

# The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

## The Trojan Horse

### IV. It's Really Impressive

**F**ACADE of the Palladium, the great temple of Pallas, shrine of the Trojan people. Below the pillared portico broad shallow steps descend. On one side a News Reel man is setting up his camera, on the other the Radio Voice of the *Evening Trojan* arranges his microphone.

I better try my acoustics, he says. Hey, News Reel, tell me how this sounds from over there.—He speaks into the mike, burlesquing himself.—This is the *Evening Trojan*, folks, covers Asia Minor like the plague. Your friend George Ilium, trying out his beautiful acoustics.

NEWS REEL—Is it acoustics or acows-tics?

RADIO VOICE—Nerts. The broadcasting office has put the ban on Greek pronunciation. Talk Trojan.—Folks the great day is here and I wish you could watch it with me. Here comes King Priam and his fifty sons, by heck; excuse me I mean by Hecuba, the First Lady, or so we assume. Queen Hecuba is wearing a muslin overall which does more than justice to her royal stature—Lyde, where are you?

NEWS REEL—There's that cockney accent again.

RADIO VOICE—No it isn't, I don't mean Lady, I mean Lyde, Lyde the fashion reporter, she was to be here to help me describe the dresses.

NEWS REEL—She's doing a rush for the early edition.

RADIO VOICE—Then I'm sunk. I feel terrible today anyhow, we had a party down at Sarpedoni's last night. (He is adjusting the volume control, and these sentences come out with a terrific roar.) The whole crowd went off the deep end, I'll tell the world.

NEWS REEL—Evidently.

The populace is gathering; Ilium ducks behind one of the massive pillars to fortify himself with a slug from a flask, and then becomes professional:—

This is the Radio Voice of the *Evening Trojan*, speaking from the Palladium, historic temple of Pallas. Folks the great day is here and O boy O boy what a scene. I wish you could watch it with me, we've set up the mike right here on the portico of the temple and already the crowd is coming in. There never was such a turnout, it looks to me as though half the city is pouring into the square. It's as though they're all coming on purpose to show that in spite of some recent surprises we're not discouraged. It's regular Trojan weather, I never saw a sky so blue, the

air is like wine. That reminds me, while I don't intend to annoy you with commercials I must just say that this is exactly the weather to have a look at the *Evening Trojan's* seaside bungalow development out at Saline Shores. Admission to the property by showing one of the coupons printed in the paper, and when you see what a dandy little home-site can be had for just a few drachmas down payment, well, all details in today's *Evening Trojan*.

The crowd is coming in faster and faster, orderly and in perfect silence. You know the old legend, this is the day sacred to the goddess, Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, protector of the Trojan state, and if everyone keeps silence the goddess herself will speak. Behind me in the temple her great image is surrounded with fresh flowers, the children of the city were up before dawn today gathering them on the slopes of Mount Ida. Of course admission to the temple is restricted to the clergy, high officers, ministers of state and the royal family, the rest of us remain respectfully outside and observe absolute silence. This is the first time one of these ceremonies has ever been broadcast and believe me the *Evening Trojan* had plenty difficulty persuading the high priests to let it be put on the air. I should like to add that though the goddess only speaks in moments of great national crisis, your favorite newspaper speaks every afternoon in News, Editorials, Features, Advertisements.

Now folks, they've opened a lane and the procession is coming through. It's really impressive, it's wonderful, I don't know how to describe it to you, it makes you realize how we all feel about this great city of ours. Some of the women are crying. Here's King Priam, I can see King Priam! I can see that splendid beard of his winding slowly round the throng. He's walking by Hecuba, our beloved Queen, and he's completely surrounded by a bodyguard of his sons. I don't know what it is, there's sort of a divinity about a king that really gets you, the crowd knows that silence is the rule but you can always trust our Trojan folks to know what to do, they make motions of applause without actually making a sound.

The King is walking up the steps of the temple. He and his officers are in full armor, it's really wonderful, we don't forget that though this is a day of armistice we are still engaged in a great war, certainly a sight like this brings out all one's patterotic emotions. It's certainly significant to think that we Trojans worship the goddess of wisdom and all those Greeks seem to worship is that big

wooden horse they're building out there, think of it folks, making an idol out of a perfidious horse, certainly that's a sign of a crude civilization. It begins to look as though the Greek culture and Greek art and all that sort of thing had really been overrated.

