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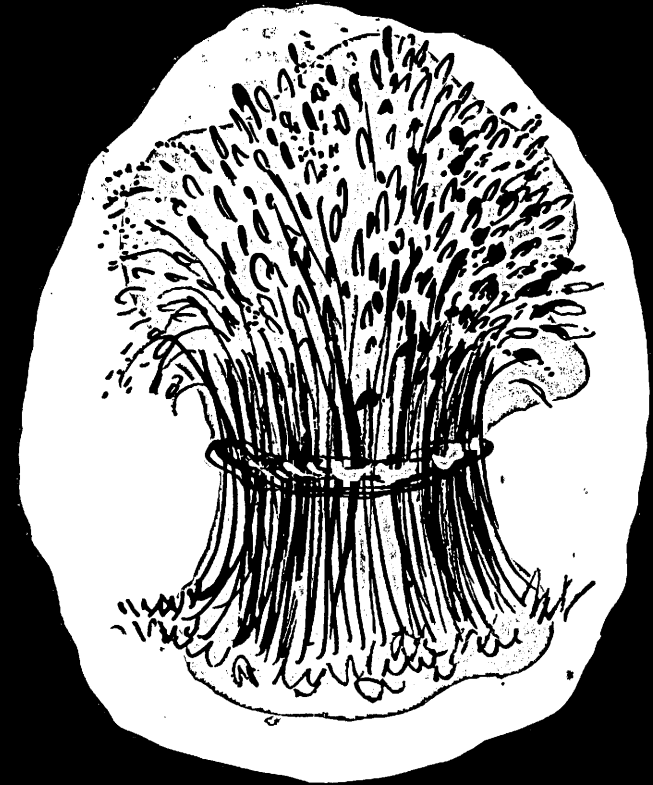
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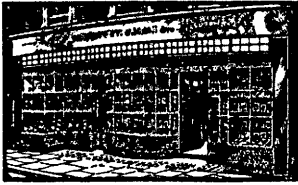
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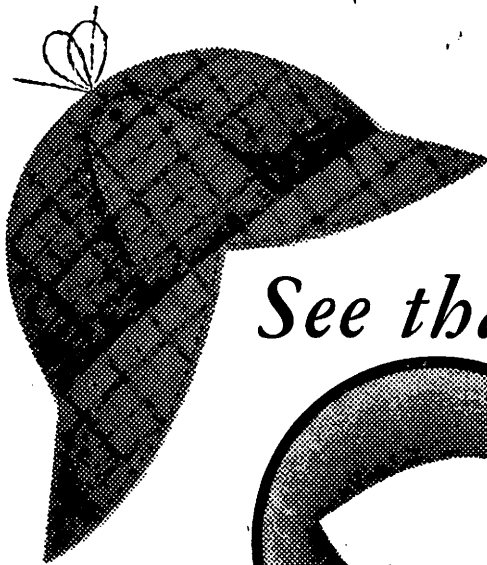
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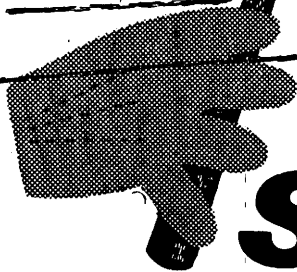
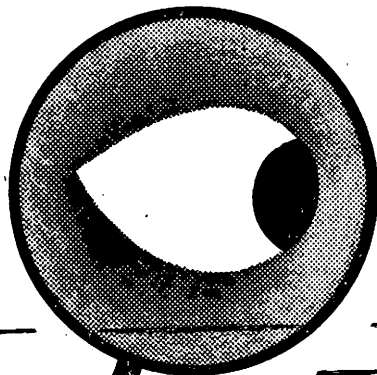
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No. 1009

Autumn, 1956

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

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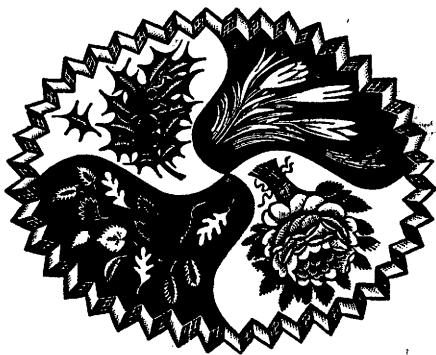
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SETON DEARDEN is a specialist in Arab affairs at the Foreign Office. He has written books on Sir Richard Burton and George Borrow and recently edited a new edition of Curzon's *Monasteries of the Levant* (Arthur Barker).

MAURICE ROWDEN lives in Italy. His first book, *Hellbore the Clown*, was published by Chatto and Windus. His most recent books are *Of Sins and Winter* and *Perimeter West* (Heinemann).

FRANCIS KING lives in Greece. Among his most recent books are *The Dividing Stream*, which won the Somerset Maugham Award, and *The Dark Glasses* (Longman). His new novel, entitled *The Widow*, is to be published next year.

DESMOND STEWART has been living in the Arab world and has travelled widely in Turkey and Persia. This year he produced *Oedipus Rex* in Arabic in Baghdad. His books include *The Memoirs of Alcibiades*, *Leopard in the Grass*, *The Unsuitable Englishman*. His latest book is *New Babylon, A Portrait of Iraq* (Collins). He is now working on a translation of *The Philoctetes* and a study of Muhammad.

PETER MATTHIESSEN is a young American writer living in Paris. He has written two novels, *Race Rock* and *The Partisans* (Secker and Warburg).

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# Laurence Oliphant

BY SETON DEARDEN

---

EXCEPT for a conventional, formless, and reticent biography of Laurence Oliphant, written by his cousin, Mrs. Oliphant the novelist, three years after his death in 1888, there has been no attempt to resurrect this Victorian eccentric who had, during his lifetime, such an odd personal influence on his contemporaries, yet is now completely forgotten. The *Dictionary of National Biography* describes him as 'novelist, war correspondent, and mystic'; surely, it seems, a promising field for the biographer. Yet when one turns for the details of his life to his books and correspondence, it becomes clear why he has been neglected. For he is an enigma; his life is not one but two lives; indeed, he seems to be not one man, but two, each with a separate identity expressing itself in terms of thought and action. To reconcile these two personalities and make a consecutive story of the man is therefore not easy. His very rootlessness increases the difficulty. For Oliphant, even in the tragic folly of his mysticism, was essentially superficial. Without the alchemy of that personal magnetism, of which all his contemporaries speak, he seems to us a restless, shadowy creature, skating across the bare surface of the Victorian scene, cutting graceful figures in Society, dashing off effortlessly on light-hearted adventures, and as suddenly reappearing; leaving no real trace on either the life or thought of his time. The truth is; of course, that without the undeniable vehicle of this great charm, the record of his life seems shallow, and his books and correspondence, without coherence or dates, as ephemeral as a last week's newspaper. Yet in his way he was a symbol of his period; and the student of human behaviour, eschewing the record of his practical achievements, will find a psychological interest in seeking for a clue to the contradictions, which make up a complex

## Laurence Oliphant

personality. It is in fact his character, rather than his achievements, which is of interest.

What are these contradictions? What is this curious dichotomy in Oliphant's character? On the one hand we seem to have the man of action; the energetic traveller and journalist, the novelist of industry and talent, the club-man, the prominent figure of a social caste whose values were closely defined and whose code of behaviour allowed few lapses. This is the Laurence Oliphant of mid-Victorian society, the man whose presence was craved by the hostesses of Belgravia, whose 'exhilarating talk' delighted Queen Victoria, and whose vivacity gave the Prince of Wales 'unqualified enjoyment'; the trusted confidant of the great Delane of *The Times*, the 'intrepid young traveller' of Kinglake, the man who was 'hand in glove with half the potentates and conspirators in Europe'; the gay, charming 'Lowry' of many books of contemporary reminiscence; who, seemingly without effort, made a success of literature, travel, diplomacy, politics and even commercial speculation.

On the other hand, what have we? The man his contemporaries knew as 'the mystic in lavender kid gloves,' or the 'brilliant and fascinating visionary'; the author of two strange books of pseudo-mystical theory; the devoted disciple of a 'backwoods American prophet,' to whom he sold his soul for a term of years; and finally the founder of a queer colony at Haifa, not much removed from a love cult, where sex and perverted mysticism drew a concourse of poor deluded souls, and from which death only rescued him from what must have become an inevitable collapse into insanity.

This last is, of course, a not unfamiliar theme in life and literature. Bright spirits before have been dimmed by obsessions or darkened by madness. But usually the moral disintegration is gradual, progressive, and complete; it is the whole man who collapses. What is unusual in Laurence Oliphant is that almost to the last he was able to keep these two parts of his nature completely separated; he could step, as it were, from one personality to the other, or from the world of unreality to that of reality, at will.

Courage, intelligence, industry, great charm—Oliphant apparently has them all; yet, if there is a moral in his story it is that of the pitfalls which lie in wait for the superficial mind when moved by religious

Seton Dearden

doubt : the danger inherent in spiritual experiments carried out without the discipline of orthodox belief or a proper grounding in the humanities. Mysticism is one of the least analysable factors of human experience. At its best it may be the highest form of apprehensible religious truth. But, alas, to some it can also be the most dangerous of emotions. The very elements which make it up—love, and union with the loved one, and the ecstasy so obtained, can be so easily parodied by the sexual impulse. There is a mysterious border-line which lies between. It was the tragedy of Laurence Oliphant's life, that he crossed this border-line and was lost in a strange, comic, blasphemous hell of his own creation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Laurence Oliphant was born in 1829, the son of Sir Anthony Oliphant, Attorney General in Ceylon, and spent his youth and early manhood in an atmosphere of social gaiety and constant domestic unrest mingled with an undercurrent of evangelical piety, imbibed from his mother. A restless spirit and a facile pen, combined with great personal charm and good family connections, shaped his future career for him. Travel, politics, journalism, Victorian society—he rapidly made his way to an assured position in all these activities. At the age of thirty-six he stood with a very creditable record as a politician, a political writer and a social star. A succession of light and successful books lay behind him ; Parliament was beckoning, and in the social world he had reached the limits of Victorian ambition, and was a welcome guest at Sandringham and Osborne.

And yet a still more potent force was at work in his uneasy spirit. He was unhappy. Within him was a spiritual conflict. It was as if, having so easily made himself master of his future in the world of the flesh, he had found it dross, and was groping towards that of the spirit.

In 1865 the opening parts of his first novel *Piccadilly* began to appear in *Blackwood's*. It was a light but brilliant skit on Victorian upper-class society life, and its religious pretensions ; and the work at first appeared anonymously. But the anonymity was not long preserved, and Oliphant was widely praised for a satire which so cleverly and so kindly exposed the religious temper of the times. *Piccadilly* has

Laurence Oliphant

all the ingredients of the popular Victorian three-decker novel. Its venue is Victorian upper-class society, its characters are titled people, the fortune-hunting mother, the delightful but impoverished lord, the wealthy Indian merchant prepared to make a financial marriage match. But behind these puppets of convention there was a more serious note sounded. It marks the emergence of Oliphant's so far repressed religious side. It was the sign that something momentous had occurred in his life. 'I dare say,' he had written to his publisher, John Blackwood, as the book had progressed, 'you will be surprised at the half-serious, half-mysterious tone of the last parts; but, after having attacked the religious world so sharply, it is necessary to show that one does not despise religion of the right kind.'

But what was religion of the 'right kind'? The reader of *Piccadilly* was enlightened, but not very clearly. Towards the end of the book the hero, Lord Vanecourt, exhorts his friend, Broadhem, to 'live the life'. "Supposing," he elaborates as the two walk arm in arm under the gas-lamps of Piccadilly, "supposing that you gave up attempting to steer your own craft any longer, but put the helm into other hands, and could complacently watch her drive straight on to breakers, and make a deliberate shipwreck of every ambition in life . . . supposing you could arrive at the point of being as indifferent to the approval, as to the censure, of your fellow-men . . . what a balance that would be on the credit side."

And here a mysterious stranger appears suddenly beside them, breaks into their talk, and pours out a torrent of eloquence on the theme that man has lost his God.

"Who is that?" whispers Broadhem. "I never saw him before."

Vanecourt does not answer the question, and the scene, enough to arouse the curiosity of any reader, ends with the following apostrophe. "Ah, Piccadilly! Hallowed recollections may attach to those stones worn by the feet of the busy idiots in this vast asylum, for one sane man has trodden them, and I listened to the words of wisdom as they dropped from the lips of one so obscure that his name is still unknown in the land, but I doubted not who was the greatest man in Piccadilly."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Who is that?" asked Broadhem; and the query was repeated

by most of Oliphant's friends during the year 1865. For some time they had become aware of the growth of this more complex side to his nature. Behind the gaiety and wit there was beginning to emerge at odd moments a note of compelling seriousness. Perhaps it was this darker shadow in his temperament that gave an added quality to his undeniable charm ; was there not an even greater appeal in the witty tongue suddenly stilled, the roguish eye abruptly darkened and pensive, the mind turned inwards from the listeners ? He was in fact searching for some outlet for his spiritual unease.

