

pass on, we may well find ourselves victorious heirs of the kingdom-to-be.

In two ways the forces of progress win their slow, sure victory. First, and more obviously, through the common, primal pressure of life, moving in all simplicity toward self-realization; then, and more profoundly it may be, through the undying passion for sacrifice, born of the craving for a wider good. It is when the two forces harmoniously interact that progress is sound. But the powers of sacrifice must learn the enduring lesson: if they are to be saved, and saviours, their life must be lost that it may be found. Their ardor, their purity, are what lifts us from the brute to angelhood. But let their too frequent helplessness in the past to affect the trend of progress, teach them a lesson. If they would be deeply and widely operative in the social field, they

must ally themselves with the more massive, though not more normal, powers to which the age gives birth. So may they have their share in translating what life presents into a higher likeness. So may we attain a courage that is never fatuous, a wisdom that is never academic. For we shall read an Intention greater than our own, expressed, not in the abstruse language of theological mystery, but in the warm if terrible terms of this ever-changing universe, our home. 'A Body hast Thou prepared for me,' wrote the psalmist, exalted by the hope of sacrifice. In the rise of the proletariat, in the elements of the class-struggle, in the trend toward socialism, is the body prepared for us of the twentieth century. Into this body we are to infuse what soul we will. 'Lo! I come,' let us then say, 'to do thy will, O Lord!'

URSA MINOR

BY ZEPHINE HUMPHREY

URSA MAJOR adorns the sky — obvious, glittering, clearly defined, a constellation about which there can never be any doubt. Everyone is familiar with it. Even those people who 'really know nothing about the stars' modify their disclaimer by adding, 'except the Big Dipper, of course.' Just as those other people who do not read widely are yet familiar with Dickens's characters? Precisely. It was this analogy which held my mind as I lay in the orchard one evening not long ago, tracing out Ursa Minor and Lyra, and trying to find some significance in the curves of Andromeda.

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It was not a clear evening, — too dreamy and warm, — and I was somewhat put to it to draw the outlines of the heavenly figures. 'Bind the cluster of the Pleiades?' Indeed, I could not at all. But I sat up suddenly once to shake a grasshopper out of my hair, and there before me lay Ursa Major — obvious, glittering, as I have said, emphatically itself.

'If it's constellations you're after,' it said, 'what in the worlds is the matter with me? Here I am, definite; I can defy the mists of the evening; I plant myself firmly above the hills. You waste your time groping among those

other vague gatherings yonder. At the best, they mean nothing unless you apply a mind-splitting force of imagination. Dragons and lyres, indeed! Look at me. I'm a dipper, I am. Take hold of my handle, and drink reality.'

It was true; the Big Dipper was a dipper. It lay evenly balanced across the sky, pointing upward, with time-honored accuracy, to the North Star, — a useful, an excellent constellation, conspicuous and exact. Yet, oh, how it bored me! I lay down again, and waited until a cloud had passed by between me and Ursa Minor, and then gave myself over to the gentler influence of the lesser group of stars. It did not point to the North Star, no; how could it, when it had snared the star closely in its tail?

That is the way — so I pondered, sunk in a fragrant revery in the grass, with only the flash of a meteor to startle me now and then — that is the way with a good many of the people that I know. Great bears and little bears, major and minor — they divide the world between them. Not evenly. A huge section of space has to be given over to the aggressive monopoly of the Great Bear; no other constellations swarm and hide about its clear-cut corners. But the heavens are wide: to the south, east, west, the other stars gather and come and go, herding in friendly fashion so close that their outlines merge and blend, and they weave one splendid pattern of glory across the purple void. How alluring, how interesting Ursa Minor, with its companions! How tedious Ursa Major, — and yet how indispensable! Every age is the age of Ursa Major; this must of necessity be so because — well, for one thing, because it will have it so. But I wonder if some readers do not share my preference for the minor folk.

It is the minor poet whose use — or

whose suffering — of the attribute of falling short is most familiar to us. Yet the poet, of course, stands by no means alone in his possession of the quality; all classes of men share it with him. Perhaps it may fairly be questioned whether that which indicates a lack should have anything but a negative significance, should be considered a quality at all. But a state of being which is shared by ninety-nine one-hundredths of mankind cannot escape a certain robustness; and, if it is negative, then negation is a force to be reckoned with.

We are rather hard on the minor poet; at best, we only tolerate him. But perhaps we have not considered the general uses of minority, the universal need, I may say, of the blessed estate. Its defects are obvious; very well, then, they may be ignored in our present discussion. It is precisely the obvious from which we would make our escape. But its merits — ah! the merits of Ursa Minor lure us to contemplation. They are so beautiful, some of them, that they almost cause the state of being which they adorn to transcend its proper bounds and emerge into the most superior kind of superiority.

