped and said : “ Very succinct, succinct ! Excellent treatise ! Just what I would have said myself, Professor, if I had known



how to put it so" ♦ The serving-maid apologised ♦ But there was a great tittering in the back premises afterwards where nobody knew what "succinct" meant but suspected all sorts of indecent interpretations ♦ "I wouldn't mind betting there was goings on in this 'ouse last night!" it was excitedly rumoured.

At the first sound of Flora, a serving-maid, upsetting a spinning-wheel in a nearby powder-closet, the agéd Princess awoke with a hearty appetite and bugled for her maid, who tripped in with a tray of accessories; the waiter was then rattled for; when he came in he proved to be an hostler—no matter, he had brought the Menu with him ♦ The Princess was hungry so she ordered for her breakfast three "Oeufs brouillés Lyonnaises" which, when they arrived, appeared clearly by their condition to have been scrambled in a landslip ♦ The Princess was a rich woman; she was so rich that she couldn't count below five because she never needed to she was so rich ♦ "This wasn't the number of eggs I ordered," she cried ♦ The hostler held that it was ♦ The maid had wisely made a rule of expressing no opinion in such cases ♦ So Professor Stigler had to be summoned. He came steaming from his morning bath, in a well-worn



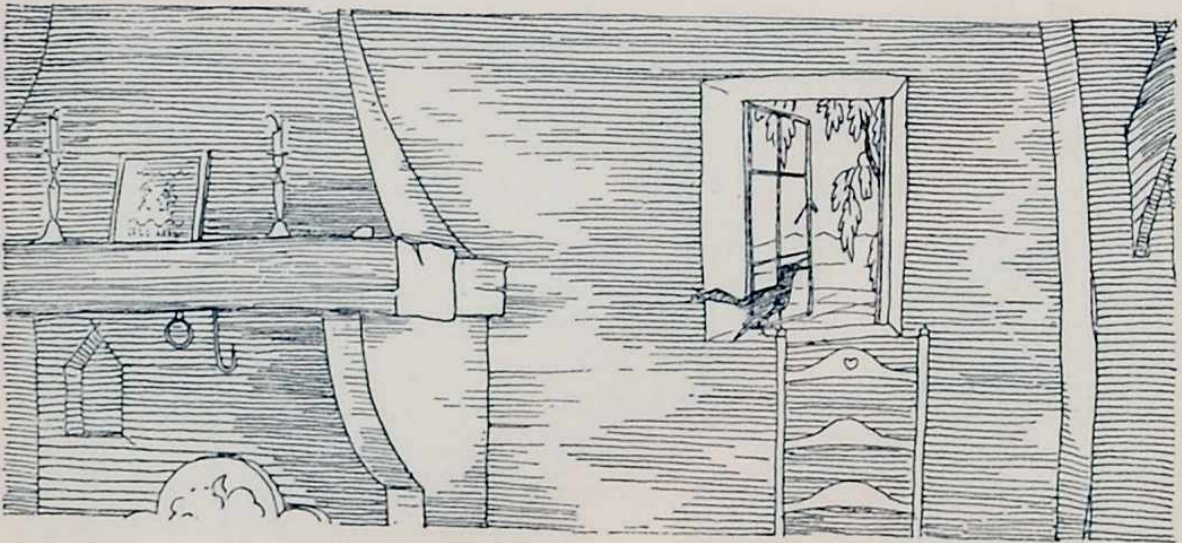
bath-towel-bath-robe with a hood ♦ Though sallow by nature, and with circles under his eyes after a night of mares—this morning the steam had nevertheless made him look for the moment shiny and almost rubicund ♦ He sent the hostler to fetch his stilo-pen ; and with the aid of this, after careful calculation it was mathematically proven to the satisfaction of the Princess that the number of eggs present was three ♦ Alas, all the calculations were then upset by an untimely jackdaw flying in and laying another egg on the mantel-shelf ; owing to the perilous position in which it had been laid this egg soon rolled to the floor and thus became immediately “ brouillé ” and therefore indistinguishable from the other eggs.

“ Fool ! ” shouted the Princess at the hostler.

“ Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! You make me bump my head every time I look at you, Madam, ” rejoined the hostler retiring from the room.

Downstairs in the slick and span larder a spick young kitchen maid, fresh as the heart of a lettuce, polished the marble shelves with sprightly rubbing : “ Succinct, ” she chortled in a mischievous undertone as she polished, “ very succinct. ”

In the next room the eight Princesses were breakfasting



heartily off the hostel's ham an' eggs, freshened with Neapolitan ices for the very young ♦ The scones were home-made and the jellies home congealed ♦ The east side of the house was bathed in a radiance of morning sunlight ♦ The French windows of the breakfast-parlour stood wide open on to an Italian garden where old English hollyhocks were proving to Dutch tulips that they were flowering out of season.

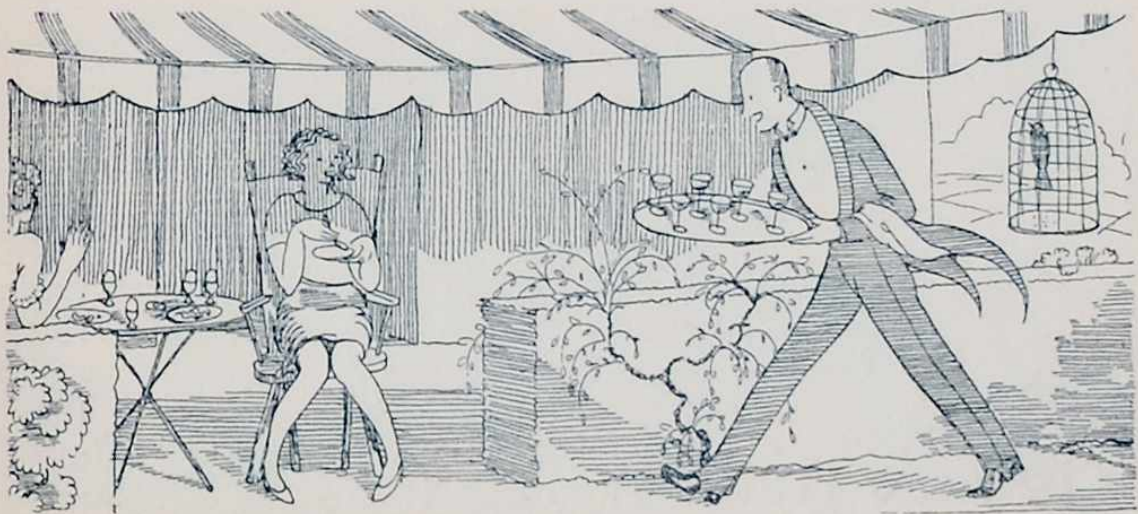
The breakfast-room rang with the glee of girlish laughter and a riot of happy repartee ♦ “You're another too,” giggled Aminta ; “And how about *your* face !”

Piggy ! Piggy ! The youngest princessling had dropped egg on the hand-woven breakfast cloth. Piggy ! Piggy !

“How could you,” admonished the eldest princessling, “when you *knew* it was woven by gentlewomenne for charitie ?”

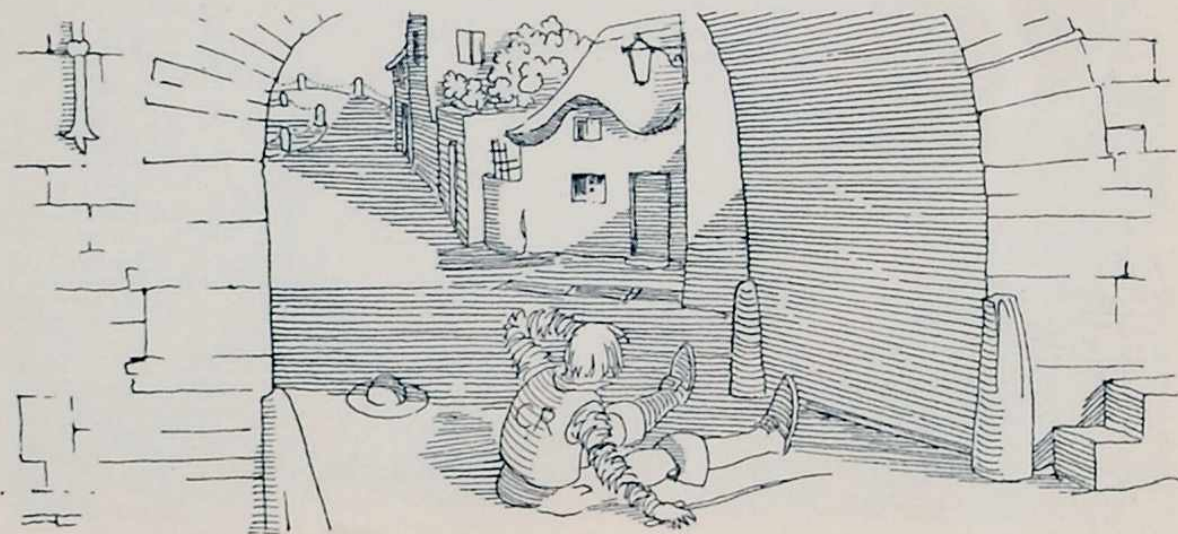
Now the youngest princess had not been so well brought up as the other seven—when eating an ice she would often leave the spoon in her face and forget all about it, coming back as much as ten or twelve minutes later to fetch it out.

During this jolly breakfast her sisters twitted her upon the way that Cyrus the King had stared at her ♦ She blushed and bridled.



Soon, all too soon, the tranquil meander of that summer forenoon at the inn was closed with a clatter of departing hoofs as the carriages, midst a shouting of outriders, wheeled in the cobbled courtyard and out through the archway onto the noon-day road ♦ But one equestrian equerry had grazed his knee on the mounting block and had not kept proper hold of his horse's bridle: therefore he found himself badly left ♦ The steed in question was now rearing and careering riderless down the main road in front of the first of the three carriages ♦ The sight of this bolting horse made all the pekineses yap with great degree of venom ♦ The equerry upon whom this equine misfortune had fallen was none other than Rosenslump's personal valet ♦ Rosenslump who was riding in the third of the three carriages insisted on stopping and going back for his unfortunate manservant ♦ This angered the Princess Frigidaire in the front carriage, who remarked acidly that His Majesty, Cyrus, could not have chosen a more ridiculous and unsuitable escort for her ♦ She was further angered when Aminta, her youngest daughter, expressed a desire to stop and help kind Mr. Rosenslump to assist his poor valet onto the naughty horsey-porsey.

“ I shall not detain you if you want to get out and go back,”



she snapped at her daughter.

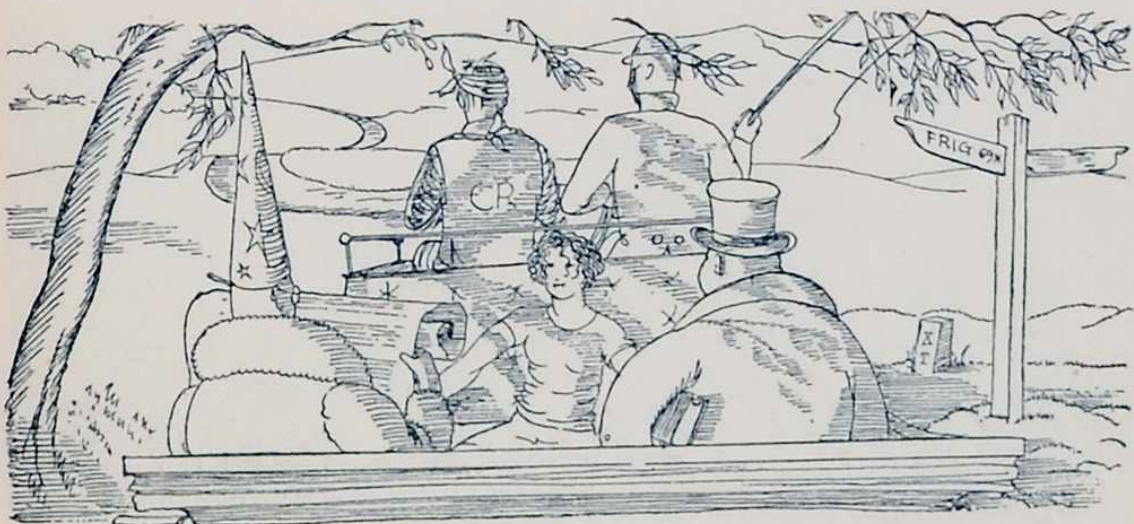
“ Then I *may* get out really *may* I mama ? ” urged Aminta.

“ Certainly, if you want to walk the rest of the way home, ” threatened her mother.

“ I’ll risk it, ” chortled the wilful little maiden, and leapt from the still moving barouche ♦ But she knew as she did this that her mother’s remarks about her walking back would have no substantiation in fact ; because she had noticed that the last carriage, in which Rosenslump and the Professor were sitting, had already drawn to a standstill.

When Rosenslump had finally ascertained to the calming of his anxiety that his valet was uninjured, and the latter having been not unwillingly persuaded to give up further attempts to mount into the saddle, the third carriage started off again, now bearing Aminta on the little seat back to the driver, opposite to Rosenslump and the Professor ; while the equestrianly misfortunate valet was sat up upon the box next to the coachman.

To ride the rest of the way in the same carriage with Rosenslump and the Professor was precisely the end which Aminta had aimed to achieve ♦ She had felt apprehensive lest, driving with her mother, the latter would make the journey wearisome



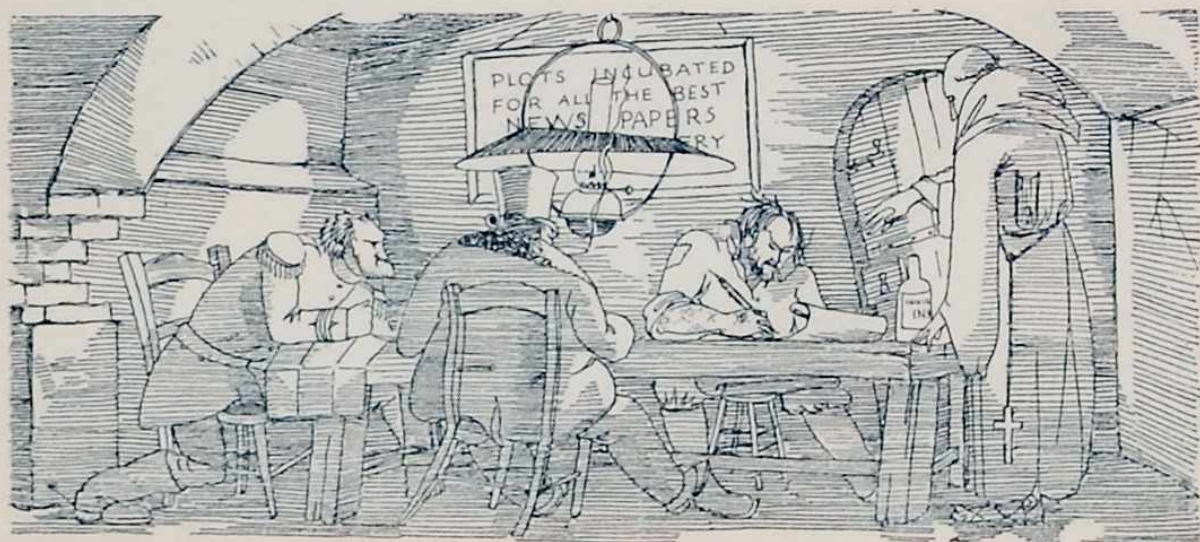
with that nagging about nothing in particular which was habitual in the Princess Frigidaire's relation to her daughters ♦ Aminta sighed with relief to see the dust of the two other carriages, which held her mother, father and sisters, settle down far ahead upon the heavy leaves about the still summer highroad.