King Priam and his bodyguard have halted at the top of the steps, they look over the crowd in dignified silence while the rest of the procession take their proper places. Folks this is really impressive, I don't know whether I can get any of it across to you, but honestly I could almost reach out and touch the King where he sits. The crowd has found its own way of expressing its feelings and still not break the silence, you can see ripples of approval, excitement, as their favorites come up to the steps and make their bow before approaching the temple. Here's Paris and Lady Helen, my she's beautiful, I wish you could see her like I do, she's wearing a blue sort of a robe and the Greek fillet in her hair, you don't realize until you see her in the full sunlight that her hair has a red light in it, I don't mean a traffic light folks, I mean a lovely sort of bronze shimmer. When you think of all the trouble she started it's surprising she's so popular, but it's the kind of trouble lots of us would like to have more of. She and Paris both get a wonderful reception, you can see it in people's faces. I think everyone respects Paris for being so persevering about keeping her here in Troy. Naturally the world's most beautiful woman would gravitate to the world's most beautiful city.

It's really wonderful the way this has all been worked out, there isn't a hitch anywhere, the soldiers are lined up on one side of the steps and the Junior League girls on the other, the girls are all in their natty uniforms and they certainly look slick with those Sam Browne belts and little doughboy taps, all standing just as serious and determined looking and so wonderfully reverent, I guess it's sort of symbolic of our Trojan idea of sex equality and giving women a share of citizenship. I believe we're a lot ahead of the rest of the world in that sort of thing. Look, I mean listen, here's something interesting, this is unusual, the crowd shows its interest, speaking of sex equality here are young Lieutenant Troilus and his sister Cassandra walking together, you know they're twins, remember they used to call them the Priamese Twins, I'm sorry folks that's terrible. It's interesting, two identical twins and such different ideas, Troilus is quite the military hero he just got his baptism of fire as I told you last night, and his sister

Cassandra is leader of the T.L.D. that is making all these pacifist movements, it just goes to show what a real democracy we have here in Troy, all parties can get together when it's a question of the national welfare, it's really impressive. Troilus looks tremendously handsome and very serious, he goes on up the steps, Cassandra is very pale, I guess she doesn't approve of so much military display, but really it gets you. There are a lot of big shots coming in now, the members of the aristocracy who have seats reserved in the temple, oh here's something that certainly gives me a kick, here's Lord Pandarus the banker, you know how popular he is, they say he's really the power behind the finance ministry, he never takes office but he's the one who really pulls the strings, and with him is his lovely niece Cressida. That's wonderful of him, because Cressida has been on the spot, her father Doctor Calchas deserted to the enemy, and naturally people resented it, you can just see that her uncle wanted to give her his confidence and support by walking with her. Folks this is really dramatic, and you can see the crowd realize it, Cressida is wearing black, the only woman wearing black in this whole crowd, it's as if she's wearing mourning for what her father did. Say, she certainly has class, it's wonderful how that black becomes her, her face is sort of aloof but she certainly carries her head high, she doesn't seem to look at any one, you can see she's been through an ordeal and she certainly has the crowd's sympathy, it took courage to come here like this.

Wait a minute, I think something's happening that wasn't on the program. Wait a minute, folks, till I get the hang of this. King Priam is making a signal—well, say, for heaven's sake, it's a gas mask drill. I heard there was going to be a surprise and this is it. Certainly it's an amazing sight, honestly it's incredible. Wait a minute, get this, I'll try to tell you what happened. King Priam held up his hand and at that moment everyone here, all the troops and officials, and the Junior League, put on a gas mask. I wish you could see them, it's unbelievable, it's simply colossal. They've just handed me a slip of paper, it says to tell you this demonstration was secretly arranged by the high command to impress the public with the absolute solidarity of our will to win. Of course we had heard that the enemy were going to use gas but I had no idea our preparations for it were so complete. The crowd is simply thrilled. Stand by now, the King is making signals again, everyone is absolutely still, wearing those weird-looking masks. The high priest holds up his arms, it's the gesture for the silence, for the goddess to speak. I can only whisper, quiet everybody, stand by . . . the royal family and the priests go inside the temple to kneel before the goddess . . . the silence is ominous.

(A protracted hush. Then the Radio Voice continues in an awed whisper).

