

It was so early that some birds were yet asleep. In the middle of the clearing, a robin was having a delicious salad of slugs on clover leaves with pearl-dew dressing.

The Wayfarer had already risen, and, munching a piece of stale bread, with occasional nibbles at a lump of equally stale cheese, he smilingly contemplated the verses he had just written.

"Now for a tune to set them to," he said.

He borrowed an old sailor's air that had stuck in his memory, and, by dwelling on certain notes for some syllables of his second lines, found it tuneful enough for his fancy.

"How you like that, Madame Robin?" he mocked. "Does not your dainty breakfast slide down that delicate gullet with greater gusto to the meter of my mellifluous ditty?"

Madame Robin continued to devote all her attention to her succulent breakfast.

"Philistine!" he growled, wrapping up the remainder of his bread and cheese. Then he looked ruefully at the empty flask.

"A provident man," he said, "would have saved a sup for the morrow. But I have the philosophy of the savage in affairs of the thirst, and *carpe diem* is my creed".

Day awakened quickly. The air was full of songs. The mists had curled themselves from the valley, and hung like pillows on the tops of the hills, and the sun came and lusted them like golden fleece. A rabbit skipped almost across his feet.

But the Wayfarer heard nor saw not any of these things. He was wrapped in retrospect; no orderly review, but a turbid fancy that flew from youth to manhood, from middle-age to childhood, like a bewildered kaleidoscope.

A swinging gate—a raft on a tossing sea—bloody swords—a honey-suckle hedge—two dark eyes peeping through an Arabian veil—a dead white face, and a dead white hand

with a golden wedding ring—a little laughing girl, snub-nosed, blue-eyed and fair—a slippery deck—a cold, fierce wind and a driving sleet—a tap-room hung around with blue-ringed mugs—a sword hilt-deep in a velvet-broidered vest—a caravan and a moonlit Sphinx—a gypsy dance—a grinning face, skinny and pale—an iceberg gliding like a ghost—a tall old clock at the foot of an oaken stair—a flying kite—a woman who smiled like a gargoyle—a field of daisies—a wounded man crawling in the mire—a broad white sail and a silver moon—a tinkling sleigh scudding across the snow—a valley of vineyards and olives—a row of grinning teeth—a pewter of foaming ale—a little man nailing notices on trees.

He shook himself.

"Lord, that was a quick journey—fifty years in a few minutes. I must be declining to a sentimental dotage. However, to proceed. The day dawns fair and portends well. I think I shall find a haven ere sunset, and then—

I'll sit in the bar where the pewters are
And stay till the last drop's done."

He started off along the trail, but, after a few yards stopped.

"It may be useful," he said.

He turned back, picked up the flask and then resumed his way.

He had not walked very far, when the road again divided. To his left a broad, well-beaten trail went across the valley, and rose in a straight line to the top of a high hill, on whose crest loomed rugged crags, gray and desolate. The valley trail went on, rough and seeming endless, so without any further appeals to the family doctor, he turned to his lucky left, glad of a smoother road for his feet. The road was precipitous, long and dusty. A breeze from the hill tops blew the fine sand into his eyes, and he made for the summit with all speed.

"Curse the wind!" he said.
"The valley was as still as death".