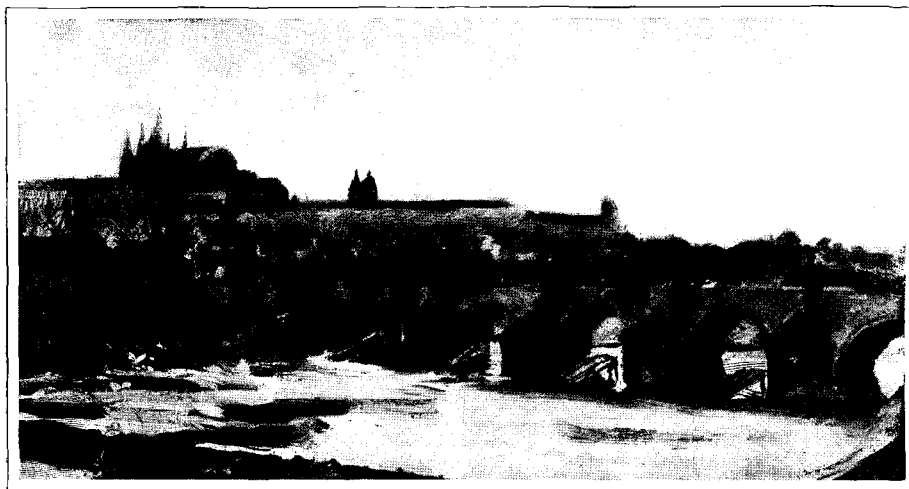


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KARLSBRÜCKE

Prague

BY ARTHUR SYMONS

I
WOODED and watery Bohemia, though indeed no longer on the sea-coast, might well have seemed to Shakspeare, if he had really seen it, a suitable place for a tragical pastoral. Coming from Bayreuth to Prague, one finds one's self, as soon as one has got well beyond Karlsbad, in a totally new country. The very sky is new, and I have seen an orange light of fire breaking through barred clouds like a vision of the gate of the Venusberg, which added a new experience to my

knowledge of sunsets. And the country is at once wide-reaching and mountainous, rising into pine woods above quiet rivers, and widening out into green and brown plains, hedgeless, with here and there a corn-field, a flock of geese herded by a small boy, a few goats, a few cows. All along the line people are bathing in the rivers, or lying with naked feet among the grass. A boatman tows himself across, reaching up to a rope above his head, as he stands in his flat, oblong boat, square at each end. The scenery is wild and yet gentle, with many

