

spired this whimsical, heart-teasing  
couplet from a trench in Flanders:

And we assault in an hour, and it's a silly  
thing:  
I can't forget the lane that goes from  
Steyning to the Ring.

Let me pass over the famous Sussex  
poets (among them Jasper Mayne,  
made Archdeacon of Chichester at the  
Restoration, who had the sombre in-  
tensity of Donne at times), and look  
at the little anthology of young singers  
and makers in the *Poetry Review*.  
Alas! that it is impossible to quote  
them all. The various aspects of  
Sussex scenery are praised in golden  
numbers; not so Brighton, which is

really London against a countryside  
background, forgotten in her sedate  
magnificence:

Can there be yet a still more lovely thing  
Than this steep street in the grey  
Georgian town,  
So steep it reaches halfway to the sky,  
Having been once a sheep-track on a  
Down?

It is the Downs, however, that domi-  
nate each song of life or love or death,  
and so let us close on a heavenly ca-  
dence with this epigram:

O green, translucent Downs!  
Soft-shadowed, lifted high!  
What magic fills you, that you stand,  
Untouched by Time's relentless hand,  
As God first breathed you on the morn-  
ing sky?

## BAD 'CESS TO THE WIDOWS AN' ALL!

BY ROSAMOND LANGBRIDGE

From *The Manchester Guardian*

(RADICAL LIBERAL DAILY)

PERHAPS it was because, the night  
before, a gay laddo had whistled at the  
Widow Healy as he passed her on the  
road, and, when she looked back at  
him, had blown her an impertinent  
kiss; or maybe it was the glory-flare  
of the gorse which glimmered through  
the dusk that night and spoke to her  
of the yellow sunshine of life; or else  
it was the reminiscent scent of the  
gorse which put back the clock of her  
mind to her courting days with Healy  
in that very lane. Whatever it was,  
after an hour of steady reflection she  
raised a defiant head, and with one  
shake of her shoulders shook off the  
weight of forty dull years from her  
shawl, and with it her twenty years'  
record of sobriety in Ballybeg. She

decided that twenty good years of her  
life had been wasted without courters,  
and that courters, therefore, she must  
have.

It was perhaps unfortunate, if not  
untypical of widows, that her pre-  
monitory choice fell on a 'promised'  
boy. It was partly that her instinct  
sensed a flaw of softness in James  
Hickey; partly that between herself  
and Delia Meahan, his promised wife,  
there had always existed an obscure  
competitive dislike.

So she kept her door open of an  
evening till that hour when young  
Hickey was passing by alone. Mrs.  
Healy had cut her finger deeply the  
day before, and as James lunged  
heavily toward her, the very flower of  
ingenuity bloomed suddenly in her

closely shawled head, and she tore off the sticking rag with such force that the wound bled freshly again.

'Och!' she called out at the top of her voice. 'I have the top cut off of me finger with a p'isoned traycle tin, and how will I hold it on?'

At that, James Hickey lunged into the house, the big lump of good-natured softness that he was. But, as the widow stooped and tore a rag from her petticoat, at the sight of the blood he sickened and turned away.

'You'll get the lock-jars with the dint of the p'isoned gore, ma'am,' James said faintly, and sat down trembling, on a chair.

'An ye'll set down on' watch me gettin' 'em, is it?' the widow railed with coquetry at him. Soon, James Hickey was stirring a sugary cup of her tea, and what could he do but fall in with her chat and go on nodding his head?

'And do you cross yourself, now, when you do be meeting her first thing of a morning?' she continued in her railing voice.

'Why would I do that, ma'am?' James Hickey asked.

'Did you never hear tell them red-haired girls is awfully unlucky?' Mrs. Healy cried, setting the small shawl she always wore upon her head more closely round her face. She clapped down a faded photograph beside his cup, and continued, standing over him, her hands upon her hips.

'Look at that for a lovely boy!' said Mrs. Healy, 'God help us!—he had a red-haired wife, and whatever he'd set about would go bandy on him, whether his cows'd slip a calf, or he'd get an odd gripe every day, or what, till he wandered the whole of Ireland to try could he get shut of her, and she always after him, till he set his heart on meself; and when he heard I was a wedded wife, he thr'un himself in the

duck-pond, and when they took him out, there was yards of green duckweed and a drake's fedder in his hair.'

James Hickey rose, and went unsteadily to the door. 'That was a frightful thing!—t would give you the creeps!' he said.

'T would so!' said Mrs. Healy, 'and if you loves them kind of stories, James, come back to me some evenin' and I'll tell you more.'

And when James was gone, the widow was filled with a glorious surprise that she had cut so deep a notch in his credulity, and that the craft of putting the 'Come-hither' on a man still welled up freshly in her practised heart. 'But now,' said she to herself, 'what good is in one? I should get two or three, for to make the first come on!'

So, presently, it went all round Ballybeg that young Hickey never crossed Delia's door these times, and that himself, and old McSweeney, and Johnnie deCourcy were always going up to Mrs. Healy's place, and that they were all saying there wasn't a finer woman in it than what Mrs. Healy was. And as to Delia Meahan, it was a pity for her, but it was true for James, what he was saying—Delia had no luck.

