

thé club set on the hill overlooking lake, golf course, and sports ground. Right glad were we of long drinks and a rest in that most comfortable and sociable of clubs, before we parted to go to the bungalows of our respective hosts and change for dinner.

My own hosts, the Auditor and his wife, had one of their most cheery dinner parties, and about 9.30 P.M. the whole station, in rickshaw and on foot, climbed the hill to Government House, where, to the strains of a Goanese band consisting of piano, two violins, and a flute, we footed it heel and toe into the wee sma' hours. The gardens were prettily lit up with lights and Chinese lanterns, while small tents and chairs, arranged at not too frequent intervals, made secluded and appreciated sitting-out places. The light breeze off the lake kept us cool, and a champagne supper added considerably to the gayety of rations; so, when, rather footsore, I later sought my bed, I reflected that we had 'jubilated' to some purpose here, in this corner of Darkest Africa!

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## THE HOBO: AN ARGENTINE TALE

BY FEDERICO S.-MERTENS

GEORGE took his hat and cane and said to Aurelia, who was busy typewriting her husband's weekly article for *El Enciclopédico*:

'I'm going to the office, my dear. If a hobo — you understand? a hobo — now listen — should come, tell him to wait; that I'll be back in a moment.'

'A hobo?' asked Aurelia, equally surprised and curious.

'Yes.'

'What business would a hobo have with you, George?'

'I'll tell you,' said her husband, pausing to lay his hat and cane down on the desk. 'I noticed this hobo every afternoon seated on a bench in the *Plaza del Once*, watching the children run about, with an expression in his eyes that seemed to say, "Be happy, be happy while you can, little creatures, you'll suffer enough later!" On another occasion, I was struck by his demeanor toward some lovely young girls who were passing; I should say they were n't more than eighteen years old. They stared at him with a certain puzzled interest, while a grimace, half repugnant, crossed his face.

"The girls, startled by his enigmatic glance, hastened their steps, timidly turning around once or twice to look back at the man of sombre presence.

'Really, his glance did inspire fear. I was conscious of a little tremor myself.

'It made me anxious to know more of his history, and perhaps use it for literary material. There was something in his eyes that inspired you with a feeling that the story of a tragedy lurked in their depths.

'So, one day, I stepped up to him, laying my hand respectfully on his shoulder, and said:

"Enjoying the fine weather, Don Fermin?"

'Before he could open his lips to me to say "I am not Don Fermin," I bowed respectfully, and taking off my hat, said:

"I beg your pardon, sir; I made a mistake."

"No offense," muttered the man, without moving.

"You are the exact double of a relative of mine," I added.

'Impudence!' interrupted Aurelia.

'I beg pardon, my dear; it was the first thing that occurred to me to start a conversation.'

'No offense,' said Aurelia, mimick-

ing the hobo, with a little giggle that started her husband laughing, and adding, immediately, with eager curiosity:

‘Go on, George, go on.’

‘Well, “you are the perfect double of a relative,” I repeated. But my man’s only reply was to glance at me indifferently, and resume his contemplation of the children and young people passing by.

“What a simpleton!” I commented to myself, as I passed on. The next day, I noticed him sitting on the same bench. This time, I sat down next to him, and began to read *La Nación*. I pretended to be absorbed in my paper for a few minutes, and then, taking out my cigarettes, I asked him if he would have a smoke.

“Thanks,” he said, taking one.

‘I took a match, and, offering him a light first, lighted my own cigarette, and remarked between my teeth:

“Fine afternoon, eh?”

“Fine” he answered.

‘Had the man guessed my intention, and proposed, like most unfortunates of this class, to keep the secret of his misfortunes to himself? Had he guessed I was a journalist, and was he amusing himself in playing me a bit, before giving me an opportunity to draw his portrait? Or, was he just what he seemed, a saturnine man of few words, born taciturn?

‘All I can say is, that on this and several subsequent occasions, I utterly failed to get into conversation with my hobo. But I did n’t give up. I told myself that patience will accomplish anything, and persisted.

‘I stopped and chatted with him every day, and, gradually, saw that I was winning his confidence, which began with his letting me know his name — Ernesto — although he never told me his family name, merely saying that it was the same as that of one of the most prominent families in

“your Eastern Republic,” which was also his native country.

‘Later, he told me of some of the escapades in which he had been involved, pretending, as many men of that character do, that he had plunged into them in order to forget an unhappy love affair.

“‘I’ve been in France, Germany, England, Italy, and in most parts of Europe. To-day, although I have a good education and know several languages, I am what you see; a miserable, low-down hobo. Yes, and this is all on account of the woman whose name you have been trying to get hold of. You’ve been trying to get me drunk, and even have invited me to your house in order to find it out. Then, you would write a story. But would you put in the proper names, so that the woman could suffer as she merits? Commit suicide, or something?’

‘Do you mean to say,’ interrupted Aurelia again, ‘that he has already told you his life story?’

‘Practically.’

‘Tell it to me. The man has interested me so much that I’m dying to know what really did wreck his life.’

‘Very well, listen:

‘At twenty-three years of age, my hobo started on his unhappy career by falling head over heels in love with a beautiful Easterner — like all your country-women, a magnificent brunette of the Moorish type, with big black eyes, and that sort of thing. Those big, black eyes, you know, are always bewitching. She reciprocated his passion, and they both used to laugh at the idea that happiness is a delusion in this world.

‘Only a month before the date set for their marriage, he was compelled to leave suddenly for Italy. His father, who was seriously ill, had been ordered there at once for his health.