London in the '50's and '60's was not without its solace for those who were uneasy in spirit. Oliphant was himself only a reflection of the spirit of his time. The mid-nineteenth century saw the sudden growth of a sort of material spiritualism among the upper and middle classes. To the Victorian mind which sought to fly from the rigid doctrine and spiritual atrophy of the new scientific materialism, an exciting new world of escape was opened into the agreeable uncertainties of the Occult. Spiritualism, table turning, mesmerism, animal magnetism became the subjects of earnest discussion and experiment in the London salon and the provincial parlour. Here, the problem of the after life could be discussed, and indeed confused, with the properties of the Leyden battery ; the trance motions of the female medium—were they so far removed from the more sublime functions of the magnetic coil ? Mesmerism performed its familiar miracles ; and in the perfumed darkness of many an aristocratic drawing-room, the startled materialist, listening to the reverberations of spirits from Beyond, for the first time achieved a spiritual experience.

This was an unhealthy climate for one suffering from Oliphant's chronic spiritual malaise, for, while exciting his emotions and confusing his intelligence, it did nothing to assuage his very real sense of moral guilt.

It was a strange dual life Oliphant led during this period. He was to be seen gay, witty, untiringly charming, in the gas-lit salons of Belgravia. His light liaisons with several women were well known, but easily forgiven. He seemed tireless in following the social round, and yet found time to write consistently and brilliantly on European politics for *The Times*, for *Blackwood's* or for his own magazine *The Owl*. Yet there were frequent nights also when the tall,

## Laurence Oliphant

lean, pensive figure, with the flowing beard, high forehead and dark rather wild eyes would sit a rapt listener in some obscure meeting house or concert hall. For what was he listening ; for what waiting ? Only he himself could have answered that. But he did not wait in vain. Sometime, somewhere in 1859, he found the answer to his prayers. "Who is that ?" Broadhem had asked in *Piccadilly*, as the mysterious stranger had joined them. The world of Oliphant's friends were now to have the answer.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sometime in 1859 a new preacher had arrived in England from America. He came at the invitation of a group of English new church liberals, and appeared in London, Manchester and Glasgow where he had a great emotional success. Tall and with a deep and eloquent voice, so musical and so moving that it stirred the phlegmatic Thackeray to tears when he heard a Bible reading at the Steinway Hall, a long patriarchal beard and curiously deep-set magnetic eyes, with 'a depth so spiritual,' as one observer recorded, 'one might imagine him in communion with the invisible,' he drew large congregations wherever he went. His preaching and his Bible readings were orthodox ; but those, stirred to make his closer acquaintance, were rebuffed. Unapproachable, and served by a few faithful disciples, he spent most of his time in what seemed a monastic seclusion either in London lodgings or in a farmhouse in Yorkshire.

His name, perhaps the most plebeian thing about him, was Thomas Lake Harris, and he came to England from Wassaic in New York, where he had been known as the 'wonder preacher.'

It is not known where first Oliphant heard him preach ; nor whether his belief that here was his guide and his leader on the path of moral regeneration was a sudden one or came slowly. But from one of Harris's sermons he rose and left the building with his mission defined ; and he confided the tremendous truth to a close friend. 'I consider that from time to time the Divine influence incarnates itself so to speak in phenomenal persons. Sakyamuni was such and Christ was such, and such I consider Mr. Harris to be.'

Inspired by the sermons, incredibly moved by the sensuous verse, Oliphant tried to meet Harris. But to approach him was not easy.

He kept himself in strict seclusion, and visitors were turned away by the devoted disciples who kept his door. Oliphant sought the man who had first invited Harris to England and acted as his host, a dissenting gentleman named Garth Wilkinson. From him he begged an introduction. Garth Wilkinson refused the introduction; and it seems clear that this hard-headed Scotsman had already had second thoughts about Harris. Could he have learned something of the terrific secret which only Harris and a few disciples knew? At all events he refused to help and indeed warned Oliphant of the un-wisdom of meeting the preacher. But Oliphant was undeterred. It is related that, after learning Harris's address, he wandered in perplexity and doubt for sometime up and down outside the house. (Was it his guardian angel, or the voice of common sense still speaking to him?) But at length he summoned up courage and entered. He saw the preacher, he secured an interview; he listened to him speak. From that moment he was completely enslaved; like Vane-court in *Piccadilly*, he 'put the helm into other hands.' It will be seen how he was to 'watch her drive straight on to breakers and make a deliberate shipwreck of every ambition in life.'

But though he gave Oliphant an interview, and possibly also a tantalising glimpse of the awful truths about himself that so far were hidden from the world, Harris was experienced in the psychology of faith and he accepted no male convert without a long and arduous apprenticeship. Oliphant was lectured on his moral condition, and it was part of Harris's great skill and knowledge of human nature that he could draw this with great accuracy and force for any sinner; he was warned of the thorny path ahead; meanwhile he must study to purify his heart and obey such instructions as came to him from time to time from the man who was now his master. Whether he should learn the ultimate goal had yet to be decided.

And the ultimate goal? What, then, was the secret of Thomas Lake Harris; what was this strange belief that was slowly to be unfolded to Laurence Oliphant during the years of waiting—from 1859 to 1864? It was an astounding doctrine, in which as we have said the tragic, the comic and the blasphemous were closely intertwined. To believe in it required an effort of faith, an abandonment of common sense, beyond the capacity of most normal persons;

and yet the Brotherhood of the New Life as the new sect was called, who strove to carry out its tenets in the wooded valleys of Duchess County, was a growing and influential community.

Harris believed that the world was now ready for a new revelation of the Divine will. This revelation could only come through a chosen intermediary between God and man whom he named 'the pivotal man.' Harris was convinced that his own mission in life was to be this 'pivotal man,' poised between the forces of Heaven and Hell in a new age when 'deeper and more interior truths will be revealed.' To become a 'pivotal man' required long years of seclusion, mediumistic trances, prayer and a curious system of breathing exercises.

To assist him in this great struggle Harris formed an internal group of regenerate persons who had to live absolutely under his dominion. Beyond them was an external group, who, although allowed to join the Brotherhood, and partake of its semi-divine blessings, had not as yet undergone the rigorous tests necessary to become internals. In the case of men, these tests always entailed long years either of field labour in exacting conditions or commercial work of benefit to the Community. In the case of women, it seems, the tests were less arduous and of a more personal nature.

It was on such a basis that the first Community of the Brotherhood of the New Life, frequently called 'the Use' was opened at Wassaic. It was in its early days immensely strengthened by the arrival of a Miss Jane Lee Waring, a handsome and devoted follower of Harris, who brought with her not only great managerial capacity, but a sum of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. She became Harris's assistant, amanuensis, business agent and personal companion.

Harris's doctrine, as elaborated to his followers, was a mixture of the theories of Swedenborg and Jacob Boehme. God was bi-sexual, and since man was made in His image, every man had on earth or in heaven a female counterpart. Harris had already found his own counterpart, and she played a considerable part in the life of the Community. She was a spirit lady called Lily Queen, and lived in a sort of paradise sometimes called Lilistan, and sometimes the electro-vital. Lily Queen, the subject of many reams of Harris's sensuous verse, was able to descend to earth and unite with Harris in what was known as 'the counterpartal marriage to Lily Queen of the



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THOMAS LAKE HARRIS IN HIS STUDY

'Conjugal.' In effect, she ruled the Community through Harris, and her sudden appearances from the electro-vital and her orders, which were often difficult and unpleasant to obey, caused wonder and alarm throughout the Community. But no one doubted her existence or her semi-divinity.

The counterpart doctrine was an attractive one, especially to women; and these flocked to the Use to meet Harris and hear his theories. Difficulties such as were put in the way of men neophytes disappeared in the case of women. For them it was not difficult to join the Use; and the first interview to a sex-starved sister in Christ was often, it seems, an earnest of more exciting things.

It was to these doctrines and to this life that Laurence Oliphant now aspired. Dates are confusing, since Oliphant rarely dated a letter; but it seems that from 1859 when he first met Harris until 1867 when the summons came, he lived his normal life in London, mixing in society, making his sudden journeys to Europe, writing copiously for *The Times*, for *Blackwood's*; publishing books, in which no sign of the great spiritual revelation he has undergone appears. It is not clear exactly when Harris decided to accept Oliphant's plea to be allowed to join the Use at Amenia, to which, from Wassaic, the Community had now moved, as an external. It seems that Lady Oliphant, who already was also a devotee of Harris's, had been allowed, after her husband's death, to precede him there. Messages and instructions continued to come from Amenia to Oliphant in London. All were blindly obeyed. The news that Oliphant had been elected to Parliament in 1865 had scarcely been published when Harris sent him instructions that he was not to speak in the House. Oliphant had in fact made a promising maiden speech before this message arrived, and friends prognosticated that with his ability, personality and knowledge of world affairs, he would make a useful contribution to the Chamber. To the astonishment and protests of his friends and Party he never opened his mouth there again.

By this blind obedience to instructions, carried out over a period of years, it is probable that Oliphant succeeded in convincing Harris of the genuineness of his conversion. Harris must have clearly realised that Oliphant was a convert outside the usual run. A brilliant, popular, influential man of the world, he must have presented to the

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shrewd Harris a problem in marked contrast to the usual disciples who asked to be taken into the fold. In Oliphant, intelligent, financially independent, and well versed in the ways of the world, he might find someone who could become a grave danger to the Community; a possible rival who might not long remain under the Master's spell. On the other hand, could he subordinate Oliphant entirely to his will, what a convert this would prove! What an ambassador to the outer world for the 'pivotal man'; what an added prestige to the growing circle of worshippers at Amenia.

Perhaps only gradually did Harris realise that here was a convert more completely enslaved than most; one prepared to believe anything; to do his bidding in anything; one, in fact, ready to accept the semi-divinity of Harris's mission.

It was not until the summer of 1867 that Oliphant at last received the longed-for instructions to go to New York and there await final orders to join the Community. He responded with alacrity; severed his contacts, packed his bags, and disappeared.

His disappearance was received with sceptical incredulity by his friends, and with dismay by his editors, publisher and constituents. 'A universal cry of consternation followed . . .,' wrote his cousin, Mrs. Oliphant, 'expressed half in regrets for the deluded one (who was so little like an ordinary victim of delusion), and half in scorn of his prophet, the wretched fanatic, the vulgar mystic, who had got hold of him by what wonderful wiles or for what evil purposes, who could say? . . . The Billows closed over him and for three years he was as though he had never been . . .'

And his friend Kinglake wrote sadly to Blackwood: 'I trust that his charm and cleverness will somehow deliver him from the redoubtable Harris.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Oliphant arrived in New York in the autumn of 1867 to find a messenger from Harris awaiting him, with a final warning that he should once more consider the fatal step he was taking, before it was too late. The road before him was hard, the discipline strict; should he wish to retract he must do so now. But this warning, Oliphant confessed later, was accompanied by such a searching diagnosis of his

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own moral condition that it served merely to strengthen him in his determination to link himself with a teacher who could so deeply see into his soul.

Meanwhile he made over his entire fortune, some \$100,000, into the Community fund, from which land was purchased, and sat down to await further instructions.

These, when they came, were odd. He was prepared for hardships, for penances, for rebuffs; but that the Member for Stirling Burghs, the author of *Piccadilly*, should be instructed to sew petticoats was surely unforeseen. Harris was to show himself a past-master in the art of humiliation during the years that followed. Yet, nothing daunted, Oliphant took up the work. 'I have nearly finished one petticoat,' he wrote in perfect seriousness to a friend in England. 'I find the greatest benefit from it—it induces a calm, and if not actively devotional, at all events a contemplative state of mind.'

At length the summons came and in the late autumn of 1867, it is recorded, the figure of a fashionably dressed Englishman startled the simple villagers of Amenia by enquiring the way to the Harris Community.

Here, when he arrived, he found further humiliation indeed. As a mere 'external,' he was not permitted to see Harris or his household. He was to serve at the most menial tasks and house himself where he could; but it must be alone. He must hold no communication with any of the Community until a first period of penance was over. Above all, he must hold no communication with his own mother; though he frequently saw her. Apart from boarding with someone, there was in fact nowhere to live in Amenia, which was a tract of new country dotted with the small huts of the Community, and one large newly erected comfortable building, suitably hedged about, in which lived Harris with his personal retinue. Oliphant had perforce, and without help, to build himself a shack of empty orange boxes; and here he began a period of service, cleaning stables, hoeing vineyards; repairing and cleaning the Community's boots. His food was brought daily to him by a silent messenger and, according to his friend Lord Dunraven, 'pushed to him at the end of a long pole.'

While the 'externals' laboured about the Community lands, planting

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vines, making wine, trying to bring rough new land under enough cultivation to support them, a group of 'internals,' mostly women, surrounded Harris and kept him insulated from the world. This was necessary, for his spirit life was one of constant struggle against the 'inferentials' from the outside world. When not writing his long, involved books of doctrine or his verse, he spent most of his time in trances. During these his spirit was particularly susceptible to what he called 'spheres' or inimical forces in the outside world, and 'states' or wrong-minded conditions in anyone in the Community. 'Spheres' might be caused by anything from a declaration of war in Brazil to a rise in the price of local wine in New York. Harris's battles with 'spheres' could be terrible, and from them he would emerge looking shaken and worn. But, for the Community, 'states' were much more menacing. These were caused invariably by members of the Community afflicted by worldly emotions. The most common worldly emotion in the Brotherhood was family affection.

