

FREEWOMAN

AN INDIVIDUALIST REVIEW.

No. 13 VOL. I.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15th, 1913.

SIXPENCE.

Editor: DORA MARSDEN, B.A.

Assistant Editor: RICHARD ALDINGTON.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
KAROS, THE GOD. By Allen Upward.	241	FORD MADOX HUEFFER. By Ezra Pound.	251	LEGO ET PENSO. By Benjamin R. Tucker.	254
VIEWS AND COMMENTS.	244	POEMS. By Maturin M. Dondo.	252	MY HYPOTHESIS. By Huntly Carter.	255
THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDEAS. Henri Bergson.	246	<i>Serial Story—</i>		"GREAT CATHERINE." By D. N. A.	256
THE BRITISH ACADEMY. By R. S.	248	THE HORSES OF DIOMEDES. By Remy de Gourmont.	253	PROGRESS. By Otway Cannell.	257
PLAYS, BOOKS, AND PAPERS. By Richard Aldington.	248	(Ch. 17.) The Laurel Bush.		CORRESPONDENCE.	258

KAROS, THE GOD.

BY ALLEN UPWARD.

FOR a long time Karos lay where he had fallen, after the scourge had picked off its last strip of flesh. He lay quite still. Nothing moved in the darkness except the blood that welled slowly from the smashed veins and oozed along the cracks in the clay floor of the slave-house into the tiny pool of sunlight beneath the door.

The pain of the scourging he had just undergone had stunned him. He neither writhed nor groaned. He kept telling himself that the scourging was over; and the certainty of this steeped his spirit in a dull ecstasy which seemed to Karos the most delicious sensation he had ever known.

He was sorry when the numbness passed from his mind, and the sense of pain where the lash had eaten him revived. He got up, moaning softly, and wrapped his coarse shirt round him. When the stuff brushed against the raw face of his wounds he shrieked aloud. Stumbling like a drunken man, he went to his cubicle.

The cubicle held a straw pallet covered with a thin blanket, a three-legged stool, and a wooden box, on which there stood a comb, an earthen cup and such trifles. Among them was a small clay god, about the height of a man's forefinger, with wings on its feet, and a rod with two twined serpents in its hand. Every slave possessed one of these images; they were made by Eratosthenes, the blind idol-maker in the Street of the Conduit, and sold for half a drachma.

Karos stood and looked at the Hermes, a frown gathering on his brow. It was the duty of Hermes to protect slaves and thieves as well as travellers, and Karos had relied on that protection when he stole the silver cup which had brought him to grief. In a fit of anger at the god's treachery, he took it up, spat on it, dashed it on the ground, and stamped it into pieces with his foot.

The moment his fury had spent itself, Karos repented. In his mind a purpose was already formed which he dared not carry out without the very amulet he had just destroyed. He must get another, and he had no money wherewith to buy one. He bethought himself of the famous lucky Hermes of his fellow-slave Lukidas. No other idol did so much for its

owner as this one. Lukidas had been offered ten drachmas for his god before now, but it had been worth more to him to keep it. Karos knew that it was shameful for one slave to rob another, nevertheless he crept softly out of his cubicle, and into that of Lukidas. When he came back the stolen god was safely tucked under his girdle.

Karos stepped out of the slave-house and looked round him.

The slave-house stood by itself in the sesame fields, some way from the hall. Beyond the fields there were olive groves reaching as far as the mountain side, where the great white high-road wound from distant Korukos by the sea, up into the heart of the Kappodokian highlands. There were towns and villages along the road for two or three days' journey, but after that they ceased, though some said the white high-road went on still, stretching into the unknown region beyond like a ray cast by the lighthouse of civilization. Dark tales were told of the barbarians who dwelt in those inaccessible valleys, speaking no Greek, and paying no tribute to the governor in Ikonion. Karos had heard that there were man-eaters among them, and dog-headed men.

No one had seen him come out of the slave-house. The overseer had gone back to the olive-press, where a number of slaves were hard at work crushing out the oil. Karos slunk round the corner of the building, and got under the shelter of the prickly-pear hedge which protected the growing sesame. Then he began to run in the direction of the olive groves.

