



The Shadow on the Dial

By Marjorie L. C. Pickthall

THEY are filling up my pet willow-tree hollow with ashes and tomato cans and things, and I am very angry. Fortunately, the birds sip just as happily from a pool of rain drops caught in the curve of a broken tea-pot as from a moss-grown stone fringed with maidenhair fern and the tassels of the meadow-rue. And the reflection forces itself upon the thoughtful mind—perhaps those light-hearted gentlemen of Irish extraction who so largely handle that which our wasteful civilization calls rubbish, perhaps they are preserving the only record by which the said civilization shall be known in future ages. A humiliating reflection truly. But there are whole races of humanity who are known to us only by their kitchen middens, their rubbish heaps. They left no literature; shall we? They had no architecture; we have, according to the immortal definition of the Beloved Vagabond, lots and lots of little buildings writ large in granite and sandstone and most variously ornamented with little scratches sometimes as much as half an inch deep; but it is very doubtful, if knowledge increases, whether they will not all be pulled down in another hundred years or so; and if knowledge goes the other way, then they will fall to pieces through economic construction. Our painting will not last, because all our colours are adulterated. And goodness only knows where our music will be—put into graphophones, maybe, to show Japanese babies what those ignorant old barbarians tickled their ears with. Only our dumps shall endure, and sing to unknown ages the apotheosis of the tomato can.

This is frivolous, I know, but the subject is too serious to be treated in any other way. If a materialist worships nothing else, he must abase himself before the march of Time. If he would shut off the last horizon of Hope, and go on most unprofitably for the "good of the race," let him look at the moon through a telescope, or go on a Cook's tour to Egypt, and feel the procession of ages crush his soul—if he has one—into the dust. Well, well. I had in my mind a few days ago one of the mallets used by one of the hundred thousand workmen that Khufu, Pharaoh of Egypt, had to build him his Great Pyramid. The stones are there under the blue Egyptian skies, on the rim of the desert of mystery. The rough tool—they use the like to this day—is here, in a land that was not dreamed of; the grip is polished dark brown from the grease of the man's warm hand. And he?—

"I feel chilly and grown old"

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CAPS are "in" again, the milliners and the *De-lineator* tell us, caps for motoring and caps for breakfast. Though woman doubtless gained a great deal when she foreswore caps, she also lost a good deal. When my grandmother married at twenty, she put on a cap, and figuratively she kept it on for the rest of her life, and it was probably most becoming to her. Caps and bonnets are becoming to most women, and there remains a sentimental glamour attached to a bonnet which has failed, so far, to become attached to a hat. Listen to this description of fashionable bonnets from *Harper's* for 1850, when "Bleak House" was running as a serial and there was not a single factory at Niagara Falls:

There is "a light drawn bonnet of white tulle, made in bouillonnes, having three rows of white figured ribbon placed on each side, following the undulations of the bouillonnes. The inside of the capote trimmed with bunches of daisies." Another is "of white hair embroidered with straw, with a row of straw blonde running along the brim; the ornaments are bows of white ribbon, and inside of the brim are rows of violets surrounded with foliage. Flowers are decidedly in vogue as ornaments for bonnets. Among those much admired are long elastic branches of white and coloured lilac and cordons of violets. A decided novelty in the way of floral ornamentation is formed by rice-ears composed entirely of feathers, even to the cells them-

selves. These are accompanied by straw and flag, forming a charming decoration for summer."

I wouldn't mind a bonnet like that white one with the violets. It was probably worn with a dress of green taffeta trimmed with velours and guipure, the skirt being very full and ornamented with three deep flounces, and the sleeves of pagoda form. I only hope the girl who put it on had fair hair and golden brown eyes, and that she did proper execution with that wreath of violets.

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I AM supposed to say quite a lot about books at odd times in this page, but this time I can't think of anything to say. I have read quite a lot lately, too. One was Mr. Jack London's "Adventure." Mr. London, in spite of the superior critics, certainly has gifts. He has written lately one or two famous short stories about the South Seas, the best of which contains a description of a hurricane in a grove of cocoanut trees, which is about the last word on the subject, and is, in a few illuminative phrases, as fine as Kipling's description in the "Bridge-Builders" of the coming of the flood from the Ramgunga. But his love stories are—I have no words at present to say what they are, and it is too hot, and I am too lazy, to go for a Thesaurus. But one reflects that the last best gift of all the literary gods must surely be that faculty of good taste and self-criticism which seems to desert the modern magazine market and the hirelings who therein ply their trade. I have read the last greatest book of the decade, "The Open Road"—isn't that the name?—and should have liked it very much if not quite so many trumpets had been blown over it. It is a strange, involved book, but parts of it have the real breath of life. And I have read "Marie Claire," of course, but she takes a deal of thinking over. So I am not going to say anything about books, but about wind bells.