Upon each member of the Community, therefore, lay the heavy personal burden of preventing Father (as Harris was called) from being afflicted by 'states'; since such affliction, they were told by his household, would take the form of physical pains causing Father 'to roll on the ground in agony.' Since Harris, though apparently isolated and remote from his disciples, watched the Community very closely, he was instantly aware of alliances or affections inimical to his own interests. A 'state' would result. Then, possibly without warning, the sword would fall. An irrevocable edict would be brought by a messenger, and offending individuals or families were either separated and punished, or banished into the outer world.

Over all the Community there hung this cloud of fear, uncertainty and awe. Scattered in their rough huts and communal dwelling houses, from which they issued to toil long hours at manual work on the estate, the members of the 'external' Use would pass in trepidation and wonder the comfortable house, shrouded in carefully planted shrubs and trees, in which Father, incommunicable, remote, yet all seeing, lived. Who knew, behind those walls, what agonies were being suffered, what battles fought, for their redemption?

Mostly the great house would be silent, but there were days when,

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to the startled disciples, there would emerge from the shuttered building the unearthly and inharmonious strains of a piano, on which Father, playing 'by sheer influx,' would be calling down Lily Queen from the electro-vital. 'For it was wholly needful that the beloved Lily herself should absolutely rule every strain and tone, from her own Lilistan home, without being forced into any artificially determined forms from the musical culture of the 'world.'

\* \* \* \* \*

For some three months poor Woodbine (as Oliphant was called according to the rules of the Use by which each member bore a fairy name) worked in isolation and considerable squalor. Mrs. Oliphant wrote that often afterwards he would recall 'in a sort of nightmare the gloomy, silent labour for days and days wheeling barrows of dirt and rubbish in perfect loneliness.' Towards the end of 1867, doubtless with funds provided from Oliphant's financial renunciation, Harris made a move long contemplated to a new Community site on the shores of Lake Erie, at a place called Brocton, near Buffalo. Harris and his household, consisting of 'Dovie' (Jane Lee Waring), 'Viola' (a lady called Mrs. Requa), and some serving girls went first; the rest of the Community, consisting of some seventy souls (of whom fifty were women) followed gradually; among these were about a dozen Japanese, who found that Harris's strange theories echoed some need in their own peculiar oriental psychology. Oliphant left Amenia practically last, having been neither consulted nor even informed of the move. 'I have not been able to speak to Faithful, or come into any kind of rapport with him or Dovie,' he wrote in a letter dated October 1867. 'I am consoled by feeling that by this separation I am enabled to fight without drawing life from him or causing anyone any suffering. . . . Deprived of all human aid, the Divine arm becomes more and more evident to one's spiritual senses. . . .'

Meanwhile there was plenty of work to do. Harris had taken the first farm purchased on the Brocton estate. He virtually rebuilt the house, making it a place of some thirty rooms, and calling it Vinecliff. So that his seclusion should be complete, a public road which ran near the house was removed and relaid a good distance away. Round the house were planted thick clusters of ornamental

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shrubs and flowering trees. Water was piped from a source nearly two miles away to feed an ornamental fishpond, there was a small deer park laid and a cultivated tract of land in which vine experimentation was carried out by 'Dovie.'

On this beautiful and inviolable little estate the 'prophet' might be occasionally seen wandering in deep communion with himself, wrapped in a black cloak and smoking a clay pipe. Occasionally 'Dovie,' also smoking a clay pipe, would be seen accompanying him. Inside, the house was furnished in the height of luxury; tapestries, paintings hung on the walls, and the floors were covered with Persian rugs. Flowers, for which Harris had a passion, filled every room; doors and archways were discreetly curtained. On an upper floor Harris had a small but luxurious study, lined with books (many of which were the gift of the Oliphants). Here in a soft, specially designed arm-chair he would sit and compose his verse or his books of doctrine; here also he could writhe in his trances and fight, unseen by all but 'Dovie,' for the redemption of mankind. Here came Lily Queen gliding down from the electro-vital to give him comfort and physical release; from here emerged the sound of him reciting his verse to himself; his shouts of agony when the 'inferna's' attacked him, or the unearthly strains of his piano as he established his rapports with the Unseen. This room opened into his bedroom, and from there on to a vine-covered small private verandah which looked across Lake Erie.

\* \* \* \* \*

The exact length of Oliphant's period of probation is not clear. It seems that for at least two years he was treated as an 'external' and not allowed to approach 'Father'; though he was closely watched. The gossip of a household of five women, if nothing else, was sufficient to keep Harris well informed of every detail of the private lives of the members of his Community. There are, however, letters from Oliphant to his publisher, Blackwood, showing that he himself was still in touch with the outer world, and that that rational and intellectually active second self in his strange make-up was enabling him eagerly to discuss the re-publication of his novel *Piccadilly* in book form. These letters give no inkling either of his labours or

of the curious world in which he lived. They might have been written from the Athenaeum and not from Brocton. Gay, business-like, fluent, it seems almost incredible they could come from a man worn out with menial labour and steeped in all the mysterious supernaturalism of the Harris Community.

In the absence of any clear information except Laurence Oliphant's undated letters it is difficult to trace the actual sequence of events ; but it seems that by the end of 1869 Harris had realised that Oliphant's money-making talent was wasted in menial service at Brocton. His subservience seemed complete ; and he was now allowed to pay visits to New York, to put his knowledge of the financial markets at the service of the Community. Possibly with Community funds to invest, he was in New York frequently during the latter part of the year ; and he saw sufficient of New York commerce and social life to write a satire 'Dollie and the Two Smiths,' which began to appear in *Blackwood's* early in 1870. This was entirely in his old vein of gay, infectious satire. 'Fun,' wrote Mrs. Oliphant, who read the instalments eagerly, 'had never been so wild in him, nor satire so bold, nor could anything be supposed more completely unlike the conventional idea of a man who had given up everything for the sake of religion, than the laughable, yet subtle, sketch . . . too ludicrous to be immoral, which he launched at his new neighbours with the same laugh which had bewildered the old.'

The first instalments had scarcely begun to appear when Oliphant himself arrived in London, and immediately resumed his former place in society. He strolled into the Athenaeum, a friend remembered, as if he had only left it the previous day ; and took up his old life again as if he had never been away. Yet those of his friends who were sanguine enough to believe that his return meant a return to sanity, and a final rupture with the crazy community at Brocton, were speedily disillusioned. Mrs. Oliphant who saw him wrote, 'He was in high spirits, unfeignedly glad to be released from his drudgery, and to return to his native air of intellectual novelty and variety, after long fasting from all that was exciting or agreeable. But this natural sentiment did not in the least degree interfere with his faith. . . .'

Harris had allowed him only a small pittance from the Community chest on which to live, and remunerative work of some sort was an

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immediate necessity. He made one attempt to obtain employment in the diplomatic service, but this door was now closed to him. Yet a journalist of such outstanding merit could not, in those days, remain long without employment. The Franco-Prussian war, which had just broken out, led to a race in the British press to be first with the news. Delane, editor of *The Times*, was glad to offer him the post of correspondent at Lyons at a salary of £1200 a year, plus expenses. The work promised excitement, for which he craved, and the terms were generous. He accepted, and in September 1870 left London for the war front where, in the following months, he had ample opportunity for displaying his physical courage, and capacity for being first and often exclusive in his reports.

But a master, more imperious and more impatient, was calling. Harris had told Oliphant before he left for England that he would recall him by a mysterious sign, when the time came. This sign was to be a bullet. Oliphant afterwards wrote that the sign came to him during the street fighting of the Paris Commune. 'I had turned into a house to avoid a charge of soldiery and a bullet grazed my hair. I took it as a sign that my protection was removed, and got away as soon as I could manage to do so.'

The reason for which he was summoned to Brocton is not known; but after a few weeks he was allowed to return to Paris and continue his work, and later his mother was able to follow him. Possibly this relaxation of discipline was made because during that year Harris himself and 'Dovie' were travelling in Europe, and appeared in Paris where for a time they were housed in Oliphant's hotel.

\* \* \* \* \*

Among the English families at that time residing in Paris was that of a Mrs. Wynne Finch, who lived with her daughters by a previous marriage to a man called Hamon le Strange, of Hunstanton, Norfolk. One of these daughters, Alice le Strange, a charming, intelligent girl of twenty-six, became the companion of Lady Oliphant during her daily drives about the city. Of her beauty, another woman, Frances Power Cobbe, was to write, 'Never was there a more bewitching young creature, so sweetly affectionate, so clever and so brilliant in

every way. It was quite dazzling to see such youth and brightness. . . . And in Kinglake's sober judgment she was 'the most intelligent of women.' She was a popular figure socially and something of a problem to her more serious friends because of her religious scepticism.

The steps of the love and courtship of Laurence Oliphant and Alice le Strange are not clearly known ; but by March 1872, the former is writing to his cousin Mrs. Oliphant : 'My happiness has come at last, one that I am sure you would approve, the sweetest, frankest nature that I ever met, in thorough sympathy with all my vagaries which she utterly agrees with and understands—with the intellect of a man and the intuition of a woman. . . .'

But the engagement was fraught with difficulties. The le Strange family, for obvious reasons, were opposed to the union. Oliphant had been quite frank with them. He had no money to offer Alice—all had been given to God ; and he made it quite clear that if Alice married him her own portion would go the same way. It also appeared that though Harris did not at first object to the idea of Oliphant's marriage, Dovie, who, evil tongues were later to assert, was herself in love with Oliphant, certainly raised objections and perhaps persuaded Harris to agree with her.

Meanwhile the courtship, surely one of the strangest, progressed. To his fiancée, still hesitant upon the brink of the new and alarming world he was opening up to her, he wrote :

'What more intense happiness could the world give than to see my darling overcoming all opposition, and, like some flaming angel, leading on the suffering womanhood of her world to new and unsuspected possibilities of victory. You will become a divine decoy, luring with angelic art those round who the evil ones have woven their toils . . . ' and, he continues, 'I have sometimes been conscious that the most successful things I have done have been owing to the strength I derived from an internal rapport with Mr. Harris. . . .'

Surely, as this correspondence progressed—'perhaps,' as Mrs. Oliphant who saw it, remarks, 'the most extraordinary correspondence that ever passed between a pair of lovers'—surely a young girl of twenty-six might well be perturbed? What is she being prepared for? 'Divine decoy! Internal rapport with Mr. Harris!'

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Approval for the marriage must have arrived in the spring of 1872, for in June, Laurence Oliphant and Alice le Strange were married at St. George's, Hanover Square.

No sooner were they married than their tribulations began. Whether under the instructions from Father, or from some wish of their own to do penance, it was stipulated that they should not live as man and wife; they slept together, but were not intimate.

'I learned self control,' Oliphant said in later years, 'by sleeping with my beloved Alice for twelve years without claiming the rights of a husband. We lived as brother and sister. I am a passionate lover, and so it was difficult. But it did not prove to be impossible, I was able to keep my vow, and I shall never regret having made it.'

What Alice Oliphant felt is not recorded; but, having crossed her Rubicon, she did not look back, and she accepted the trials and disillusionments of the new faith with a fortitude which time was to show exceeded that of her husband. Meanwhile her letters appear to have been full of Mr. Harris, still a mysterious being in America; her husband has now become 'Woodbine,' and she is already able to talk and write the symbolic jargon of the Use.

She was soon to be tested further. By 1873 Oliphant had found *Times* work in Paris boring. The war was over and there was no longer much excitement or glory in acting as a correspondent of the tangled French political scene. He resigned his post in March, with a vague promise to Delane, 'if Europe gets in a fix I shall return and be ready again for any special service for which you may think me fit. . . .' Then, after a brief holiday in the Mediterranean and a stay at Long Island, the pair proceeded to Brocton, whence Lady Oliphant had preceded them, and, in the summer of 1873, presented themselves at the Use.

Immediately the thunderbolt fell. Father no sooner saw Alice, than he became aware of a 'state.' Alice was not Oliphant's true counterpart; this was a woman in the spirit world. They must separate. Oliphant was sent back to New York to stay there and deal with the business finances of the Use; Alice was ordered to live with her mother-in-law in a small cottage at Brocton,

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where they were to rear chickens and mend the clothes of the Community.

Meekly, the Oliphants obeyed. Alice moved into a small cottage, near to Harris's house, and here with that somewhat featureless creature, Lady Oliphant, she passed the first eight months of her life at the Use.

There were, as will be seen, frequent meetings for her with Harris during these months, and what happened between them will never now be known, but when later Harris accused her of devilish spiritual designs, and of imitating his counterpart, Lily Queen, to him, we may guess that some of the mystic seances shared by other women in the study or the bedroom overlooking Lake Erie were also undergone by this refined young woman. But Harris's influence, that strange, alluring mixture of the patriarchal, the warmly human, and the semi-spiritual, to which even his enemies testified, evidently completely enthralled Alice. 'I should like,' she confided to a friend in a letter, 'to tell you about the greatest and deepest mystery—the key mystery—of all the lives here in some of my own knowledge of it, but I cannot bring myself to trust it to the post.' I will only say to you that things more wonderful than any imaginings become the simple realities of everyday experience.'

What Harris's new revelation was, is difficult to disentangle from the copious pages of his verbiage; but it seems that the pivotal man has moved one step forward nearer to the God-head and is about to become the recipient and the channel for a kind of Messianic second coming. The tone of his language consequently grew more obscure and, where the sense emerged, more blasphemous.

