

At the Morgue

"I beg your pardon, sir. You're a new arrival, aren't you?"

"Yes. Brr."

"It's a bit cold at first, isn't it. But you get used to it in time. Did they put ice on your head as well?"

"Yes. Brr."

"Of course, of course. That's very good. And they pushed you right in, what? What number are you?"

"Number?"

"Why, yes. There's a ticket tied to your foot with a number on it, and your name—if they know it. They don't know mine. Haven't identified me yet. Don't you find your cubicle a bit too narrow?"

"No."

"I do. I'm bloated. They only fished me out after four days. Still, it wouldn't matter, but for my eyes. They've run into my mouth. Have you still got your eyes?"

"Only one. The other was torn out by the bullet."

"So you used a revolver?"

"Yes."

"That's a good way. I'd have liked to use a revolver, too, but I didn't have the money. It lasted a long time, but sure's sure, you know."

"Where did you jump from?"

"From the railway bridge. I only came up four days later. Your lungs get so nasty, you know. Excuse me, is your belly turning green yet?"

"No. Is it going to?"

"Not half! You should see mine. It's a nice light green right up to the navel. I'll soon be green all over, only my pancreas is blue. I'll be all right now till I'm dissected. I wish it was over. Zzzz."

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing. It's the water fizzing inside me. But I'm regular in every way. The doctor said so. By the way, was she a blonde?"

"No, a brunette. And yours?"

"Same."

"What was her name?"

"Pepi Potty."

"I see . . . I see. . . . But then you're Zoltan Freinreissz."

"What about it?"

"What a fool I was to think that she was going to marry you."

"Then you're Lajos Nebbich? I thought she was going to marry you. Then why did I jump into the river?"

"And why I did I waste money on a revolver? Sheer madness!"

"Why, she'd have married me, after all. If I'd known that she wasn't going to marry you and that you were going to shoot yourself dead. . . . But she said she was going to marry someone else and I thought it could only be you."

"And if I'd known that she wasn't going to marry you and that you were going to jump into the river. . . . But she said she was going to marry someone else, and I thought it could only be you."

"And that's why we're both decomposing here in the morgue. Then whom *did* Pepi Potty marry?"

(A corpse from the third cubicle:)

"Me."

My Patent Office

In my heart of hearts I was always convinced that I am an inventor of genius, provided I am left alone. Not, indeed, an inventor of the old school, like Stephenson, Bell, Edison, Marconi and all the rest of them, who applied the same formula—analysis and synthesis—to the solution of practical problems. I have very different ideas, having discovered an entirely new sphere for the inventive spirit. How shall I put it? Perhaps I had better say that the new school of invention, whose founder and apostle I am, makes inventions for their own sakes, ignoring practical requirements and base utilitarian considerations. Thus we proceed on entirely new principles.

I follow in the footsteps of one of my predecessors—characteristically enough, he died destitute, and an ungrateful posterity still refuses to recognise him—who was a dreamer of the first water, and who invented artificial corns that hurt exactly like natural ones.

The poor fellow never had enough money to prepare a model of his invention. He ran about for

finance so much that in the end, when Death claimed him, he himself was wearing a number of inferior natural corns.

You see the point?

But instead of theorising let me—on the strict understanding that all patent rights and priorities belong to me—make a few concrete suggestions to my few adherents, partly in order to enable them to prepare models, and partly in order to induce them to make similar inventions.

The following are required:

1. Alarm Clock Sordine, to be fitted to the alarm clock before going to bed. In the morning, when the clock starts to ring, the device damps or—in its most perfect form—completely suppresses the racket that is so brutally disturbing the owner of the clock in his sleep.

2. Anti-Reading or Blinking Bulb. This would stop the evil practice of reading in bed. As soon as it is switched on, this bulb starts to blink, so that reading becomes impossible.

3. Invisible Thermometer and Invisible Compass. The mercury column of the thermometer moves in an opaque metal tube, so that the patient cannot see how high his temperature is, is therefore not frightened and may, in view of his cheerful state of mind, recover more quickly. The doctor

may use an ordinary thermometer side by side with the invisible one. The invisible compass is constructed on the same principle with a welded metal lid. This is for globe trotters and pleasure tourists who in any case do not care a tinker's cuss where the four cardinal points are.