MEANWHILE, back at the court of Cyrus, the monarch was meditating upon the carefree charms of Aminta who all too soon had left his slow and easy city ♦ He had felt genuinely disappointed at not having had the chance to get to know that fresh and impetuous maiden a lot better ♦ To-day his city seemed to him slower than ever.

“ Things,” he called to the Master of Ceremonies, who was crossing the cedarwood gallery, “ things go too smoothly in this ‘ burg ’ ♦ We must get some policemen to confuse the traffic or something.”

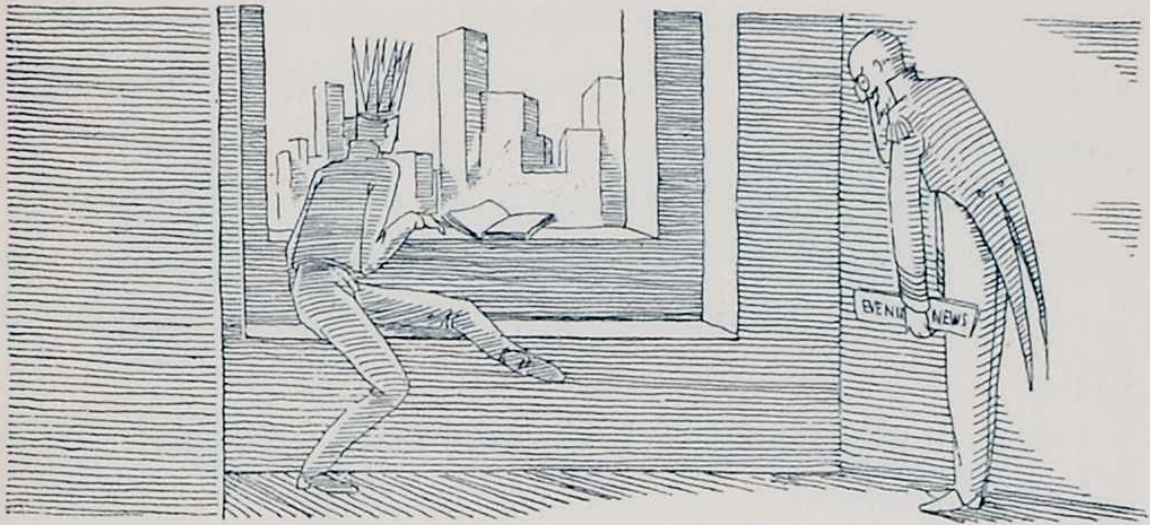
“ Ah ! ” called back the Master of Ceremonies, “ beneath all the surface serenity, grave political crises are cooking.”

“ Ah, that will be nothing new or amusing ♦ Have we not had an average of two crises a year ? ” sighed Cyrus sceptically, “ yes, as far back as I can remember.”



“ But has not Your Majesty been informed by the Lord Chancellor about the various conspiracies which were started after the circus yesterday ? ” insisted the Master of Ceremonies.

“ No, ” said Cyrus, “ or perhaps I wasn't listening ♦ But come over here a minute, so that I won't have to shout to you. ”



“ Your Majesty, ” murmured the Master of Ceremonies, when he had reached the deep arched window recess from where Cyrus sat gazing out and whence, high above the commoner levels of the capital, seven terraces beneath them stepped down to a lake into whose further verge the sky-scrapers of the city sank reflected ♦ “ Your Majesty, ” he murmured in the monarch's ear, “ it was unmasked early this morning by ‘ The Evening News ’ that four plots to assassinate Your Majesty were conspired last night by four different groups of extremists . . . ”

“ But they ought to be angry with somebody else, not with me ♦ For what do you suppose I allowed the Lord Chancellor to make himself dictator, unless it was to furnish people with somebody special to blame whenever anything goes wrong ? ”

“ Indubitably, Your Majesty, ” agreed the Master of Ceremonies, “ but, nevertheless, those four hard-boiled conspiracies would undoubtedly have been hatched, had not the evening press

been in such a hurry to get new copy that they exposed the four plots before they were really ripe. And in addition to the four conspiracies, it is rumoured that an invisible mender travelled the whole length and breadth of this kingdom during the night spreading personal propaganda."

"An invisible mender, that of course is grave," agreed Cyrus. "But to change the subject, do you think I ought to get married?"

"The notion might certainly appeal to popular sentiment," ventured the Master of Ceremonies.

"I was really thinking about private sentiment," explained Cyrus.

Distant steps sounded on the cool marble pavement of the cedarwood gallery.

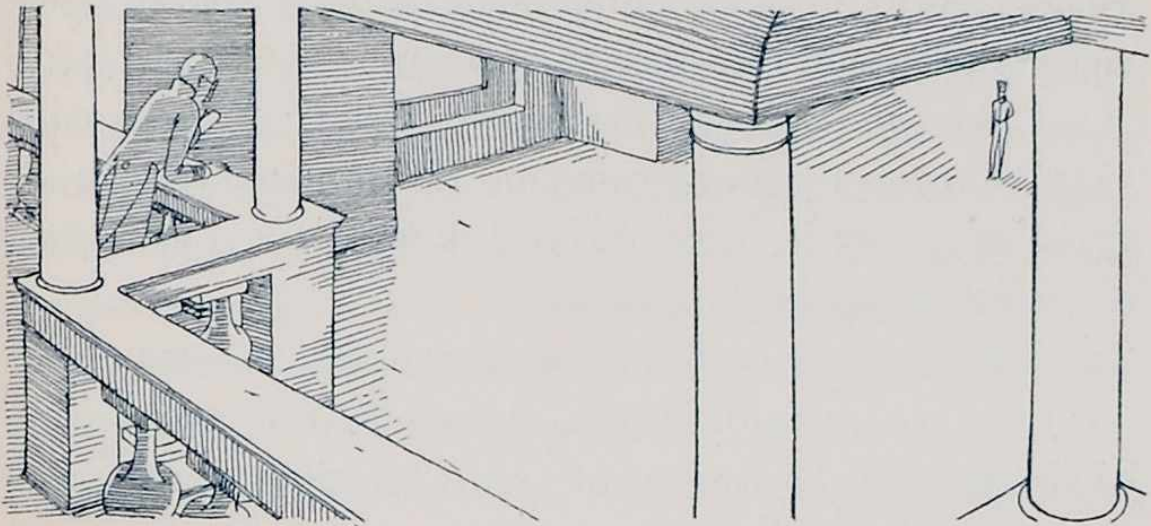
"That sounds like somebody going some place," remarked Cyrus.

"Your Majesty would infer that he hears some person approaching as if he had an end in view."

"Ah, now I see a bit of his end in view," cried Cyrus, as the massive figure of General di Bussoliera, the Lord Chancellor appeared between the thin fluted columns of the upper gallery.



“Run and ask him to come down from the clerestory, if he wants to speak to me,” said Cyrus to the Master of Ceremonies. “I don’t want to have to shout at him across an acre of resonant reception room” + Cyrus wasn’t nearly so scared of the Dictator as the Dictator thought he was : but as long as the Dictator got the Fascist salute often enough he was satisfied, and as long as the Dictator was satisfied, that was *all* all right.



Now, when the Dictator had been persuaded to approach the monarch, it was seen that he carried one of those scroll things, half concealed beneath the silk lapels of his morning coat.

“What sort of a manifesto has he got this time?” asked Cyrus apprehensively.

“This,” said the Lord Chancellor, extending the scroll in his right hand, “this is all written in invisible ink.”

“Oh!” said Cyrus taking the scroll timidly, as if the touch of it might burn him + “What does it say?”

“It is treasonous,” said the Lord Chancellor.

“But how do you know it is treasonous,” asked Cyrus, “if it is invisible?”

“Well,” said the Lord Chancellor, “would it be written in invisible ink if it were not treasonable?”

Cyrus looked doubtful for a moment ; but the Lord Chancellor continued : “ Just look at that invisible mender for example, he went the whole of last night speaking nothing else but treason.”

“ Yes, General,” replied Cyrus, unfolding the document, “ but the whole scroll *is* just blank except for one sentence which merely says : ‘ To read the invisible writing on this scroll pour Elizabeth Arden’s eyelash lotion over the whole parchment and the script will then become apparent.’ ”

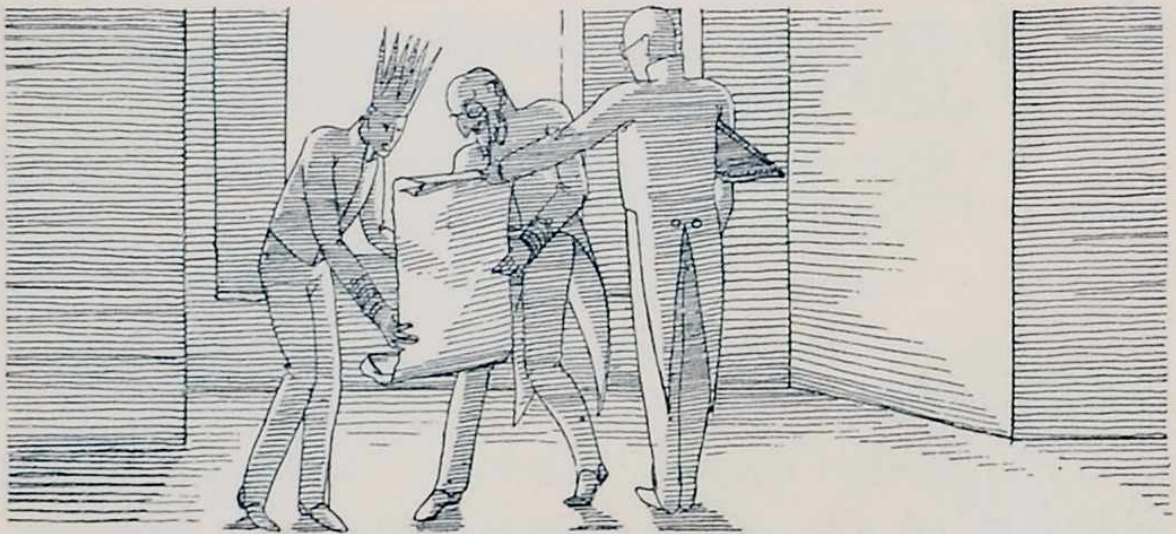
“ Who wrote that ? ” inquired the Master of Ceremonies.

“ That is the handwriting of the Professor Stigler • I found it in a secret drawer of his desk when I was unmasking the fourth group of conspirators.”

“ When you unmasked those conspiracies,” insisted Cyrus, “ tell me, as a matter of interest, did you do it in your capacity of General or of Dictator or of Lord Chancellor, or of Keeper of the Privy Purse ? ”

“ In none of these capacities,” answered the Lord Chancellor, “ I did it for the Press in the capacity of Reginald’s father.”

“ Which of your uniforms did you wear ? ” asked the Master of Ceremonies.

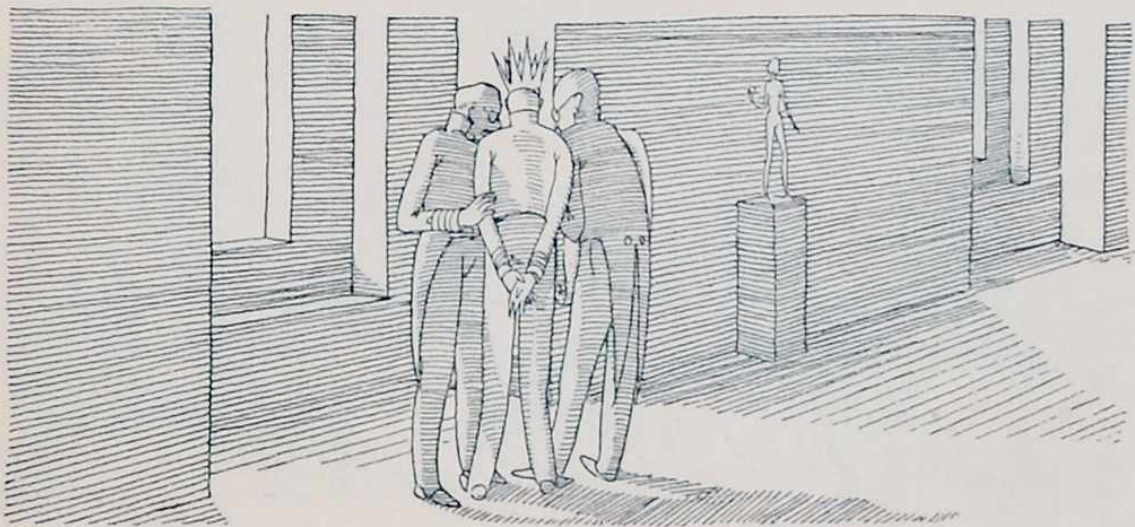


“Come on,” said Cyrus, “has nobody a bottle of eyelash lotion?”

The Master of Ceremonies confessed to the fact that he never went out without a little in a flask—he was in some ways not unlike a crooner ♦ Dark violet hieroglyphics did indeed begin to appear upon each successive area of scroll as it was moistened by the eyelash lotion ♦ Unreadable at first, it could not be understood until someone had the bright idea of holding it before a hand mirror, which the Dictator happened to carry in his inner pocket for the purpose of practising Fascist faces at himself in his spare moments . . . The pith or gist of the document was the setting forth of a new political theory which the Professor had provisionally named “Monarchical Communism!”

“What is the pith or gist of this theory?” asked Cyrus of the Lord Chancellor, as together they perused the document in the mirror ♦ They had both started perusing together; but the Lord Chancellor perused a little quicker than Cyrus, and this the latter realised.

“It seems,” began the General di Bussoliera pensively, “to be the principle of Communism allied to the principle of Monarchy.”