There is, for instance, that very trait hinted at in the paragraph above; or, rather, that lack of a trait, — for one must more often speak negatively than positively in dealing with Ursa Minor, — that fact that there is nothing obvious about it but its defects. Now, how pleasant that is, to be sure! To find nothing a bore about a man but his shortcomings.

The world — the intelligent world, at least — instinctively avoids that which bores it; and surely a man could not ask better fortune than that his friends should ignore his faults. It is when they have to ignore his virtues that he is in a desperate case. Poor Ursa Major cannot be held fairly to blame

for the opposite condition which exists with it. It has to be obvious. Nature has carved it conspicuously, and set it prominently to work; it would defeat its own destiny if it tried to be quiet about it. That North Star is an important thing. People are careless, and they get lost; and then they are very stupid and cannot find their way again. It is absolutely essential that somebody or something stand forth very boldly, not to say baldly, and point an infallible finger in one direction. But people are not always lost; and, when they are sitting safely in their front yards or lying in their orchards, they are sometimes apt to grow weary of perpetual North Star.

'Behold me!' Ursa Major cries, in season and out of season, to the orchard full as loudly as to the mountain. 'I am the Great Bear, and I point the way to the North Star.'

'The North Star?' Ursa Minor murmurs. 'Oh! the North Star. I believe I've got it somewhere in my tail.'

Dear Ursa Minor!

But there is no doubt about it that to be free not to take themselves too seriously is a gracious privilege appertaining to the minor people, a privilege which conduces much to the general cause of ease and friendliness. Also to be free to come and go. One 'always knows where to find' Ursa Major, without the least trouble; one has but to stand facing the north in a general fashion, and, unless the sky is quite covered with clouds, there the constellation waits. Waits? Nay, rather, advances to meet one, delaying not to be wooed. Now, it is true also of Ursa Minor that one may 'know where to find it'; but whether one does find it or not is another question. It almost always has to be sought, unless the brilliant mood of the night robs all the stars of reserve; and, when found, it has to be held with the eye, lest its faint out-

lines vanish again. Now, I protest, this is decent of it; decent and self-respecting and independent and interesting. A little provoking, too, now and then; but provocation has excellent uses.

'Why, I'm not important,' it says, when one pleads earnestly with it to stay awhile. 'It's my brother that counts; he is the real thing; go and talk with him. His office hours are every evening; from nine to eleven in the summer, from six to ten in the winter. He'll tell you everything you want to know. I only repeat his main ideas feebly after him.'

And nothing can persuade it that one may prefer its own gentler, more indirect, more luminous exposition of North Star wisdom to the hard-and-fast statements of Ursa Major. Therefore, one has to coax them from it, and that's where the fun comes in.

Who does not know families which consist of one dominant personality and an ineffective company of eclipsed entities? 'The Browns? Oh, yes, Miss Martha Brown! What a force she is!' 'The Smiths! I think you must refer to Mr. Wilson Smith.' When I hear people talk like this of some family strange to me, I know my quarry from afar, and seek an introduction. Past Miss Martha and Mr. Wilson, I make my way as soon as I can; and, in the background of their greatness, I have never failed to find minor brothers and sisters, even a minor mother or two, who have charmed me utterly.

Companionability is another agreeable trait of Ursa Minor. Ursa Major stands off by itself, clearly distinguished from the other constellations that neighbor it, always preoccupied, always on duty, never with time to spare. How the major people of one's acquaintance do oppress and paralyze one with their absorption in their North Stars! They pretend to allow one to come and see them and talk about something else

once in a while; but one cannot do it, one is overwhelmed by the briefness of the interview granted and by the trivial nature of the ideas which one has brought to discuss. This is mortifying: to stand in the presence of greatness, mewing like an unhappy kitten that opens its mouth but utters no sound. Yet there are many who do it; many who cannot rid themselves of the curious contradictory panic of haste and reluctance which the North Star breeds in them.

But the minor person, the dear minor person — how comfortable he is! Three or four hours, more or less — it does not matter: spend the day, stay overnight. The genial latitude of the arrangement (if one can call it precisely an arrangement) gives time for a score of ideas to bud, open, bloom, and fall. Moreover, there is no slightest demand that ideas shall be forthcoming at all, if the wit prefers to lie fallow. This latter point is very important; I am not sure that it does not mark the chiefest merit of the minor person. His modest attitude toward life is one of an open receptiveness to whatever comes his way. He likes to talk and laugh, yes; but he also likes very well to be silent. He even makes no objection to downright dullness now and again, to real stupidity. Stupidity and dullness, he holds, are integral parts of human nature; and, without them, any man is (or would be) but half a man. The result of this tolerant wisdom is that the minor person is often far more stimulating than the major.