4. Boiler Scale Dye. A suitable chemical compound which, when mixed with the water used in steam boilers, dyes the so-called scales that settle on the boiler walls a pretty red, blue, green and, if necessary, mauve.

5. Shavable False Beard. Indispensable to detectives. The false beard can be shaved off in a few minutes. Naturally, the cloth on which it is stuck must be securely glued to the chin, so that it should not come off while shaving.

6. Double-Bottomed Wardrobe. This wardrobe has legs at the top, so that if it gets dusty at the top it need not be dusted, but may simply be turned upside down, whereupon the dust falls off. It is not advisable to keep fragile objects in this wardrobe.

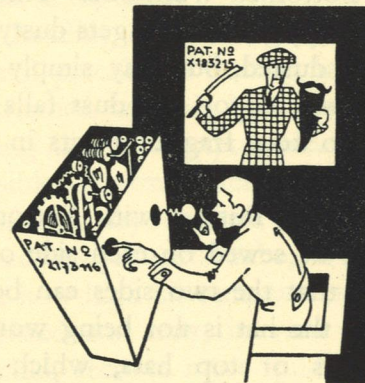
7. Hat Button. Button with buttonhole, one of which must be sewed on each side of the brim of the hat, so that the two sides can be buttoned together when the hat is not being worn. In the case of bowlers or top hats, which might be

damaged through being buttoned up in this way, use a steel or silver chain to connect the two buttons.

8. Automatic Apparatus. A simple device with a push button at the top. When this is pushed another button at the side jumps out, which can also be pushed.

9. Anti-Burglar Foot-Bath. A bowl with soap holder, obviously destined for foot-baths. Fill this with water and place near the safe, so that the burglar cannot fail to see it. If after cracking the safe he fancies a foot-bath, the bowl starts to ring and acts as a burglar alarm. If he doesn't, it doesn't.

10. Magic Shoes. These cause the wearer to stagger, but do not act until he has drunk at least fifteen whiskies and five beers.



Providence

"Optimism and Providence," said the sage, "are things about which you people can have no idea, because you don't believe in Divine Providence and degrade a miracle to the level of coincidence. Unless you have had an eventful life, unless you have gone through many trials and tribulations, you can't understand what it is that comes to your aid at moments of mortal danger, when all seems to be lost. Cheer-oh!" He raised his glass and took a sip of the apricot brandy.

"Let's have it," said I, expecting to hear a fresh yarn about his African adventures.

The sage reflected for a while, then he began:

"It happened on the bank of the Zambesi river, in the African jungle. . . . Lagging behind my hunting companions, I lost myself in the primeval forest and was desperately struggling to get through the impenetrable web of jungle creepers. Then, suddenly, the silence was rent by a savage battle cry, and the next instant a half naked gorilla devoid of all human understanding appeared among the trees, snarling at me with bared teeth and tugging

angrily at his unkempt mutton chop whiskers. As he was about to fling himself upon me an arrow came hurtling through the air and lodged in the wildly swaying trunk of the bloodthirsty orang-outang. Then a crowd of savages, their bodies painted red, sprang up behind the animal, and the chase was on. Fortunately, I succeeded in hiding in the thicket, but unfortunately, owing to the great heat, the forest caught fire. I had to run for my life, and there was only a single path in front of me and the murderous Mongols and the burning



forest behind me. . . . The path led to the river Niger, which I have already mentioned, and at that moment it seemed to me that I could reach safety if only I succeeded in swimming across the river.

For to turn back would have been equivalent to flinging myself into the very jaws of death. Unfortunately, I failed. The instant I jumped into the river I saw my escape cut off by nine crocodiles, which surrounded me snapping their awful jaws. Another stroke and they would have devoured me."

"Well, what happened?" we chorused, filling the old man's glass.

"Ah," said the old man, "that's just it—what happened?"

"Well, well," we urged impatiently.

"Well," said the sage, raising his voice, "at that point Providence intervened."

"An eagle flew along and picked you up?" I ventured.

"Nonsense! Providence does not need to resort to such childish solutions. . . . Just as the crocodiles were about to attack me it turned out—"

"Yes, yes?"

"It turned out that all this never happened, and so, thanks to the inscrutable goodness of Providence, I was saved."

The Stranger

Three women were sitting on the terrace, sunk in reverie.