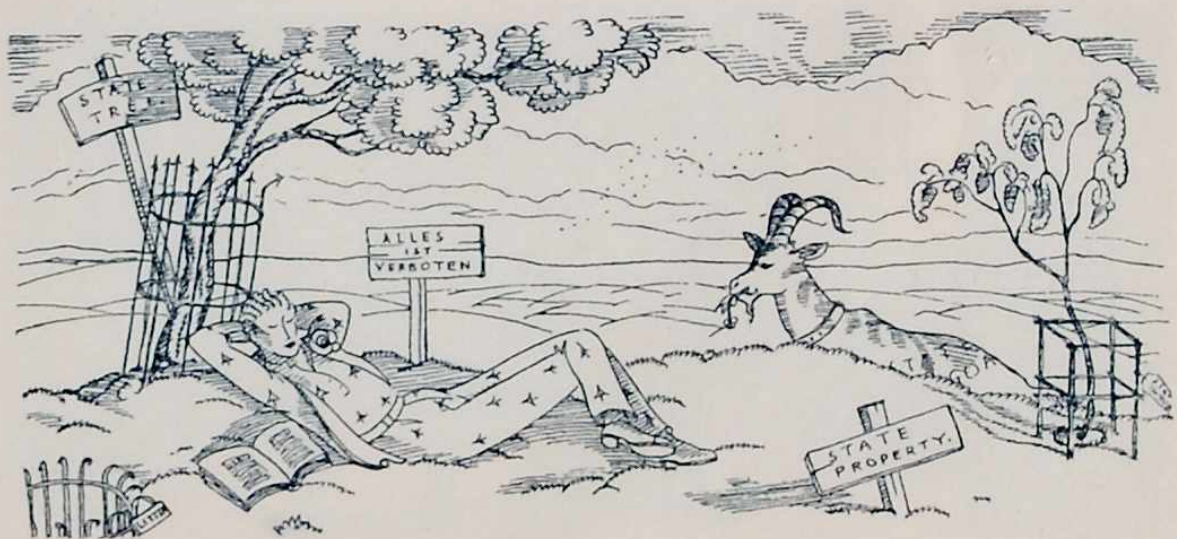


“ And would this leave room for a Dictator ? ” asked Cyrus.

“ It appears not, ” replied the General, a little testily.

“ Oh, ” said Cyrus.

To arrive at the idyllic state of Monarchical Communism, the first step was to be the hell of a capital levy—so said the document—the very smallest articles of property were to be considered capital in this respect ; in fact only the finger nails and the toothbrushes of every citizen would be left to him to hoard up as his own (because the Professor for reasons of hygiene did not recommend the communal toothbrush, and communal finger nails have not seemed exactly possible even in the red land of St. Lenin) ♦ Shoes, however, were to be requisitioned ; hairpins commandeered ; the delirious diaries of every debutante became the property of the State ; no one might without a signed and stamped warrant allow a goat to eat the flower in his buttonhole, because neither the goat nor the flower nor the buttonhole could rightly be considered his own—everything belonged to Mother State ♦ But during, amidst and above all this, the Monarch would continue to reign—obliged to go on being King just as if nothing had happened ♦ He would still follow his routine of opening the new sun-loggias of lunatic



asylums, and laying the foundation stones of turkish baths for corporations of plumbers and pavement artists + In addition to this special trains (yes, they *would* allow him this luxury) would take him to the points of the Empire where he would be expected to unveil mad memorials by Esau and Iddleswidrick† to the martyrs of Communism + But strangest of all he would be allowed to retain his palaces and all his entourage of officials and domestics. They were not to be called his own ; nor were they to be exactly appointed by him ; but the lightened people *en masse* would vote a list of possible persons to fill the appointments at Court, from which the Monarch would be allowed to select those whom he disliked the least + Yet, though he was to live in the palaces and eat off the gold and silver plates, off which he in his youth in the days of constitutional monarchy had eaten, and off which his great-great-grandfathers had eaten in the days when the divine right of Kings was considered a phrase no more ridiculous than we consider today the phrases about the prerogative of the people — though he were to wear his miniver and the diamond stars of the orders of the Shower and Suspender, yet neither his shower nor his suspender would in theory be any more his own.

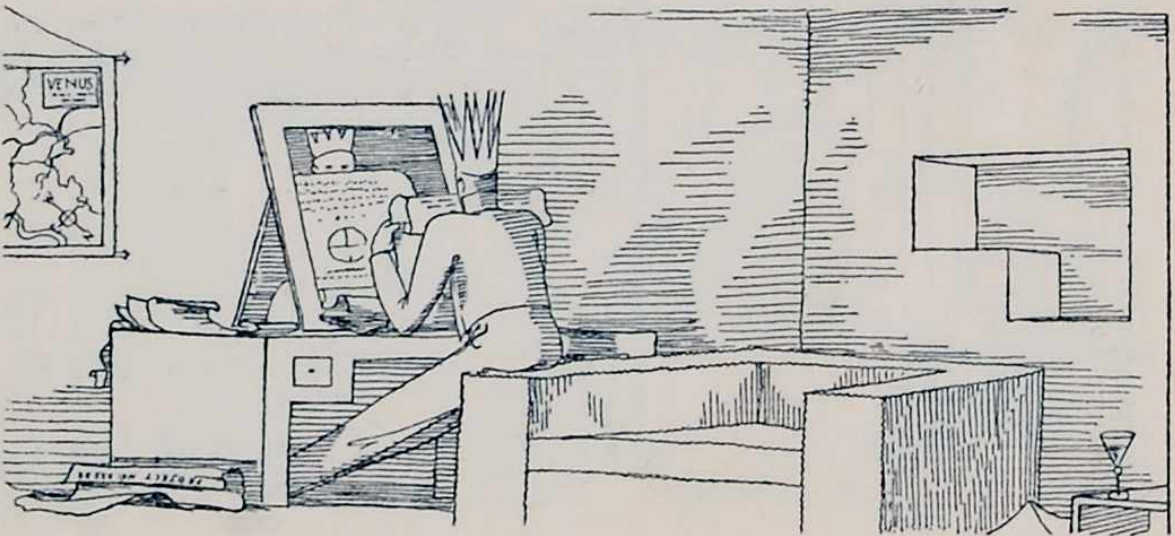
† *Esau* and *Iddleswidrick* are the Epstein and Mestrovitch of the planet Venus.



In fact, his existence would remain exactly the same, just as arduous, just as troublesome, his time just as little his own, his recreations planned ahead by officials who had no idea how to recreate, his privacy just as limited, his relations just as grudging, his freedom of expression and of transit nil, his liberty even less than the liberty of a people in the clutches of communism, everything in fact as before—*only in theory* however it was to be different ♦ One condition, perhaps, is difficult to determine ; his hopes of escape might indeed be less—or might be greater : it would all depend upon the enlightenment of whatever it was that really held the power, and this presumably would be some permanent and indispensable party of secret police——.

As he gradually digested the contents of the document in the mirror Cyrus wondered whether Monarchical Communism would deprive him of his right to choose his own horses ; he didn't care a damn who selected court officials.

PRUT ! exclaimed the Princess Frigidaire, “ Prut ! What a hussy that child Aminta is, to be sure ” ♦ Thus she complained to her husband, when one hour after the arrival of the



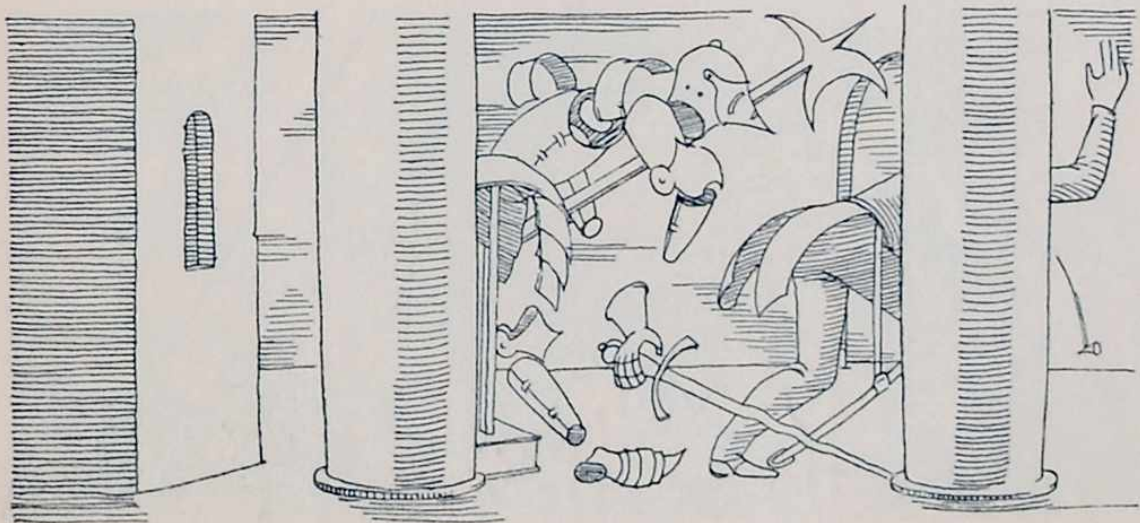
first two carriages at Castle Frigidaire, the carriage bearing Rosenslump, her youngest daughter and the Professor had not yet rolled up to the waiting drawbridge which had given such groans of welcome beneath the loads of the first two carriages passing over its ancient timbers.

“ Did I not always tell you that the child was a slattern ? ” pronounced the tired old Prince ♦ “ Some of us are born sluts,” he continued, beginning to pace to and fro among the heedless suits of armour, “ some achieve sluttishness, and others have their sluttishness thrust upon them—Aminta, my dear, has had her sluttishness thrust upon her.”

“ And what may you exactly mean by that ? ” snorted his indignant spouse.

“ Well . . . ” re-began her crotchety old consort—but while he hesitated his foot caught in a rusty steel greave which was loosely hanging from the knee of one of the inattentive suits of armour ; this crashed to the stone pavement with a clatter that proved sufficient to check the inchoate brandishments of what might certainly have been a conjugal rumpus.

When the echoes of that sharp metallic crash had died away among the turrets of the castle, the elderly Princess, gathering

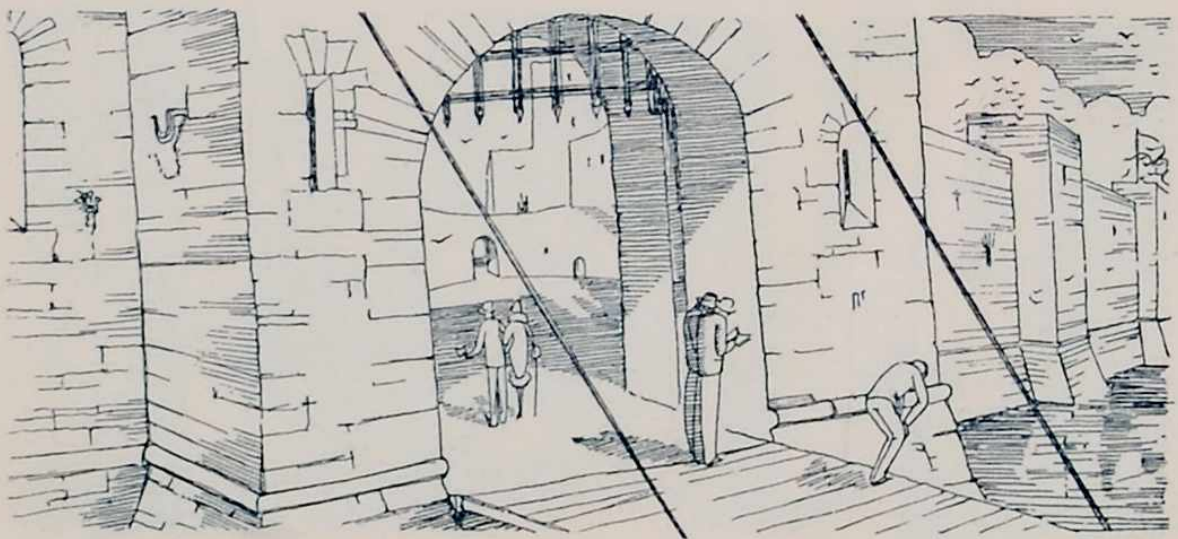


the skirts and flounces of her many, dusty petticoats about her, turned from the room with a weary wag of her frowsy, flaxen peruke ♦ “Fiddlesticks,” she sighed as she swep’ out ♦ “But I feel indisposed interiorly—Ee Gad—it is an attack of the vapours that I will be having shortly !” And she retired to her own wing in the company of two fidgety old ladies of the bedchamber.

“I am sure I heard a clash of arms somewhere,” remarked a tourist anxiously looking up from his Baedeker ♦ “Does it say that these ruins are inhabited ?”

“Haunted perhaps,” suggested a second rubberneck, craning his spectacled gaze towards the tall turrets which were beginning to shroud themselves in an early afternoon haze, “Just like that advertisement for Gibbs’ Dentifrice,” he added sentimentally ; and he parked meanwhile his spearmint upon a spike of some armorial portcullis which the erudite Baron Baedeker had noted in smaller type as having been restored during the nineteenth century by Viollet de Duc.

You may not have before heard that these two great benefactors to humanity became after death transmogrified to the planet Venus which is a special paradise for the especially conscientious.



WAY back in the capital Cyrus was discussing a possibility of marriage.

“She had a winning little manner, I thought,” he mused. “What think you?”

“Well Sire,” acquiesced the Master of Ceremonies, “since the practice of a King allying himself in marriage to the daughter of a foreign royal house has of late years been little adhered to, I can see no harm in Your Majesty choosing a princess of his own realm.”

For hours already they had debated the subject. For hours they continued to debate it.

“Should I? Would I regret doing it? Would I regret failing to do it? Would I be losing a happy opportunity or would I be sparing myself an infinity of worry by remaining a bachelor?” Such were the phrases that Cyrus turned over and over, with an ever indecisive tongue.

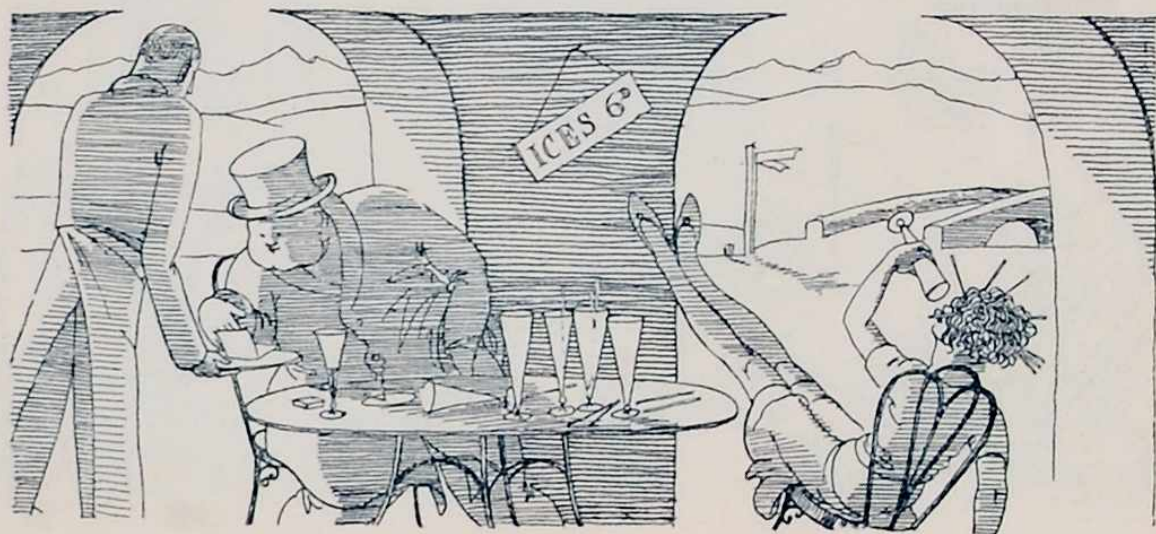
AMINTA had persuaded Rosenslump and the Professor to halt the carriage at a rest house some two miles before the road comes to the crossing of the River Frig.