Could you hear that? There was a voice, a cry. I believe the goddess did say something . . . Wait a moment, something queer's happening. There was a scream. Say, Colonel, can you see what's going on? The public's waiting to hear . . . Just a moment, folks, stand by, I'll take care of you . . . Nothing like this ever happened before, everybody's flabbergasted. In the middle of the silence Cassandra shouted something, the priests tried to stop her, it's a terrible thing to do. She broke away, she's run out here on the steps, she's haranguing the crowd and a whole flock of T.L.D. placards have appeared. It's another of those pacifist demonstrations. The King and the priests don't dare leave the presence of the goddess, the guards are trying to quiet her, she goes on irregardless. Zeusalmighty what a story! Wait a minute folks, I'll drag the mike over, see if we can catch what she says. You're certainly listening in on a unique event; excuse me brother I've got to get this mike over there; you're getting all this by courtesy of the *Evening Trojan*, News, Editorials, Features, Advertisements, read your newspaper for full details . . . Please, miss, put it here where the radio audience can get it. . . .

CASSANDRA—She will not speak. The goddess will not speak. Do you expect Wisdom to reply to your folly? Is her temple a kennel, to profane it with the faces of dogs? Look at yourselves, look! Hideous and absurd, like grinning beasts, turning Wisdom's people to a pack of hounds to yap and slaver and destroy; turning beauty's world to madness. I warn you, Wisdom has fled this place. Animals, muzzled animals, answer me if you can.

RADIO VOICE—Folks she's right, it's extraordinary, they've all got the masks on, they can't speak, they can only make a sort of growling gobbling noise, really it does sound like a pack of dogs. Wait till I turn the mike so you can catch it. That shrill yapping is the girls in uniform, they're furious, they're trying to tear their masks off so they can answer her. Gosh, this is a terrible sacrilege! I can see our News Reel man working like mad to get pictures but I bet the censor never passes them. The T.L.D. banners are waving applause but all the others can do is growl. Now the priests have come out, they've got Cassandra under control but the crowd is milling around on the steps. I guess she's right, the goddess of Wisdom is out of town for the day. Here comes the King, folks it's King Priam himself, I wish you could see the look on his face, he's holding up his hand for silence. They say that means me too. Signing off, this is the *Evening*—

(One of the priests must have pulled him away from the mike).

(To be continued)

## A Brief Adventure among the Loyalists

*SINGLE TO SPAIN.* By Keith Scott Watson. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1937. \$2.

Reviewed by JOHN C. DE WILDE

IT would perhaps be inappropriate to say that this is not a significant book; the publishers specifically warn the reader to expect "no profound opinions nor prophecies." Those who want an analysis of the forces struggling for supremacy in Spain must go elsewhere. Here they will find only a rather light, but very readable account of a young Englishman's experiences both as a soldier and a journalist. If one reads the book, it is solely for its human interest.

Watson came to Spain determined to enlist with the Loyalist forces. Amusingly enough he met with considerable difficulty. The Popular Front Committee at the frontier town of Port Bou was not greatly impressed with his union card or the letter of introduction from a Labor M.P. Only the intercession of a casual acquaintance enabled him to get credentials. Even then he was sarcastically reminded that in Spain fascism was not fought "by reading the *New Statesman* and *Nation* or attending advanced cocktail parties." After a period of desultory training near Barcelona he was shipped to the Madrid front. Some days of intense fighting sufficed to diminish his ardor to combat fascism in the trenches. He resigned and returned to his profession of journalism in Madrid. Ironically enough he was wounded by a bomb while covering an assignment in the heart of the city.

### English '37

(Continued from page 8)

seen the novelist manipulating the strings, but at least the puppets were giving the show. When the novelist is heaving with emotion of his own, however, when he is throbbing with the tides of night or the soul, he has become the show and there are no longer any puppets. Technical criticism of them is therefore almost meaningless. All one can say is that the novelist has mistaken his medium. He is writing something which resembles Old Testament rhapsody but differs from it in vital ways; he is certainly not writing fiction. His material might prove to have the highest usefulness for fiction, but before it can become fiction it must be submitted to processes which are psychological rather than technical. It must stay longer in the tanning bath or the rising pan, it must be leavened—or whatever metaphor will suggest that a further transformation must occur before it can be given form. At any rate, the essential thing has not yet been done to it.