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A suitable site for another move had been reconnoitred and purchased, possibly with the capital which had come from Alice's patrimony. The new place was called Fountain Grove, Santa Rosa, California; and here Harris, with Jane Lee Warner and two Japanese disciples, moved in the winter of 1873. Lady Oliphant and Alice were left behind to board at Vinecliff; and the rest of the Brocton community were left to their own devices.

The new house which was built for Harris on the pleasant rolling

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countryside of Fountain Grove was even larger and more ambitious than the Brocton demesne. Near the house, a building for a new printing-press was set up, and in readiness for the new Community which, it was hoped, would gather round Father, two further large buildings were erected, called respectively the Commandery and the Familistery. In the former, men, and the latter, women, were to be segregated.

No sooner was Harris installed at Aestivossa, as the new site was called, than Alice Oliphant received a summons to leave her mother-in-law and join him. Although she had seen virtually nothing of her husband for a year she instantly obeyed. She had already been told that Oliphant was not her true counterpart; for this was a spirit woman called Alaweine, a friend (possibly a neighbour) of Lily Queen. Who was Alice's own counterpart was left unsaid; nor is it known what took place between Father and Alice at Fountain Grove. But, after a short period, she was dismissed and sent to a village called Vallejo to teach in a small school.

There can be little doubt that Harris was attracted by Alice, and that he made her strange offers and promises. In later years he was, while trying to induce another woman to join the Community, to refer to Alice in tones of some extravagance. 'You are to be our little queen of the East,' he told one woman, 'You are to be Alice. You have her brilliancy and grace and are well fitted to take her place.'

Did Alice, after succumbing to him, have some revulsion which caused her not to be sent, but to flee away? When the schism between Oliphant and Harris was complete, Harris was to accuse Alice of 'having resorted to occult practice' by taking on the substance and appearance of Lily Queen. Whatever drama really was enacted in that somewhat sinister house at Fountain Grove, there was no doubt that about this time Harris's megalomania was increasing and that his occult pretensions and statements made more and more demands on the credulity of his still loyal disciples. Lily Queen, aided and abetted by Miss Waring, now reigned supreme, and many women (there is no record of a man!) received comfort and relief in her arms. So real by now had she become to Harris and those at Aestivossa that the Fountain Grove press was able to print, without

comment, the news that both Harris and Lily Queen were pleased to receive letters from their friends. 'Communications,' ran the press notice, 'should be addressed, if from gentlemen, to Mr. T. L. Harris, and if from ladies, to Mrs. Lily Harris. . . .'

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During this period dates and facts are few and confusing. There is mention of Oliphant as a visitor at the usual society gatherings. Sir M. E. Grant Duff, a friend, recollected a visit from him to his house at Twickenham in December 1878. Oliphant was perhaps not insensitive to the fact that, possibly from Alice's family and the friends of Lady Oliphant, there was some criticism of his appearance in the London social scene (he had visited the Queen at Sandringham in October), while his mother and wife were left to languish in poverty and distress in America. 'I come out from time to time into the world to make a little money,' was his explanation to Grant Duff; 'and then go back again.'

However, early in 1880, Harris relaxed his discipline and allowed Alice to join him in London.

One would like to know what emotions stirred the hearts of these two strange creatures when, after such a long penance of separation, they were rejoined. Did the ghostly figures of different counterparts still stand between them; did Harris's mysterious and incalculable injunctions still bind them? There is no record. They took up their daily life together as if nothing had happened; shared their duties in the social round, and then, since they were both in somewhat ailing health, left Europe for a holiday in Egypt as might any couple in London Victorian society.

Communication with Harris and the community at Santa Rosa seemed now to be non-existent and rumours of the moral decline of the Community were rampant. Did the Oliphants, as they leisurely saw the sights in Egypt, spending for the first time for years long hours in each other's company, ever allow the breath of criticism to disturb their many talks of Father and Dovie? It appears not; for suddenly there came instructions from Fountain Grove that they were to make over to the Santa Rosa Community whatever lands in Brocton were still held in Oliphant's name. This instruction they

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accepted without demur ; and would indeed have immediately complied, but for a fortuitous circumstance. Consular delays and a poor postal system prevented the immediate signature and despatch of the relevant papers to Santa Rosa. News of another and more startling nature arrived in the interim ; and this, by holding up the transfer of the documents, saved the residue of Oliphant's property ; though that of Alice was irretrievably lost.

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The news now received was from Vinecliff, and told of the sudden and serious illness of Lady Oliphant. This wretched woman, banned from communication with either her son or daughter-in-law had, during all these years, continued to languish in the austerities at Brocton. On receiving the news of her illness, Oliphant at once cabled to Harris asking for permission to visit her. There was no reply. He therefore decided to break the ban, as, indeed he must earlier have done in the case of his wife, and go to her. He arrived at Brocton to find her seriously ill with cancer. It was clearly necessary that Harris's healing powers should at once be invoked ; and Oliphant, desperate, now took his mother on the long weary road from Brocton to California. Both believed firmly in Harris's power to heal her, and it must have been with pathetic hopes that he presented himself at Fountain Grove and asked to be received by Father.

Harris at first refused to see him ;—but at length there was a stormy interview in which Harris refused to exercise his healing powers. Oliphant left the house in despair, and seeking somewhere for succour for his mother, at length took her to another religious community some distance away where there was also a healer, credited with supernatural powers. The journey was in vain. At a small village called Cloverdale, where Mrs. Walker, a friend of Alice Oliphant, hurried to join them, the unfortunate woman lay a few days in agony and then died.

The death of his mother seems to have been the decisive blow to Oliphant's belief both in the honesty and infallibility of Harris. Doubts about Harris's personal honesty had been held by him for some time, and he later declared that these first arose when Harris tried to make use of knowledge obtained by his disciple in financial

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circles in New York to make money by dishonest means. The stories about Harris's way of life at Fountain Grove which were now circulating in the local press at Brocton, and among the deserted community there, no doubt helped to strengthen these doubts; and the chance discovery, during his visit to Fountain Grove, that some of the female members of Harris's entourage were wearing jewellery formerly owned by Lady Oliphant must also have come as something of a shock.

But whatever doubts he had earlier held about Harris's morals and way of life, and his treatment of his disciples, Oliphant had still retained the belief that Harris virtually possessed the power of life and death. Harris's refusal to see Lady Oliphant and the physical fact of her death with all its attendant misery, seems to have convinced him that Harris was not only fallible, but evil; though this did not invalidate the religious beliefs he preached, which Oliphant to the end, with minor changes, continued to put forward. He now began legal proceedings to regain his property.

Harris was soon made aware of what Oliphant was doing, and his reaction was typical. So long as the money and property were safe; Oliphant could go his own way, and no doubt Harris had hoped he would do so. But to Oliphant's threat to regain his financial contribution to the Use, he reacted quickly. To Alice Oliphant, still the dutiful disciple in England, there came a telegram from Harris instructing her to apply for Oliphant's certification in lunacy. Alice was thrown into instant dismay, and we may well wonder at the hold this man had over his disciples when we learn that she had long to search her heart, and question her friends, before she decided not to obey.

A struggle now ensued to wrest back from Harris the property bought at Brocton by the Oliphant money in 1869. After a long and involved legal battle, Oliphant won his case, and most of the Brocton property had either to be handed over or sold to repay him.

And now fresh shocks, fresh infamies, were in store for Father. The financial loss was great, and the failure to retain Oliphant's unquestioning obedience and subservience was galling, especially as Oliphant now explained that Harris had been under the impression

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that I obeyed him because he mastered me. He did not understand that the bondage had been self-imposed, voluntary, that it had been suffered for a given end; namely to kill my pride.' Oliphant, however, now propounded the heresy that Lily Queen had deserted Harris and was now regularly visiting himself from the electro-vital; and that, in fact, the mantle of Prophet and leader of the Brotherhood of the New Life had now fallen upon his own shoulders. In this he was supported by a section of the Brocton community. Harris's printing-press went into violent action to prove that it was not Lily Queen who was visiting Oliphant at all, but Alice Oliphant in her 'devilish disguise.' To explain this still further, one of Harris's adherents wrote, that Oliphant, 'becoming mediumistically open to the lower forms of spiritism, rejected the cautions of T. L. Harris regarding the possible impersonations of the true counterparts, and so became exposed to deception and disaster.' For months a struggle couched in the jargon of this strange sect waged between the two communities. Distance at length put an end to it, but it continued spasmodically to reappear, long after the two protagonists were dead.

The final rupture with Harris, and partly perhaps the failure of the badly managed community at Brocton to be economically viable, strengthened Oliphant in his resolve to move his own branch of the Brotherhood from the West to the East. The kingdom of heaven upon earth was now to be awaited not at Harris's Aestivossa in California, but in Palestine.

It is not clear from Oliphant's writings when this decision was taken. The financial seems to march so closely with the spiritual in the lives of both Harris and Oliphant that it is often difficult to decide which was the prior motive force. When, a few years earlier, he had propounded a scheme for financial investment in the colonisation of certain areas in Palestine, Oliphant had failed because of Turkish intransigence and suspicion, and his own lack of funds. With the sale of the Brocton properties and the part repayment of his investment in the 'Use,' Oliphant was now able to reconsider the purchase of land for the settlement of the new colony of the Brotherhood and the propagation of his own religious ideas.

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JANE LEE WARING AT THE TIME OF HER MARRIAGE TO HARRIS



THOMAS LAKE HARRIS IN HIS LATE SEVENTIES

After a stay in Constantinople in 1881, the Oliphant household, now consisting of Laurence and Alice, a Brocton adherent Mrs. Cuthbert, and a Jewish poet and scholar, Naphtali Imber, arrived at Haifa to set up house and form the nucleus of a new colony of religious. Haifa was then a small seaside town in the bay of Acre mostly inhabited by German colonists of the Templar society. Here the Oliphants took a house which soon became a centre for friends to visit them from England and for, one by one, the 'dear Brocton people,' as Alice called them, to join them. For the summer heats they built a small house on the hillside at Daliet Carmel, and here, according to Mrs. Oliphant, began 'the happiest portion of their lives.' Alice's mother and her brother, Guy le Strange the orientalist, were now guests at the simple household and there was a constant stream of visitors—Jews seeking advice on colonisation, lost souls begging refuge from spiritual oppression, fashionable acquaintances from Belgravia and a medley of Druse chieftains and the usual hangers-on of the Arab world which gather about any project promising perquisites or profit.

Here, Oliphant and Alice continued to put forward, with modifications, the theories Harris had first propounded at Wassaic. Only the idea of the 'pivotal man' was now discarded. Every man might equally obtain Christ by labour and service, and Oliphant himself, inspired by messages from the Unseen, continued to show how this should be done. He and Alice 'breathed together' and with others, and steadfastly preached the strange theory of heavenly counterparts.

Among distinguished visitors who came to the household was General Gordon, and we have an unusual picture of the two eccentrics pacing the seashore discussing the Second Coming, the theory of female counterparts, and Gordon's model of Jerusalem, which he had made, 'to carry out his theory that the hill upon which the greater part of the city was built, was in the form of a woman . . . the divine Bride! . . .'

Oliphant, who had first known Gordon twenty-nine years previously in the trenches before Sebastopol, showed him the manuscript of his new book *Sympneumata*, which contained a new theory for the attainment of religious experience. Gordon approved it, but 'wished it had been written from the more biblical point of view.' 'People,'

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wrote Oliphant later, 'would have been amused to see us two illustrious maniacs conferring together.'

*Sympneumata*, which appeared in 1885, was not produced under Oliphant's name, since it had not been written by him directly. It was received divinely through Alice, who was now proved to be his true counterpart, and dictated by her to him in short sessions every day.

Thus was the book written ; and Blackwood the publisher confessed that 'he was quite unable to understand it' ; while Mrs. Oliphant declared in a letter to Blackwood that trying to read it made her catch hold of the furniture after a few pages to 'keep myself from turning round and round.'

Oliphant explained the aims of the little colony as: 'it is by the active and conscientious performance of daily duties, by the cultivation of pure love, humility and upright dealing and purity, that the frame can be prepared for the conscious presence of the other half, and for the descent of Christ as the comforter and bridegroom. . . .' But Mr. Cuthbert from Santa Rosa, who had strangely deserted his wife to join Harris, wrote tersely to a friend : 'His system is to seek the internal and what he calls "God" through sexual sensations. . . .'

But the writing of *Sympneumata* was not the only occupation during these two years. Oliphant was still earning money by his pen. He might write a mystical, almost unreadable, book in the conditions described above ; but he could still, with that curious dichotomy of mind which characterised him, produce at the same time a most entertaining series of sketches of past adventures in travel, journalism and diplomacy in his *Episodes in a Life of Adventure* which appeared in *Blackwood's* in 1885. He had already produced in 1885 a novel *Masollam*, in which the mysterious, sinister central figure appears to be a portrait of Thomas Lake Harris. Two years earlier had appeared his *Altiora Peto*, a novel partly based on his American society, experiences, and which he told Blackwood was intended 'to ventilate the theological opinions that are not old-fashioned and go in largely for attacking the views of modern society.' Of *Altiora Peto*, his best novel after *Piccadilly*, a distinguished critic could describe forty years later as 'the best description of the young American girl in our literature. . . .'

*Seton Dearden*

Other travel books were on the stocks, and Oliphant was also closely concerned in financial projects, one of which was the possibility of raising capital to carry a railway line through the wheat areas of the Syrian Hauran. As material for his books, Oliphant and Alice made a constant series of journeys in Palestine and Syria. His *Haifa, of Life in Modern Palestine*, a series of letters to the *New York Sun* (later published by Blackwood's), contains descriptions of visits to the Jordan Valley, Transjordan, and most of the lesser known biblical sites in the area.