Aminta was partial to ice-cream-sodas—she found old Rosen-



slump the most attractive man she had ever met, simply and solely because he allowed her to eat as many ice-cream-sodas as she could manage; and this had never happened to her before that she found someone who did not appear to wish to check her consumption of soda, cream and ice ♦ It was true that when the bill came Rosenslump after furious fumbling found that he had no cash, and that one of the postillions had to fork out the necessary amount to pay for all those vanilla and chocolate beverages which were now churning vehemently within the rapacious, young, female entrails that they were filling and chilling ♦ But Aminta thus occupied by the throes of digestion failed to notice her benefactor's irreadiness of coin.

With straws in her hair, like a phrenetic Ophelia, she wriggled back into her seat in the carriage ♦ During the time which it took to traverse the two miles of rough road before the crossing of the River Frig, the Professor expanded upon a theory of his, dealing with the different digestive actions of various races on the planet ♦ But shortly before they came within sight of the coiling river bed, Aminta, who hadn't been listening to a word, exclaimed—"Look, there's—a—bird—look—there's—a—bird sitting up there!" And true enough on the little brass rail



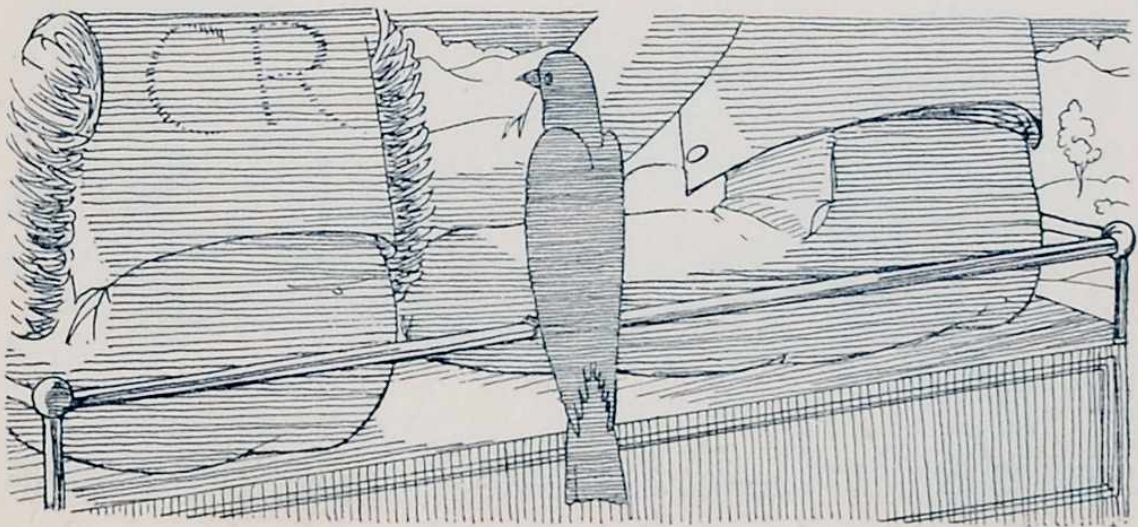
of the driver's seat the huddled form of a jackdaw was perched.

"It has been there all the time," said Rosenslump.

"What! And I haven't noticed it!" cried Aminta.

"If I had thought it would thrill you so much Princess Aminta, I would have pointed it out before," apologised Rosenslump.

The Professor was momentarily annoyed at having his exposition of Digestion in Relation to Ethnology thus interrupted but, recollecting that recently he had written an essay for the *Ornithological Gazette* entitled "Should our Feathered Friends be Granted the Franchise," he decided to switch his illuminating discourse into a digression upon Digestion in the Aviary. "For example," insisted the Professor, "the digestion of jays and jackdaws can even comprehend the consumption of stolen wedding rings and other such solid or heavy substances foreign to the ordinary abdomen." "You will see," he added putting on his spectacles, "this bird appears to be a *Corvus Monedula Familiaris Vulgaris* or 'house-jackdaw'. And by Aristotle!" he exclaimed, after closer inspection, "I swear it must be the same bird which laid an egg on the mantelpiece this morning, in the Princess' room."



The bird now thrust its head under its wing as if suddenly grown self-conscious.

“In consideration of the disturbing and indeed immodest behaviour of that bird this morning,” went on the Professor, “one might feel it indicated by the dictates of behaviour that it should summarily be shooed off.”

“Oh, please don’t frighten it away !” protested Aminta. “What has it done that is so *very* wrong ?”

“Well it did, as it were, gate-crash through your mother’s window,” insisted the Professor ♦ “But, as I was going to say, it is my experience that uninvited guests only redouble their uninvited appearances if discouraged ♦ Therefore I would consider it quite wise to ignore the bird” ♦ The Professor had, as I explained, a sense of irony but no sense of humour.

At last the carriage reached at any rate the brink of the ford ; for fording was the only form of crossing the River Frig at this point of its long and winding course ♦ The attention of the travellers therefore became diverted from the jackdaw to the business of avoiding as many as possible of the splashes thrown up by the wheels and hoofs of the cortège advancing through the turgid waters of the stream ♦ On the further strand the alluvium



of the river bed had been churned into a veritable slough which witnessed to the fact that the vanguard of that morning's cavalcade had passed that same way but a short while earlier ♦ The horses slipped and floundered in the mire where the wheels could get no grip ♦ And here they now stuck.

AT the court of Cyrus the latter had somehow decided to hold a council of some of the principal personages of his entourage, to discuss the project of his marriage which had that morning entered his head ♦ When two senators, three bishops, the Lord Chancellor and a lady judge had at last been persuaded by the Master of Ceremonies to convene, Cyrus, impatient demanded that the meeting should open.

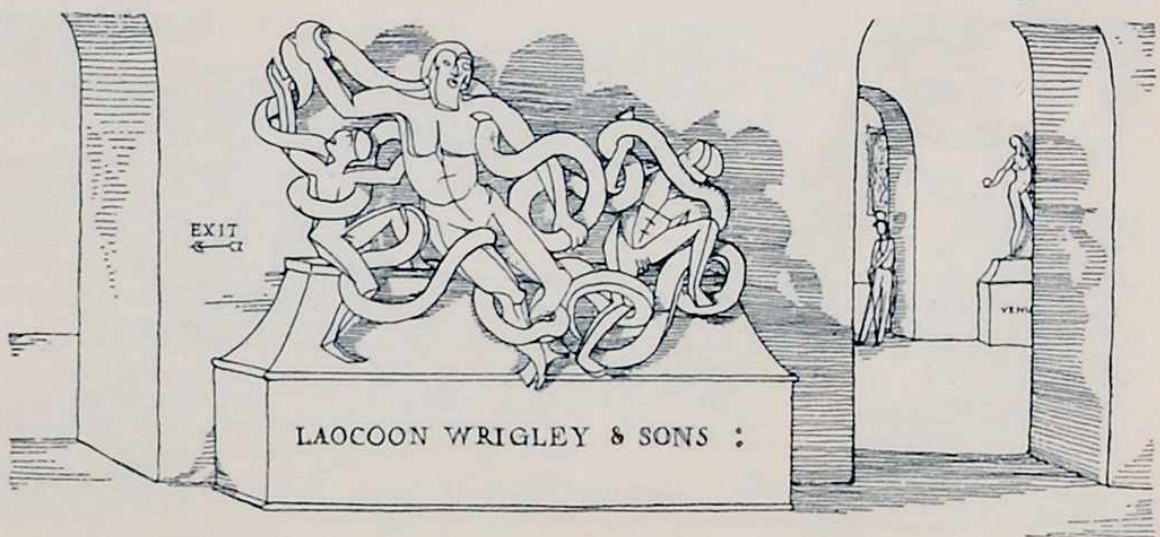
“Surely seven entries only, Your Majesty,” expostulated the Master of Ceremonies, “does not constitute a sufficient number of participants for a real Royal Council.”

“In that case,” postulated Cyrus, “the Lord Chancellor must count as five, and allow himself to be present not only as Lord Chancellor, but also in his capacities of Dictator, Keeper of the Privy Purse, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and father of Reginaldo di Bussoliera.”



The council was held in the cedarwood gallery overlooking the terraces and the lake ♦ I must give as a brief description of the cedarwood gallery, the following particulars, viz. : —that it was panelled throughout in stripped, bleached and pickled pinewood (which had been called cedarwood by the court before pinewood had come into fashion); parts however of the cornice and skirting were really of cedar, and the more elaborately ornamented portions over the doors were even of pearwood and had been so skilfully carved that one might have suspected the craftsman to have been Grinling Gibbons had that great artist lived upon the planet Venus ♦ At the north end of the room rose a semi-circular dais, above which three niches were set containing the elegant statues of Faith, Hope and Geography ; while at the opposite end in a shallow narthax beneath a peristyle writhed a group in plaster representing Messrs. Laocoon Wrigley and Sons caught in the toils of their Spearmint Chewing Gum.

On the dais the members of the small council grouped themselves, quite consciously picturesque—the bishops in lawn sleeves and gaiters, pectoral crosses clinking on their chests, and tapes extended on the exterior of their low-crowned high hats.

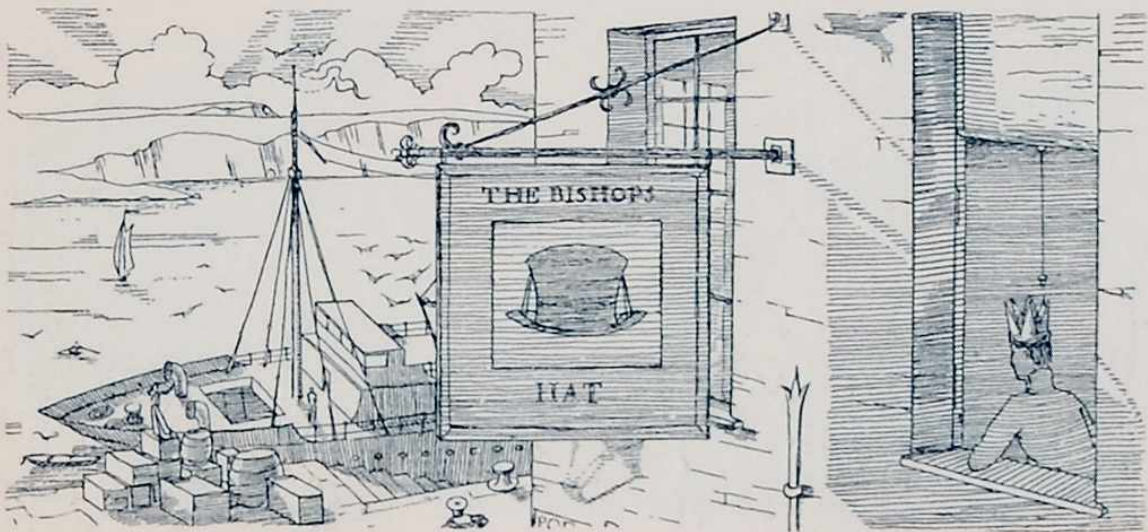


Cyrus was fascinated by the tapes on their hats : they reminded him imperatively of those wires on a ship which are usually to be seen extended among the rigging + Cyrus wondered whether the bishops wore those tapes in order to get into radio-telegraphic communication with Paradise.

Everybody present started by being very non-committal in their opinions of Aminta as possible queen ; they did not want to commit themselves.

NOW at the same time that back in the capital this council was being held, out at the deserted fording of the River Frig the carriage of Rosenslump, Stigler and Aminta remained stuck in the mud.

They could just see a distant bay of the sea from where they sat stuck behind their four plunging horses + Some way below the ford, the river hastened towards some rapids, which hurrying and hurrying plunged in turn into a torrent ; this, a cool and bright cascade, leapt thunderously down from the dry upper plateau to a lower swampy plain far beneath—ribbons of river and ribbons of road meandered across this narrow plain to the ocean's verge + There was a slight evening haze of heat over



that malaria infested region ♦ But the far glint of surf striking upon white shingle flashed quite visibly through the mist.

Aminta and Rosenslump conversed at first but little ♦ *She* was preoccupied with visceral concerns: *he* was alarmed at their somewhat perilous predicament, and from time to time squeaked little nervous injunctions to the postillions ♦ The sun is now sinking in the west ♦ The horses grow exhausted and cease to plunge ♦ Aminta's indigestion is also stilled with evening. The weary horses, abandoning all effort, lie down in the mud. The scarlet feathers of the sunset moult into the sea ♦ All idea of extraction, for that night at any rate, is abandoned.

The night was hot, much hotter than the previous night at the inn had been ♦ It was moreover, just as still ♦ The murmur of the river sounded like the warm earth breathing in her sleep; while the far thunder of the falls came insistently, now louder, now softer with each slow breath of air, just as if the earth were *also* snoring ♦ By and by Rosenslump imagined that he could hear the buzz of mosquitoes coming up from the marshy plain. He was habitually afraid of catching a chill, or perhaps it might even be a fever ♦ Yet to-night he found himself buoyed up not to care so much, not to dread anything ♦ He was made new and



brave and manly by a sense that he was now placed in the position of protector to this fairest young princess 'in distress'—Why 'in distress' should be the term his fancy selected to describe the position, was more than he could explain to that psychologist, Professor Stigler, when the latter asked him his reasons ♦ Actually Aminta was anything but distressed: she was enjoying the novelty of the situation ♦ But Rosenslump had in his youth paraded a plump baritone voice, singing ballads at charity concerts: and in ballads 'fair ladies' were always 'in distress.' There was something about Aminta, which made any man, with a spark of sentiment in his system, feel that she was there to be protected ♦ This was one of the principal ingredients of her charm.

Somewhere in a thicket on the far side of the stream a nightingale began to trill ♦ The Professor Stigler had dropped off to sleep, so also had the postillions ♦ This left Aminta and Rosenslump in a certain warm solitude, alone together in the universe, listening to the voice of the nightingale as it were the song of some distant planet far away in space calling to their planet Venus—a world serenading another world.

"What is that light up there ahead?" whispered Rosenslump.

