

has aroused more interest than the Tank. Even in this age of rapid oblivion the Tank has, by the exercise of a commanding personality, captivated many imaginations. It is true that aeroplanes produce something of the same effect. But aeroplanes are becoming too common. Whenever Behemoth pays us a visit, the visit is an event.

On the last night of the last visit of the Tanks to London I was in Trafalgar Square, which was brilliantly illuminated with calcium reflectors. I could not help going back in my mind to the London I have not forgotten, but which is now only a memory, the London of four years ago. Then there were lights for all; now only the Tank has lights. And as I looked at the crowds still pressing forward to obtain the coveted bits of stamped paper, I could not help reciting to myself this verse:

"Consider the Tanks of the battlefield; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

J. G. FLETCHER

### FIRST LOVE

IT was half-past three in the afternoon of a dry day in late October. There had been a meet of the harriers at Ketchem's Inn that morning. Alphonse had been walking, running, and standing about for the last five hours, and was now walking home across the fields.

He came out of a thick wood of Scotch firs, very neatly hedged in, and provided with a stile over which he had to climb, mounted a short grass slope, and then stood for a moment on the top of a sunny hill. The sun was rather low in the cloudless sky, and the valley was in shadow; there was a slight mist in the distance, a hint of coming frost in the air, and the subtle smell of a bonfire far down the hill. There was no wind, and the only sound all round him was a distant chopping of wood. The harriers had gone miles away to the right, so that the monotonous wail of the horn could no longer be heard. Towards the left, about a mile away, was his own home; and below him was a large, square, drab, ugly house, standing in wide, well-kept gardens and among many little woods, too neat for beauty, in which half-tame pheasants were carefully preserved to be shot. There lived his first love.

When he came out into the road which led past her home, he turned round from shutting a gate and looked straight into her laughing eyes. She had just come back from a walk with her big yellow St. Bernard dog; she wore a rather short red skirt and brown boots. The colour of her jacket was lost to him, and so was speech. She said:

"Short cuts again?"

He blushed furiously. That was a reference to a meeting with her a week ago. He had gone a long way out of the direct road from a friend's house, where he had been lurching, to his home, on purpose to meet her, and then foolishly said that he was making a short cut.

Then she began to talk of hunting, and how lameness of her horse prevented her from hunting. And then she asked him to come in to tea. "You *must* be hungry, not having had anything to eat since nine o'clock! Would you like some meaty thing?" But, instead of refusing on the evident and sufficient grounds of muddiness and weariness, the silly boy refused all manner of meat, went into the drawing-room, shocked her mother by his large and muddy boots, was regaled with a cup of rather nice tea and some unsatisfying bread and butter and cake, and did not think of any brilliant or even tolerable conversation until he was well fed, at home, and out of the presence of his beloved.

\* \* \* \*

They had known each other since childhood, but it was not until he had left his Public School, in the previous July, that he first began to love her.

One day, she and he were asked to tennis at somebody's house. When he arrived she was watching a set. She was standing close to a low fence made of wood and wire netting that surrounded the court; and he went up to her: she was almost the only person there whom he knew at all well, except some boys—and just then he hated all boys with the bitter hatred that a Public School sometimes produces, and which it takes a University to overcome.

At first she seemed rather shyly interested in him. But she was a year older than he, and had just begun to cultivate a society manner. And the old intimacy was checked, and then he looked up at her . . . and she looked away, and he looked down, and there was an awkward silence. Then she looked back, and a note of slight excitement and growing self-confidence came into her voice. And there was a new feeling in his breast, as if his heart was being very, very gently rained upon by warm rain. . . . And he played tennis atrociously, and he wanted to say: "Love fifteen, love thirty, love forty," when he was serving, and he might have done so truthfully, but was afraid of betraying his secret to the onlookers. And then he walked home across the fields in the evening sunshine, and kept making little excursions into the mowing grass, and hit off the heads of dandelions with long sweeps of his racket, and once, after looking carefully all round him, he sang. . . . Then something reminded him of Schubert's "Ständchen," and he whistled that again and again.

And so he came home to a new house and new people whom he recognized as father and mother and brothers and sisters, but they did not know his secret. Nobody did except himself, and he felt wise and happy.

\* \* \* \*

There was a little stream that flowed about five hundred yards below her home. He found that he could only get a good view of the gate out of which she came with her dog for a walk, while he himself was hidden, if he stood in the middle of the stream. He used to stand in the stream for nearly an hour almost every other day. He saw her come out about twice a week, with her sister and her dog; but only rarely had he courage to go and meet her.