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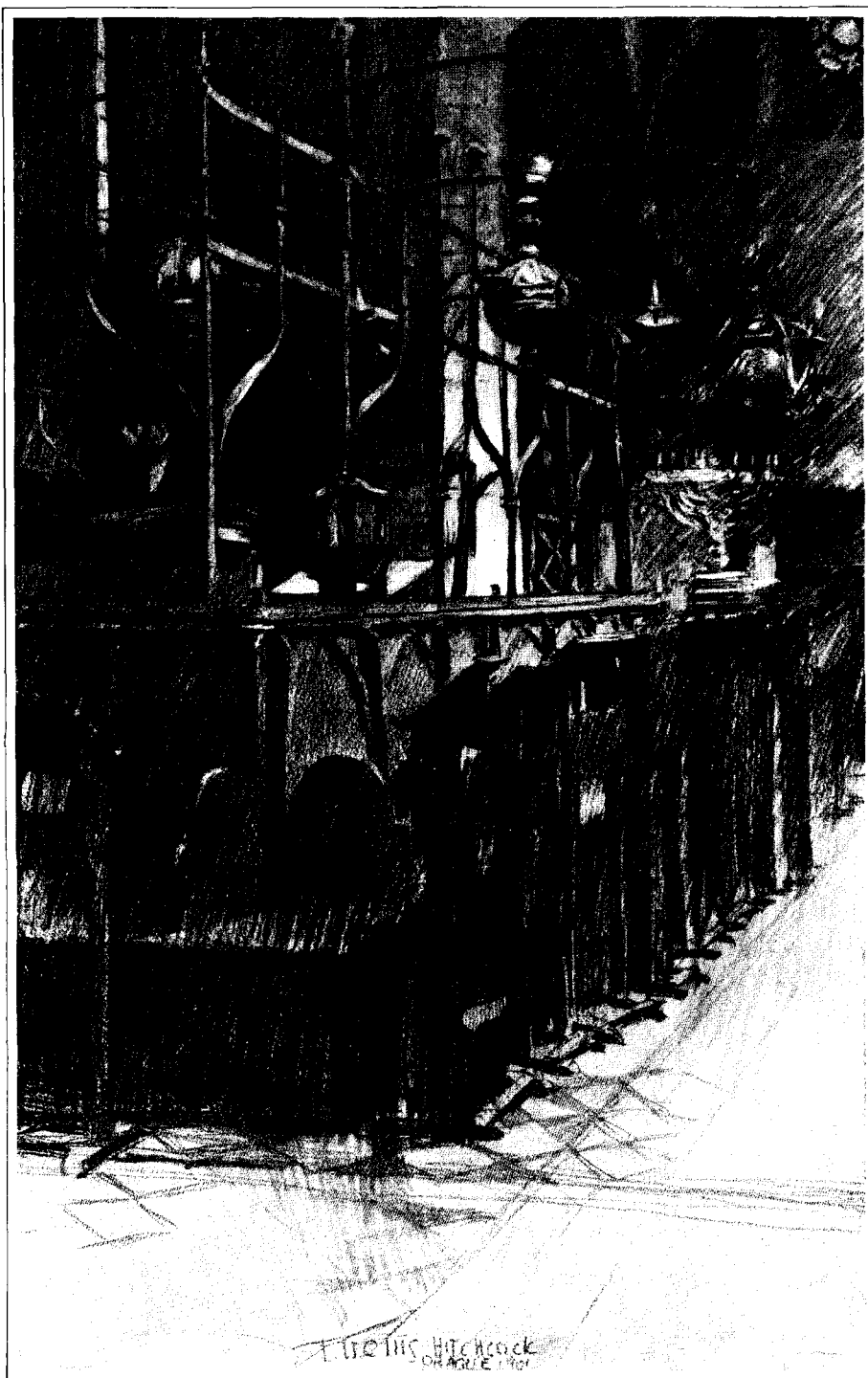
delicate shades of green, fading into hills on which the mist turns the pine woods purple. And Prague itself, seen from the Wysshrad, once the Acropolis of the city, and now a melancholy waste of grass and crawling roads and modern fortifications, seems little more than an accidental growth among green fields and tree-covered hill-sides, a wide land of woods and meadows and streams. Seen from the Hradschin, the Kremlin of Prague, it is a city of pointed spires, green domes, and red, many-gabled roofs, through which the Moldau wanders, carrying its five bridges, and it climbs the hill like Naples rising to Camaldoli. All Prague is red and green, and part of its charm for one, not only as one looks down upon it, seeing the freshness of the green among the red, comes from its homely, delightful way of filling up vacant spaces with grass and trees, as in the vast Karlovo Náměstí, the only city square I know which is almost a park, laid out with smooth grass and cool trees and flower-beds planted in patterns, and yet an actual city square, closed in by civic buildings, with its fourteenth-century tower by the side of what was once a Rathhaus, out of whose windows Ziska had flung councillors. And the green is everywhere, spreading outward from the fortifications, high above the city, where the children play on the grass, spots of bright color, and piling itself mountainously up the Nebozizek, and softening the river with shadows, and flowering out of the river in green islands.

Warm, full of repose, heavy with happy sleep at mid-day, at night the river-side becomes mysterious, a romance. The water silvers; with its islands, from which lights glimmer, it might be a lake, but for the thunder of the weir, which comes to you as you walk under the trees, or go out on a kind of platform beside a dusty mill, from which you see the water rushing violently towards the great wooden stakes by the bridge. Lights move on the opposite shore, at the foot of what seems a vast mountain, dimly outlined. The bridge, at first invisible, a detached line of lights, comes out gradually as your eyes accustom themselves to the night mist, in the palest of gray, like the ghost of a bridge.