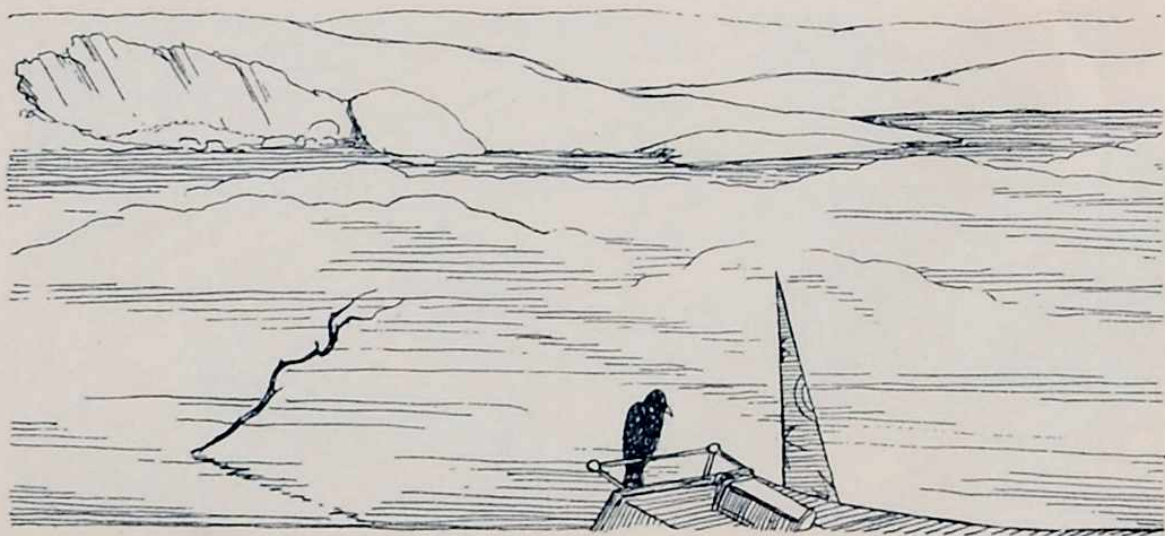


Stigler roused for a moment from sleep, grunted without opening his eyes : “ It is the North Star.”

“ But it is *not* the North Star,” whispered back Aminta, “ for I am convinced that it must be the lights of my father’s castle on the hill.”

“ Then if we are so close to your father’s castle as all that,” said Rosenslump, “ we have only to get out and walk ! ” But, suddenly regretting that he had made this simple and obvious suggestion, he added : “ No—that would be dangerous ! For surely our feet would stick in the mud of this quicksand.” Rosenslump was feeling, for the first time in years, so happy that he would gladly have stayed there for ever ♦ Yet he wished that he could think of some way of getting Stigler out of the carriage.

Eventually Rosenslump too dozed off, he awoke with a slight sense of chill, together with the pale feeling of emptiness which precedes the dawn ♦ The night had lost its lustre : and indeed the air had become a little chilly : dew had settled upon his dust-coat ♦ But already in the east the wan sky was becoming gradually exalted like a whole people of doves filling the oriental slopes of heaven with their wings of grey ; until the fringe of one distinct cloud, lower than the rest, was suddenly



tinged with pink ♦ Then one by one other clouds, becoming infused with the same flush, a flock of flamingoes seemed now to have chased the doves away.

Behind the drowsing postillions something on the brass rail of the carriage fluttered ♦ It was the dusky little jackdaw which had roosted there for the night ♦ Lifting its head from under its wing, it gave one quick beady glance towards the inmates of the carriage ; then unexpectedly it sprang into perky flight ♦ The black speck of it was soon lost to sight among the cloudy flamingoes of the waking sky ♦ The dew-drops which it had shaken from its feathers, falling on Aminta's forehead, woke the child.

“ Day-break ! ” she cries, stretching her limbs ♦ “ Gosh I feel frowsy ! ” Then leaning over the rail of the carriage she catches sight of the reflection of her face mirrored in the clear surface of the sliding river ♦ She rubs the grains of sleep from the corners of her eyes, exclaiming : “ Look, all the dust of yesterday still on my face and arms ! I don't know what *you* think about it, but *I'm* going to take my morning bath to freshen me up *as per usual* ♦ What are your theories about bathing, Professor ? ” she adds, giving Stigler a dig in the ribs.



“ To a Turkish bath I am anything but averse,” grunts the Professor ♦ “ And if the water is warm enough in an ordinary bath, I find *that* an excellent location in which to peruse my papers upon Relativity ♦ But to a chilly dip in the river, I say *no* ! ”

Aminta is wonderfully devoid of any shyness ♦ The most naïve of maidens, if asked whether she is not ashamed—she replies with all the *aplomb* of a young Lord Nelson—“ What is shame ? ” The fact is she realises that her lithe, adolescent figure is faultless ♦ In another minute she has slipped right out of her dusty clothing and the glassy waters are embracing her slim knees.

On beholding her firm young nakedness, the whiteness of her youthful breasts, the glimmer of her graceful shoulders and the svelte swoop of her ivory flank, both coachman and postillions roused themselves to stare and goggle with sudden interest : the Professor Stigler started writing something in a notebook ; while the horses turned their heads ♦ “ Ah ” all the four steeds whinnied with approval ! As for Rosenslump, he felt something, now cold, now burning, grip him below the heart ♦ He might even have fainted away with this sudden violent emotion, had not Aminta broken somewhat the spell of her serene young loveliness by giving a screech like a tunnelling train to express how chill



the water was ♦ And thereupon she commenced to plunge and splash.

It was a new emotion this which stirred now within Rosenslump ♦ He was fifty-six years of age and had not been in love with anything or anybody since his first wife had died twenty years before ♦ Not having been a crook financier, but merely an inefficient one, he had felt no compulsion to commit suicide when his financial crash came ♦ Now his honesty and his dogged attachment to life were being rewarded.

One of the grooms was really quite good-looking, but Aminta did not notice him any more ♦ She preferred her obese Mr. Rosenslump, though he was round and crinkling like a drying apple ♦ And as for Cyrus, the languishing monarch, Aminta had not given two thoughts to him since she had left the capital.

Aminta was rather a common child ♦ She liked the idea of being kind-hearted, but she would never have had the intelligence to perceive that the rich and splendid, lonely and exalted might need her sympathy quite as much as the ageing and ugly and humble ♦ So she gave freely her affections to the latter, whose pathos was more obvious, and she forgot her dreams of



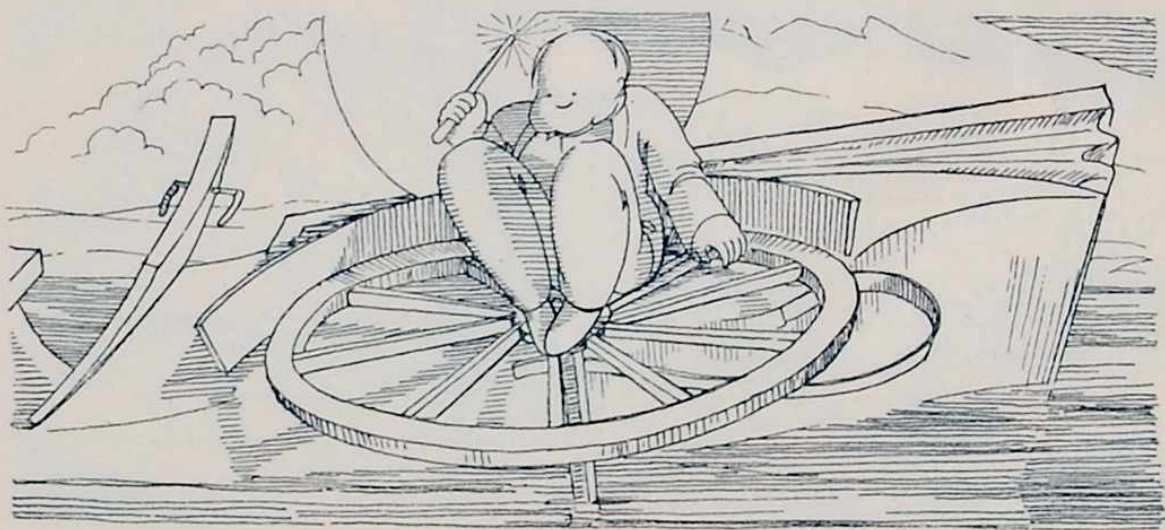
youth and loveliness ♦ For to Aminta beauty was not an essential need, and good looks no longer a criterion of attraction ♦ It is lucky for the Rosenslumps of this world that there are quite a good many girls who have the same reactions as Aminta.

Compare Rosenslump's romance with the gallant adventures of Aminta's mother ♦ They neither of them altogether escape the danger of being judged sordid.

The Princess Frigidaire was hungry, with the hunger of an old woman who savagely snatches back after receding life, not wishing to retire gracefully, refusing to be superannuated from passion ♦ But there is nothing forced in the awakening of this new and anxious love within the tired and battered breast of Rosenslump. It comes to him like a sudden natural phenomenon, like a fresh fountain breaking out of a bulky old rock, like a bright source of pure mineral water welling up within him and making him feel as fresh as a crocus.

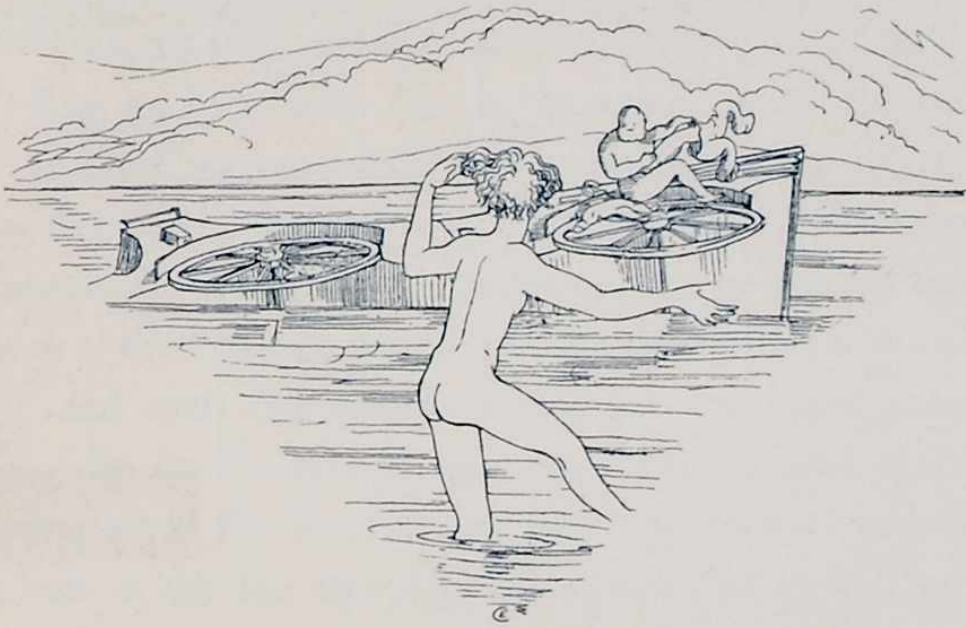
“ Rosey, why don't you jump in too ? ” piped the maiden, splashing ♦ She had been colonel among the girl guides of the Frig district, and never, all her life, escaped the “ jolly ” tone.

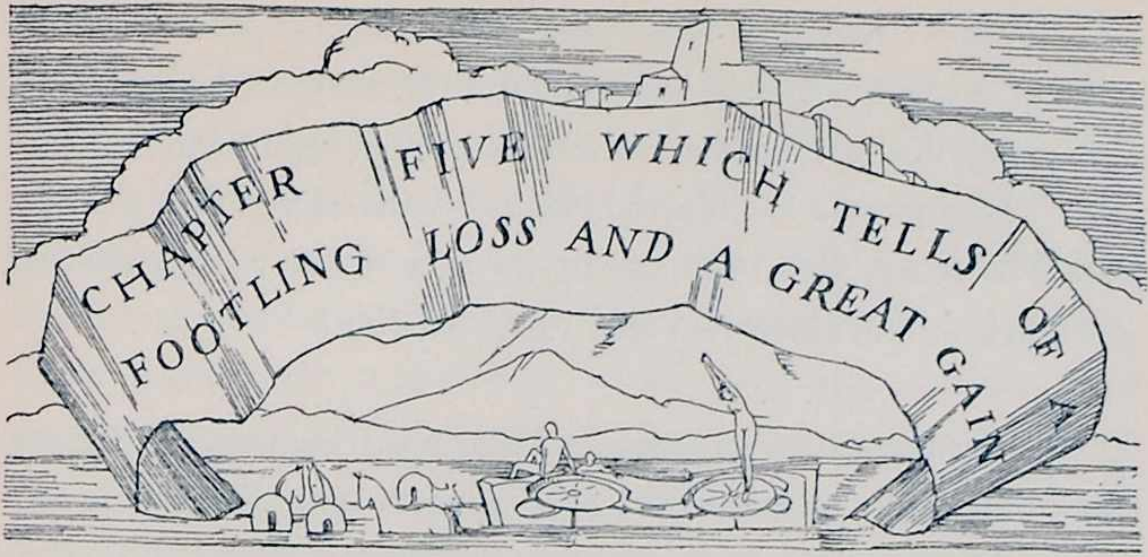
The “ jolliness ” suddenly communicated itself to Rosenslump ♦ Overcoming in an instant a whole lifetime of shy self-



consciousness, he divested himself of shiny, black, business suit, Jaeger underwear, tummy band and all ♦ Like a smiling god of Chinese plenty he stood poised for a moment on the carriage step, his plump hands folded upon his enormous stomach. Then with a river-shaking plop he too dropt into the stream. Hotei bathed with the Greek Hebe : and both splashed and laughed a great deal.

“ Es war der ewige Geist der Liebe, der tausend Formen hat.”





THUS, while back in the battlemented capital the council of the King was sitting and continued sitting all that day and the next, down at the ford of the River Frig in their barouche sat Aminta, Rosenslump, the coachman, the postillions and the Professor: the first two would pass the time with an occasional bathe: and even the postillions and the coachman ended by taking a dip on the second morning; but no need of bodily freshening urged the Professor to strip and plunge—he had had a hot bath at the Inn two days before and that would last him for a week.