"To be admired," said Christa gazing into the distance, "to know that you're desired without any effort on your part, merely by the fact that you exist, gives you a lovely feeling. But how rare that is, how rare!" And her delicate hand reached for the cigarette case.

The other two said nothing. Elisabeth stared in front of her, absently sipping the fragrant green liquid from the dainty glass.

"There was the Stranger," she began, depositing the glass. The other two looked at her expectantly. "I call him the Stranger because I don't know his name. It was about two years ago, but it may be more or less than that. I forget. But now that you've raised the subject I can almost see him before me. While you spoke I was thinking of him, and I agree with you. There are moments like that, rare moments, and they're the most beautiful."

"What was he like?" whispered Lena.

"Tall, lean, with a bony face. He was not a

young man. He had deepset eyes, with a queer, attentive, longing and yet gloomy look in them. I remember I was having a bad day."

She sighed and emptied her glass.

"I was alone in the house. I felt old and frustrated. My husband was away and I didn't expect him back till late at night, but I wasn't looking forward to his coming. There was a bleak, empty evening in front of me, and I didn't feel like doing anything. I arranged the linen in the cupboard, then I lay down on the settee, started to read a book, then threw it away. Suddenly the door-bell rang. I heard the maid explain to some one that my husband was away, but the visitor didn't reply. Then there was a knock on the door. I sat up on the settee. A strange man came into the room, and he was evidently surprised to find me alone. He stood speechless for a second or two, then he stammered out a 'Good afternoon.' I asked him what he wanted, but he didn't reply. Then he began to talk of his own accord, in a deep, agitated voice: 'You're Madame Geray, I presume. I beg your pardon, I wish to see your husband—in a very important matter.'

"I was rather surprised. 'But,' I said, 'the maid told you he was away.' 'The matter's of the utmost urgency,' repeated the stranger. Then

he said: 'I beg your pardon, Madame, but your husband knows all about it.' And he just stood there, as if he were petrified. I became embarrassed, and pointing to a chair I said, merely in order to say something, 'Won't you sit down?'

"He looked at me, then at the chair, then he sat down. But all this time he did not remove his eyes from me for a moment, and kept looking me straight in the face. I blushed. There was a strange power in his eyes.

" 'My husband won't be back till late tonight,' I said suddenly, more in order to cover my embarrassment, 'but perhaps you'd like to leave a message.' I stood up and he did the same. He didn't reply, only fixed me with his eyes, never looking away for an instant, and I realised that he was not interested in what I was saying. The words made no impression on his mind. He just kept staring at my lips, as though he had been bewitched since he came into the room. I turned my head away and—the Stranger came up to me, quite close.

"Then I sat down on the settee. The Stranger sat down beside me. Mind you, there was no aggressiveness in this. He just craned his neck forward, gazed into my face and said nothing. I stood up again and blurted: 'Will you wait for him? . . . What am I talking about—he won't be

back till late. . . . ' I then sat down in an easy chair. The Stranger got up from the settee and followed me. He sat down on another chair quite close to me. And now he began to stare at my lips quite frankly, self-forgetfully. There was nothing brutal about it, no crude passion. He was simply enthralled, overwhelmed, and so he forgot his manners, and I found his clumsy behaviour rather touching. It was the sort of rare moment Christa's been talking about. I felt a kind of intoxication. I understood what it must mean to a man that I'm a woman and that I'm beautiful. I was physically aware of the magnetic waves emanating from my body and paralysing the man's will, so that he could



not help, in his enchantment, circling round me, always closer and closer, until he was drawn with fateful certainty to my lips. I had a wonderful feeling of triumph. I was trembling all over, but I was gloriously happy. I made a few more experi-

ments, changing to another chair, then again to the settee. Meanwhile, I kept talking, as calmly and naturally as I could, not caring what was going to happen. I didn't expect any reply from him. I knew that he couldn't reply. But he followed me everywhere, quite close, as though he was being pulled by a short piece of string. And he went on gazing at my lips, waiting, waiting, waiting. . . . A pair of wide open, gigantic eyes . . . like two planets . . . two intoxicated eyes. . . ."

Elisabeth fell silent and reached for her glass.

"What happened?" asked Lena eagerly.

Elisabeth drained the glass at a single gulp.

