



"He says he saw a giant with a great big knife walking through the town by moonlight"

A Tall Story

Another paradox of Mr. Pond, who, being challenged, relates the story of the man who was too tall to be seen

By G.K. Chesterton

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE HOWE

THEY had been discussing the new troubles in Germany: the three old friends, Sir Hubert Wotton, the famous official; Mr. Pond, the obscure official; and Captain Gahagan, who never did a stroke of work in the way of putting pen to paper, but liked making up the most fantastic stories on the spur of the moment. On this occasion, however, the group was increased to four; for Gahagan's wife was present, a candid-looking young woman with light brown hair and dark brown eyes. They had only recently been married, and the presence of Joan Gahagan still stimulated the captain to rather excessive flights of showing off.

Captain Gahagan looked like a Regency buck. Mr. Pond looked like a round-eyed fish, with the beard and brow of Socrates. Sir Hubert Wotton looked like Sir Hubert Wotton; it summed up a very sound and virile quality in him, for which his friends had a great respect.

"It's an infernal shame," Wotton was saying, "the way these fellows have treated the Jews; perfectly decent and harmless Jews, who were no more Communists than I am; little men who'd worked their way up by merit and industry, all kicked out of their posts without a penny of compensation. Surely you agree with that, Gahagan?"

"Of course I do," replied Gahagan. "But I fancy the Jews must be kicking themselves for having been so faithful to Germany and even, everywhere else, pretty generally pro-German."

"Even that can be exaggerated," said Mr. Pond. "Do you remember the case of Carl Schiller, that happened during the war? It was all kept rather quiet,

as I have reason to know; for the thing happened in some sense in my department. I have generally found spy stories the dullest of all forms of detective fiction; in my own modest researches into the light literature of murder I invariably avoid them. But this story really did have an unexpected and rather astonishing ending.

"Of course, you know that, in wartime, the official dealing with these things is very much exposed to amateurs, as the Duke of Wellington was exposed to authors. We persecuted the spies; and the spy-maniacs persecuted us. They were always coming to us to say they had seen certain persons who looked like spies. We vainly assured them that spies do not look like spies. As a matter of fact, the enemy was pretty ingenious in keeping the really suspicious character just out of sight; sometimes by his being ordinary; sometimes actually by his being extraordinary; one would be too small to be noticed, another too tall to be seen. one

was apparently paralyzed in a hospital and got out of the window at night—"

Joan looked across at him with a troubled expression in her honest brown eyes.

"Please, Mr. Pond, do tell us what you mean by a man being too tall to be seen."

Mr. Pond smiled—and proceeded, in his slightly pedantic way, to narrate the story which is now retold here.

IT ALL happened in a fashionable watering place, which was also a famous seaport, and therefore naturally a place of concentration for all the vigilance against spies, whether official or amateur. Sir Hubert Wotton was in general charge of the district, but Mr. Pond was in more practical though private occupation of the town, watching events from a narrow house in a back street, an upper room of which had been unobtrusively turned into an office. And he had two assistants under him—a sturdy and very silent young man named

Butt, bull-necked and broad-shouldered, but quite short; and a much taller and more talkative and elegant government office clerk named Travers but referred to by nearly everybody as Arthur.

The stalwart Butt commonly occupied a desk on the ground floor, watching the door and anyone who entered it; while Arthur Travers worked in the office upstairs, where there were some very valuable state papers, including the only plan of the mines in the harbor.

Mr. Pond himself always spent several hours in the office, but he had more occasion than the others to pay visits in the town, and had a general grasp of the neighborhood. It was a very shabby neighborhood; indeed, it consisted of a few genteel old-fashioned houses, now mostly shuttered and empty, standing on the very edge of a sort of slum of small houses, at that time riddled with what is called labor unrest in a degree very dangerous, especially in time of war. Immediately outside his door, he found but few things that could be called features in that featureless street; but there was an old curiosity shop opposite, with a display of ancient Asiatic weapons. And there was Mrs. Hartog-Haggard next door, more alarming than all the weapons of the world.

Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was one of those persons, to be found here and there, who look like the conventional caricature of the spinster, though they are in fact excellent mothers of families. Rather in the same way, she looked very like the sort of lady who is horribly in earnest at pacifist meetings; yet, as a matter of fact, she was passionately patriotic, not to say militaristic.

tic. And indeed, it is often true that those two extremes lend themselves to the same sort of fluent fanaticism.

POOR Mr. Pond had reason to remember the woeful day when he first saw her angular and agitated figure darkening his doorway as she entered out of the street, peering suspiciously. There was apparently some slight delay about her entrance. Some repairs were being made on the porch and some loose board or pole was not removed sufficiently promptly from her path—was in fact, as she declared, removed reluctantly and in a grumbling spirit by the workman employed on the job; and by the time she had reached the responsible official, a theory had fully formed and hardened in her mind.