In January 1886 tragedy struck at them. Camping near one of the swamps in the Jordan valley, Alice was struck down by malaria, and was hurried home seriously ill. Sadly, her husband brought her back to Haifa where she lingered for a while. Both believed she would recover, and that it was not a physical illness, but a 'spiritual pressure' put out by Harris that was afflicting her. In vain. In March 1886 this 'beautiful and beloved woman,' as Mrs. Oliphant described her, 'departed out of the midst, not of a family, but of an entire people.' In a letter to John Blackwood, Mrs. Oliphant wrote what *must* surely be poor Alice Oliphant's obituary :

'The impression of reality in all she did and said and hoped for was so strong that I myself felt something of the same, as if death could not be anything but a trifling circumstance in the course of such an immortal creature.'

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Laurence Oliphant was to follow her two years later ; but his bizarre life had still a strange, erratic course to run. From America, Harris, hearing of her death, had informed his disciples that he himself had caused it, owing to the disobedience of the Oliphants. And remembering Alice's haunting appearances at his bedside in the guise of Lily Queen, wrote :

'Did the subtlest soul of magic  
Sting your heart to bleed and ache?  
By a down stroke swift and tragic  
Died the siren of the snake.'

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But to Oliphant her departure had only deepened and strengthened his tie with her. She was now his true female counterpart in Heaven and could descend to him in the spirit. She became constantly with him about the house, was recognised by his disciples as a factor in their lives, and did not need, as Lily Queen, a trance state to announce her coming.

Now, under Alice's guidance, he began to write his *magnum opus*, a book called *Scientific Religion*; and the theory of counterparts took a further step forward.

'Woman,' ran this strange book, 'is the central vessel in the human for secret inception of all vitalities from the divine, and for their distribution outwards into the masculine. In woman there remains beyond a depth into which man can never penetrate; in that within she is eternally alone with God. What she knows within that depth is for ever to man a mystery, save for what God, for ends of service, instructs her to set forth; but it can never be known to man except through woman. In the deep and inward man-woman union of pure essences, she touches God herself; through whatever atomic change of beings this union is affected man touches God through her. . . .'

But by mid-1886 he was back in London and Edinburgh again, taking his wonted place in the social world. There is a record of his visiting Prince Christian, an old friend, and the Prince of Wales at Abergeldie, from whence he went to Balmoral for an even more exalted interview.

'Last night I dined with the Queen,' he wrote to a Brocton friend from Abergeldie, 'and told her about *Sympneumata*. She wants to read it. . . .'

The pen of the biographer pauses at this scene; the imagination fails. If a tribute to the Oliphant charm, wit and intelligence were needed, surely this interview with a stern, unyielding old autocrat of rigid religious principles, supplies it!

Never was his strange dual character more in evidence. Those who knew him as the prophetic healer of Haifa, shaken with constant spiritual seizures, would scarcely believe it was the same man who 'entered the Athenaeum and greeted one as if he had only departed yesterday, and immediately plunged into a whirl of political gossip, punctured with delightful witticisms and good natured banter. . . .'

*Seton Dearden*

Back at Haifa, life became stranger during the years 1886-7. A clergyman of the Church of England, Mr. Haskett Smith, who, reading *Sympneumata*, had thrown up his benefice in England to join Oliphant as secretary, now in his surplice read the lessons in the small Haifa church, returning no doubt to lunch and the mystic appearance of Alice. Mrs. Cuthbert, whose husband still remained a fervent 'Harrisite,' continued to play the part of female acolyte, and who knows what else. And numbers of visitors, mostly, it must be confessed, women, came to visit or join the little community in various capacities. Over all of them Alice ruled, much as Lily Queen had ruled at Brocton and Santa Rosa.

To casual visitors Oliphant could still be the charming and attentive host and he was always willing to apply his faculties to any practical problem. "How strong the influx is," he would cry as he sat among his circle of female admirers, and a tell-tale rippling vibration would run over his breast and shoulders. "There is Alice," he would add, with a half tearful smile, which would melt even the most sceptical heart among his listeners.

But now, as the months wore on, a sad new element intruded itself into his life. Alice seemed to withdraw herself from him and take with her the divine influx. He could not understand it. A restlessness fell upon him, and, looking worn and emaciated after a period of fasting undergone in order to try to recall her, he arrived again in England in 1887, where a friend Mrs. Hankin found, 'that the singular spiritual force which, to my consciousness, differentiated Mr. Oliphant from all other men whom I had ever met, was no longer, as before, almost of the nature of a persistent attribute allied to his own original character. The sense of great spiritual power no longer accompanied his mere presence. . . .'

But help was at hand. In the spring of 1888 he was on the move again; this time 'induced by a curious combination of circumstances' to go to America, and from New York 'to make a pilgrimage 1100 miles to see a lady of whom I had only heard, but who I found to be a remarkable person. . . .'

The lady was a Miss Rosamund Dale Owen, daughter of Robert Dale Owen of the New Harmony community, and a spiritualist. Oliphant had heard of her from a friend in Paris and some strange

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impulse drove him to go and see her. From New York he forwarded a letter with a copy of *Scientific Religion* to Southern Indiana where Miss Owen was staying, and followed it in person. In her autobiography Miss Owen gives a lively account of this meeting.

‘I was inclined to be timid when I met a stranger, but I felt completely at home with Mr. Oliphant from the moment he took my hand in his. . . . He then drew from his pocket a picture of Alice his late wife and handed it to me. “I am going to Palestine with a party of friends. Will you join us?”’

Miss Owen needless to add was guided to accept; and on board ship to England agreed to marry him.

‘On the passage,’ wrote Oliphant, ‘she was brought into very close relations with Alice. . . . She realises Alice most intensely and brings her closer to me than I ever remember, so that instead of in any way separating me from her, it unites me more closely while she can work through us combined, more powerfully than through me alone. . . .’

It was a curious and complicated relationship; but these two strange creatures, drawn to each other over thousands of miles, accepted it. Their friends accepted it less easily. Those who had loved Alice could not clearly understand this sudden new relationship in which Oliphant had involved himself. Mrs. Oliphant wrote in dismay to Blackwood: ‘What is this dreadful business about Laurence Oliphant? Married, after publishing his book to convince the world if possible that marriage should not be, and with such a wife so lately buried!’ He seemed aware of this and hastened to explain to Mrs. Oliphant in a letter that it ‘does not imply any want of faithfulness to Alice’s memory, but is in fact only carrying out her wishes. It is a duty imposed upon me by the necessities of the situation. As the number of people, especially women, increases with whom I have to deal, it has become absolutely necessary for [Alice] to have a human assistant of her own sex. She gets so exhausted with the amount of work she has to do, that I feel her fatigue. It is a great mistake to suppose that beings in the invisible have an unlimited supply of nervous magnetism; they get tired just as we do.’

Laurence Oliphant and Rosamond Dale Owen were married at

*Seton Dearden.*

Malvern in August 1888, and almost immediately Oliphant was struck down by sickness. There was no honeymoon, and he lay prostrate for some weeks at the house of his old Californian friends, the Walkers, now living in Surbiton. His illness was at first diagnosed as malignant pleurisy; but as pain and debility persisted, it became clear that it was cancer of the lungs. From the Walkers, attended assiduously by his new wife and a Bulgarian valet, he was moved in the autumn to the large pleasant York House, the home of his close friends Sir Mountstuart and Lady Grant Duff at Twickenham. Mr. Haskett Smith came hasting from Haifa to his side, and for a while he seemed to rally. But not for long.

In his last hours of pain, one wonders what spirits, the product of that brilliant but deluded mind, crowded about the bedside. Was the gentle Alice there? Did the sombre eyes of Thomas Lake Harris glare from the shadows? 'No doubt Harris's devils have been at me,' he said gaspingly but with his old infectious smile in a moment of consciousness. But Lady Grant Duff recollected that his last words, despairing, piteous—an epitaph, to his whole life—were 'more light . . . more light!'

One can only hope that this last, unhappy cry from the heart of the once gay, brilliant and intelligent man, was answered by his Alice, faithfully awaiting him; and not by some dismal messenger from the Shades.

'The actual end,' Mrs. Oliphant wrote, 'was complete and perfect peace. He passed away as into a tranquil sleep. . . .'

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And Harris? Surely he must provide an epilogue? The 'Prophet of the backwoods' lingered on for another eighteen years, sustained by a small handful of disciples, including a few Japanese. After the secession of the Oliphants he turned more to the East for his inspiration, and evolved curious new theories in which Buddha figured largely, and poor Lily Queen seemed banished. He made other attempts to recruit disciples for his Community; but times were changing, and some of the odium which had clung about him at Fountain Grove still remained. He finally was induced to abandon the Santa Rosa community and for a sum of 40,000 dollars to sell his

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rights and cede the property to a remnant of his disciples who remained, including the Japanese. In 1892, under pressure from public opinion, he married Jane Lee Waring, the faithful Dovie, and led a wandering life accompanied by her and the zealous Mr. Cuthbert. He had to be watched carefully as senility drew on, for he had, to quote a contemporary, 'become a drivelling, sensual old man . . .' whose only thoughts 'appeared to be hugging and kissing women. . .'

He died in March 1906, and for some time his disciples refused to believe the evidence of his mortality. His body lay, until the physical evidences of dissolution were too obvious to be ignored. Then Mr. Cuthbert took up his pen and sadly wrote, from 308 West 102nd Street, New York :

'The end has come to the outward labours of the Lord's Beloved Son—our Father in Christ—Christa. . . . There will be no death-notice published, as the friends at home do not recognise this event as death. . . .'

Little remnants of the Harris community lingered on into the first decade of the new century in Glasgow and New York. Cuthbert died in 1914, and dear, devoted Dovie could then write : 'I am now the last survivor of the little group gathered by Father at Wassaic in 1861.' In 1916 she too followed Father—(dare one hope to Lilistan ?)—and with her death the Harris legend ceased. But until 1932 a few Japanese still lingered at Santa Rosa, and the remains of Harris's library could be seen.

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*Note.* Since this article was written a new biography of Laurence Oliphant by Philip Henderson is announced by Robert Hale.

# Samson .

BY FRANCIS KING

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THE tavern was called *Ta Ornia*—The Vultures—but it is more than three years since it was demolished and a glass-and-concrete laboratory of Salonica University was built on its site. I used often to go there, as one goes to taverns in Greece, not for the drink, which tasted of pine-disinfectant, nor for the food, which tasted of mutton-fat, but for the dancing and company, both of which were excellent. From outside, it looked as if someone had built a card-house out of rusty sheets of corrugated iron and strips of ply-wood and pasteboard, but inside, on winter evenings when a razor-sharp wind was blowing down the Vardar Valley, through my house and on into the greasy milk-white sea before it, it was one of the few places where I could be sure that the cold would not penetrate. The customers were mostly either sailors who came up from the caiques tossing along the quay or metal-workers who came down from the small white houses scattered like shoe-boxes to form a slum beneath the Old Fortress. I have only three times smoked hashish, and once was at The Vultures ; but in spite of the general poverty of the customers, one had little sense of vice or of squalor. Perhaps it is only guilt in the search of pleasure that produces that sense ; and guilt, though so terrible a reality to the ancient Greeks, is fortunately almost unknown to their descendants.

It was a night of driving sleet when Takis first came into The Vultures, leading Boulis behind him. I say 'leading' because, although the two men in fact entered separately, that was the impression which I at once formed, and which remained with me to the end. Takis was obviously what the Greeks call a 'mangas,' a figure the nearest English equivalent of which is neither the Teddy Boy nor the Spiv, but the 'roaring boy' of Elizabethan times. He was

wearing no overcoat, in spite of the temperature, so that, as he shook out his threadbare umbrella in the doorway beside my table, I had ample time to appreciate the extravagant width of the shoulders of his jacket and its no less extravagant 'dràpe,' as well as the little fingernails grown and trimmed assiduously into miniature lances, and the three front teeth all of which had apparently been wrapped in silver paper. Under the narrow black stove-pipe trousers, with their numerous horizontal creases and their wide turn-ups caked in the mud of the Salonica streets, his shoes looked absurdly long and pointed, and I noticed that one had a crack over the hump of what I assumed to be a bunion.

As he rattled his umbrella up and down, spraying my legs with water, he flashed me a grin and asked: "American?"

"English."

"English—O.K.!" I had been in Greece long enough not to be startled by the enthusiasm with which he snatched my hand and pumped it to and fro between both of his. "English," he said to his gigantic companion who stood behind him, his legs apart and his hands to his sides, while the melting sleet trickled off the blond prongs of his hair and made their way down his forehead. "Shake," he said in Greek. He added, still in Greek but more softly: "We may get something out of him."

It was in Greek that I now made a point of remarking: "A beastly night to be out." But I had been mistaken in my hope of embarrassing them.

"Ah, you speak Greek! He speaks Greek! Bravo!"

His companion grinned slowly. "He speaks Greek," he said.

"He speaks Greek," the other repeated.

It was then that they introduced themselves: or, rather, that Takis made their introductions. He himself, he explained, came from Tambouria, a suburb of Peiraeus, but Boulis was from a village high up in the mountains beyond Yiannina. They had served together in the army in Macedonia and now, having been demobilised, they were working together. It was no life for a young man in a remote village of Epirus. Was it, Boulis? he asked.