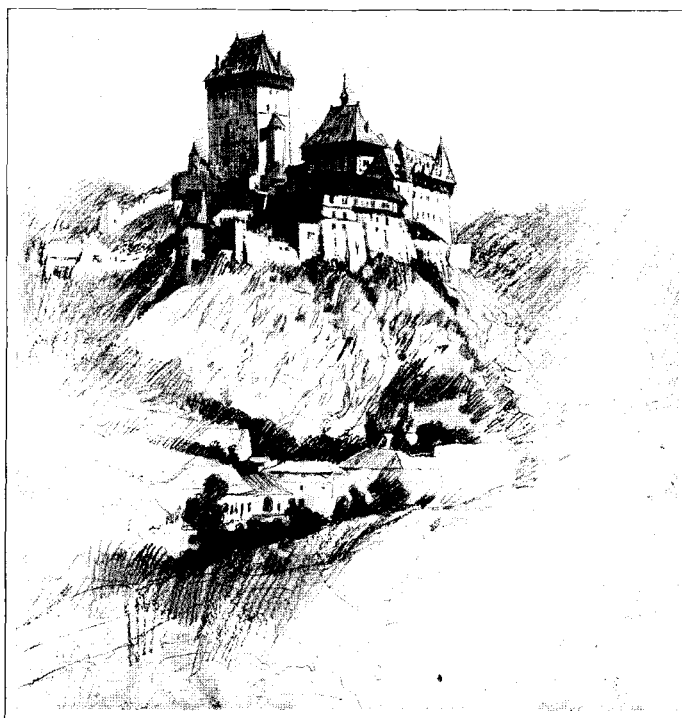
Beyond and above, the Hradschin emerges in the same ghostly outline, a long gray line against the sky, out of which the cathedral spire points upward. It is a view which seems to have been composed, almost too full of the romantic elements to be quite natural, and it has something of whatever is strange, placid, and savage in the character of the Bohemians.

II

The real centre of Prague is the Karluv Most, or Karl Bridge, which crosses the Moldau on eight out of its sixteen arches. Begun in the fourteenth century, with its fifteenth-century tower, and its mainly eighteenth century statues, it may remind one at first sight of the Ponte S. Angelo at Rome; but Bernini at his most fantastic never conceived anything so fantastic as these thirty stone and bronze figures of saints, martyrs, doctors of the Church, our Saviour, and the suffering souls in purgatory. There is a crucifix erected with money mulcted from a Jew in 1606, in which the gilded bronze is washed and dusted and weather-stained into a ruddy and veined warmth. St. John Nepomuk, the patron saint of Prague, is in dark bronze, with the five stars around his halo like five spikes of gold; and near by is the marble slab marking the spot where he was flung over the bridge, a tiny bronze image representing him floating with his crown of stars down the river. For the most part the saints are in rough-hewn stone, based at times with faintly outlined reliefs bearing strange inscriptions, such as that which commemorates St. John Nepomuk, who "conquered devils, and turned 8000 Saracens and 2500 Jews to the Christian faith," the Jews and Saracens being shown on their way to that pious moment. The strangest of all these monuments is a vast and rocky mass, surmounted by the figures of several saints, and opening in the midst to show three hollow and piteous figures in purgatory, lifting their chained hands towards the doorway, guarded on one side by a snarling dog, on the other by a gigantic Bohemian in uniform, with a fat stomach, endless mustaches, and a long sword hanging from his military cloak, as if to impress upon the minds of Bohemians that hell, for them at all



THE SYNAGOGUE IN THE JEWISH QUARTER



KARLSTEIN

events, was entirely Bohemian. There is a certain savagery in the whole aspect and record of this bridge—in its way of indicating the place where spiked heads rotted for ten years, the place where a just man was flung into the water by a tyrant, in the vindictive insistence on the fact that a reviling Jew's money had been taken to set up the crucifix. It is an always fierce and militant religion which has fixed these landmarks, a religion armed against enemies, or suffering death at their hands. There is none of that rest which remains to the people of God in these large figures, who had labored and suffered; as there is none of that rest which is beauty, here or elsewhere, in the endeavors after art of the Bohemians.