"Well," she shrugged, "suddenly the children burst into the room, making an awful racket and turning everything upside down. The Stranger stammered something about calling on my husband at his office. That night, in bed, I mentioned to my husband that a man had called to see him in the afternoon. I described him, trying to make my voice sound indifferent, although my heart was pounding at my ribs. At last my husband discovered who he was.

"Oh, that must've been Shurek—about the timber. I'm glad he didn't find me in. He's a nuisance. The poor fool's stone deaf, but he won't admit it, and he pokes his nose into your face, so

he can read the words from your lips. You see, he's not only deaf but also myopic, the poor devil. I'll send him an order in the morning for two loadings.'"

The Cripple

When he was born his parents were not at all sure that he would live. His mother, when she first saw him, hid her head in the sand with terror. She refused to have anything to do with him, and he was taken away by kind relations, only to be thrown more or less on his own resources. But there were merciful strangers who, though they did not exactly spoil him, always left him a few green leaves on the tip of a branch or a few blades of grass somewhere or other.

He realised early that he must be quiet and modest. In his babyhood he felt no less frisky than other youngsters, and he would have loved to romp and fight with the others, tease the little females, and play hide and seek among the legs of the dignified adults, or frighten the baby giraffes. But the very first time he tried to mix with the others, he was puzzled and perplexed to find that they thought there was something wrong with him. They snorted at his approach, pointed their noses at him, chased him, refused to play with him. It was a bearded youth from whom he first heard the word "cripple."

He looked at the youth with surprise. Two magnificent humps rose proudly on the youth's back. He did not like the humps. They almost nauseated him, and he liked those of his contemporaries better who had only one of them.

At noon, when the sun beat down vertically, he happened to see his reflection in the well, and he then realised what it was that was wrong with him. He had a smooth back. Smooth and straight like a stag's, without even the slanting line that made the giraffes at least acceptable to his relations.

And now he began to be ashamed of this defect. Although he felt no need for the two humps, he hoped that they would one day develop on his back, and the teasing would stop.

But he waited in vain, and when others of his age began to court, he realised that he would have to spend his life alone. The females did not want him. There were two whom he had timidly approached. One of them told him frankly that she detested him, while the other explained that although she personally did not mind his lack of humps and would gladly forgive him his straight back in view of his straight character, she was afraid that her friends, who were being courted by splendid specimens, would look down on her.

This happened in the year when the bipeds

crossed the river, and all the youths looked forward excitedly to the recruiting. The older ones, who had already worked in caravans, and had come back to the herd after their comrades had been killed by the simoom or a robber band, reminisced enthusiastically for the benefit of the eager youths.

He slunk into the crowd that gathered for examination by the bipeds; he longed to go out into the world, dreamt of adventurous journeys, saw visions of the limitless desert. But his dreams were shattered by bitter reality.

"Get out of here, my son," said the old Leader kindly. "Don't you know that you're a cripple? They couldn't even put a saddle on your back."

There was a burst of laughter behind him. He stole away, feeling very unhappy. The bipeds arrived. He saw the magnificent procession, all gaily caparisoned, each with a biped on his back. Clouds of dust rose behind them and finally they were lost in the distance.

He remained alone, with only a few very old men. They might have been prepared to talk to him, but his heart was not with them. He was young and he wanted something different. So he wandered about alone on the river bank, thinking and gazing at the far horizon.

Then one day his feet uncovered a few printed

pages in the sand, pages of a Bible lost by English missionaries. He bent down and began to decipher the writing.

There was a parable on the page, which ended with the words that it was "easier for a camel to pass through a needle than for a rich man to pass into the Kingdom of Heaven."

It went right to his heart. "It would be very easy for me," he thought, "without any humps on my back." He meditated on this and he felt as though something had dissolved within him. He realised that he was the chosen one from among his kind, and that his sufferings, his unhappiness, his spoiled life constituted a sacrifice and a privilege which raised him above his fellows.

"Call me a cripple as much as you like," he cried towards the desert, "you haughty, conceited hump-backs—my soul has a bigger hump than yours!"

And Athanasius, the humpless camel, thenceforth devoted his life to intellectual pursuits.

Radio

The ship had gone down in a raging sea three days ago, and he was still floating, hungry, parched and exhausted, on the raft he had clambered on in the first awful hour. He had grown tired of scanning the horizon, so he turned on the wireless and settled down to listen.