'Having an intuitive presentiment, perhaps, of what might happen, he desired that their marriage should occur before he left. This proved impossible, however, and after mutual reciprocal protests of undying devotion, he parted from her, happier, if possible, than ever.

'For a few months, her letters were frequent, and filled with expressions of devotion. Gradually, however, they became rarer and cooler in tone. Finally, one day, he heard from her for the last time, begging his forgiveness, and saying that she was to marry another; and asking him to keep the fact of her earlier love for him a secret.

'For a time, he was in complete despair, and dreamed of nothing but revenge. Later, he tried to forget his trouble in dissipation.

'Eventually, his father died, leaving him a very large estate, which he speedily lost, mostly on the gaming table. In a few years, it had vanished.'

'And then?'

There was such a tone of intense interest in Aurelia's interruption that George glanced up, and noticing the paleness of his wife, said:

'What is it, my dear?'

'Nothing; I'm just nervous. You know that sad stories always agitate me. Don't you recall how distressed I was the other day by that story of Maupassant's?'

The tall clock in the hall struck three, with the melancholy timbre of an ancient memory.

'Well, my dear, I've got to go to the office. It's already three o'clock. If he comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back in a few minutes.'

'Madam, there is a hobo asking for the master.'

'Have you sent him away?'

'Yes. I told him the master was not at home.'

'Call him back at once, and tell him to come in, said Aurelia, leaving the room. When he gets here, tell me.'

The servant hastened out, coming back a moment later with the invited caller, whom she left in the office; then she hurried to announce him to her mistress.

The human wreck who sat there was probably a man of thirty-five, of unusual height, in spite of his stooping posture. You could hardly discern his countenance, so completely hidden, was it by his unkempt beard and dirty tangled locks. His only striking feature was his eyes, brilliant, lucid, and sad. His only garments, apparently, were his ragged trousers, and an equally dirty and ragged jacket. A cap several times too large, and soiled by frequent contact with the earth, covered his faded auburn hair. His apology for boots had long ceased to deserve that designation.

The hobo, motionless, with his arms limp by his side, surveyed with evident contempt the ostentatious luxury of the room. What were his thoughts?

The door suddenly opened, and Aurelia appeared.

A hoarse, grating exclamation of surprise, of stunned astonishment, escaped the man.

'Aurelia!'

Aurelia advanced toward him.

'Ernesto!'

'But it's you? It's Aurelia? You . . . You . . .'

Aurelia shrank back, terrified at the contraction of hatred in Ernesto's face.

'Pardon me, Ernesto. I have no excuse. I was ungrateful, I know. But you know why. What would you have? Love has always caused more cruelty and misery than happiness. You must be a decent, reasonable man; you must forget me, and you must promise, first of all, to have

nothing more to do with my husband. You must promise to give up this miserable way of living. I cannot bear to see you like this. You must become the Ernesto you were. Please, will you promise me this?’

Ernesto looked at her for a moment in silence. Then, lowering his glance, he repeated to himself Aurelia’s words:

‘Love has always caused more cruelty and misery than happiness.’

As if disarmed by the thought, he said:

‘I promise part. I promise not to see your husband. I cannot promise not to forget you. I will promise other things, if you ask, but don’t ask me to give up this “miserable way of living.” No. Not that. I’m happy this way. I’m most happy like this!’

‘Did n’t my man come?’ asked George, when he returned from the office.

‘Yes,’ said Aurelia; ‘he came and waited for quite a time, and I think got tired.’

George remarked that he would come back the next day; and when he failed to do so, he went to hunt him up in the *Plaza del Once*. Greatly to his surprise, the man was not there.

So George spent a week, a month, looking for him; a year, hoping he would come back, and then, finally, imagining that he must be dead, decided to write the sad story of the hobo, using fictitious names.

[*The New Statesman*]

## HENLEY THE VAINGLORIOUS

BY ROBERT LYND

HENLEY was a master of the vain-glorious phrase. He was Pistol with a style. He wrote in order to be overheard. His words were sturdy vagabonds, bawling and swaggering. ‘Let

us be drunk,’ he cried, in one of his *rondeaux*, and he made his words exultant as with wine.

He saw everywhere in Nature, the images of the lewd population of mid-night streets. For him, even the moon over the sea was like some old hag out of a Villon ballade:

Flaunting, tawdry and grim,  
From cloud to cloud along her beat,  
Leering her battered and inveterate leer,  
She signals where he prowls in the dark alone,  
Her horrible old man.  
Mumbling old oaths and warming  
His villainous old bones with villainous talk.

Similarly, the cat breaking in upon the exquisite dawn that wakes the ‘little twitter-and-cheep’ of the birds in a London Park, becomes a picturesque and obscene figure:

Behold  
A rakehell cat — how furtive and acold!  
A spent witch homing from some infamous dance  
Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade  
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade!

Or, again, take the description of the East Wind in *London Voluntaries*:

Out of the poisonous East,  
Over a continent of blight,  
Like a maleficent influence released  
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,  
The Wind-fiend, the abominable —  
The Hangman Wind that tortures temper and  
light —  
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,  
Hard on the skirts of the embittered night;  
And in a cloud unclean,  
Of excremental humors, roused to strife  
By the operation of some ruinous change,  
Wherever his evil mandates run and range,  
Into a dire intensity of life,  
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down  
To the grim job of throttling London Town.

This is, of its kind, remarkable writing. It may not reflect a poetic view of life, but it reflects a romantic and humorous view. Henley’s humor is seldom good humor: it is, rather, a sort of boisterous invective. His phrases delight us, if we put ourselves in the