Visiting the older part of the Hradschin, one is impressed by the air of naked strength, of walls built only for defence, of a kind of contempt for decoration; everywhere is bare stone, hard wood; the council-chamber has a brick floor, leather-covered tables, a wooden stool for

the archbishop, a dungeonlike room for the secretary. And in the cathedral, the metropolitan church of St. Vitus, the memorial statues are of men in armor, as if every one buried there had died by violence and in the act of fighting. In the barbaric Václavská Kaple, or Wenzel Chapel, the saint's helmet and coat of mail are preserved in a niche behind the altar. His statue, by Vischer of Nürnberg, stands in armor in a corner of this sombre place, where the faded frescoes are half outlined and half overlaid by smooth, unshaped masses of amethyst, chrysoprase, malachite, porphyry, set into the damp walls without pattern or design, blotching the rotting colors with crude heapings of precious stones. The Svato-Tynsky-Chram, or Teyn Church, has also its men in armor carved upon stone tombstones.

III

There is one corner of Prague which has kept, more than any other, its

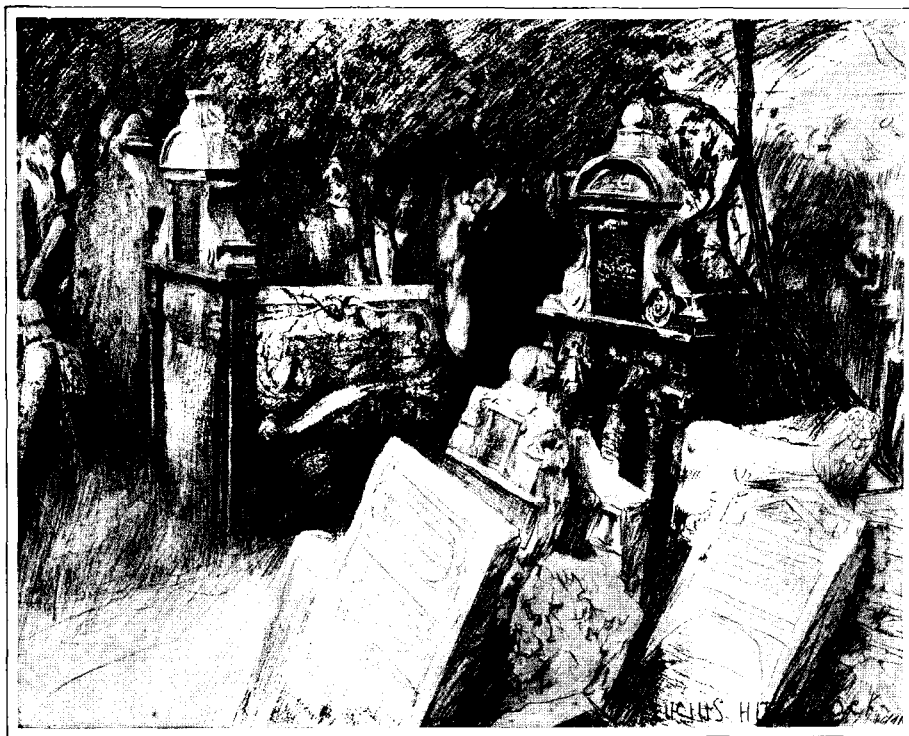


IN THE CATHEDRAL

mediæval aspect, combining in itself many of the contrasts of this contradictory city: the Jewish quarter, which lies between the Staromestké Náměstí and the river. The synagogue, built in the twelfth century, outside like a monstrous dwelling, inside like a dungeon, made in the image of a wizard's cell, with its low roof and heavy walls, black with age, pierced with narrow windows, its railed-off space in the centre, in which a chair and desk seem to await a scribe, its narrow seats, each with its little desk, its tall candelabra and mean candlesticks, in some of which a candle is guttering out, its banner of the time of Ferdinand III., its suspended cloth or robe, hung with bells like the robe of the high-priest, its strange ornaments of wood and copper, as of some idolatry to which graven images had never lent grace, concentrates in itself all the horror of the Ghetto. And the Ghetto swarms about it in a medley of narrow streets and broad empty spaces, a pestilent circle of evil

smells, and half-naked children, and slatternly Jews and Jewesses, in the midst of shops of old books and old clothes, and old houses with coats of arms over their doors and broken ornaments on their walls.