My wind-bell swings in the little kitchen window, high up, on a level with the branches of the elm outside. All the small wandering airs which stray among the green leaves, all the little gray winds of evening, all the golden winds of dawn, breathe on the wind-bell and wake the strange fairy music that it holds. It is one of the proper kind, not made of glass, but of gold and silver leaves of thin metal swinging from a metal ring, and when it sings, it sounds like the rush of tiny feet, the beat of tiny drops, the clash of innumerable small cymbals. At night when it moves softly in the pale square of the window, it is if Titania and her hosts had hovered for a moment without, and were pausing in a drift of silver wings to peep at a silly sleeping mortal. But when the mortal wakes hopefully in the next room—in sleep we all turn to children; am I going to catch them *this* time?—there is nothing but the moonlight on the next-door chimneys and the pale, warm sky and the nighthawks crying in it.

Sometimes it seems as if the musical chimes of the gold and silver leaves would fall into a rhythm recognizable to western ears, but the promise fades and falls away in a ripple of semitones as lovely and apparently as lawless as the falling of water. The tune remains unfinished, of the stuff of dreams.

There was once a pleasant girl called Koizumi, the Little Waterfall, and her lover was Sato, a poet and a soldier. Sato had to support his parents in their old age, for they were very poor, and there was no money to keep a wife. So he never said a word to Koizumi, only when he passed her in the streets or the fields his eyes would follow the movement of her little feet, which was like the movement of white ripples advancing and retreating upon a pebbled beach. And he made a song, rather famous in its day, which said—

"Very pleasant it is, in the weariness of the evening,
To lie at the green edge of the little waterfall
And fill the hands with violets
Sweeter to Amaterasu than the breath of Kyoto incense."

No one would think this song was very outspoken of love for Koizumi, but she understood it, and when she heard Sato singing it, she knew he loved her

and was content, with the unfathomable content of Japanese women.

Then the war came and Koizumi was content, too, that Sato should go as a soldier with a score of other young men from the village. She went to see them off, with all her neighbours, and she bowed to Sato, who said, "Honourably keep yourself in good health until I return," and she said, "Honourably deign to come back to your friends, who will be much distressed at your unfortunate absence from the Cherry-Blossom festival," and then everyone said "Banzai," and they were gone.

Only three ever came back, and Sato was not one of them.

Koizumi's father fretted himself to death just about then because he was too old to go and fight, and she went to work to make match-boxes, for it is necessary to live. Against the window of the room where she worked there leaned the pale gray-green leaves of a willow, and sometimes a pigeon rested on the sill; but there was always a little draught there, and so the thin silver leaves of the wind-bell which hung in the opening stirred and whispered continually.

The griefs and contents of the East are beyond the fathoming of the West. Koizumi was plump and cheerful, and her little broad face had upon it the delicate bloom of a nectarine. That was because the wind-bell sang to her; and what it sang was always the first three lines of Sato's song about the Little Waterfall. So she knew that Sato was near her, waking and sleeping with the waking and sleeping of the thin winds, and she was very happy. You see, when he was what they call alive, he had scarcely ever even spoken to her, and now he spoke to her every time the wind blew, and to no other soul but her. But he never finished the song. Koizumi knew that if he finished it, her life would not be able to contain that fulfillment. So she just waited.

No one knew that Koizumi, as she bent over her match-boxes, heard all day long,

"Very pleasant it is, in the weariness of the evening,
To lie at the green edge of the little waterfall,
And fill the hands with violets,"

only often the very old and the very wise, an old peasant woman or the Shinto priest of some forgotten shrine, would look at her face and see that she had already gained another existence.

English is so clumsy. It is hard to tell the little tale of the Little Waterfall in such a concrete sort of language; the wind-bell would tell it best. According to Western ideas there is really no story to tell. Only one day of high wind and cold gray cloud Koizumi heard the whole song,

"Very pleasant it is, in the weariness of the evening,
To lie at the green edge of the little Waterfall,
And fill the hands with violets,
Sweeter to Amaterasu than the breath of Kyoto incense."

And Koizumi smiled at everyone, all those poor deaf folk who heard only a hurry of little musical notes, and never knew that it was Sato calling her from the immortal air, in that the time was come. And she went to a man who had a sword, and asked him if he would honourably deign to lend it to her. The man had seen better times before the new regime, and it was a beautiful little sword in a sheath of ivory-like enamel pictured with honourable deaths. It was no sort of a tool to lend a little peasant girl who made matches, but this man, looking into Koizumi's face, gave it without question. And Koizumi carried it home with her. She only wished that she had the wind-bell, too.

When the moon touched the stone-pines and the edges of the millet fields to pale gold, and the world was asleep, Koizumi rose from her quilt and took the sword from the sheath engraved with honourable deaths. Then she whispered to herself the words of Sato's song, and, girding her cheap cotton gown about her as if she had been the daughter of a samurai, she, the Little Waterfall, attained peace.

One of the most important items in the catalogue of any Humane Society is the prevention of the sale of aigrettes, to procure which means such cruelty to the beautiful birds. Recently eight colonies of white herons and American egrets have been located, by the Association of Audubon Societies, New York, who have placed guards over them, to prevent any further extermination. Mrs. Russell Sage, always interested in humane work, gave \$5,000 recently, to be used in teaching bird lore in the schools of the South.