It was a portable set which, God only knows how, he had fished out from among the wreckage and lifted aboard the raft. It had been packed in a watertight box, and he just happened to reach out for it, probably in the vague hope that it contained biscuits. Then, before he had time to open the box, he was suddenly startled to hear, issuing from it, the voice of Piccaver. He was singing with moving artistry the great aria from "Tosca." "I never loved life so much," or something like that. The shipwrecked man understood at once. Yes, a wireless set. And the broadcast was from Prague. He remembered reading in the paper yesterday that Piccaver would be singing in the Czech capital.

The first day the wireless irritated him a little. He was terribly cold, for the iceberg that had

wrecked the ship was still somewhere near. The wind had also changed and was taking him backwards. He had no idea where he was. All he knew was that he was in the middle of the ocean, and that there was no hope for him. He took off his shirt and managed to fix it up as a signal, but then he thought better of it and put it on again. A shark suddenly bobbed up near the raft, showing its terrible teeth for a moment, but it was frightened away by the voice of Professor Reinhardt. The Professor was giving a lecture in Salzburg on the æsthetic aspect of modern producing, and the shark streaked away and did not re-appear. The man patted the wireless set on the shoulder, and from that moment right to the end they were firm friends.

And particularly now, on the third day, when the man's brain was already refusing to function. The set was not only a good friend, but also excellent company. In the morning it had wakened the man with jazz music from New York. The man immediately concluded that it would be a waste of energy to go on hoping, for it was now night in New York, and dawn in Berlin, so that there could be no land anywhere near. Thus he could surrender himself completely to the artistic enjoyment provided by the set.

During the morning he studied Spanish under the guidance of a learned professor from Buenos Aires. Towards noon he listened with interest to the Stock Exchange report from London, which he was able to compare with the corresponding broadcast from Berlin half an hour later. After lunch—or rather lunchtime—an “Auntie” broadcast some charming fairy tales from Vienna. At three o’clock a Paris hotel king read extracts from his memoirs on culinary art, giving a few recipes for hors d’œuvres. Then there was dance music from Milan.

A talk from Moscow on the merits of the second Five Year Plan he found particularly absorbing. Later, he had an opportunity to establish that Bassermann was still a great elocutionist, particularly in his interpretation of the uncanny, while Mistinquette was decidedly not so good as she used to be. He noted with malicious joy that Bernard Shaw had after all been roped in by Hollywood again and enjoyed the broadcast of an exotic tipster from the Epsom course. He learned that the colt Forever was bound to win the big race at Auteuil, and that white waistcoats would be the thing with evening dress next year. He strongly disapproved of Mr. Anthony Eden’s weak policy on Non-Intervention in Spain, and was greatly perturbed about Japanese

aggression in the East. He vehemently disagreed with Mr. James Douglas’s tirade against the Modern Girl, but the broadcast of a spiritualist prophet left him cold. The Mazdaznan doctrine that happiness was only possible to a soul detached from sensuality and floating in solitude on the Ocean of Love, he considered as slightly exaggerated.

Shortly before he lay down for his last sleep, he had a great personal satisfaction. In Vienna a singer by the name of Fräulein Polderl Schlogerbauer was announced as the next item. This young actress had been trained at his expense. She sang a few comic songs, and the man noted with satisfaction that his sacrifice had not been in vain. Polderl had a charming voice and a delicious humour, and she compared favourably even with the best Parisian chanson singers.

The shipwrecked man smiled happily and gave up the ghost. Just then the set began to reproduce the broadcast of a professor from Stockholm on the irresistible progress and the blessings of technical civilization.

The Guinea-Pig

I took a fancy to the guinea-pig as soon as they put it down in the kitchen. I liked its stupid little head, its frightened eyes, its soft, smooth coat. I felt that tender, protective affection that is so well known to men with experience of petite, somewhat feline women. I wanted to stroke it, carefully, gently, so as not to frighten it. Then I should pick it up and scratch its funny little head, make it feel safe, convince it that there was nothing to be afraid of, that I would look after it, protect it.

I had a warm, unselfish, protective feeling as I reached out to stroke the animal, but it was terribly scared, the stupid creature, slipped away from under my palm and ran under the cupboard.