Wisdom! One wonders if the stars are as concerned for this attribute as we have felt it our duty to be since the days of Solomon. Perhaps that North Star of theirs is wisdom. If so, there is significance in the wide variety of the relations which they maintain with it. Ursa Major proclaims the North Star, points to it ostentatiously, stands for

it before all nations. Ursa Minor hooks the North Star in its tail, and turns its back on it.

It would seem, indeed, that Ursa Major must know all that there is to know about this particular point of light, since it travels around it continually, viewing it from all sides. But the very fact that Ursa Major always views it is the trouble. It never turns to look off and see what effect the North Star is having upon the other constellations, what are their various attitudes toward it, nor what they are doing among themselves off there in the heavenly fields. As a matter of fact, some of them are so placed that they cannot see the North Star at all from the standpoint of Ursa Major. They have to make their own way to it from other directions. To them it is, therefore, a more important circumstance that Ursa Minor has leashed the star, and holds it gently from running away, than that Ursa Major points to it. There is that to be said for Ursa Minor: with all its seeming indifference, it does maintain the North Star. It may turn its back on its prize and ignore it; it may subdue its own shadowy outlines to the vanishing point, and lose its identity in the mist; somehow or other that star persists, carelessly flung on high for the careful pointing of Ursa Major.

It is in the matter of their wisdom that minor people come nearest to defeating their mission in life and emerging into superiority. But the general nature of their wisdom saves them and keeps them down. On any given subject under discussion, some major person can always instruct them. They never know as much about flowers as the botanist, as much about music as the composer, as much about education as the kindergartner; so that they are continually to be found in their heaven-ordained position of deference toward some one. But, in the knowledge of

combinations, of tendencies, of ultimate issues, in the reckoning of averages, they are unsurpassed. Who would not rather have the advice of a competent minor person, in the complex questions of everyday life, than of a major person with a theory to prove?

There is one more trait of Ursa Minor — that which includes and presupposes all the other characteristics, their fine flower and, at the same time, their seed — which I would fain, yet dare not, handle. How shall I even speak its name without doing harm? A delicate quality, the very last attribute of human nature to stand analysis and discussion, it has yet been subjected to the rashest, most shameful exploitation in these latter days. Almost done to death it has been; nay, sometimes entirely so. Surely the reader knows what I mean. He has read about it in countless books, has noted its capitals S and H in magazine articles without end, has even heard it recommended from the pulpit earnestly. Look up at Ursa Minor, and see how its stars twinkle among themselves — not keenly, like Ursa Major, flashing an obvious sheaf of rays from every well-marked corner, but dimly, deliciously, through-and-through, so that the separate stars disappear sometimes in the effulgence of their mingled rays. That is — ah! speak it softly, whisper it — that is a *Sense of Humor*.

A pretty good showing, is it not, which we have found for minority in this orchard meditation? We have actually had to be on our guard every moment, lest the terms of our discussion slip from us, become confused, and — presto! change! — the minor person appear as the major. Such a sudden shifting of values as that, such a whimsical prancing of paradox, would be only the method which life employs habitually for our edification, and probably it approaches truth more nearly

than any other; but we are not up to it, we slaves to human reason. Consistency is still the bugbear of our small minds. Minority being granted, then, as a lesser estate than majority, we have examined it and we have seen that it has such merits that no phase of life can dispense with it. No phase? Well, yes, there is one at which I hinted many paragraphs back. Perhaps, if we return to it now, it also will succumb.

I said that we were apt to be hard on the minor poet. We are; and on the minor musician and the minor artist. Our general verdict seems to be that, however useful the minor person may be in the other departments of life, he is *de trop* in the arts; that, unless a man can make of himself a really first-rate poet or painter, he has no business to meddle with rhymes or pigments at all. But we do not stop to consider what an unkind treatment this is to give Melpomene and Euterpe, nor what an estimate we hereby tacitly make of the natures of these muses. Are they so inferior, then, to the other gods and goddesses that we may presume to scant their worship to less than the whole of mankind? Are they, on the other hand, such high prigs that they will have none of the company of common folk? Cruel and shameful assumptions, these, if we really made them. But I think that we are only thoughtless about our judgment in the matter. Not inferior to Venus and Ceres do we hold the Dames of Parnassus, but even superior in a way, different certainly, and deserving of peculiar honor. Alas! poor ladies, we therefore commend them to the companionship of nothing but the major people. No pleasant relaxation for them, no light-hearted dallies by the way with restful dullness; nothing but North Star forever and ever, continually North Star.

It is well that the gods are above human disposals, and that the muses have

always been traditionally willful. The case might be really serious with them if they had to obey our decrees. But they do not have to, and they do not. They know the value of the minor person, and they visit him freely. In fact, they give us the best of reasons — if we argue candidly — for supposing that they prefer minor people to major. Otherwise, why should they seek and summon a score of the former every year to one of the latter? It is always fair to assume that the guests one meets in a drawing-room are the hostess's chosen friends; and goddesses, like mortals, are known by the company they keep.