Out of the midst of this confusion a short street leads to the old burial-ground, hidden behind its high enclosing-wall. This graveyard in the midst of the city, in which no graves have been dug for more than a hundred years, carries back the mind, as one walks among its alleys and garden-plots of tombs, to an unknown antiquity. The tombstones are crowded and pressed together, rows of them overlap the same grave, and they huddle together in a forced companionship, leaning this way and that, battered and chipped, with worn lettering and broken ornaments. Most have inscriptions in Hebrew, with symbolical records of tribe or name: a fish for Fischer, a stag for Hirsch, two hands for the tribe of Aaron. Some are family tombs, in



THE OLD JEWISH BURYING-GROUND

which the broken lid of a sarcophagus shows a glimpse of bones among the casual heapings of time. Some are famous tombs, such as that of Rabbi Löwe, the friend of Tycho Brahe, a tall slab crowned with a cone, and still heaped with little stones on every ledge, after the Jewish fashion of commemorating the dead. But now all cling together in a sad equality. The trees have grown familiar with the tombs, turning gray and green together, as they share the same weather age after age. One tree has bent over and riveted itself upon the edge of a gravestone, which it presses down into the earth under its weight. The alders

are shrivelled and twisted, with but little foliage, as they cover the tombs with a little melancholy shade. The lichen creeps up their trunks, which are cracked and dry. Weeds and thorns grow about their roots, the grass is everywhere, with bare patches here and there of black earth, close about the tombstones.

The sky was turning towards sunset as I wandered about the alleys, under the trees, and the last pale rays of the sun filtered through the leaves and gave a sadder light to the broken edges of gray stone. Now and then a blackbird crossed between the tombs and the sunlight. Towards the further end, where the graves are fewer and the trees grow more freely, children were playing on the grass. It seemed to me as if one were seeing all the graves of all the people who had ever died. These tombs, as no others had ever done, seemed to sum up the real meaning of our memory of the dead, the real way in which they crowd together, dwindling

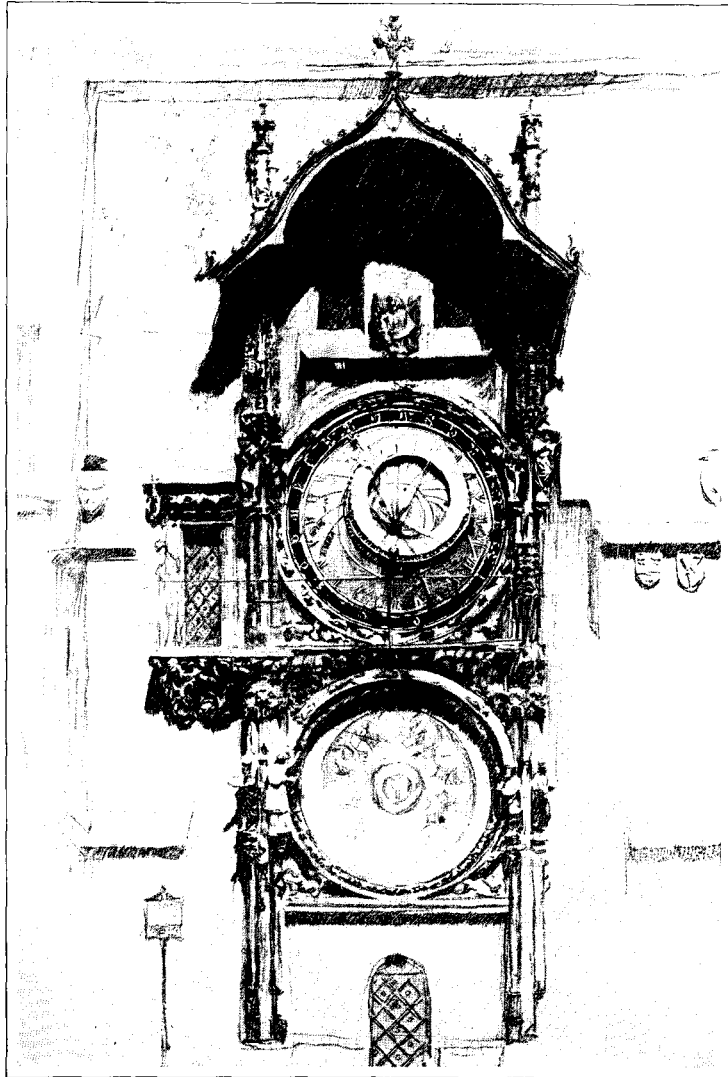


A TYPE FROM THE GHETTO

miserably, as time carries them further and further away from the general memory. They were inexpressibly human, these poor gravestones, on so few of which had any people now living come to put the pious stones of remembrance.