"Silly-billy," I thought, shaking my head. "What a stupid little guinea-pig you are, to think that I want to catch you, kill you, eat you, just because I'm stronger than you. Of course I'm stronger than you, and I could do what I liked with you, but that's just the point—I don't want to hurt you, on the contrary, I want to make friends with

you, I want to show you how I love you, I want to make you feel safe and happy."

That was what I thought and my heart was full of tenderness for the little creature, and so I poked a piece of wood under the cupboard to get it to come out, so that I might stroke it. The little thing first recoils, its nostrils quivering with terror, then suddenly it streaks out from under the cupboard and runs into a corner of the kitchen.

I follow it, cautiously sit down on my heels, and start to talk to it. Why, you're trembling even worse than before. Of course, your stupid little mind tells you that it's the blood lust of the savage beast that makes me follow you, you can't understand the morality and altruism of strength. I really must catch you now and stroke your pretty coat. I can't leave you with the impression you have now, that I'm a bloodthirsty tiger or something. I must prove to you that you're mistaken. I don't want to bury my teeth in your throat, I only want to stroke you, caress you, make your life pleasant and happy. I shan't even expect gratitude from you.

I reach out cautiously. My fingers are already round its neck. Then it gives a sudden bound and, squeaking with mortal terror, it hides behind the stove.

I gulp and feel the blood rushing to my head. What a stupid creature! What shall I do now? Give it up? But then it will think it was right. It will think I really wanted to kill it and was giving it up for the present because I was tired.

So I lie down on my stomach and peer under the stove. There it is, its little head drawn into its shoulders, its black eyes gleaming with unspeakable terror. I get seriously angry. Fool, I say bitterly, can't you believe in unselfishness, tenderness, love? How shall I prove to you that your fear is unfounded, a contemptible reflection on my intentions? Of course, your tiny animal brain is full of images of brutality, biting and scratching, the ruthlessness of the strong with the weak. . . . Disgusting little worm! Won't you believe me that there are such things as mercy and sympathy, tears and emotion at the sight of weakness, poverty and helplessness? Damn your eyes, I'm going to prove it to you!

I make a grab for it, angry, panting. I stumble and fall, run after the guinea-pig on all fours, knock my head against the doorpost, gnash my teeth. I catch it by the ear, it pulls itself free, squealing loudly this time, and after biting my hands it bounds off and hides in a pile of wood.

There it is, and I must scatter the whole pile in

order to find it. But I'm going to do it, I'm going to pull down that pile even if it kills me; I'll lift it by the ears and swing it round in the air, and bash its head against the wall for refusing to understand that I only wanted to stroke it.

The Savage Beast

I read the following news item in one of the dailies :

"Exciting Adventure with a Bear. Mr. E. F., Chief Magistrate of . . . has had an exciting adventure in the snow-covered Transylvanian mountains. He was out hunting in the forest with a party, the members of which were posted far apart. The Chief Magistrate was following two beaters, who at one point turned tail with cries of terror and fled. There was a huge bear sitting in the thicket, chewing some roots. The Chief Magistrate took aim and shot the savage beast in the chest. The bear gave a roar, and rising on its hind legs walked towards the hunter. The Chief Magistrate only just managed to fire again and hit the animal for the second time, before the savage beast attacked him. There was no time to re-load the gun, so the Chief Magistrate seized it by the barrel and struck the bear on the head with the butt. But the savage beast was already upon him and the Chief Magistrate, who is a man of powerful physique, was obliged to fight the animal with his bare hands. However, he managed to draw his hunting knife and plunged it

into the throat of the savage beast. The bear, licking its wounds, waddled away, collapsing on the edge of a water course some eighty paces away."

Being a conscientious journalist I studied the case carefully, and looked over the other papers for any further reports. In my absorption I fell asleep, but that did not prevent me from continuing my reading of the papers, among which, to my intense surprise, I found one entitled "Bruin's Review." I turned the pages of the primitive publication, the editor of which signed himself "B. Growler," with considerable perplexity. Then I came upon an article that attracted my attention :

"Fatal Adventure with a Man.

"We regret to announce that Atta Troll, the well-known philosopher, has died from his wounds at the Hollow Tree Hospital. Before he died he bade a touching farewell to his grief-stricken wife and children, and also related once more to our reporter the circumstances of the terrible experience that cost him his life.