Of course they prefer the minor person! They know what they are about. It is he who serves them most wholeheartedly, putting the greatest effort forth for the least reward. It is he who soothes them and keeps them sane, even letting them go to sleep now and then in his restful presence. Does one ever stop to think what a strain an out-and-out genius must be on his poor muse?

The fields of art are spacious and open, and many are called thereto. But few are chosen? True; but the calling is the vital thing. Honor there may be in being chosen, — honor and assurance and joy, — but not much credit in the long run; the ultimate credit lies with him who, once called, can be trusted to follow the magic lure forever without reward; without other reward, that is.

I think, for my part, that Euterpe is so far from being a snob that she does not scorn the humblest instrument in the world which touches some heart into responsive song. The hand-organ, then? Oh, surely, yes, the hand-organ, with the children about it; the brass band, flooding the street with a sudden tide of hope and buoyancy, lifting the heads of the scattered pedestrians and binding their disconnected footsteps into a transient march; even the penny

whistle, if so it awaken some wisp of a dream in the brain of him who blows it. That is the errand of art: to communicate life, to awaken dreams. It is hard to see how it is to deny some title of its nobility to anything which achieves the end, no matter by what means.

'If only there were not such a host of scribblers and daubers nowadays!' the dissatisfied critic sighs. If only there were not — well, what then? Is the world's creative, artistic power to be conceived as a fixed and limited quantity, like its supply of marble and coal, like the currency of its nations; so that, if every one has a little, no one can have a great deal? If all the copiers in the Louvre firmly threw their brushes away, if the poetasters refused to fill the left-over corners in the magazines, would a Michael Angelo straightway appear, would a Shakespeare lift up his voice? The experiment would certainly be an interesting one to make; and, such is the modesty and good-will of the minor person in general, that he could probably be induced without any trouble to desist from expression long enough to put the thing to the test.

What a holiday the reviewers would have! The magazines would suspend their issues; the bookshops would close; the annual art-exhibitions would languish; the popular music-halls would give over, and bid their frequenters patronize the Symphony Concerts — where the bewildered creatures would yawn for a few hopeless moments, and then drift out into the street. But what if the waters, left to themselves, refused to congregate in one pool, and preferred to stagnate? What if the heavenly light which had flashed from so many mirrors and bits of glass and had made the world such a sparkling place a little while ago, withheld its radiance now because it found no reflecting surfaces left? This might happen. Nay, as a

fact, of course it would happen; for art is not a quantity at all, but a spirit, increasing with use, like Dante's love; and the more there is of it, the more there will always be.

Well, well! what a prolonged discussion! I fall back in the orchard grass and look up, and catch Ursa Minor's eye, twinkling more than ever.

'I'm sure, I am much obliged,' it says. 'You are very kind to take all this trouble. But, really, did you think

I was going to let myself be snuffed out?'

Of course not! The minor person, with all his modesty, has a pretty determination about him, a quiet inflexibility. We are not likely to lose him at any point while the world persists. I do not know but I ought, by good rights, to apologize to him for my long defense. But I love him, that is the truth; and, loving him, I have wanted to praise him. Ursa Major gets so much praise!

THE CONTRIBUTORS' CLUB

A MATTER OF PLANES

'MY sister and I get along beautifully together: she cares only about the big things of life, and I care only about the little ones.' This remark, made to me once by a friend of mine, comes into my mind every now and then, and I am increasingly amused by its astuteness. For nothing seems more capricious than the basis of our harmonious intercourse one with another. We constantly see people whom we would aver to be incompatible, living serenely at peace, while others, whose cordial agreement we would as confidently predict, are quarreling scandalously. I believe my friend's remark may throw some light on the matter. It amounts to this: people on the same plane may clash, people on different ones cannot. It is the grade-crossings that make trouble.

Let us see how it works. Here are Benedick and I living happily together, although our acquaintances would 'never have expected it.' We are both of us possessed of strong convictions, but

they happen not to concern the same things. For example, I put sugar in my coffee. I think that is the way to take coffee, and of course I always put it in Benedick's cup too. Now Benedick does n't care, — he would scarcely notice if I dropped an onion in, because he is thinking about civil-service reform and other large matters. As he drinks his coffee he talks to me of these things, which I regard as unquestionably of vital importance, but unquestionably not of vital interest. Yet Benedick talks well, and it is very becoming to him to be deeply in earnest, and so I like to listen to him. Thus we get along together very happily. He accepts my little habits, and I accept his big principles. The adjustment is perfect.

On the other hand, there is a certain lady who sometimes visits us. She drinks her coffee without sugar, and she never sits at breakfast with us that she does not evince real uneasiness as she watches the white cubes being dropped into our steaming cups. Benedick has never even noticed that she is uneasy, but I have, because, well, be-