"That man is a Socialist, Mr. Pond," she hissed in the ear of that unfortunate functionary. "I heard him with my own ears mutter something about what his trade union would say. What is he doing so near to your office? He certainly doesn't look English. He may be a spy!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Hartog-Haggard," said Pond patiently. "I will certainly make a note of your warning and see that inquiries are made about it."

And so he did, with the laborious precision of one who could not leave any loophole unguarded. Certainly the man did not look very English, though perhaps rather Scandinavian than German. His name was Petersen: it was possible that it was really Petersen. But that was not all. Mr. Pond had learned the last lesson of the wise man—that the fool is sometimes right.

He soon forgot the incident in the details of his work; and next day it was with a start that he looked up from his desk, or rather from Mr. Butt's desk, which he was using at the moment, and saw once again the patriotic lady hovering like an avenging shadow in the doorway. This time she glided swiftly in, unchecked by any Socialist barricade, and warned him that she had news of the most terrible kind. She seemed to have forgotten all about her last suspicions; and, in truth, her new ones were naturally more important to her. This time she had warmed the viper on her own hearth. She had suddenly become conscious of the existence of her own German governess, whom she had never especially noticed before.

POND himself had noticed the alien in question with rather more attention; he had seen her, a dumpy lady with pale hair, returning with Mrs. Hartog-Haggard's three little girls and one little boy from the pantomime of Puss-in-Boots that was being performed on the pier. He had even heard her instructing her charges, and saying something educational about a folk-tale; and had smiled faintly at that touch of Teutonic pedantry that talks about a folk-tale when we should talk about a fairy-tale. But he knew a good deal about the lady; and saw no reason to move in this matter.

"She shuts herself up for hours in her room and won't come out," Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was already breathing hoarsely in his ear. "Do you think she is signaling, or does she climb down the fire escape? What do you think it means, Mr. Pond?"

"Hysterics," said Mr. Pond. "What! Do you think the poor lady cannot be hysterical, because she does not scream the house down? But any doctor will tell you that hysteria is mostly secretive and silent. And there really is a vein of hysteria in a great many of the Germans; it is at the very opposite extreme to the external excitability of the Latins. No, madam, I do not think she is climbing down the fire escape. I think she is saying that her pupils do

not love her, and thinking about *Welt-schmerz* and suicide."

Here again, however, Mr. Pond was careful not to ignore or entirely despise the warning. He kept an eye on the German governess and even engaged that learned lady in talk upon some trivial pretext; if anything she touched could remain trivial.

"Your study of our national drama," he said gravely, "must sometimes recall to you the greatest and noblest work that ever came out of Germany."

"You refer to Goethe's Faust, I presume," she replied.

"I refer to Grimm's Fairy-tales," said Mr. Pond. "I fear I have forgotten for the moment whether the story we call Puss-in-Boots exists in Grimm's collection in the same form; but I am pretty certain there is some variant of it. It always seems to me about the best story in the world."

The German governess obliged him with a short lecture on the parallelism of folklore; and Pond could not help feeling faintly amused at the idea of this ethnological and scientific treatment of a folk-tale, which had just been presented on the pier by Miss Patsy Pickles, in tights and red boots in the

character of Puss; supported by that world-famed comedian who called himself Alberto Tizzi and was born in the Blackfriars Road.

When he returned to his office at twilight, Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was awaiting him. She ducked under the frame of scaffolding and darted into the room, crying out as she came:

"Mr. Pond, do you know what is right opposite your own house?"

"Well, I think so," said Mr. Pond doubtfully, "more or less."

"I NEVER read the name over the shop before," cried the lady. "You know it is all dark and dirty and obliterated—that curiosity shop I mean; with all the spears and daggers. Think of the impudence of the man! He's actually written up his name there: 'C. Schiller.'"

"He's written up C. Schiller. I'm not so sure he's written up his name," said Mr. Pond.

"Do you mean," she cried, "that you actually know he goes by two names? Why, that makes it worse than ever!"

"Well," said Mr. Pond, rising with a curtness that cut short all his own courtesy, "I'll see what I can do about it."

And for the third time did Mr. Pond

take some steps to verify the Hartog-Haggard revelations. He took the ten or twelve steps necessary to take him across the road and into the shop of C. Schiller, amid all the shining sabers and yataghans. It was a very peaceable-looking person who waited behind all this array of arms—not to say a rather smooth and sleek one; and Pond, leaning across the counter, addressed him in a low and confidential voice:

"Why the dickens do you people do it? It will be more than half your own fault if there's a row of some kind, and a jingo mob comes here and breaks your windows. Why can't you call yourself Levy, like your fathers before you—your fathers, who go back to the most ancient priesthood of the world? And you'll get into trouble with the Germans, too, some day, if you go about calling yourself Schiller. You might as well go and live in Stratford-on-Avon and call yourself Shakespeare."