"It appears that on the fatal day Atta Troll was walking on the edge of the forest preoccupied with thoughts of the great philosophical work, 'The Bounty of Nature,' which he was writing, when he saw some very appetising roots under a tree. He decided to take some of the roots home to his

children, and in his well-known gentle, peaceful manner he began to chew the roots with a view to severing them. Looking up, he saw a full grown man standing a few paces away and glaring at him with bloodshot eyes. The man's poison glands, which look like a long, rounded bar, and from which this animal is in the habit of squirting poisonous secretions upon his victims, were aimed straight at Atta Troll. Atta Troll, with the child-like faith of the philosopher in his heart, tried to disarm the savage beast with kindness and superior intelligence and began by giving him a charmingly inquiring look, but the maddened beast only snorted and squirted some of the poisonous secretion over Atta Troll. Atta Troll thought of going away, but realising that the savage beast was about to attack again, it occurred to him that retreat might cost him his life, and he would be unable to finish his epoch-making work. Thus, there was nothing left for Atta Troll but to try and render the bloodthirsty beast harmless in some way, though such action was contrary to his gentle inclinations. So Atta Troll went up to the savage beast and placed a reproachful paw on his shoulder, but this made the brute even angrier and, unable to use his poison glands, he drew a piece of iron and plunged it several times into Atta Troll's throat.

"The great philosopher shook his head disapprovingly, and for a moment it occurred to him that he might crush the skull of the savage beast between his teeth. Then he remembered a passage in his philosophical work in which he wrote how base and despicable was the blood lust of some savage beasts which induced them to wound and kill living things, and even to eat them, as do human beings, although Mother Nature has made ample provision for all her children by producing fruits and plants, so that all could live in peace and happiness in the forest. So Atta Troll turned away



in contempt, while the savage beast ran away, grinding his teeth. Atta Troll began to lick his wounds, and reflecting sadly on death he sat down on the edge of the water course, where he was later found. The sad fate of our noble friend has aroused uni-

versal sympathy, which will find expression at the funeral this afternoon."

Having finished the article, I reflected that "savage beast" was a very relative term and could not be used without a certain amount of prejudice one way or the other.

Conversation

"I can't understand how they can talk so much about him."

"Neither can I. It's sheer madness."

"I've just been to Mme. Milchgriess'. I simply left them. They were talking about nothing else and I could'nt bear it any longer."

"Feminine intelligence, my dear ! You see, that's why I have no woman friend—I can't stand stupid people."

"I, too, prefer male company. With men you can at least talk about sensible things, hear about new ideas, if you know what I mean. Women ! Why, you can't talk with them about anything but clothes, and since he's arrived they all rave about him."

"Disgusting. I can't understand what there's to talk about him."

"Yet they go on about him for hours and hours."

"Why, the whole thing can be settled with a couple of words. A smart man, that's all."

"He's rather attractive, that's all there's to say about him."

"Or that he's an interesting face, nothing more."

"Or that he's intensely masculine."

"Or that he's a splendid figure."

"Or that he's exquisite manners."

"Like a knight of old."

"Or like a prince."

"But to rave about him all the time—well, it's beyond me."

"Perfectly ridiculous !"

"I could understand it if he were a great author or a great thinker."

"That's just what I was going to say, my dear. A great thinker—yes ! That'd be different. With a man like that you can discuss physics, mathematics, cinematics——"

"Cinematics ?"

"I mean one of those ologies, you know."

"I see. But it's really amazing that this fashion plate should make their mouths water. That's what he is, isn't he—a fashion plate."

"A fop !"

"A lady killer !"

"A male vamp !"

"But really, my dear, it beats me how anyone can talk about him for more than a minute. After all, all he's got is a handsome face."

"And a little sex appeal."

"And a strong mouth."

"And beautiful eyes."

"And the fact that he makes your heart beat a little faster."

"What about it? What does it matter if it does make you tremble a little when you look at him?"

"Or that it makes your eyes bulge a little?"

"That's what I say. Aren't all those women ashamed to be writing letters to him!"

"Or to mob him in his car."

"Why, he doesn't take the slightest notice of them."

"He doesn't even look at them. He just shuts his eyes and turns his head away."

"And suppose he didn't shut them? Is that enough to make anyone swoon in the open street? I certainly didn't swoon when he looked at me that time as he was entering his car."