Over Boulis's massive shoulders there was thrown the kind of rough sheepskin coat worn by Greek shepherds as a protection against

*Francis King*

rain and cold, and now, sodden as it was, I was aware of its gamey, not unpleasant odour. Below it, Boulis wore a khaki shirt, tattered khaki trousers, and army boots, one of which was laced up with string. Like many Epirotes he had high, rosy cheeks, blue eyes behind short, thick lashes as pale as the bristles of a pig, and a white skin scattered with freckles. His smile both came and faded slowly, and when it faded it left on his face an expression of curiously blank desolation.

I had wondered what work two such incongruous people could find to do together, and did not have to wait long for my answer. After Takis had whispered for a while to the keeper of the tavern, another record, this time of an Epirote song, was put on the gramophone. Boulis was told to throw off his coat, and Takis then knelt and clapped his hands to the music while his friend began an extraordinarily graceless and clumsy version of the traditional dance. He looked, I thought, like some performing bear, and had the same pathos, as he lifted his booted feet and gyrated ponderously, always a fraction of a section behind the beat of the music. Takis suddenly hissed, and though that sound is commonly made in Greece by dancers and onlookers—the anthropologists say in order to keep off evil spirits—yet, on this occasion, it seemed more like the signal which a trainer gives to a performing animal at a circus; and at once, as though in obedience to it, Boulis began to dance his way over to where I was sitting. He bent down and opened his mouth, and for a moment I had the ludicrous fear that he was about to use his large white teeth to take a bite from my calf.

“Ela!” shouted Takis. “Ela, agori moo! Come, my lad!” Boulis closed his teeth on the edge of the table, shut his eyes, and then began to straighten himself. The chatter of the other customers had all at once ceased and there was no sound now except for a curious snorting whistle which emerged from Boulis’s nostrils in rhythmic spurts against the squeal, clatter and hiss of the ancient record on the phonograph. Soon, to my dismay, my plate of ‘liver,’ which was really spleen and lights, my glass, my can of wine, my cabbage salad and my hunk of bread were all up aloft; and, a moment after, they were circling about the room, with Boulis below them, the sweat now joining the melted sleet to stick his khaki shirt to his shoulder-

blades and make his white face glisten. He put out his right hand, the wrist of which was encircled by a leather strap, and brandished a chair; then he put out his left, and swept off another chair. Takis was clapping in a kind of ecstasy and shouting in Greek: "Go it, boy! That's it! Go it! Go it!" His eyes glittered with an extraordinary brilliance in his long, narrow face to which the stubble of at least two days had given an Indian darkness, and from time to time he would shriek at the onlookers: "Look at him! Look!" and then at me: "Hey, American! Look see! Look see!"

When the dance was over, Boulis brought my table back to me, and as he stood, breathing heavily and mopping his face on a khaki rag of a handkerchief, I poured him out some wine. Takis was meanwhile going from table to table, making a collection from which I later saw him give the keeper of the tavern a few tattered notes. This done, he came over and, unasked, drew up a chair beside me; a moment later he had ordered Boulis to seat himself.

With the lance on one of his little fingers he began to clean the other lance, as he queried: "Good, Johnny, eh?"

"Very good. I've seen it done before of course—but not with the chairs as well," I added in Greek.

"Ah, I bet when you saw it before, the bastard had one leg of the table firmly between his knees. Or if he didn't, he'd put it up his . . ." He finished with an obscenity which made him give a shrill, cackling laugh and, several seconds later, caused a slow smile to crease Boulis's face. He had already shouted for another plate of the 'liver' and for a cut from the roast pig, for both of which dishes I guessed I should have to pay; and now, when the boy brought this food over, as a gesture of courtesy he first proffered me a piece of gristle on the end of his fork before he himself ate and signed to Boulis to do so. I noticed that as they both fed, Greek fashion, indiscriminately, out of the two plates before them, Takis would fastidiously pick out the choicest tit-bits which he would chew with a slow care, whereas Boulis blindly and voraciously jabbed, shoved and gobbled, his left hand at the same time cramming hunks of bread into his mouth to follow the meat. Sometimes he would even use an enormous, nicotine-stained thumb to push the food home.

Having eaten, Takis wiped his mouth on a corner of the table-

cloth and then began to talk. At first he questioned me about myself—Was I married? What was my age? Had I any sisters or brothers?—for in Greece it is ill-bred to talk at length about one's own affairs until one has asked about the stranger's. Then Takis spoke about Boulis, who himself listened as though he were hearing for the first time tales of some acquaintance. It was only when Takis, with a number of winks and sly chuckles, explained why it was inadvisable for Boulis to return to his village—I guessed, though Takis was far from explicit, that he had got a girl into trouble—that Boulis showed any self-consciousness, lowering his blond eye-lashes as he inspected the fish tattooed in red and blue on his massive forearm and giving that slow-motion smile which broadened at last to a grin and finally ended in a giggle.

"Yes, he's a dangerous boy, this," Takis said. "Not the sort of lad you ought to leave alone with your wife. Feel those muscles of his! Go on, feel them! Let him feel them, Boulis! Like iron, they are. He's like a tree that boy. Like a tree, and it would take a stroke of lightning to bring him down. There can't be a stronger man in Greece—to that I could swear. Have you ever seen anyone as tough as that? I bet there's no one as tough as that in America." By now I had wearied of telling him I came from England. "I call him another Samson. And gentle—gentle as can be! He wouldn't hurt a soul, not a living soul . . . We're like brothers, he and I, that's what we are—brothers. I've got no one else in the world, and he's got no one else here." Takis paused to shout for another can of wine, and then drained his glass: his cheeks were reddening under the stubble, and his lips were relaxed and moist. "Women—I've had thousands of them! Greek women, French women, Italian women, Turkish women. I even had an American once. I met her one evening when I was bathing at Vouliagmeni. Beautiful car she had—Cadillac. And all alone, all by herself." He chuckled. "I gave her what she wanted—and something more! But—what was I saying?" Again he drained his glass. "Yes—this lad of ours here. Would you believe me if I say that there's not one of those women that I care for, as I care for this lad? Would you? Would you now?"

Later, he asked where I lived; hinted that I might have an old

pair of shoes, ruefully showing me the split over his own ; and finally asked if I ever managed to get English or American cigarettes. At this turn of the conversation, I grew bored and irritated ; so that when I got up to go I made a particular point of giving a tin of Benson and Hedges, not to him, but to Boulis. But Boulis, as though from long habit, handed them at once to Takis, even before I had paid my bill and closed the door behind me.

After that I often saw the two about the streets of the town. If down some alley-way, along the quay or in the public gardens I came on a small crowd, I could usually be sure it had gathered for Boulis. I would then pause to watch as the Epirote, often in no more than a grubby singlet above his khaki trousers in spite of the cold, would lift prodigious weights, tear books asunder, bend iron bars, or lie down in the mud to hold above him a table on which were often seated as many as four self-consciously giggling loiterers. Meanwhile Takis, like a terrier yapping at the heels of a bear, would excitedly jump up and down as he shouted instructions or harangued the watching crowd. On the occasions when Takis noticed that I was present, he would always make the same elaborate exhibition of running across, wringing me by the hand, and asking in detail about my health and that of my family in England, none of whom, needless to say, had ever been known to him : all this done, I suppose, in order to impress his audience.

I did not like Takis, but slowly I became used to him, as one so often becomes used to people who persevere in making nuisances of themselves ; Boulis I had always liked. If I had a shirt the collar of which was too frayed for wear, a spare packet of cigarettes, or a bar of English soap, I got into the habit of at once thinking of him. Occasionally I would take them both out for a meal, for I derived the same pleasure from seeing Boulis gobble plate after plate of food, till the sweat ran down his face, as one derives from feeding a starving dog. Once or twice I even 'lent' Takis money.

In the spring, I had an English visitor, a children's doctor who, growing bored of being entertained in the houses of his colleagues or fellow-countrymen, asked to be taken out for what he himself called 'a native evening'. I suggested The Vultures ; but once there, in the company of this gentle and fastidious man who was

twice my own age, I was suddenly aware of many things that I had somehow been able to ignore on all my other visits: the reek, for example, of stale sweat and cooking; the damp that trickled down the walls, in large rusty drops; all the horrors of the charred bits of entrail, fat or gristle served on one chipped plate placed on the table between us; the hiss and grind of the pick-up; and, above all, the icy blasts that swept our legs and shoulders whenever the door was opened.

"It's rather fun," Hawkins said weakly; and then he gave a little cough. I knew that cough, for it invariably indicated that he was either bored or embarrassed.

"Someone's going to dance," I said. "Those sailors dance superbly. Heaven knows how or where they learn!"

"H'm . . . Yes . . . Yes . . ."

In all the months that I had been frequenting The Vultures, I had never seen a worse dancer—except, of course, for Boulis.

As I thought this, we were swept by yet another sleet-laden blast that came from the open doorway: and there Boulis stood, with Takis beside him. They greeted me, and being glad of the diversion, I urged them to join us. "I want to see some of the local characters," Hawkins had said. How better could I oblige him?

When Boulis came to do his turn, Hawkins leant forward in his seat and murmured: "Astonishing, astonishing." In his excitement he even sipped some wine and forgot to pull a wry face when he realised what he had done. "As strong as a bull. Tremendous. This really *is* something." He was not to notice, as I did, who had seen it so often before, that to-night there was something faltering and unsteady about the whole performance: nor was he to be alarmed, as I was, that when Boulis had first picked up the table, instead of that usual snorting whistle, something which was almost a groan had burst from his straining throat.

Hawkins was clapping noisily as the record hissed to its close. Boulis lumbered grinning towards us, a drop of sweat gleaming from the tip of his blunt nose; then he put out a hand as if to still the clamour, gave an odd little sigh, and buckled at the knees. I jumped up but Takis was before me. Snatching our can of wine, he flung its contents in Boulis's face. Then, kneeling down, he raised his

friend's head and shoulders in his arms and began to shake him vigorously. Hawkins approached: "Tell him to leave him alone. That's not the way to deal with him."

But when I translated, Takis retorted irritably:

"Yes, yes. This has often happened. I know what to do. Please sit down. I know what to do."

"My friend is a doctor."

"Please sit down."

The thick, short lashes fluttered momentarily and then the eyes were revealed; they were looking up at me, and their gaze of seeming terror made my scalp prick. "You see, he's all right," I heard Takis say. The enormous hands began to feel the floor, and then one gripped my ankle. Slowly Boulis raised himself. On the dead-white face the freckles looked like a rash.

"Come and sit down," Takis ordered. "Come!" He spoke as though to a disobedient child, and I hated him for it. "Come on, get up! Get up!"

"What do you think was the matter?" I asked Hawkins in English, as Boulis flopped into the chair beside me and buried his face in his arms.

"Hard to say. It may not be anything, just a faint. But the lips are oddly blue—do you see? I don't much care for that."

Boulis slowly recovered: apologised, gulped some wine, wolfed some food, and even giggled when Takis offered a characteristically obscene explanation for his collapse. But I noticed that his hand still trembled when he raised his glass to his lips, and that the sweat still kept breaking out on his forehead.

Later, I asked Hawkins if he would be willing to give Boulis a quick medical check and Hawkins agreed. But when I put the suggestion to the two Greeks, Takis was cold and even resentful. "Your friend is very kind, but it's not at all necessary," he said. He looked down, as the nail of one little finger was used to explore the other. "We know many Greek doctors," he added with an airy condescension. "One of our friends studied in Germany. Another attends the Governor-General. But a doctor is not needed."

I translated to Hawkins who said: "Well, that's all right by me. After all, children are really my line—and I *am* here on holiday." But still I persisted:

“ My friend doesn't, of course, wish to be paid. We can go back to my place and he can look Boulis over, and then if——”

“ No ! ” There was something menacing in the way in which Takis suddenly stopped picking at his nails and hissed out the negative. “ There is nothing wrong with Boulis. Boulis, you don't wish the doctor to look at you, do you ? Do you ? ”

Boulis glanced from one to the other of us, without giving an answer. But when Takis repeated : “ Do you, Boulis ? Do you ? ”, he slowly shook his head. Only, as he did so, his eyes sought mine ; and that same look of glazed, animal terror with which he had stared at me from the floor gave me a horrible pang.

“ Please, Boulis ! ” I said, and I even grasped his shoulder.

He looked away, as again Takis hissed : “ No ! It's not necessary ! Not at all necessary ! ”

From that evening I had the impression that the two Greeks avoided me ; and I, in turn, found myself beginning to avoid them. Takis's presence now only filled me with revulsion ; and even the thought of those sharp little finger-nails, of his silvered front teeth, or of the greasy side-burns framing his narrow face, gave me a momentary nausea. But I used to wonder how Boulis was faring ; and once when, in the far distance, I saw a back which I guessed to be his, both because of its broadness and because it was covered in an old Harris tweed coat which I had once given to him, I ran off in pursuit. But I failed to overtake him before he was lost in the crowd.

Then the summer came and with it the Volos Bazaar ; and it was there that I saw them for the last time. For a week the town of Volos was transformed, with music and dancing each night till dawn ; with crowds of peasants from the surrounding countryside wandering up and down the streets and along the sea-front ; with side-shows, a dilapidated round-about, and even a Fat Woman from England.