IV

Prague, in summer, has the aspect of a Southern rather than of a Northern city; for the people are out-of-doors all day long, walking in the streets for the mere pleasure of walking in them, and sitting under the trees on the islands in the river, and in the gardens of many cafés, and in the parks, which lead into the country in every direction. They bring their books and their work with them, they bring little paper packets of sweets, and there is generally a band playing as they sit at tables drinking their "white coffee" or their beer. Bohemian music has a kind of fiery monotony, its polka-beat marked with



CURIOUS CLOCK OF THE RATHHAUS

all the emphasis of ceaseless cymbals, in an orchestra arranged after a somewhat savage fashion of its own. Popular music, and the characteristically Bohemian music of Dvorák and Smetana, have a singular mixture of barbarism, of something windy and savage, and a kind of conventionality. There is no passion in it, but a sort of primitive folk-rhythm, full of surprises to the Western ear, with sudden spirals of the flutes and hautboys, leaps and clashes of the cymbals,

enveloping outbursts of the brass. The people are for the most part quiet and good-humored people, in whom it is curious to trace the mixture of Slavonic and German blood. The pure German type, which begins to lessen at Karlsbad, is hardly to be seen at Prague; the faces are more nervous, with sharper eyes; the figures are slimmer, less shapeless. They are often very blond, at times very dark; and there is something a little wild, even in the soft beauty of blond women, a

fiery sweetness, a certain strangeness, as of unfamiliar lights amid the shadows of still water; a little of the soft, unconscious savagery of the animals man has tamed, but which have never quite forgotten the forest. But they are not perilous, like the Hungarians; sly, sometimes, but simple. Children and young girls are often delicious, with their white skin and pale gold hair, which in some lights takes a faint shade of green, like the hair of a certain portrait by Palma Vecchio, known as the portrait of his daughter, in the gallery at Vienna. And all these people have, in their faces, in their demeanor, something of the seriousness of people in Protestant countries; Catholics as they have been for three hundred years, they seem to have not yet outlived the Protestant temperament; seem still, and not only through an accident in images which has really happened, to be honoring Hus when they worship St. John Nepomuk.

V

Prague is a city of contrasts, and it is not to be understood until one has seen the Prikopy as well as the Hradschin, the modern Václavské Náměstí as well as the ancient arcades about the Staroměstské Náměstí, and has realized that all these contrasts are so many parts of a single national life, and that they are, after all, only the more visible half of that "slata Praha," that "golden Prague," which the Bohemian sees, not only with his eyes, but with his memory. The older parts of the town give one a strange sensation of being still in the Middle Ages, and they are sombre, at moments menacing, as one comes upon great archways leading into narrow alleys, or opening into vaulted inner rooms or great courtyards. Twisting lanes lead from street to street; restaurants or cafés show a glimmering light at the end of a long passage plunged in darkness; wherever one passes one gets fantastic glimpses under arcades and archways, of people moving across roughly paved squares, by a flickering light, or turning down a narrow passage under a low doorway. There is a modern Prague which is growing up in the image of Vienna, with tall, characterless houses and modish shops, and it is indeed to be feared that this new Prague will

gradually overgrow all that is left of the old city. But at present the contrast can still be enjoyed without more than an agreeable sense of incongruity, as one passes, at the turn of a street, from the melancholy slumber of an old palace into an atmosphere of life and bustle, as of a contented town life going steadily on.