He ran for a few yards and stopped, overcome with pain. The bleeding had broken out worse. He was obliged to go on very slowly, grinding his teeth to counteract the pain. In this way he passed through, first the fields, and then the olive plantation, and reached the ditch which formed the boundary of the estate. Here, beside the highway, stood a square pillar of stone ending in a bearded head. Beyond this figure the slaves were forbidden to pass. Karos stood for a minute, leaning against the Term, and looking anxiously all about him. Then he stepped across the ditch into the high road, and went steadily forward with his face to the north.

In the creed of the slave-owner the worst of all slaves was the runaway. This was a vice that could not be eradicated. The only way with the runaway was to put irons on his legs and send him to the hard labor of digging in the mines. Among the slaves themselves the runaway was looked on with a sentiment like horror, as one whose conduct was unnatural. Karos knew all this; but he had made up his mind. While those furrows were being dug into his body, he had decided that he would kill himself rather than endure that punishment again. For Karos was a spoilt slave, he had been his master's cupbearer and favourite, and it was the first time he had ever been scourged.

He dragged his feet along the dusty road for some hours, till it crowned the summit of the hill and began to go down again. At last he came to a forest of tall dark trees whose name he did not know. He left the road, and crawled into the shadow of the trees till he was exhausted and dropped. In a few minutes he was fast asleep.

When Karos opened his eyes again it was lighter than when he lay down. The morning air was fresh and virginal, the wood hummed with grasshoppers, and steel-clad beetles wheeled above the moss. Karos lay contentedly, and let the lull of the forest soothe the dull aching in his body. Into the midst of this peace there burst a sound which caused him to start to his feet, pale and sick, and plunge desperately into the heart of the wood. It was the bay of a bloodhound.

Karos shut his eyes as he ran, and saw the kennel into which he had so often gone to take the dogs their food. There were four of them, huge brutes with dripping jaws and shining pointed teeth like knives. Each was more than a match for either man or wolf. The slave ceased to feel any pain as he tore through the branches and stumbled across the roots of the trees, instinctively moving down hill all the while in search of running water.

He ran fast, but the baying grew always louder and clearer. For some time he could hear men's voices urging the dogs on, but these cries became fainter till they ceased. Karos did not know how long or how far he ran. His heart hammered his ribs as though it would break them. His breath came like the last suck of a pump when the well has gone dry. A bowstring was twisted tightly round his temples. His legs were changed to stone. He ran till he felt it worse to run than to be worried by the fangs of the dogs behind him. He saw a brook twelve paces in front of him, but those twelve paces seemed like the vast distances of the desert. He ran a quarter of the way—a half—and then he fell down, and the living spirit forsook him.

When his spirit came back to him, he felt something wet and soft on his cheek. He opened his eyes. One of the bloodhounds was licking him. It was Bellona, Karos' favourite, which he had always fed before the rest. The other three were lying on the ground, panting, with their tongues outside their mouths. As soon as Karos lifted his head, they got up and came to him. He stroked each in turn, and called it by its name. Then he remembered the men's voices that he had heard, and scrambled up from the ground. His feet were full of thorns, and bled, as he stepped into the bed of the watercourse, and began to go up against the stream.

The bloodhounds shook themselves and followed Karos, till he turned round and ordered them to go back. He fled along the watercourse for hours, slipping and sliding over the stones which lined its bed. When he was quite safe from pursuit he noticed that he was hungry. He left the stream and went into the wood again, where he found some crimson berries and a few sour black plums, which he ate greedily. He went on picking and eating till it was too dark to see, and then slept again.

He awoke feeling hungry and ill. He found a few more berries, and presently there were no more trees

and he was on a heath. A long way off a little smoke went up into the air. Karos went towards it for an hour, and saw a small hut standing in the middle of a few badly cultivated fields. A woman and three children came out of the house as he approached, but there was no man. Karos asked for bread, and the woman answered him in a strange tongue. He pushed her aside and went into the house. He found bread on a shelf, three loaves. He took two, one in each hand, and came away. The woman shook her fist, and the children spat on him as he went by.

Karos began running again till the house was a long way off. He came to a small pool and sat down. He threw a few crumbs into the pool as an offering to its spirit, and then ate one of the loaves.