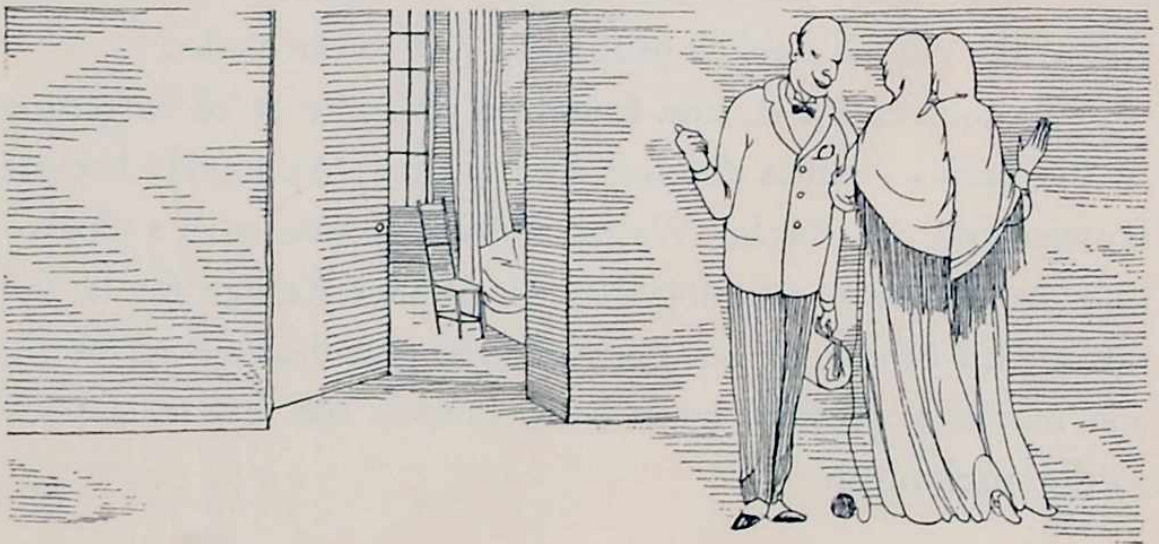
On the third day, Aminta exclaimed, “I’m getting hungry. Let’s risk it and wade to the bank. We might as well walk the rest of the way, it’s only a mile and a half to the castle!”

So they risked it, and found no difficulty at all in getting to the bank. Aminta did not even get her feet muddy because Rosenslump did the Sir Walter Raleigh gesture with a cloak—only he was more cunning than Sir Walter Raleigh for he did not use his own cloak but borrowed the postillion’s mackintosh, and moreover profited by it being himself the first to step on to the mackintosh.

“ Ah ! ” remarked Rosenslump directing his gaze above the crest of a clump of chestnut trees some two hundred yards away. “ Ah I had not recalled that we were already in sight of the castle.”

“ Hadn’t you ! ” blurted Aminta with incredulity ♦ “ But, dear Mr. Rosey, it’s been staring down at us ever since we first got stuck in that slush two and a half days ago.”

UP at the castle in question, the aged Princess had been making a number of scenes or rows or palavers over the disappearance of her youngest daughter ♦ After the first twenty-four hours of waiting, the old and noble dame became dead white with worry—she subsequently, during the course of the following thirty-six hours, turned blue, then green, then purple with the same agitation ♦ She suffered also from other disturbing symptoms of a less chameleonic nature ♦ These were first put down to this tense anxiety over Aminta failing to turn up ; but on the second day a new physician was called in, and the latter suggested the obvious explanation for these other symptoms, and it was soon after certified that the Princess was going to have a child ♦ When this rumour began to circulate between the massive walls of the castle the excitement and astonishment became so intense that

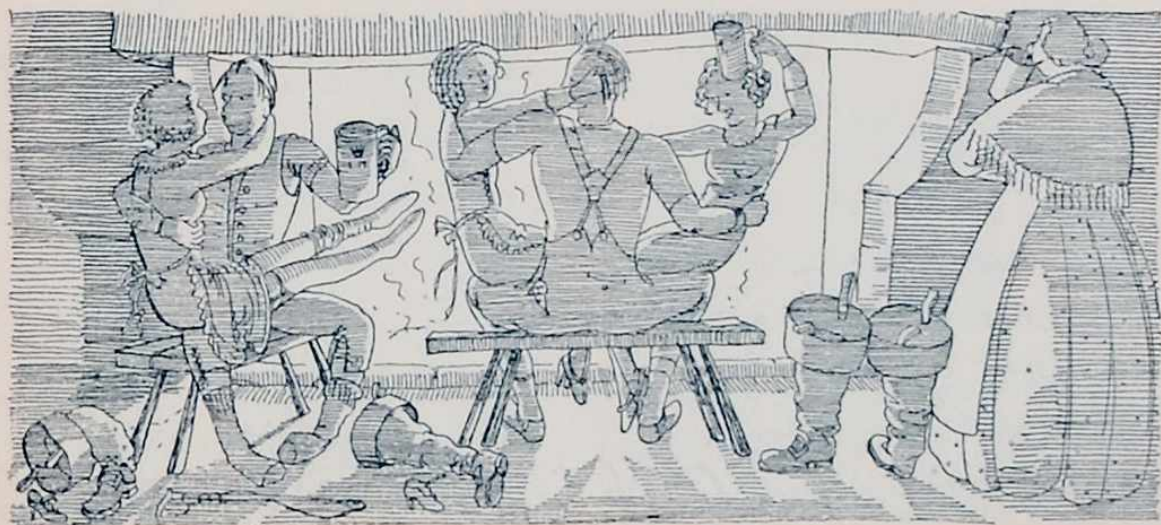


Aminta's absence ceased to be the thing of great concern, and the messengers and spies who were about to be sent out to make a search of the whole countryside took off their jackboots once more and remained by the stillroom fire eating scones with the housekeeper who was lax enough to allow them a lighthearted laundry girl on each of their knees and a flagon of ale in the hand. Thus began quite a carousing in the servants' quarters, with everyone drinking to the health of the possible heir to Frigidaire.

When Aminta and her two escorts arrived back on foot before the main door of the castle, they rang impressive iron bells and knocked with colossal knockers, but no one came to open the castle's ponderous and sullen-looking door ♦ After scraping for three minutes what little mud there was off their boots they discovered that the key was in the lock on the outside of the door ♦ They had not at first realized that it was a key because it was such a curious, curly object wrought into the semblance of an heraldically-waisted lion, rampant and regardant.

“ I've been away so long ♦ At least it seems so long,” explained Aminta, “ that I had quite forgotten that the key looked that way.”

In the corner of the tapestried hall they eventually came upon a living person ♦ It was the old Prince Frigidaire cleaning out his pipe.



“Pappa, I have returned to you safe and unscathed” cried Aminta ♦ “But why was there no one at the drawbridge to-day and no one to open the front door.”

“Ask your mother—you know I don’t run this house,” grunted the old prince.

“Pappa, this is Mr. Rosenslump whom you know.”

“I suspected that all along,” snorted the old prince.

“All along what, pappa?” inquired Aminta.

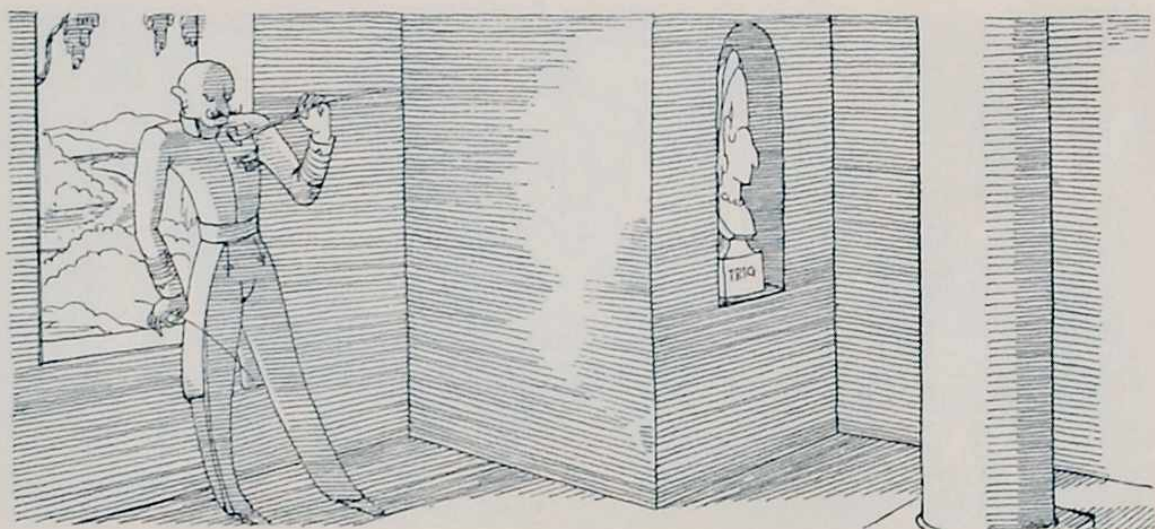
“All along the journey back of course,” replied the old prince with another snort.

“And this pappa, is the Professor Stigler, whom you have also met.”

“A lot of good you were Mr. Slumpinroses as an escort to my wife and me! . . . a lot of good, I say, you were.” . . . A bout of almost apoplectic choking checked the flow of invective which was about to come from the old nobleman.

Rosenslump took the opportunity to appear sympathetic. “Shall I ring for a menial to come and slap you on the back, Your Highness?” he asked the choking prince.

“Where is mamma?” pecked Aminta ♦ She was accustomed to see her father choke.



“Upstairs,” spluttered the old prince as soon as he could get some air back into his lungs ♦ “She was so worried about your absence that she is going to have another baby and has lost her seed pearls again,” he stated, speaking into a couple of nutshells to be brief.

“But she hasn’t had a baby for sixteen years, ever since *I* was born in fact!” exclaimed Aminta ♦ “How can this be true *pappa?*”

As sole answer the aged prince handed her the two nutshells.



Now far away in some adjoining wing of the castle the voice of the aged princess was heard to shout . . . “but look again under the sofa cushions!”

“Who is she shouting at?” asked Aminta.

“Those two fidgety old ladies of the bedchamber are helping her to look for her seed pearls,” explained Aminta’s father as tersely as he could, trying to conceal the fact that the corners of his mouth wanted to grin with a certain grim humour.

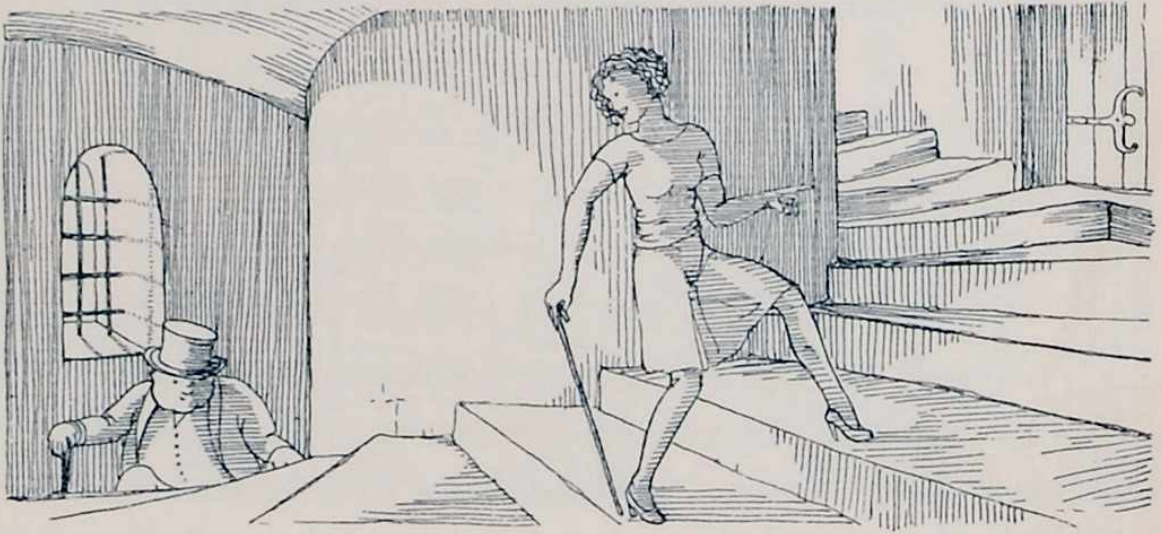
A regular thumping sound was now heard to come from the adjoining wing ♦ “Are they beating the carpets do you suppose?” said Aminta.

“Having a Saint Vitus’s *thé dansant* I expect,” suggested Aminta’s father with the same rigid suppression of his facial

expression ♦ “Go up, won’t you, and tell her you are back.”

“Come on with me,” said Aminta to Rosenslump ♦ “We must get this over.”

And hand in hand the two of them went up a corkscrew stairway which led to the wing in which ever more distinctly they could hear her mother shouting: “My pearls! But where can my seed pearls be!”



AT the court of Cyrus forty-four miles away the small council was still sitting in session trying hard to *make* the monarch *make* up his mind one way or another if he would marry Aminta or no ♦ All the members of the council had so long ago been bored stiff that their legs had all gone to sleep far above the thighs and they had by now got ‘pins and needles’ in the jugular vein ♦ Cyrus hoped desperately that someone would go ahead and make up his mind for him.

“What’s the good of a Dictator,” he was thinking, “if he cannot give just those casting numbers of votes necessary on every issue ♦ I must really get rid of di Bussoliera and find somebody who knows my own mind for me!”



THE Princess Frigidaire was inordinately proud of her seed pearl collar, though the almost microscopic beads of which it was composed more resembled those grains which one wipes out of the corners of one's eyes after a long train journey than they resembled the products of the industrious oyster.

"Look between the pages of last year's Home Chat," she was shouting, "look in the bidet, look everywhere!"

"How did you come to lose them mamma?" questioned Aminta.

"How did I come to lose them, you exasperating child! They were lost in the confusion caused by losing you," yelled her mother.

"Possibly they might have got . . ." one of the ladies of the bedchamber with a shaking head began to suggest.

"Fiddlesticks," interrupted the peppery old princess, without waiting to be told the suggestion.

"It's my private opinion," said the other lady of the bedchamber with a convulsive twitching, "that some one of those tourists, who prowl around in charabancs so much, may have taken them."

"You mean to say that you think some tourist who came

around here may have been a thief?" demanded the old princess threateningly.

"Well not exactly a thief, perhaps," quavered the shaky lady of the bedchamber ♦ "But a tourist might have unintentionally picked them up and taken them home in his rucksack as a *souvenir*, you know."

"Let it be understood that I will have no distinctions made between kleptomania and theft in this house—castle, I mean" roared the old princess, more furious than ever.