"There's a lot of prejudith againth my rath," said the warden of the armory.

"There'll be a lot more, unless you take my advice," said Mr. Pond with unusual brevity, and left the shop to return to the office.

The square figure of Mr. Butt, who was sitting at the desk looking toward the doorway, rose at his entrance, but Pond waved him to his seat again and, lighting a cigarette, began to moon about the room in a rather moody fashion. He did not believe that there was anything very much in any of the three avenues of suspicion that had been opened to him; though he owned that there were indirect possibilities about the last. Mr. Levy was certainly not a German, and it was very improbable that he was a real enthusiast for Germany; but it was not altogether impossible to suppose, in the tangle and distraction of all the modern international muddle, that he might be some sort of tool, conscious or unconscious, of a real German conspiracy. So long as that was possible, he must be watched. Mr. Pond was very glad that Mr. Levy lived in the shop exactly opposite.

INDEED, he found himself gazing across the street, in the gathering dusk, with feelings which he found it hard to analyze. He could still see the shop, with its pattern of queer archaic weapons, through the frame of the last few uprights left in the low scaffolding around the porch; for the workmen's business had been entirely limited to the porch itself and the props were mostly cleared away, the work being practically over; but there was just enough suggestion of a cluster or network of lines to confuse the prospect at that very confusing turn of the twilight.

Once he fancied he saw something flicker behind them, as if a shadow had shifted, and there arose within him the terror of Mrs. Hartog-Haggard, which is the terror of boredom and a sort of paralyzed impatience, one of the worst of the woes of life. Then he saw that the shifting shadow must have been produced by the fact that the lights had been turned up in the shop opposite; and he saw again, and now much more clearly, the queer outline of all those alien Asiatic weapons—the crooked darts and monstrous missiles, the swords with a horrid resemblance to hooks and the blades that bent back and forth like snakes of iron.

He was all the more surprised, when he turned sharply round, to find that Butt, one of his two subordinates, was not working but, like himself, was staring, not to say glaring, as in a congested mystification, into the twilight.

"Is anything bothering you?" asked Pond in a gentle voice which people found very encouraging.

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They flung open the door and they saw all that was to be seen



The Grandstander

The story of a baseball marvel who was greater than anyone dreamed—except one girl and one man

By Brassil Fitzgerald

ILLUSTRATED BY MARIO COOPER



THE great Larry Dickon of Paxton. He had a fast ball and two strikes on the world. A tall lad, with cropped black hair, with a smile like a sword flash, and amused gray eyes. He looked too good to be true—and was. Petra O'Brien told him that firmly one April night.

They were in the O'Brien kitchen, three of them, seniors at Paxton. Petra was doing the dishes, a slim, sturdy girl in an apron; blue Kerry eyes and a wise, sweet mouth. Her smooth hair was like cherry wood under the light.

Blond Doris Teale was admiring Larry and wiping an occasional spoon. Larry sat on the set tubs, big hands on the board, swinging his feet, talking of baseball and Larry Dickon.

He was, he admitted, the best college pitcher in the West. He could leave Paxton any day to play professional ball. Eagan of Butte was on his trail now, offering him plenty to quit school and sign up for the season. He'd do business with Eagan after he graduated.

Petra frowned, listening to him. "If you're not too old," she said lightly.

Larry cocked a black eyebrow and grinned, undisturbed. "My wild Irish rose," he said, "with large thorns."

Petra wrinkled her nose at him and went into the pantry with dishes.

Doris Teale said quickly and softly, "I'm going out for a fag. There's a moon." As she drifted toward the door to the porch, her pansy-soft eyes said, "Come, too."

A loud voice burst out to them: "Oh, Larry!" That was Petra's father, The O'Brien, in the living-room, demanding attention.

Larry went in to him, and Doris, losing interest in the moonlight, slipped up the back stairs to her room.

DORIS and Larry roomed with the O'Briens in the big old house Petra's grandfather had built when the O'Briens were rich and important. Her father had failed to exchange the old place for an Alaskan mine or a dry oil well, because his departed wife had come into it as a bride. He had compromised with a mortgage.

Petra came out of the pantry, put away her apron, and took her crystal-clear milk bottles out to the porch. There was no light; it was cool and dark under the vines that screened the porch. She stood there a moment, breathing the April night, wishing Larry were different, looking into the future and wondering.

She and Larry were engaged; a campus engagement. They had danced and picnicked and crammed for exams together. Now, in June, all that would be over. And then? In the dark, the door opened behind her and Larry came out.