"And I certainly wasn't particularly impressed when he sent me a note by the waiter to say he'd like to meet me."

"And I was certainly not particularly surprised when he knocked on my window in the dead of night and cried because I wouldn't open it."

"That time, when he crossed his legs, like this——"

"That's no reason why you should kick me, my dear."

"I'm sorry, dear, did I——"

"Yes, you did, and it's bleeding."

"You'd better go and bathe it—in a bathful of water. And I advise you to lie down in it and keep your head under the water just long enough—a little longer than you can bear it, my dear."

Fairy Tales

You're only three, my child, and life to you is one big flower bed, where you may pick the loveliest blooms as you toddle along—it's me they'll fine twenty shillings for damaging the plants, not you. You've no idea of the seamy side of life, its crime, filth and misery. You live in a world of happy dreams, in a world of sweet fairy tales Ah! happy childhood. . . . Mother's telling you a fairy tale. Listen, my child, my baby, and believe that life's like that, life, which to me is a cruel reality, a hard, Zolaesque reality, full of crime and filth and wretchedness and—how shall I put it?—unwashedness.

Mother's telling you a fairy story. . . . Let me listen with you, let me loose myself in the golden haze of childhood's fables, let me forget that I'm a man, one of the great mass, weighed down by care and bitterness. Yes, let me listen, let me refresh my memory of those immortal tales of childhood.

She's telling you about Snowwhite. . . . The Queen's sitting in front of the looking glass, and she's very angry with Snowwhite, because Snow-

white is prettier than she. . . . Well, well. A vain, jealous woman, that Queen, somewhere in the forties, "the critical age," unpleasant subject of Karin Michaelis's novel. What? She poisons Snowwhite? Now, really. . . . Feminine jealousy . . . attempted murder. . . . Why, my dear, this is a proper murder story. Surely, you're not going to tell the child a story like that! Why, even I—I mean, if I took it seriously it'd give me a nightmare.

Cinderella. . . . Ah, that's better. A lovely, poetic thing, if I remember aright. Go on, my dear. So she does get to the ball after all . . . then she runs away . . . the Prince only finds her slipper . . . says he'll marry the girl to whom that tiny slipper belongs . . . the ugly sisters cut off their toes to make the slipper fit. . . . But this is horrible, my dear. Do you realise what you're telling the child? A man falling in love with a girl's slipper! Do you know what that is? Fetishism—one of the worst sexual perversions! You might as well read to the child a chapter from Havelock Ellis or Ivan Bloch. Fetishism, self-mutilation. . . . Why, you're simply ruining the child! Can't you think of another story?

The Babes in the Wood. . . . Yes, that's right. That's the sort of thing you should tell a child—

innocent children, fairies. . . . Yes, that's right. What? The parents abandon their children in the wood. . . . But that's a crime! Oh, yes, the witch. How does it go, now? She puts the boy into a cage and fattens him. . . . She wants to eat him. Stop it, for God's sake. Why, it makes my hair stand on end. This is cannibalism, so horrible that we don't even have a law about it, a subject that not even the bloodthirstiest thriller writers dare touch.

Ah, the Princess and the enchanted Prince. . . . You see, this is what I call a fairy story, something fit for babies. . . . Although I don't like the hypnotism in it. Still, that doesn't matter much. This story at least has a moral if I remember aright. Yes, I know—the Prince changes into a pig . . . but the kind Princess caresses him, even kisses him. . . . Stop! Stop! You seem to be determined to poison the child's mind! Do you realise what this story's about? Sodomy! The filthiest, most horrible thing imaginable. . . . The darkest pages of human history. . . . The Marquis de Sade. . . . Retif de la Breton . . . secret publications . . . police . . . filth, filth, filth. . . .

I never realised that fairy tales were like this. What a world! What people! Murder, revenge, conspiracy, envy, robbery. . . . What a world, in

which even old women are vain and murderously jealous; what a world, in which employers involve their workers in fraud by persuading them that a year only consists of three days; what a world, in which tyrannical kings offer "half the kingdom" in return for some personal advantage, without the consent of a responsible parliament.

You know what? Get a copy of Zola's "Nana" and tell the child the story of the novel. That, at least, is a moral story, in which the guilty receive condign punishment.