Then Delia followed John deCourcy one dark night, as he went up the widow's lane with something in his hand, and old McSweeney joined him, with a swaying bucket in his grip, and last of all James Hickey joined the two and all went into the widow's house.

'Look at here, ma'm!' said young deCourcy, opening his red handkerchief, out of which fell pellets of dark mold. 'I have brought you a fern for your winder. I dug it out o' the side of the mountain stream.'

'Well, aren't you the boy!' said Mrs. Healy.

'And I've brought you the fill of me hand of dillusk!' said James, taking red sea-weed from his pocket.

'And what did I bring you, but the fill of a pig-bucket,' announced McSweeney, 'an' the promise of the lavings from the priest's own house. And I'll do that much for you every day, so I will!'

'Wisha, good luck to yez all!' said the Widow Healy.

'What'd be the good of a pig-bucket,' said James, 'when she haven't the pig!'

Upon which, Mrs. Healy stopped her triumphant face to James's ear and whispered into it, alluringly, 'No, but now I have the promise of the pig-bucket, maybe I'd get the pig!'

It was at this psychological moment that Delia broke into the circle, just as Mrs. Healy's arm was creeping round James's neck.

'Bad 'cess to you, ma'am!' she cried, 'for tempting me promised boy with your pig-buckets up to me nose!'

'Cross yourself now, James, for she have no luck!' railed Mrs. Healy, standing her ground.

'Arrah, what luck?' cried Delia, at inspired random. 'I'll go bail she have a fine red poll herself—puttin' the Eye on all of you!'

And suddenly, she seized the widow by the shawl she always wore about her face and tore it from her head, disclosing to the eyes of the three men a mat of sandy-red hair.

'Wasn't I right now!' she screamed, 'and aren't ye the big fools sittin' here till she have yez all overlooked? Wasn't McSweeney telling me himself, the las' time he come out of her door, he fell down a bog-hole and lamed his knee?'

'It is true for her,' said McSweeney, suddenly awe-struck. The men turned and murmured amongst themselves.

'Weren't you always telling me you're carrying a fish-bone in your gullet that you can't get shut of?' de Courcy said, and turned to James.

But James had disappeared through the half-open door. The company, dispersing, beheld him flying through Ballybeg; and that night the widow stood at one end of the village, and Delia Meahan at the other, to catch him as he slunk back to the town. But James Hickey never came back to Ballybeg that night, nor any other night. And they are saying in the village that James Hickey is still running round Ireland, and the Widow Healy runs one way, and Delia Meahan the other. And still, and for all that, they never catch James Hickey.

# THE ART OF JAROSLAV HNEVKOVSKY

BY BERNADETTE MURPHY

From *The New Witness*, March 25

(NATIONALIST AND CHESTERTONIAN WEEKLY)

THE biographical introductory note, or preface, to the catalogue of an art exhibition fulfils the functions of a guide with a megaphone. Presumably, the work to be seen is not sufficiently interesting in itself; the artist, as a man, must be presented to the public by a fellow-artist or a literary friend in a pen-picture in the catalogue. In summer parties of Americans may be seen touring London in motor *chars-a-bancs*. As they whirl along, buildings of historical interest are pointed out to them by an official with a megaphone; they are allowed to alight at the Houses of Parliament, the Tower of London and St. Paul's Cathedral. The by-ways are avoided, even the old city churches merely glanced at, and the beauty of streets, of squares, of open spaces is disregarded utterly. No attention is paid to the architectural values of any building the tourists examine; the only thrill understood and insisted on is that awakened by a knowledge of its history.

So in the preface to the catalogue the life-history of the artist, with the early struggles accentuated, his character with its attendant crop of eccentricities, his manner of living, his tastes, even his personal appearance are all discovered to the reader in the evident hope that even if his work does not merit attention, the man himself will excite curiosity. Such a foreword creates a prejudice in the visitor's mind, and dulls by a haze of

sentimentality any critical faculties he possesses.

In the catalogue of paintings by Jaroslav Hnevkovsky, of Prague, an account is given of the many adventures which befel the painter whilst collecting material for this exhibition. We are told that he lived solely 'on the booty of fishing-rod and gun' in the jungle in Ceylon; that he adopted 'the simple loin cloth' as costume; that he arrived at the same degree of intimacy with the natives as Ganguin enjoyed in Tahiti; that upon his return to Prague 'just before the outbreak of the great war' he hunger-struck to avoid fighting 'under the hated Hapsburg flag,' and in consequence of the severe strain this imposed on his constitution he is now austere haggard in appearance. He shaves his head in the manner of Buddhist priests, and is very reserved by nature; his brother is a doctor; he had a devoted friend who accompanied him on his wanderings. This friend fell ill of malaria fever and Hnevkovsky was left to face the unknown jungle life alone.

It is a romantic story, but it has nothing to do with the quality of the artist's work any more than the tale of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot has any bearing upon the structural excellence of the House of Commons. The recitation of either tale disposes the mind to be interested subjectively and not objectively, and for this reason establishes a false standard