She felt his strong hands on her shoulders. His lazy voice said, "Believe I'll kiss you—Doris." Then aware of Petra, he said easily, "I was just fooling. I knew it was you."

Petra's voice was edged with scorn.

"You wouldn't lie to me, Larry?"

He chuckled. "Jealous, Petey?"

He would call her Petey. She didn't like it, and suddenly she didn't like Larry. She didn't want Larry. She moved away from his arms. "Please, Larry, don't."

He said cheerfully, "Don't be cross, Petey. You are my girl."

"I was your girl, Larry"—a small cold voice. "I'll give you your pin in the morning."

"I won't take it." Larry was angry. "Just because you're jealous."

"No, Larry," she said quietly, "because the girl grew older. Because you're not the kind of man I want to marry."

Larry was surprised and indignant. "Why not? What's the matter with me?"

Petra was close to tears but her voice was firm: "You're too good to be true, Larry; too conceited and spoiled to be true."

There was silence between them. The night wind stirred in the vines.

"Thanks," he said bitterly. Behind her the screen door closed quietly.

Petra sat on the steps, watching the moon rise over the garage, hardening her heart against Larry. She had worries enough without Larry. Her father, The O'Brien, bearing bravely the loss of his inheritance and the collapse of the dreams he called his affairs, was selling real estate, now, planning big deals, while Petra managed the house as best she could and studied hard for a teacher's certificate.

Petra loved her father. She never with word or look pricked the bright balloons of his hopes, but she did long for safety, for the peace of bills paid on the first of the month. She loved her father, but she wanted a husband unlike him, and unlike Larry Dickon. A modest, provident man, unaccustomed to cheering sections and indifferent to pansy-soft eyes.

Larry didn't come back. The moonlight silvered the yard. A train whistled coming out of the mountains—a long, mournful sound in the night.

It was time to go in and coax her father away from his reading. When he sat up late he had headaches and looked reproachfully at Petra.

She would give Larry his pin in the morning.

In the morning Petra was in the living-room, running the vacuum sweeper, when Larry dashed downstairs, late as usual for his eight o'clock class.

"Wait, Larry," she called over the buzz of the sweeper. "Here's your pin."

"Can't wait," he said cheerfully. "Can't hear you." The front door closed with a bang.

From the window Petra watched him stride down the walk, hatless in the rain, swaggering a little. Under the dark, curling lashes her blue eyes were smiling. Larry would never grow up.

The cook put her head through the dining-room drapes. "The butter and egg man," she announced moodily. "He wants his money." Petra sighed, and went out to be firm with the butter and egg man. And her father had never grown up.

IN GRAY tweeds and a white polo shirt, Petra stood on the steps of Main Hall. It was three o'clock and her classes were over for the day. A stream of students flowed by her; voices and voices and many feet. The rain of the morning had washed the sky to a porcelain blue, leaving clouds like soap foam on the mountains. On the green Oval, trampling the dandelions, the student corps marched and marked time, their rifles shining in the sun.

Boys beside her were talking of Larry. "A swell egg, Dickon! A great pitcher. The only one we've got. Gleason's no good." Two worried sophomores. They moved off down the steps on their way to the ball field where the varsity was playing the scrubs.

Petra was tempted to follow along. She should go home to her vacuum sweeper, but it would be nice in the sun in the bleachers. Larry would—

A dry voice said, "Are you going my way?" It was old Dr. Thorne, smiling at her over his glasses. Petra smiled back and went down the steps beside him.

Dr. Thorne marched along, hugging his green bag. "And how," he asked, "is the notorious Larry? Will he graduate?"

Petra said, "Oh, yes. He wouldn't miss Commencement for anything. He's Senior Marshal, you know."

Dr. Thorne nodded. "'A thing,' he said, 'a little soiled i' the working.' Do you know where that comes from?"

Petra didn't.

Dr. Thorne said crossly: "No one quotes any more. It's old-fashioned. I'm old-fashioned, and so for that matter is Larry Dickon."

At the Faculty Club the professor stopped. He looked at Petra over his glasses, trying to remember something. He thought: "She's a nice child, a very pretty girl." He said: "You look very healthy. Yes. That reminds me. I'm sending you a roomer. Young Tate of the English department. You'll like him. He's quite sound on Chaucer."

Petra smiled shyly. "You're kind, Dr. Thorne."

"Not at all. Not at all," the old man said, and took his bag into the Club.

MR. TATE came to the house that afternoon, and was like an English instructor—a very young one. He had brown hair and brown eyes and an Oxford accent.

"Dr. Thorne has been telling me about you," he said, with a nice smile. "I hope we'll be friends."

