

"La Sorda," he asked in Spanish, "what do they pay you here?"

"Four pesetas a night," said La Sorda.

Four pesetas is eighty cents. Spanish incomes are incredibly small.

"And how much for your teaching?" pursued José.

"Two to four pesetas an hour," replied La Sorda. She tossed off these figures in a careless aside; she was laughing now at some joke from a far corner of the audience.

"Sometimes rich patrons give her presents," said José, on his own account. "She has bought with these presents a little house across the river. There she lives with her mother, and her cousin cooks for them. She lives very well, as things go with the Gitanos."

I watched her then, still chatting across the noise to people on the floor; spying, with her art of lip-reading, on a dozen conversations, all of which amused her, and quite oblivious to us. In Madrid, which loves dancing and novelty, she would have been a craze. With a Madrid reputation she might have gone on to the Argentine and to all rich, lavish Latin America. Suites at luxurious hotels, jewels, automobiles, the company of the rich and great in all the Spanish world—this was the prospect open to La

Sorda when, years ago, she went to Madrid. If she were of a saving nature, she might have had much money. Her very affliction would have served as a priceless instrument for her press agent.

Yet here she was, with her expression of good-humored serenity and her easy, tinkling laughter of a child, dancing for the boys of Seville in a small, dingy theater, working hard for an income which could not possibly exceed, regularly, fifteen dollars a week. Still—that expression, that laugh— Suddenly I realized that the elusive bluebird of happiness had for a moment brushed us with his wings. She, this deaf woman of Seville, was plying an art in which she was supreme, loving it, confident in it. Every night she gained that instant, generous applause which is the consolation of the actor. No Irving in London, no Booth in New York, got quicker or more hearty appreciation than she in that obscure, drab quarter of a Spanish provincial city. She was queen in her little world; it existed for her, because of her; it loved her, that queer little world, amused her, satisfied her. Above all, she was doing well a job which she loved. Between acts of that gigantic drama of unhappiness being played to the north, I had encountered the happy life.

THE SHEPHERDS

BY LAURA SPENCER PORTOR

THEY never sought; nay, they but woke and came
Quickly; nor paused they to bring
Gifts to the Little King;—
No gems had they, nor a remembered name.

E'en while they knelt, three Wise Men worshipping,
Over the desert rode afar,
Patient, and sought a star;—
Yet came too late to hear the angels sing.

Oh, wake us, make us simple, make us mild!
Spare us the desert thirst and fears,
The garnered gems, and years!
Oh, bring us to Thee quickly, Holy Child.

EIGHTY YEARS AND AFTER

BY W. D. HOWELLS

ALL my life I have been afraid of death. I think the like is true of every one, and I think it is also true that now, when old and nearer death, in the order of life, than ever before, I am less afraid of dying than when I was young and naturally far from it. I believe this again is true of all men, but it may not be at all true of others. Perhaps in age, as in sickness, when the vital forces are lowered we lose something of that universal and perpetual dread, until, as observation, if not experience, teaches, we survive it altogether and make the good end common to the dying.

Apparently the fear of death does not always mount with the loss of faith in a life hereafter, but sometimes the contrary. Until I was thirty-five years old I had no question but if I died I should live again; yet the swift loss of that faith, through the almost universal lapse of it in the prevailing agnosticism of the eighteen-seventies and 'eighties, was a relief from that fear. I had hitherto felt that, being a sinner, as I did not doubt I was, I should suffer for my sins after death; yet, now that the fear of hell was effectively gone, a certain stress was lifted from me which had weighed upon my soul. When I was a well-grown boy I used to pray before I slept at night that I might not die before morning and that I might not go to hell, but neither of my petitions had been inspired by the wise and kind doctrine of Swedenborg which I had been taught from my earliest years, and so I must suppose that my terror was a remnant of the ancestral, the anthropoidal fear which once possessed all human life.

In age, in youth, most people believe in God because they cannot deny

the existence of a cause of things. The universe did not happen of itself, though we may, in middle life, say so sometimes. Even then I felt that there was a Creator of Heaven and Earth, but I had not the sense of a Father in Heaven, though I prayed to Him every night by that name. I had not the sense of loving Him, though I feared Him because I knew myself a wrong-doer in my thoughts and deeds, and imagined Him a just judge. The fear of His judgment has passed from me more and more as I have grown older; but at no time have I thought irreverently of Him or spoken so of Him. Still I have not affectionately prayed to Him outside of the Scriptural words. I have not praised Him in the terms of flattery which must, if He is the divine consciousness we imagine Him, make Him sick at heart. I do not say this is the case with other old men, but I note it in my own case with whatever humility the utmost piety would have.

My fear of Him has not grown upon me; neither do I think it has lessened, as it seems to me my fear of death has. There is apparently no reason for this diminishing dread, and I do not account for it as a universal experience. There seems to be a shrinkage of the emotions as of the forces from youth to age. When we are young life fills us full to the verge of being and leaves us no vantage-point from which we have any perspective of ourselves. For instance, I cannot recall inquiring what I was at twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, and hardly at sixty, as I am now inquiring what I am at eighty-two, though I have always been keenly interested in the analysis of life and character. But experience grows with age, and the study of it may be