Once she passed near him, and he scrambled out of the stream. She called to him, and he went out for a walk with them. His boots made a squashy sound as he walked, and so he said:

"Slipped in the stream!"

She did not answer for some time. Then she stopped and blushed, and pointed to a field-path and said:

"Go home at once and change your boots. . . And do not. . ." here she swallowed a little laugh, ". . . slip in again!" And then she added in a lower, amused, and tender voice:

"I saw you 'slip' in for quite a long time on Monday. I was fishing a hundred yards farther up." And then she got quite serious. "I suppose I ought to have shouted or something to let you know; but. . ." and she broke off.

\* \* \* \*

There was an elm-tree which grew in the little valley beside the stream, and one afternoon he cut on it her initials enclosed in a heart-shaped frame. Then he rubbed some earth into the white cuts to make them look old. He wanted her to see it, but he dared not tell her the truth; so he asked her casually one day if she had carved her name on that tree. Some days afterwards she told him that she had been to look, and she thought that she must have carved those initials herself when she was a small child, trying to copy something she had read



about in a book. She was so evidently unsuspecting of anything else . . . and for some reason he felt bitterly disappointed.

\* \* \* \*

One day she picked a tea-rose and fastened it in his button-hole. Of course he preserved it carefully: he kissed it reverently, and put it into a box by itself that very evening, before it had begun to fade. And then he composed—it was his first serious attempt at verse—a sentimental and appallingly bad stanza on this flower, supposed to be faded:

Only a rose, a faded one,  
Discoloured by merciless time;  
Its scent is gone, yet there lingers  
A memory sweet of those fingers,  
Of a hand which placed it in mine,  
Of a face and form so divine, . . .

and beyond that inspiration refused to move. Genuine love is never ridiculous, but sometimes it looks perilously like it:

\* \* \* \*

Towards the end of November his father suddenly had the quaint idea of having dinner at half-past six so that he could work at archæological books and old memoirs that he got from the London Library from half-past seven till nine. Then came tea and many biscuits—for everybody was hungry again—and then, perhaps, a short game of chess before bed.

He began evening walks to her house then. It was just over a mile away, so that, if he walked fast, he could watch outside the house for nearly fifty minutes for a candle in her room.

He would open his father's front door quietly and run down the steep, curving drive between the laurel-bushes and the rhododendrons, open the eccentric gate with an arrangement of pulleys and a weight, which his father had designed, which never fulfilled the function of shutting itself for which it was designed, and which was much too heavy for its hinges. Then came a lightening of heart at the thought that already about a thirtieth—the same fraction that a day is of a month—of the distance was covered; and then a quarter of a mile of dark lane that was always muddy. Then he passed the edge of the little country town of which his father was Vicar, and then there was under a mile of broad dry high road, sloping down into the valley on the side of which she lived. The broad road shone faintly white under November stars and led into November mist, and the cold, raw air filled his lungs, and love filled his heart, and he was warm and half dreaming and his body seemed so light and he whistled Schubert's "Ständchen" much too loudly . . . and he was happy.

They dined at eight, and sometimes her room was illuminated at first, and then the candle was blown out and the house looked out into the night with black, sightless eyes. . . . Some of the lower windows showed thin lines of light between the shutters. . . .

One night it was rainy and very windy. The house was in darkness, but as he stood under a tree near the garden a faint yellowish-red light came into her room, vanished, came again, and then vanished altogether. . . . Her bedroom door had been blown to and fro by the wind, and had let in and then shut out the light from the passage outside. . . .

And then he used to walk home, and came into the unreal, bright, warm drawing-room, and his eyes ached at first after being used to the darkness, and he drank very hot tea, and played chess dreamily. . . . He was full of the wonders of the night. . . .

\* \* \* \*

He never kissed her and never spoke a word of love to her, and, next October, he went up to Cambridge, and kissed her photograph—that he himself had taken—every night . . . for a week, and never saw her again.

J.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of THE EGOIST

MADAM,—I shall be grateful to you if you will allow me to state in your columns (in response to numerous inquiries) that to the best of my knowledge and belief Captain Arthur Eliot, joint author of "The Better 'Ole," is not, roughly speaking, a member of my family.—Yours, etc.,

T. S. ELIOT

LITTLE TICHESTER, BUCKS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ULYSSES

THE appearance of Mr. James Joyce's new novel, *Ulysses*, announced to start as a serial in the current issue of THE EGOIST, is unavoidably postponed owing to unexpected difficulties in regard to the printing.

TARR

WE hope that Mr. Wyndham Lewis's novel, *Tarr*, which ran serially in THE EGOIST from April 1916 to November 1917, will be ready in book form before the end of April.

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