After that his journey brought him among the hills, and he wandered for days without knowing whither. He found nothing to eat, and the sickness returned to him. He had dreams as he walked along; he dreamed that the dogs were following him, and then that he was feeding them with great pieces of red juicy meat. He dreamed also that he was a child in the pirate ship which was taking him from his home. They were rowing the ship, and he could hear the rumbling of the oars in the rowlocks and the splash of the blades in the water. Then there was a wind, and the deck of the ship slanted, and he stumbled as he tried to walk along it.

Karos decided to walk to the top of the hill in front of him, and lay himself down there to die. He took the stolen Hermes from under his girdle, and reproached it bitterly for not having brought him good luck. He supposed that the Hermes was only powerful in the district he had come from, and after a time he threw away the useless god. He did not know what were the gods of the country he had come to, or he would have worshipped them. When he got to the top of the hill he saw a large village in the valley which lay beyond.

Karos uttered a cry, and stood still. Hunger urged him to go down into the place and ask for food; but he remembered all the tales he had heard about these highlanders and fear held him back. He was obliged to remind himself of the resolution he had just made to die rather than wander further. If he were to die in any case, as well perish by the hands of the barbarians, as by hunger. A runaway slave, his clothing a few dirty rags, his body a mass of sores and bruises, his bones coming through his skin, sick, forlorn and desperate, he stood there for a few minutes, shrinking.

Then he began to go down the mountain side.

Between him and the village there were fields of wheat and millet, and another corn which was strange to Karos. The wheat was being cut in one of the fields by women who were unlike any one the slave had ever seen. They were stunted in shape, and dark-skinned, with long, straight black hair. They wore woollen garments, and shoes that ended in a turned-up point. As the slave came toward them, they left off reaping and stood up to stare at him, and a man dressed in a sheepskin cloak, who had been ordering the work, gave a shout, and started off running toward the village.

Karos' heart sank. He went forward slowly, dragging one swollen foot after the other. He had just got to the last field outside the village when he was astonished to see a troop coming out to meet him.

At the head marched an old man, taller than the rest, whose long white beard and venerable aspect struck the slave with awe. He wore a fillet on his head which reminded Karos of the sacred fillet worn by the priest of Demeter, and in his hand he carried a garland of wheat-ears mixed with blue cornflowers, like the garlands bound round the horns of a bull about to be sacrificed. Next to the leader of the procession came boys and girls with their hands full of flowers, and after them young men playing on reeds and wooden cymbals, and then a crowd of

villagers. As they came along they kept up a joyous chant like the sacred chorus of Dionusos.

Karos stood still, and waited. The old man, whom he supposed to be the village king or priest, came up to him and greeted him in a strange tongue, with a respect the slave could not account for. Next he bound the fillet on Karos' head, and as he did so the musicians clashed their symbols, and the procession burst into a louder and more exciting chant. Then the priest took Karos by the hand and led him into the village, the children running in front and casting their flowers under his feet.

Karos was bewildered. He suffered himself to be led along, scarcely knowing what he did. The music made him drowsy, and he told himself that this was another dream like those which had come to him when he was climbing the hill.

The village was defended by a mud wall the height of a man's breast. Outside the gate they passed by a great oak, and beneath it there stood an enormous stone with a flat top like an altar; but Karos looked in vain for the god. The dwellings of the villagers were rude wigwams built of untrimmed boughs wattled together, the cracks being stopped up with mud, so that they looked to the Greek like birds' nests. But there was one house in the middle, better than the others, built round the trunk of a living tree that stood in an open space, and thatched over with fine straw. Into this house the priest led Karos.

The slave had to lower his head to pass through the doorway. The inside was dark at first, but after a time he saw a pile of skins, of some animal he had never met with, the fur of which was soft and brown. There were also some domestic furnishings, such as a platter and drinking cup, and a large flint stone, shaped like a hatchet-blade.

Karos sank down on the bed of skins. He was light-headed owing to extreme hunger, and did not yet feel sure that all this was real. But the venerable old man seemed to understand his condition. He spoke to the men who had followed them to the door, and they hurried away, returning quickly with milk and boiled chestnuts and small cakes of bread. The slave snatched the food from their hands, and devoured it. The chant was still going on outside, and the sounds reached his ears. A warm, soothing languor passed into him. He felt very happy, and went to sleep.