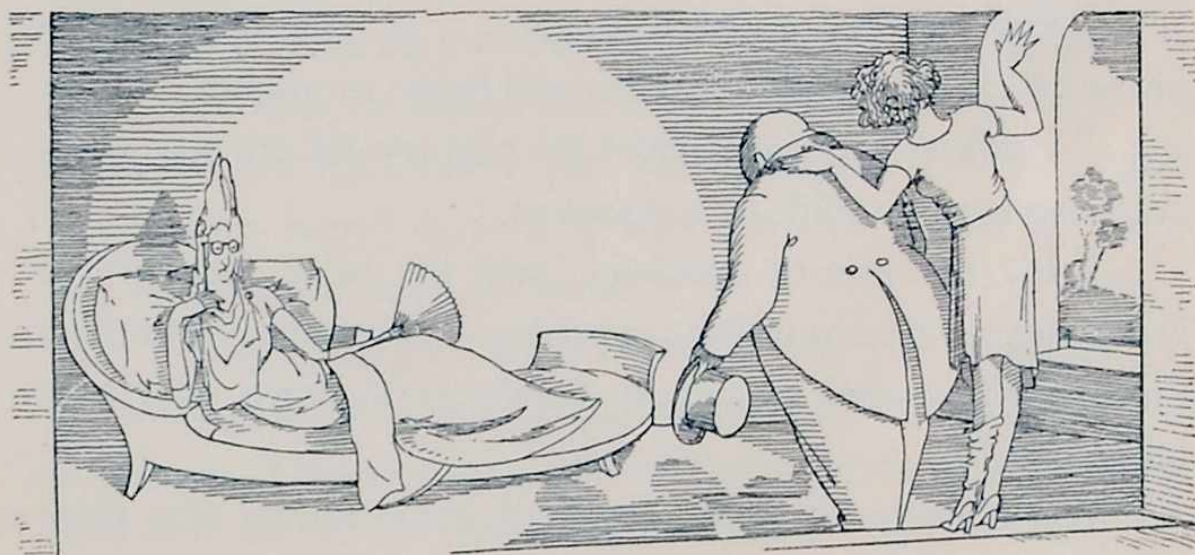
"But they always take souvenirs, Madam," quacked this second lady of the bedchamber sticking her ground far more bravely than her colleague had done ♦ "Usually," she went on "it is only a piece of lead piping off the roof but . . ."

"And is that why the roof leaks so much? Why was I never told?" bellowed the infuriated mistress of the castle.

"Mamma," broke in Aminta, "this is Mr. Rosenslump whom you know."

"Why bring *him* up?"

"Mr. Rosenslump wants . . ." began Aminta, but she was interrupted by the entry of her seven sisters, who proceeded to deluge her with questions ♦ On hearing how her carriage had



got stuck at the edge of the river-bed they exclaimed all of one voice : “ Oh we could see all the time from the schoolroom windows that there was a carriage stuck down there at the ford, but we didn't suppose for a moment that it would be yours ! ” Then they all stepped back in a well-ordered line and began to titter and expatiate in perfect unison : “ What a coincidence ! ” and “ How small the world is really ! ”

“ Cease this chatter ! ” commanded their mother with a bang of her steel buttonhook upon each of their seven skulls, ranged as they were in a well graded row before her ♦ She hit them with such precision that she might have been playing scales on the xylophone ♦ “ Now,” she snarled, turning again to her youngest daughter, “ confess as to what really delayed you these two and a half days.”

BACK at the court of Cyrus the discussion still in debate had reached a certain climax.

“ But you see I don't know the girl so terribly well yet,” the monarch had been saying from time to time during the course of the previous forty-eight hours.

Yet at last a fixed decision was penned and pinned that he



should certainly marry Aminta ♦ It was now left for the debate to slide into new channels and the question of 'when' he should marry her became the new issue ♦ This was to be the anticlimax.

"Don't you think I ought to sort of get to know her a bit better?" the monarch was now pleased to reiterate.

MAMMA, I swear to every word of it!" cried Aminta. "Besides the carriage and the horses and the two postilions and Rosey's valet—I mean Mr. Rosenslump's man servant—are still stuck in the mud to witness if I lie; unless they have by now had help from a fire station or a barge or something."

"You were on the point of saying something else, when your sisters came in," pursued her mother remorselessly.

"I was just going to say, as a matter of fact," whimpered Aminta, "that Mr. Rosenslump wants to ask you if you will be his mother-in-law."

"What? But the man must be mad! Does he know that you can't speak Latin or play the harpsichord?" bellowed the old princess, beating wildly about the sofa, there being no bush to beat about.



“ Madam,” commenced Rosenslump in a very small voice, “ Madam, I find your daughter Aminta quite accomplished enough as it is without . . . ”

“ What means have you got . . . ” interrupted the old Princess, “ on what means do you expect, Mr. Stickinthemud, to support my daughter in the manner to which she has been accustomed ? ”

“ Mr. Rosenslump gave me seven ice-cream-sodas on the way back Mamma.”

To the Princess Frigidaire, who still thought in the terms of those days when an ice-cream-soda was a daring innovation, this was an alarming proof of the rapid growth of degeneration in the next generation ♦ (Whereas to the mind of the Professor Stigler, seeing Aminta consume with such ease so much synthetic cream, it had seemed to prove the hardihood of the stomach in the younger generation).

The Princess Frigidaire was heard now to gasp aghast : “ Oh my cheild ! What next ? ”

“ Well, ice-cream-sodas are simply oozing with vitamins, Mamma,” claimed Aminta ♦ “ It was just *them* which kept me from starving during those two and a half days stuck in the mud.”



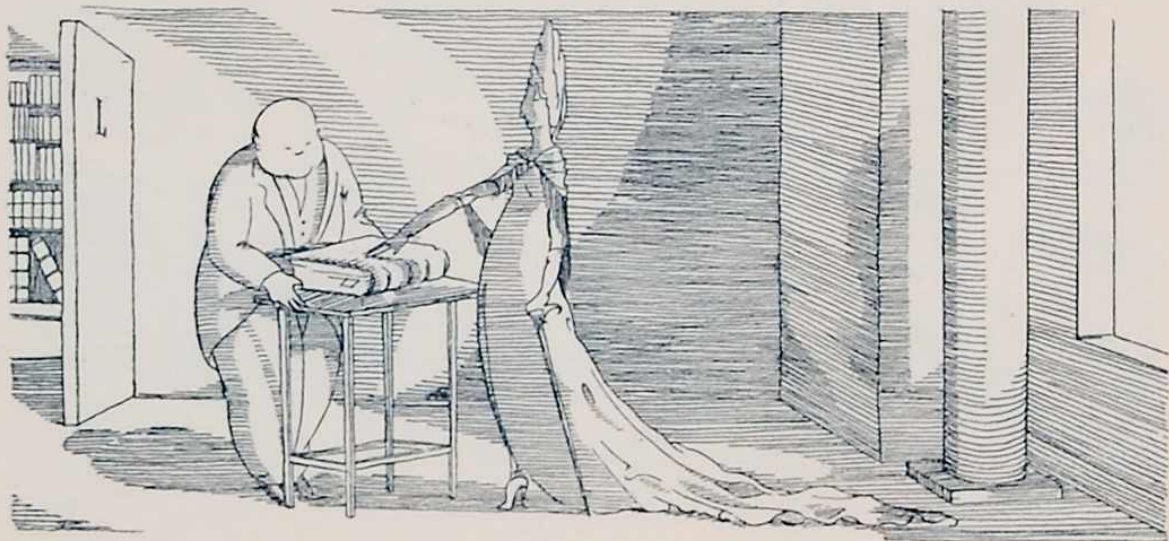
“ Grammar, Grammar ! Must that also go by the board ” cried the old princess holding up her gristly wrists in real dismay. “ Try and remember that *noblesse oblige*, my child.”

Hearing their mother’s words of admonition, the seven other daughters showed their support of her doctrines by straight-way forming fours and starting in one voice to recite the catechism : ‘ What is your name ?—N or M.’

“ Madam,” spoke up Rosenslump courageously—the lump of emotion at one side of his throat was making his Adam’s apple look like a mere gooseberry by comparison—“ Madam, I still have an office with three telephones on the fifty-seventh floor of the great Shouttattit Building ” ♦ As he began speaking Rosenslump started surreptitiously to darn the left elbow of his greasy, black suit where it had originally been worn through in the first collapse of the stock-market six or seven years before.

— — “ And Madam, I will make a proposition to you. Will you consent to my marrying your daughter if I discover who stole your seed-pearls ? ”

“ Yes, Mr. Stickinthemud,” retorted the prickly old Princess. “ I can safely accept that proposition, because you seem to me certainly much too stupid ever to discover anything.”

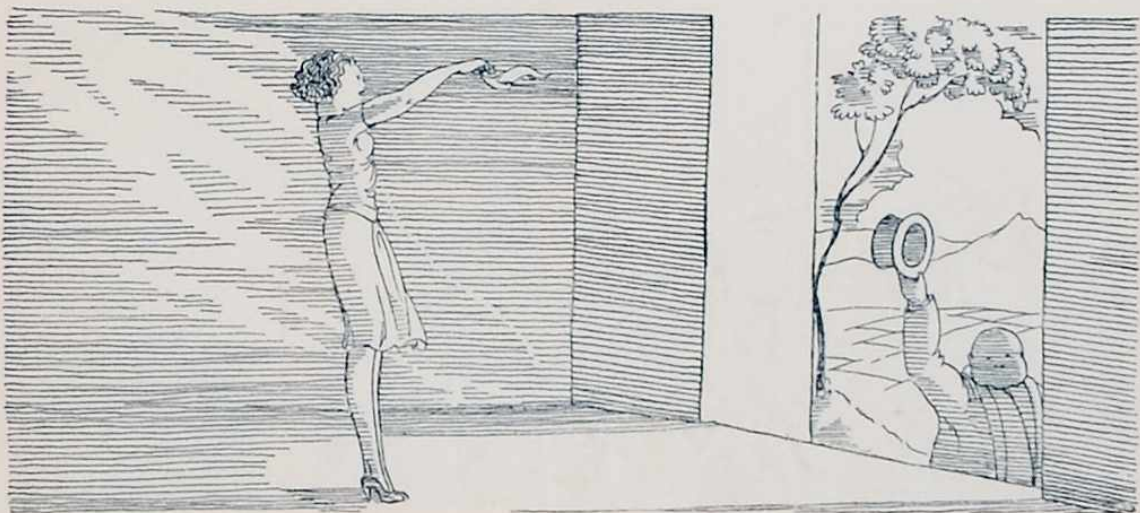


“Will you be witness to her oath upon that promise gentlemen?” cried Rosenslump who had not by any means entirely lost his acumen.

At first nobody answered, since apart from Rosenslump there were only ladies present ♦ However, the old princess was finally persuaded to swear upon a copy of the Pilgrim’s Progress that she would strictly respect any results that might arise from her rash promise.

Then Rosenslump, his shares having definitely risen some few sixteenths of a point, embraced Aminta *au revoir* and started off back to the capital of Cyrus with the Professor Stigler.

WHEN the return of the Professor Stigler was announced in the capital, bell boys were immediately sent to oblige him to come and join the council which was still being held in the cedarwood gallery ♦ The commandeering of his presence to the council had been considered by the two senators, the lady judge and others to be the severest and most adequate punishment for that treasonous paper which he had written in invisible ink.



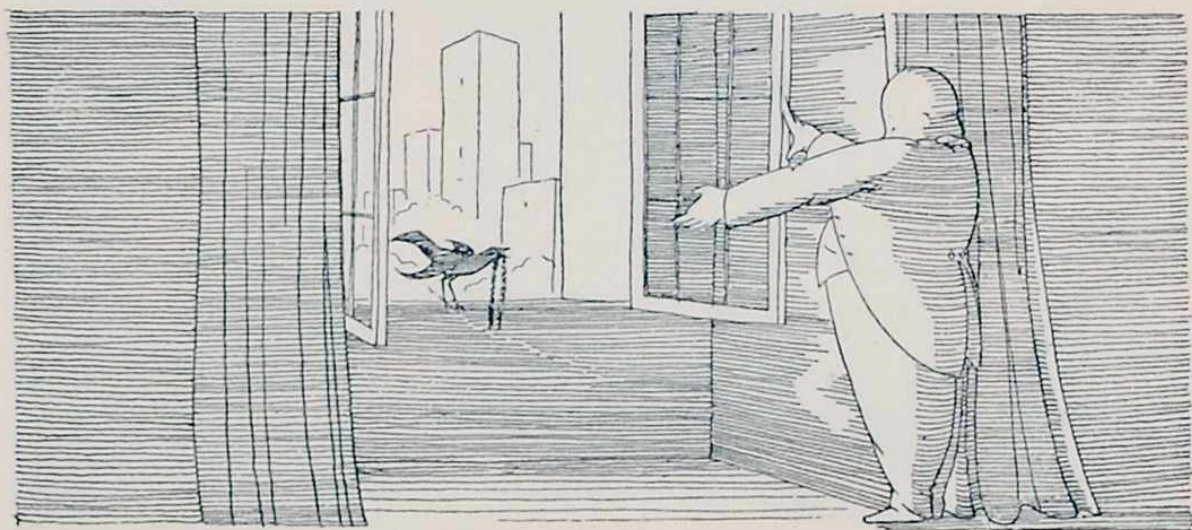
Rosenslump was also obliged to come with him, which wasn't exactly fair.

"What?" commenced the Dictator, "that is to say *how* do you defend your action, Sir, in compiling and recording in treacherous ink that treasonable treatise against our most sanctified monarchy?"

Opportunely for the Professor at this same moment his friend Rosenslump rose and ran to one of the deep-vaulted windows of the gallery crying, "There! I have discovered the thief" ♦ Whereat he opened the window to let the jackdaw fly in. It was the jackdaw which had laid the fourth egg ♦ It was carrying the missing seed pearl collar in its impertinent beak.

Everybody was laughing so much (except the Professor who had forgotten how to laugh) that nobody thought of trying to catch the jackdaw ♦ The result was that the bird soon flew out of the same window with the seed-pearl collar still in its beak, and neither have ever been seen again.

Nobody seemed at that moment very upset however; and when the general hilarity had eventually subsided, the Professor Stigler stood up and announced: "Your Majesty the King and Honourable Members of the Council, I have now a piece of



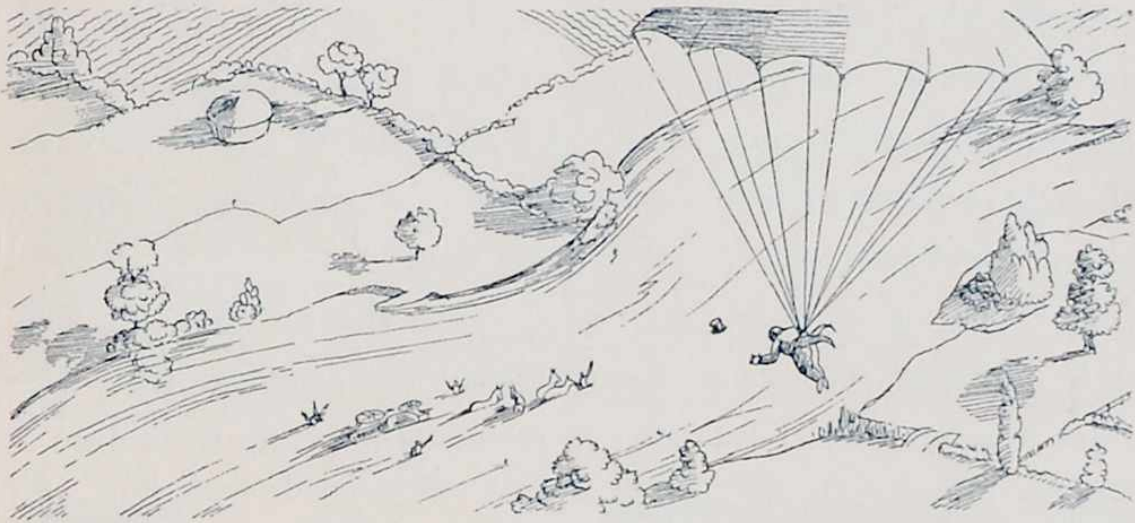
news which may interest you."