And this life of to-day, which has at last become national, passionately national, so that the names of the streets are no longer to be seen in German, and the Czech theatre would hesitate to perform an opera of Wagner because he was a German, and riots can break out in a German theatre and actresses be fought over in the streets because they act in German—this new outbreak of national life is fed upon memories. The Bohemian still sees a phantom city behind this city in which electric trams take him to the foot of the Vysehrad, a city more real to him than even what remains of his national monuments. His memory is a memory of martyrs, of executions, of the savageries of religion and of political conflict, Catholics against Protestants, Germans against Czechs; he remembers, as he passes the place where the Bethlehem Chapel of Hus once stood, the burning of Hus at Constance; he remembers the flails and pitchforks of Ziska; he remembers Wallenstein, Radetzky. Here, outside the Rathhaus, were the executions of the 21st June, 1621, after that battle of the White Mountain in which Protestantism died. Here, on the Staroměstské Vez, the tower which he passes under when he crosses the river, the twenty-seven heads were left rotting for ten years. He is not taken over the castle without being shown the window from which the three councillors were flung in 1618; an act of "defenestration," as it has been called by Count Lützow, the historian of Bohemia, which brought about the Thirty Years' War. War after war has devastated Prague, spoiling it of much that was finest and most characteristic in its buildings, but by the Bohemian no stone that has been violently cast down is forgotten. Prague is still the epitome of the history of his country; he sees it as a man sees the woman he loves, with her first beauty, and he loves it as a man loves a woman, more for what she has suffered.

His Wife

A STORY IN THREE PARTS

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS WARD

PART I

“O H, Pink! Mother *can't* lift you. . . . I would if I could. . . . Yes, I know I used to—

“Molly, take the baby. Couldn't you amuse him, somehow? Perhaps, if you tried hard, you could keep him still. When he screams so, it seems to hit me—here. It makes it harder to breathe. He cried 'most all night. And if you could contrive to keep Pink, too—

“What is it, Kate? You'll have to manage without me this morning. Pick up anything for luncheon—I don't care. I couldn't eat. You can warm over that mutton for yourselves. We must keep the bills down. They were too large last month. Order a grouse for Mr. Avery. He says he will dine at home to-night—

“There's the telephone! Somebody answer it. I can't get down, myself. . . . Is it Mr. Avery? . . . Wants me? . . . I don't see how I *can*. . . . Yes. Hold the wire. I'll try—

“Did you speak to me, Molly? . . . No, I'm not feeling any worse. It's only getting up the stairs, and . . . something that tired me a little. I don't want Dr. Thorne. I can't afford the doctor so often. I'm no worse than . . . I sometimes . . . am. It's only that I *cannot* breathe. . . . Molly! *Molly!* Quick, Molly! The window! *Air!*”

As Molly dashed the window up, Mrs. Avery's head fell back upon the pillows of the lounge. They were blue pillows, and her blanching cheek took a little reflection from the color. But she was not ghastly; she never was. At the low-water mark of her strength she seemed to challenge death with an indomitable vitality.

There was a certain surprise in the discovery that so blond a being could have so much of it. She was very fair—blue of eye, yellow of hair, pearly of skin;

but all her coloring was warm and rich; when she was well, it was an occupation to admire her ear, her cheek, her throat; and when she was ill, her eye conquered. Every delicate trait and feature of her defied her fate, except her mouth; this had begun to take on a pitiful expression.

The doctor's blazing eye flashed on it when he was summoned hastily. It had become a symptom to him, and was usually the first one of which he took note.

Dr. Esmerald Thorne had the preoccupations of his eminence, and his patients waited their turns with that undiscouraged endurance which is the jest and the despair of less-distinguished physicians. Women took their crochet-work to his office, and men bided their time with gnawed mustache and an unnatural interest in the back-number magazines upon his table. Indifferent ailments received his belated attention, and to certain patients he came when he got ready. Mrs. Avery's was not one of these cases.

When Molly's tumultuous telephone call reached him that day, it found him at the hospital, sewing up an accident. He drew the thread through the stitch, handed the needle to the house surgeon, who was standing by, and ran down stairs. The hospital was two miles from Marshall Avery's house. Dr. Thorne's horse took the distance on a gallop, and Dr. Thorne took Avery's stairs two at a time.

He came into her room, however, with the theatrical calm and the preposterous smile which men of his profession and his kind assume in the presence of danger—that unconsciousness has not blotted from the patient's intelligence. Through the wide window the late October air bit in. She was lying full in the surly breeze on the lounge pillow, as Molly had left her. Her blue morning gown was