When Karos awoke he was alone. He arose and went to the door of the hut. He found a man squatting on the threshold, who stood up when he saw Karos, shaking his head and signing to him not to pass out. The runaway shrank back with a touch of fear. It seemed he was a prisoner.

During the time that followed Karos fared much the same. He saw that the villagers wanted to please him, but that they were careful to give him no chance of escape. They brought him the best of everything they had to eat and drink. After a few days they placed a young girl in his hut, and signified that she was given to him for a wife. The girl fell on her knees to Karos, who was pleased that she should be afraid of him. This, and the reverence of his keepers, gave him boldness, and after a time he insisted on going out of doors, and walking about the village. That was permitted, but a close watch was kept on him, and whenever he tried to wander out into the fields he was turned back.

Meanwhile the venerable priest came day by day to visit Karos, and from him and from the girl the Greek began to pick up the speech of the barbarians. As soon as he could make himself any way understood he sought to learn the name of the village god.

All this time he had been wondering what was the worship of the place. He remembered that strange altar he had passed outside the village; but he had seen no sign of any god there, neither was there sign of temple or idol anywhere else. To Karos it was a fearful thing to live without the presence of some divine protection, for he had been taught that the

gods resented and punished the neglect of men.

When he tried to question his wife about this she seemed afraid to answer, responding only by gestures that puzzled him. The old priest explained to him that there were many evil spirits whom the people kept off by means of magic signs and tokens. Some of these signs he offered to teach Karos, who found they were familiar to him already, being the same as the slaves used. At the same time the priest assured him that he need have no fear on his own account, as long as he remained indoors, inasmuch as the tree around which his dwelling-place had been constructed was itself possessed of magical properties, a powerful defence against the demons.

None of this lore was new to the Greek, but what puzzled him was the absence of those greater and more beneficent beings who were worshipped in the world from which he had fled. There were the Sun and Moon, for instance, Diana of the Ephesians and the great Phrygian Cybele—did these barbarous highlanders know nothing of such gods as those?

The old man shook his head. The sun and moon were too far off to be reached by their prayers; they hardly recognised them as divine.

Whom did they worship then?—for a village could not exist without a god.

"You are our god," the old priest answered, staring at him curiously.

The slave was struck dumb. As the light broke into his mind he found an explanation of all that had so bewildered him; the joy at his arrival, the religious march, the sacred fillet and the flowers. Evidently these barbarians had mistaken him for a heavenly visitor, like Hermes or Apollo. The hut he was in was the village temple, the old man was his priest.

From that hour a great change came over Karos. In all his comings and goings he felt that the eyes of the villagers were fixed on him in awe, and he strove to act up to his divine part. His step grew stately, his mien severe and condescending. He spoke to the people rarely, and with much reserve. They on their part seemed to be prepared for this divine assumption, and to be gratified by it. Only his girl-companion shrank from him in his exalted mood and sometimes he found her weeping silently. Once when he was fingering the stone axe-head in the wigwam she snatched it from him, and hid it out of his reach. Karos beat her.

Upon a day in Spring the divine slave heard outside his dwelling the joyous music that had welcomed him when he first came. The aged priest appeared, and bade him make ready for the great yearly festival of the seed. In Springtime all men sacrifice to their gods to gain a blessing on the fields, and Karos exulted at the thought that sacrifice should be offered up to him. The priest made him put on a new white robe and anointed him and gave him an intoxicating drink. Then they went out into the open space before the house, and found it filled with minstrels and singers, and children carrying willow branches that were bursting into bud, and a great crowd of men and women.

Karos was dizzy, but men on each side held him up, and led him along, following the joyful music, till they came to the tree outside the village wall, where stood the great stone altar. Karos noticed that the priest carried in one hand an axe with a flint head like that which his wife had hidden; and when they had reached the place of sacrifice he looked round for the dedicated calf or lamb, but could not see it. He became aware that the people were strangely excited, thronging round him, and laying their hands on his garment as if to snatch a blessing.

Then the music waxed louder and frantically loud, and the chant rose to a scream as the singers broke their ranks and whirled round him in a mad dance; and the divine slave's head whirled round with the dancers, and he swooned and found himself falling backwards on the altar, and saw the flint-edge above him taking a thousand years to reach his throat.