I and two French friends were seated, at two in the morning, in the garden of a tavern by the railway-track, all of us sleepy and a little drunk, under a vast moon. There had come a lull in the dancing, and also in our conversation ; but the music ground on from a loud-speaker set in the pepper-trees over our heads. Two voices at a

table near us were raised in sudden altercation, and as suddenly were silent. One of my friends yawned.

I was almost asleep when there blazed out, jangling and shrill, the Epirote song ; and even as I opened my eyes and sat up in my chair, I knew, I could not have said how, that over there, on the circle of concrete where the men had danced all evening, Boulis had started his turn. I jumped up and hurried over, brushing the dustily hanging leaves of the pepper-trees from my face and stumbling over roots and odd bricks, and sometimes even the outstretched feet of clients at other tables.

Boulis lay on the ground, with a wooden bench balanced, like a see-saw, across his enormous chest from which, no doubt because of the heat, he had stripped off the singlet so that the bare flesh was gleaming with an extraordinary luminosity in the light of the full August moon. Takis was, as usual, leaping up and down, shouting and gesticulating : " Come on now ! Let's have a volunteer ! Come on ! Come on now ! A volunteer ! A volunteer ! "

A young man got up ; then an old peasant woman who covered her face with a crooked, dirt-seamed hand behind which she tittered ; two boys in shorts ; a girl, obviously the daughter of well-to-do middle-class parents, to judge from her disdainful air ; a grubby little soldier . . .

" That's right ! That's right ! Now you sit here, sir ! And you here ! Yes, there's a place for you, madam ! Don't be frightened, madam ! You'll be perfectly safe here ! Hop up here, sonny ! And you here ! " Darting hither and thither, pushing, pulling, using his high-pitched voice as though in extempore song, flashing his brilliant eyes, tugging at his moustache, and chuckling from time to time, Takis gradually assembled his monstrous human pyramid. Underneath, all I could now discern was the unearthly gleam of that greenish-white torso and a part of a forearm.

" Now I shall sit on this lady's lap ! That's all right, dear—don't let it worry you ! You're perfectly safe with me ! All right, then I'll sit on your Daddy's ! Give me a hand someone ! Thank you, sir—thank you. "

Suddenly the luminous mass under the bench shifted ; Boulis turned his head, and he turned it to me—or so it seemed, as the moon-

light was reflected back from his fixed, staring eye-balls. We gazed at each other. Then, in a panic, I stepped quickly forward ; I think I called his name.

But simultaneously there was a groan ; the bench rocked, creaked and tilted sideways, toppling the laughing, screaming people in an inextricable heap on each other.

Takis shrilled : " That's all right, ladies and gentlemen ! No cause for alarm ! No cause for alarm ! " He struggled out of the heaving mass, and repeated : " No cause for alarm ! No cause for alarm ! " Then he gave a little scream when he saw the blood on his trousers. But still he continued : " That's all right ! That's all right ! Nothing to worry about ! " as he began to tug at Boulis's lifeless forearm, and eventually, sobbing, at his shoulders and hair.

# *Adolf Hitler's House*

BY MAURICE ROWDON

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**W**E were looking for Adolf Hitler's house. It was mid-afternoon on a bare and cold day, with the clouds touching the trees, though it was June:

At the very top of the hill we called out to a passing woman and asked her the way. We knew it must be somewhere near. Behind us there were the ruins of what must have been a pill-box—white blocks of concrete flung together. She came towards our car slowly, half bending, her eyes narrowed as if she could not see us properly. Then she said, "Ja, ja, des Führers Haus—" She used the word Führer without any hesitation. "—there, by Goering's house, just under the road." And she pointed downwards, to where the road looked over the side of the hill, across a sheer drop. Yet her directions did not seem quite convincing. It would be a strange place for a house, there on the steepest part of the hill. She was a pale woman, bent and a little timid, with thin lips and lost eyes, as if somewhere she had lost her way in the years, though she was not old.

There were many other cars about—German, American, English and French. It was like the scene of a great, but somehow casual and untidy, pilgrimage. There were no signposts, people did not seem to know exactly what to look for, and everything lay in a strange hush, perhaps only because we were at the top of a very high hill, almost a mountain. From here the vast, long valleys below began to look like ditches covered with moss and the mountains on either side like boulders that could be found in a field, of an indeterminate greatness and height, so that one could not tell whether there were two kilometres or twenty between them.

We drove down to the end of the tarmac road, where she had pointed, and stopped. We walked to the edge and looked down, but there was only a grassy slope, as we had thought, and trees beyond.

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Below us, to the left, we could see the hotel now used by American troops as a rest camp. We had passed it on the way up, and we knew that the gutted and half-ruined building at its side, looking like a long-neglected stable, with grooms' quarters overhead, had once been a hotel for Hitler's guests, for diplomats and friends when they came to visit him at the house. The American hotel was built straight on to it, a new, bright thing growing out of a ruin, with a terrace overlooking Berchtesgaden. It seemed odd to me that the two should be so close together, indeed touching. The gutted windows of Hitler's hotel were shuttered up, and the roof was still unrepaired. But perhaps a contrast had been intended.

Cars were parked in front of it, and I could see people strolling about in the courtyard taking photographs. On another hill to its right there were more people: it seemed to me they were examining something—an aerial or beacon perhaps—but it was impossible to say what from this distance.

Near us, on our own hill, were other groups of people staring below just as we were, their cars parked behind them. Now and then one group would glance at the other, as if for a sign as to why we had all come. The hill itself offered us no explanation: it was a few roads, a ruined pill-box and a gutted hotel, and for the rest trees with a slight wind going through them. If there had been signposts—'To Goering's house,' 'To Hitler's house,' 'To the Personal Bodyguards' house,' 'To the Bunker,' our reasons for coming would have seemed clearer. But all we had was our curiosity, and that curiosity was itself mysterious to us. Our coming had turned the place into a kind of shrine, but the shrine was altarless and unblest.

And I noticed that when we passed these other people on our way back to the car we did not hear them speak. Like us they were talking in hushed voices. I was an Englishman with American people, the others were French and German: it was as if Hitler was a mystery, and perhaps a guilt, common to all of us.

Just before I got back into the car I noticed behind us a dark gravelled space which did not rise gradually with the hill but in three tiers of equal size. I began to wonder what this could be. Perhaps it was the foundation of some future building. Then I said, "This might have been Hitler's house." I had heard that it was now in complete

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ruin, and it struck me that perhaps the invading troops—or S.S. troops before them—had taken away every stone, tile and brick. But there was no one to ask. And it seemed an absurd place for a house, after all, immediately on the road like that, and cut off from a direct view of the Bavarian hills. The tiers could as easily be the site of a new café: for over ten years had passed since the end of the war, though it was very difficult to realise that, because of the look of the gutted hotel and the pill-box. I had seen other places with just that look of disorder, lying under the same hush, a few days after a battle.

So we drove down to the lower road again, where the hotel was, and once more we asked the way. This time it was a man, dressed in the traditional lederhosen and green felt hat of Bavaria. He too used the word *Führer* without any hesitation, and he spoke rather casually, hardly glancing down at us as we sat in the car. He told us how to get there, crisply and slowly, as if he had heard the same question asked many times before and in the same hushed, rather forbidden tone. Perhaps he was one of the workers whom Hitler had specially transported from other parts of Germany for work on the hill. Or perhaps he had been a waiter at Hitler's hotel, even a servant in the house itself. Certainly on his face there was a kind of dedicated look; and also the casualness of his answer seemed to accuse us—not us as foreigners, for we were in a German car, but as sightseers. He seemed to say, 'Oh, yes, you all come and visit his shrine, but he died in your name. You can't have him back. . . .' There was an absolutely assured and calm pride in his voice when he said, "Der Führer. . . ."

And this time, following his directions, we found what remained of the house. We drove up the hill again to where the road turned suddenly, just short of where we had been standing before. Above us, on a little crest, we saw an inn, still half ruined—this must be the 'Personal Bodyguards' Quarters.' And in front of us lay a black pile, simply a rise in the ground with grass beginning to grow over it—nothing more. This was Hitler's house. Really there was nothing to see. We climbed up over the mass of bricks, chipped stone, piping and rotten wood, worn smooth now and very hard to the feet, until we reached the top. Not one of the walls was standing. There was only this hard, black platform of rubble. I noticed we had come up by a winding path between the weeds, trodden there by so many

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visitors year after year. Two young men dressed in wind-suits and crash-helmets were standing on the edge of the platform, in silence, a few yards apart, gazing out across the mountains. Behind us rose a green slope with fir-trees and bushes, very quiet and undisturbed, and the back windows of the house must have opened straight on to this view. I wandered about among the bricks, kicking at the rubbish in the hope of finding something interesting. But there was only earth and brick-dust. I thought I might take a piece of brick and keep it on the desk in my room, but then I forgot all about it. There was a piece of matted, burnt straw at the edge of the platform, and it struck me that this might have been part of a thatched roof. And I came across a sudden hole which may once have led to a cellar, even to the bunker itself, but when I peered down I could only see empty cigarette cartons, paper bags and orange peel.

Standing near us there were two young couples, and I noticed that one of the men was talking in a very animated way, but almost in a whisper, while the others leaned forward close to him, concentrating. Now and then they glanced cautiously about them as they listened, nodding as if to say, 'Really? So that was how it was? That was how they arranged things here?' I imagined to myself that he had been one of Hitler's personal troops and that he was telling them how he had opened his window on to just this green slope behind them on so many occasions. He spoke as if he had a special knowledge of the place and they were ignorant. He kept pointing, and the others would follow his hand slowly, a little hesitantly, as if they thought that someone might suddenly rush across and expose them for seditious thinking. It was strange, how everyone here looked as though they were aware of being watched and overheard.

There was nothing else to see, so we decided to go up to the 'Personal Bodyguards' Quarters,' on the crest. Clearly it had once been bombed: the walls and roof were intact, but everything looked ramshackle, with piles of cement and sand in the cobbled yard outside, as if repairs were only just beginning. One of the workers was standing on the roof, tall and clear against the sky, and at this moment, as we climbed up from Hitler's house, he was gazing out across the mountains into Austria, altogether lost, his tools forgotten in his hands. All the time we climbed he did not move.

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The place was now an inn, and through one of the windows I saw a cosy room, with a scrubbed wooden farmhouse floor and a stove. We walked round to the stables and here we saw the first signpost—‘THE BUNKER’—with an arrow pointing to the back of the house, where there was a kind of kiosk, like the pavilion on a cricket ground. At first it was difficult to see where the entrance to the bomb shelter could be, but then we realized that it must actually be inside this pavilion. A young man dressed in a bright check shirt and lederhosen was leaning against the counter quietly attending to some accounts, pencil in hand. He did not glance up as we came nearer.

On a stand at his side there were photographs of Hitler's house as it had been before the war, an expensive mountain chalet with the typical overlapping roof of the Bavarian country, looking very white and tidy in the sunlight. We began glancing through them. They were all the same—just the house, its windows and main door closed, on a still summer's day. Then we found others, taken from precisely the same position, which showed it in a ruined state, its windows blasted out but the walls and part of the roof intact. These confused us even more, and we wanted to ask the young man questions. None of us knew how the house had become a mere black pile of rubble, but we thought the demolition had been done by Allied troops.

First we asked him where the entrance to the Bunker was, and he raised his eyes slowly. He had a sharp face, ruddy from the mountain winds, and round, rather staring eyes. He did not speak at once but pointed behind him to a concrete opening like the top of a well, almost hidden in the shadows.

“Can we go down?”

“Certainly. The price is one mark.”

Then we asked about the photographs and, pointing to the first ones, he told us that Hitler had not built the house himself but bought it from a private owner soon after he came to power. He spoke to us casually, giving us the information in a flat tone, as if he had been asked the same question many times before and had his answer pat. We asked which of the Allied troops had done the damage and he replied, glancing down at his accounts again, “None.” No Allied troops had done it, they had only seen it in its demolished state just as we had seen it a few minutes before. The house had first been

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bombed from the air—hence the second photographs—and then, when the war was nearly over, it was rased to the ground by the last S.S. troops, so that not a sign should remain.

“But we thought Allied troops had done it!”

“No.” And he added with quiet pride, “They did it themselves.”

He spoke with unmistakeable pride, yet he was too young to have fought in the war. And it struck me that what I had sensed in the other man, when he had told us the way up here, was perhaps no devoutness for the memory of Hitler at all—the name may have become meaningless to him—but simply the pride of one who had been elected high priest by so many awed faces day after day all enquiring the same thing—‘Hitler’s house? the bodyguards? the Bunker?’ He may even have come to that road day after day in the tourist season just to enjoy a moment’s power. . . . Perhaps we had brought the mystery with us, and these inhabitants were doing no more than bowing to our need. And there was money to be made. . . .

Then, after we had paid the entrance fee, the young man gave us each a typewritten sheet on which the lay-out of the underground rooms was described: ‘1. Entrance to the administration and Bornmann-Bunker. 2. Machine-gun position. 3. Entrance to the heating and fresh-air system. 4. Dog kennels. . . .’ And at the bottom were written the words: ‘Further there are the state archives, telephone-central, kitchen, bathroom and toilets of the bodyguard unit, which can not be visited due to the lack of lighting.’ Each sheet bore a circular stamp in blue ink: ‘HOTEL TURKEN. Neben Hitler-Haus.’

