

A PAGE OF VERSE

CHANSON TRISTE

BY R. FORTESCUE DORIA

[*The Bookman*]

I CANNOT sleep to-night, because
Across the road a woman sings
An ancient song of love and peace,
A haunting melody that clings.

Why should her singing make me sad
And drive me to the verge of tears?
Ah, there is foolishness in youth,
And bitter paying with the years.

THE SINGER IN THE STREET

BY HUMBERT WOLFE

[*Westminster Gazette*]

O SINGER in the street, either be still
Or sing some other song that does not
 stir
With the slow scent and the wild hands
 of her,
The wild small hands that life could
 never fill;
For beauty is insatiable: Oh sing,
Lest longing destroy me, of some other
 thing.

THE UNICORNS

BY A. A. LE M. S.

[*New Statesman*]

SHUDDER now, tremble. See where the
 unicorns browse
On the white dark cherry.
They thrust their hard pride through
 the still moon-frozen boughs
To snap at the topmost swaying
 berry.
They tear the grass with their feet and
 snort aloud
— See daffodil fly from hoof!
And the beautiful shadows lone and
 proud
Draw in aloof.

Will nobody scare the orchard of the
 unicorns?

They toss their flaming hair on the
 velvet gloom;
And, see, where a trembling moony
 nightingale
Throws down the bloom.

The pale boughs shake with shiver of
 thrusting horn;
Mute to the stars they sway,
And the orchard silently mourns its
 whiteness shorn:
— Will nobody drive the unicorns
 away?

Out of a tapered chamber dark
A child's sweet breathing fills
The dreaming orchard-air, and, hark!
The ring of galloping hoofs on the
 iron hills.

FROM BHARTRIHARI

BY SIRDAR UMRAO SINGH

[*East and West*]

OF summer evenings is it not delicious
To lounge on palace roofs and find
 delight
In song and music? Is it not enough
To find full satisfaction in the love
Of one's beloved partner dear as life?
And yet the saintly ones have taken
 refuge
In forest groves, seeing that all these
 things
Are passing and unstable, like the shade
Cast by the flame which flutters in the
 breeze
Created by the wings of a poor moth
That hovers restless, maddened by that
 flame.

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

SECRET MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

LORD HAIG's example of depositing in the British museum documents relating to his operations on the Western Front, to be kept secret for a period of twenty years has been followed by Lord Esher, who was Lord Haig's agent in the matter of the original deposit. All of Lord Esher's war diaries will be handed over to the Museum authorities, by whom they will be kept sealed for sixty years; so that practically all of his lordship's knowledge of what happened in France that will be shared by this generation is contained in his book, *The Tragedy of Lord Kitchener*. Lord Esher went to France in September, 1914, and kept a continuous diary while he was there, during the period when Lord Kitchener was at the head of the War Office. The diaries covering the period to June, 1916, when the great soldier was drowned, are those which will be sent to the Museum. It is remotely possible that the author of the diaries may reconsider his decision and permit an earlier publication.

Before papers or books can be placed in the custody of the British Museum in this way, the permission of the trustees must be obtained. In the case of Lord Esher, himself for many years a member of the board, this was granted some time ago. When the papers reach the Museum they are handed to the Keeper of Manuscripts, who places them in safe-keeping for the specified time. Lord Esher chose the period of sixty years because it is 'the duration of reticence selected by the author of *Waverley*.' In 1981 his diaries will presumably be opened to all students.

There are at present about eighteen sets of papers sealed in the safes of the

Museum, to most of which a time-limit is attached. No information is available, of course, as to the papers which are kept secret, though there are a few sets of documents of which parts have already been published, notably the Greville diaries. Mr. Lytton Strachey was given access to the portions of these papers bearing on the early life of Queen Victoria, which were thought unsuited to publication during her lifetime, and every reader of his book will remember to what sprightly use he turned Greville's observations.

Lord Haig's papers will become available in 1940; but there are other papers in the Museum that will be opened long before that. Some fresh letters of Dickens, which are to be available in 1925, are certain to be eagerly scrutinized. *The Life of Christ*, which he wrote for his children, has, of course, never been published.

Even upon the expiration of the time-limits attached by the depositors to their papers, the Museum authorities do not always open the documents to students. John Cam Hobhouse, later Lord Broughton, placed in the Museum his diaries, correspondence, and memoirs, believed to relate to dark passages in the life of Byron, especially the separation from his wife; but even in 1900, when they were to have been opened, the trustees decided to exercise their discretionary power, and refused to permit publication. Even the appearance of the second edition of Lord Lovelace's *Astarte*, — an effort to justify Lady Byron, — and the controversy thus stirred up, have in no way affected this original decision. Lord Broughton is known to have written a 'full and scrupulously accurate' account of this separation, which he gave