"What's that? What's that?"

"The Princess Aminta, preferring to embrace an existence of impecunious embarrassment to one of regal discomfort, has chosen as her future husband not Cyrus the King," cried the Professor with nasal emphasis, "but Rosenslump, our good friend the bankrupt."

"Oh!" uttered Cyrus in a hollow voice, "Oh!"

And this was the anti-climax ♦ The whole long council had been to no more purpose than had it been a naval disarmament conference ♦ Everyone was grateful to the Professor for finally breaking up the meeting ♦ So they all went home and got a wash and brush up 2d.



Then Rosenslump took the next passenger aero-liner going north in the direction of Frigidaire Castle ♦ There was no landing-ground anywhere near the village of Frigidaire, so he was obliged to leap out upon the tender mercies of a parachute. He landed with quite a bump near the bank of the River Frig.

"How lucky I was to miss landing in the river," he said to his valet whom he found standing near him as soon as he had extricated himself from under the extinguishing mound of drab

silk which was the parachute + “ How do you happen to be here ? ” he added loosening a foot from meshes of rope.

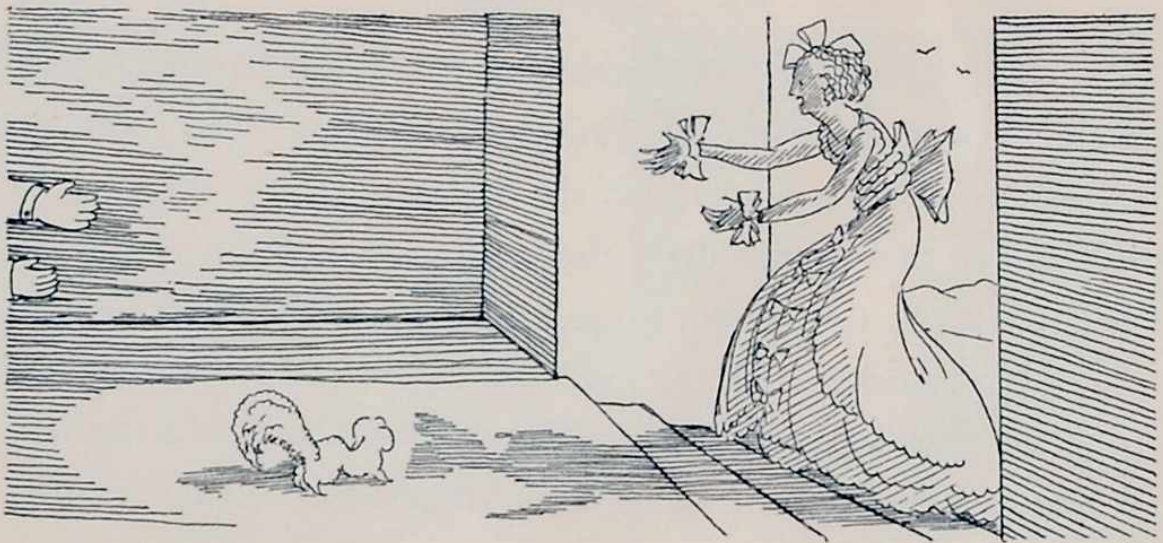
“ Luckier still, you was not to land in that there mud ! We is still in it,” explained the valet, “ Horses an’ all.”

But Rosenslump was feeling so elated by the prospect of his marriage that even this couldn’t depress him.

By attaching one end of the ropes of the parachute to a tree trunk and the other end to the shafts of the carriage, and by slipping the silk sail of the chute under the wheels they were at last able to extricate the barouche + And away they went, grandly up to the castle door.

When Rosenslump told the Princess Frigidaire that he had discovered the thief who had stolen her seed-pearls, she turned towards him grimly, slowly and stiffly ; at first she did not fully realise the significance of his words + Then her face shut with an almost audible click as if she feared that he might read her thoughts + After a silence of some twenty seconds she asked in a strained and acid tone : “ Where are they ? ”

“ Oh, the thief has still got them + But it was only in the agreement that I was to discover who the thief was, not that I was also to recover the pearls from him.”



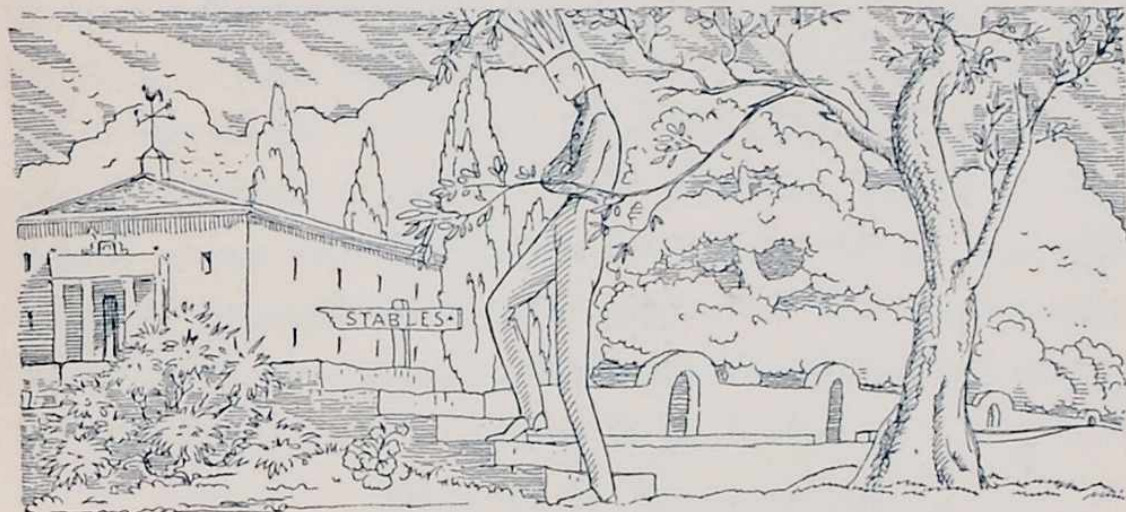
The old Princess now knew herself to be doubly defeated.

“Take her!” she groaned—“Take my daughter, Aminta. Though you may surely regret it until your dying day—she is your’s now for the wedding.”

Aminta appeared in the doorway, gleeful, covered with bows, looking like a veritable candy-box on legs. She flung her arms round her affianced Rosenslump, crying.

“Who was the thief by the way?” asked the old princess—as, disgusted, she turned to go.

“A jackdaw, Madam, simply a *Corvus Monedula Familiaris Vulgaris*,” replied Rosenslump.

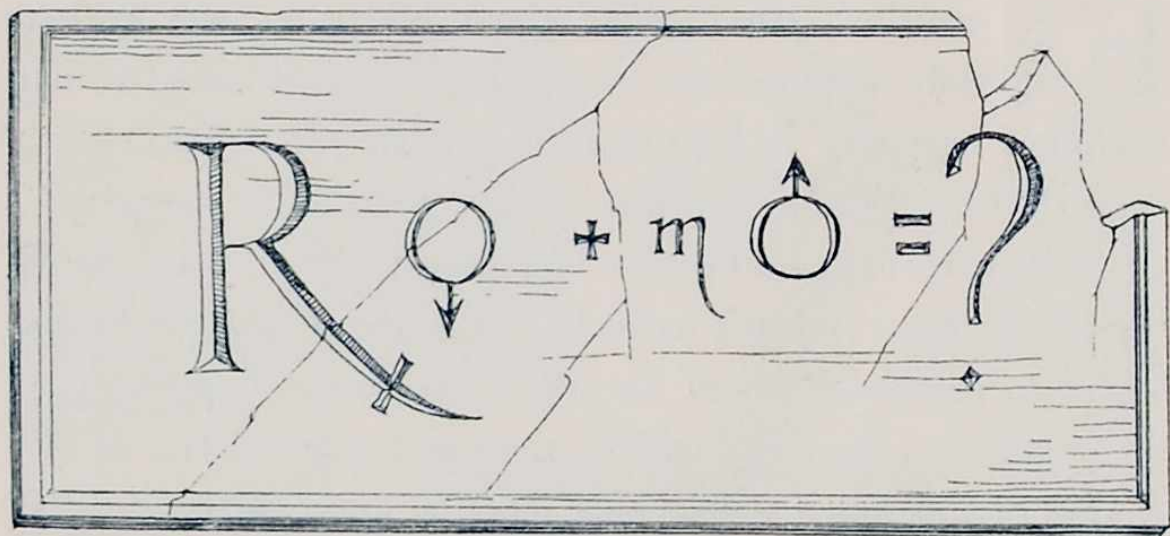


FOR months Cyrus walked about his palace and gardens aimlessly with the look of one who has been stunned. “But I don’t understand,” he kept muttering to himself, “if it’s bankrupt she likes it’s quite easy for a King to go bankrupt nowadays.”

More than eight months had passed before Cyrus could begin to reconcile himself to his loss of Aminta. But once he had begun to reconcile himself he picked up his good spirits again quite quickly; and the trifling songs and quaint lyrics of the Master of Ceremonies began once more to amuse the King.

Ever since the death of the court jester from melancholia ten and a half months earlier, the Master of Ceremonies had fulfilled many of the duties of a jester ; he was moreover about to be appointed to the vacant post of Poet Laureate as a reward for his prize poem, which he had written in anticipation of the birth of the old Princess Frigidaire's still eagerly awaited infant ♦ The prize poem in question went as follows :

*You growing fishlike creature, blue!
O you unborn, you Isaac you!
Spermatozoon just in luck
who entered in the womb and stuck!
What think you while you generate
in your prenatal state and wait
the dawning of this awful life?
What think you of your father's wife?
—Or was perchance your father just
by law no husband, yet by lust
a busbander of all that will
give you your life for life to kill.*



You and I may be certainly right in thinking this poem 'unlovely'; but then we must remember that to be 'unlovely' in this particular way is to be what the middle classes call 'modernistic'—and that to be up-to-date on lines such as these is the *littérateur's* only hope of being judged 'clever'. There is also the "gas-works school of poetry" which deals with dump heaps very well. But the Master of Ceremonies was too lazy to go and look at slums. He moreover loved too much his luxuries and feared the poor. He was a great art connoisseur at heart and a true æsthete; instead of offering guests at the palace an *apéritif* before banqueting he would seek to make their mouths water by showing them old velvets. Yet he could think of no surer way of being judged 'clever' than by being up-to-date on the lines of the poem quoted above; and at all costs he desired to appear 'clever'. He was proved to have figured things out for himself correctly; for he thereupon received, through the sudden support of the contemporary *intelligentzia*, the position of honour for which he had so long craved.



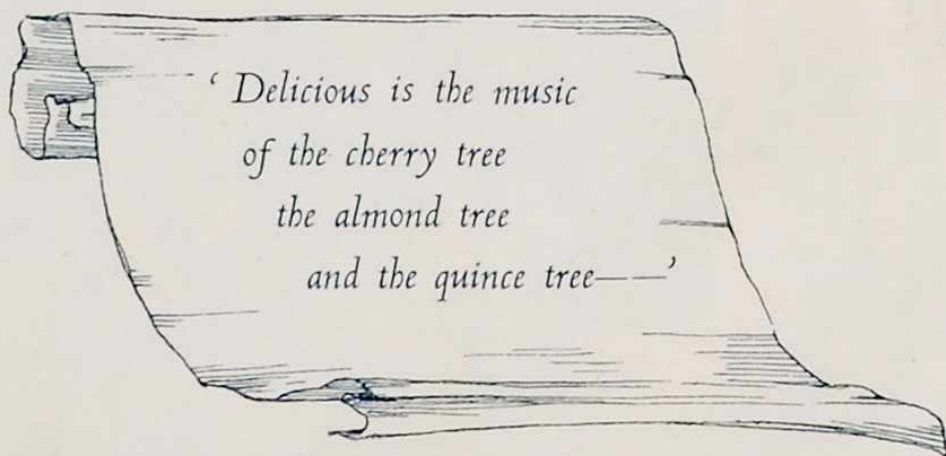
A GAIN expectation was approaching fever heat as the day drew near when the aged Princess Frigidaire was to be delivered of child. There were still wagers, arguments and duels afoot in all the clubs as to whose child it could be.

“Why not ask the Princess herself?” it was finally suggested by some bright-young-person. But hardly had the idea struck the b-y-p than upon all the newspaper placards in the empire these amazing headlines appeared: “*Princess Gives Birth to Brindled Lion Cubs.*”

“How strange,” agreed everyone.

P ERHAPS, thought Cyrus as he gazed at the front page of an illustrated daily on which were set nine press snapshots of the youngest princessling, Aminta, with Rosenslump on their secret honeymoon, “perhaps after all it was all for the best.” And with a sigh the kindly monarch decided that, so far, he was so glad.

In the orchard of the royal palace the Master of Ceremonies was reverting in secret to his true tastes, by writing just one more lyric, which began :



POSTSCRIPT.

SOON after this, for no good reason at all, Cyrus was dethroned and driven into exile by a turbulent uprising of his 'devoted' people all waving flags: and the planet Venus was then declared a republic. The devoted people seemed to think this sufficient excuse for festivity; but to me it seems too tragic to be recorded here at any length after the careless levity of the foregoing pages.

To the guillotine went all the pekineses of the Princess Frigidaire, sniffing, true aristocrats to the last.

The Princess herself, who had been suffering for some time back from fits of 'falling,' passed away in a final attack of 'Suddenly.' (For a less bewildering diagnosis of her complaint I can only refer you to the eighteenth century; from which with any fair degree of research you may obtain a more detailed analysis of what I believe to have been genuine and entirely orthodox maladies during the baroque era).

The cream of the aristocracy had been curdled long ago. Therefore they were not all beheaded: many were forced to seek employment. So, if they now became veterinary surgeons, it was no longer from any courtly imitation, but in order to earn an honest living.

However one blessing came to Venus about the same time—the Prohibition of Tobacco which had been known as the “Unfortunate Amendment” was abated in thirty-two out of the forty-seven states of the planet. Cigarettes were allowed to be smoked and light pipe tobacco, though cigars and heavy tobacco (‘plug’ and ‘twist’) are still prohibited (because the manufacturers and importers of Havana cigars felt that their sales would go down if the attractive quality of the forbidden was wiped off this particular luxury fruit). Lucky Strikes and Camels now flowed freely down every runnel of the planet; the entire population was blind drunk during four days of celebration and three railway trains got derailed.

Reginaldo di Bussoliera headed these festivities. He is still at large. But he has somewhat lost the first flush and bloom of adolescence. He is fixing up a rocket with the intention of going on an extensive lecturing tour to the other planets.

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