We descended the concrete well, down a narrow, spiral staircase, and we could hear a man’s voice echoing in one of the corridors below as he explained something loudly in German. At the bottom the first thing we came to was a machine-gun emplacement—two square holes in the wall, and firing steps. I peered through these holes, hoping to see across the mountains, but they were closed, perhaps immovably now.

We were not yet in the shelter itself. Before us there was another staircase, steep and long, with electric bulbs fixed in the ceiling at intervals and a gutter for water to drain along, under planks. Everything was silent now, apart from the trickling of mountain water.

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The bottom looked very far below. It was like the staircase leading down to an underground railway, but without advertisements or any ornament, only bare concrete walls.

Our footsteps echoed as if we were wearing heavy military boots. The first word that came into my head as we walked down, staring at the foot of the stairs below, was *evil*. I imagined Hitler being shown the shelter for the first time and the clear, rasping tones of his staff, their heels sounding out on the concrete steps as ours were now. At the bottom there was another machine-gun emplacement. Then the living quarters began, on either side of a long corridor.

One room was much like another, its walls doorless and bare, with light-brackets and piping hanging down and at floor level little air-vents which led from the fresh-air system at the end of the corridor, clogged now with cigarette cartons and waste paper. On the right we passed the two dog kennels—low, dark tunnels cut into the wall, like lions' dens, with cage doors. In the first room we came to, that belonging to a bodyguard unit, someone had emptied a magazine of bullets into the ceiling and walls, hardly chipping them.

Hitler's room was neither bigger nor more elaborate than the others. The water-pipes and sockets were twisted and smashed, and the walls dividing the inner rooms were in ruins. Clearly the shelter had never been lived in, for there was no trace of a bath or wash-basin anywhere, only the pipes necessary for them, and tiles on the floor.

I began to wonder what truth this typewritten plan in our hands could have: perhaps it had never been decided which room should be allotted to whom and the list had been drawn up by the owners of the hotel above us in the interests of tourism. But at the foot of the list there were the words 'Eva Braun's Bath-, Dressing-, Bed- and Living-room.' This promised to be the most exciting thing of all. So we hurried down to the end of the corridor, the safest and most secluded part, where her quarters lay. We were not alone in the shelter. Yet there was hardly a sound, only the shuffling of feet as people walked from one room to another, seldom talking.

And here, in Eva Braun's room, things were a little different.

For one thing the quarters were larger and the bathroom more elaborate than the others. One could actually see the layout of the four rooms as they would have been. Of all the inner walls dividing

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the dressing-, living- and bedroom from each other, only that belonging to the bathroom was still standing ; and a large hole had been kicked or machine gunned into that. The damage was wilder here than anywhere else in the shelter. More people had come here. They had crowded into the bathroom just as we were crowding now, waiting for the others to come out. In all the other rooms we had been alone ; but here there was a concentration of people.

The piping which would have led to the bath was savagely twisted, the tiles on the wall had been ripped or kicked away, and the light sockets had been torn again and again out of their beds so that they hung now from limp, dusty wires. The walls were covered with writing in pencil. Hitherto we had only seen names scrawled here and there, those rather sad messages written by American tourists to posterity—‘ Ada and Jack S—, Westport, Conn.’ But here all the walls were covered. Above where Eva Braun’s bath would have been someone had written in German, ADOLF AND EVA, THE DEVIL-PAIR, and on another wall, under a David’s star, there were the words, again in German, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE JEWS. Under a Nazi swastika there were six names, in block capitals. Day after day for ten years people had come here and spent their fury, muffled under the earth. And no doubt when they had emerged from the concrete well back again into the quiet stable-yard they had looked ordinary and safe, spectators like ourselves.

Most of the scrawled messages were obliterated now by fresh coats of whitewash. Perhaps at the end of every day the custodian came along the corridor with a brush and a pail of whitewash, to wipe out the worst obscenities and curses, especially in Eva Braun’s bathroom.

There was nothing else to see, and the air was chilling us. We went back down the corridor, past the ‘ state archives, telephone-central, kitchen, bathroom and toilets of the bodyguard unit,’ which could not be shown because of the lack of lighting—a mere dark corridor, its floor covered with rubbish and the rooms no different from anywhere else.

We walked back up the long staircase and I lifted one of the planks covering the gutter : it ran like a hidden mountain stream underneath, the water very clear, its concrete bed worn after the passage of nearly twenty years into the colour and smoothness of a damp cave floor. It

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seemed quite unbelievable—twenty years since it had all begun, yet we were still awed and hushed and moved to anger by the memory. Twenty years had passed, yet this was still our lifetime, the key to our lifetime.

*Insert from MS.* → We came up into the pavilion again, past the young man in a bright check shirt and round to the front of the inn, where we had planned to take tea. The clouds were still very low and dark, and the air motionless. The entrance hall of the inn, with its full-length portrait of a woman in a trailing evening gown, perhaps the owner, must have looked like the hall of a great country house in the old days, when it had been furnished and carpeted. The face in the portrait had style; it was not a peasant woman's face.

We sat by a window overlooking the mountains beyond Berchtesgaden, and one of the girls came with strawberry cake and cream. There were two rooms, and in the other one, behind us, an old man was talking to a group of German sightseers. He had a healthy, flushed, lean face and he was telling them how life had been in this same inn when it had been occupied by members of the bodyguard. He told how he had been their host, how they had enjoyed many a party in these same rooms during the winter nights, and how well they had all eaten. They would come in, from a conference, say, and they would order coffee perhaps, or take a snack of ham-and-eggs. Then, strangely, a moment after he had said these words, one of the German men to whom he was talking burst out with—but in English, “Ja ? Ja ? Ham-and-eggs (*hem und ex*) ?” He cried out with that encouraging, polite wonder of the tourist being told anecdotes by a guide, as if all this, the house of the bodyguards and the Bunker, were very far from him, as far at least as the English and Americans with their ham-and-eggs, legendary and a little unreal.

And it struck me again and again on that mountain how quiet we had all become, we Europeans, how much spectators of the past and even of ourselves, as if our heads could not grasp what our hands had done.

# *Lina*

BY PETER MATTHIESSEN

**T**HIS is what happened to our Cousin Lina. When her parents died, Lina went to live in a villa beyond the walls of Florence, high on a Tuscan hillside of vineyards and olive groves near the road to Fiesole, and separated from the world by a huge iron gate at the foot of the drive.

The villa itself is worth mentioning since its atmosphere had much to do with Lina's mistake. The home of a Florentine merchant of the Renaissance, it had been kept intact even to the impossible high windows on the ground floor and the burnt sienna colour characteristic of the city. The present inhabitants, close friends of Lina's parents, had seen no reason to change it, although there was introduced a great amount of antique art which hadn't been there before. Count Erardi and his wife had the rooms arranged according to centuries, and as their taste ran to Byzantine and Primitive, the original rooms were among the most modern in the house. There was, however, a seventeenth-century room and an alcove dedicated to the eighteenth, as well as a lavatory of more-or-less nineteenth-century appearance. They had not ventured any further. Even the grounds were of a certain age, architected about a series of terraces and a spacious arrangement of man with Nature suitable for concerts and outdoor theatricals, the whole affair peopled with large gray-green Venetian statues. These were a graceful smiling lot for the most part, and after a year or so of living in the villa, Lina retreated among them more and more, and took to touching them by way of greeting.

The gardens entirely surrounded the house, drifting out along the drive until they fell away at last into the vineyards and olive groves bordering the road. The drive itself was long and straight, rolling down between two thin rows of candle cypress, at the distant angle of which stood the gatekeeper's cottage. In the first year at the

villa, Lina had gone there but twice, and each time retreated swiftly when the gatekeeper appeared and stood with his hand on the gate to the outside world. The man was so old as to be unaffected by the times he lived in, and was one of the few local traditions left intact. Most of his days he slept away, coming out only on the rare occasions when somebody passed through his gate. At these times he wore a hand-me-down black overcoat with an astrakhan collar, regardless of temperature or season, and looked very much like some obscure functionary at a funeral.

Now Lina was a timorous person, and it seemed to her that the gatekeeper eyed her with contempt, knew the secret of her poverty and loneliness perhaps, and although this was not so, her suspicion of him had much to do with what subsequently befell her. Despite her security at the villa, she felt in her heart that in some way she was fated, that it was only a matter of time before the Erardi would tire of her ineptitudes and she would be sent away. And where, to do what? Through a retentive mother she had seen herself always as a homely creature, without the most humble talent, and was content to be that lady's unpaid companion, not to say lackey. Her life had been sheltered and directionless, she knew nothing of the world and dreaded the prospect of it. But perhaps because, as a spinster, she tended to feel sorry for herself, and because her desires refused to leave her in peace, she was not so grateful for her security as oppressed by an aloneness, a separation from her family and way of life that she imagined at times to be worse than death. Not that she was a morbid creature. On the contrary, Lina had somehow managed to be gay, and it was this very need of gaiety which made her so poorly suited for survival.

For nothing need have happened to her at all. As secretary to Count Erardi and his wife, she was treated well and her tasks were simple, perhaps too simple. The Erardi shared a certain apathy about details and were, in fact, too old and too established to be bothered. Such servants as were left took the best care possible of them, and did not object to the new secretary in the slightest. Like all the transitory appointments of the villa, the wine and the limousine and the electricity, they seemed selected for their venerability, and considered Lina, at that time a woman of forty-three, a modest shy well-elevated girl.

She became, to be sure, a very modest creature, and as time wandered past and finally lost itself in the dim antiquity of the rooms, her shyness deepened into silence. In the stillness of the villa, the old people themselves had grown less talkative. The tinkle of spoons in transparent teacups trembling in transparent hands was the most resonant sound in the house, and one that Lina at last could scarcely bear. After tea, even in the dark of winter, she would run down to the garden and attempt to commune with the graceful ghostly statues. The garden was warmer than the great damp villa, and life could be breathed into its figures. But once, in the summer, she embraced the stone Apollo with her hands and suffered until autumn with her shame.

At other times, Lina would try to educate herself. There was a valuable Della Robbia enamel, but she disliked the milky lifelessness of it and fought down a feeling that it had once served to decorate somebody's bathroom. She wandered for hours from century to century, making friends with saints, and at first derived odd moments of thin comfort from the ascetic solitude of the rooms. The dim light itself, slipping down from the high windows or hanging inert about its bulb, had a medieval air about it, and more and more she caught herself peering about among the artifacts, the altarpieces, for some sign of reassurance, not against the darkness but against a growing apprehension that her own century was lost to her forever.

Twice this feeling had been too strong for her and she had run in panic down the long mile to the road, where the gatekeeper came out in his old black coat and put his hand on the iron latch and waited for her to decide. And she would return in tears between the dark religious rows of candle cypress to the villa.

There were times, too, when Lina believed she was going mad. In the stillness that deepened as time crept on, in the cold and gloom, in the death, she thought, yes, the death of this terrible place, she would pause in the middle of a meaningless errand and begin to shake, stand and shake until she fell to the floor. But there was nobody to cry out to, nothing to strike out against, only the idiot tinkle of patient spoons in patient cups, a hoary butler who bowed to an ancient woman, and both of them already dressed in black for the most senile of them all, who now was dying. Dying not swiftly

or even becomingly but in the slow manner of the house as if, infected by his own atmosphere, Count Erardi meant to take his place among the other relics along the wall. And to the very end he coughed weakly into his tea and listened peevishly as his servant bowed and whispered, "Carissimo Conte . . .," and his wife chattered on in an animated voice, as she had always done, about the antique art.

It was on an afternoon in this period that Lina suffered the last of her seizures of repression and made her way as she had before down the long drive towards the gate. It was a windy day of March, and when the gatekeeper appeared, the astrakhan collar was turned up in inelegant fashion about his neck. He looked even older than usual, much too old to maintain tradition any longer. Nevertheless, he plodded methodically to the gate and placed his hand on the heavy latch and awaited her decision, and she stood a few moments as she always did until her fear of the world without overcame her fear of the world within.

But this time, as she turned away, the old man spoke to her, as if loneliness had overtaken even him, had resigned him to familiarity with her. "There they are," he said, and his voice was so slight and airy on the wind that at first she thought that there had been no sound at all. She faced around and found him peering through the bars at two young men across the road, who were loitering on the corner and speaking to each other much more loudly than seemed necessary. Lina coughed and smiled, and when the old man turned to her, said, "*Buona sera*," and smiled again.

"*Buona sera*," the gatekeeper repeated, rather dully. He digested the phrase, smacking his lips a little before he said, "Yes, there they are," and shook his head scornfully in the direction of the men across the road.

"Who are they?" Lina said, almost gaily.

"Good-for-nothings. They know nothing but the cinema and the shameless girls of these wretched times. I've watched them." There was a look of such hatred in his eyes that before she could control herself, she had turned and run. She had not gone ten yards, however, before she realised the impossibility of returning to the villa until she knew what it was she wanted. She had to *know*, for

otherwise, in the silence of the villa, her reason would never support the suspense. And she came back slowly towards the gate. The men across the street and the gatekeeper in his black coat watched her. Then the gate opened and she passed through.

Lina had no clear idea of what she intended to do. She paused in the road afraid, then started off slowly and stiffly in the direction of the city. Across the road, the two men, still talking loudly, were walking with her. It did not occur to Lina that her appearance might have started them from their lethargy and put in motion the idea of proceeding somewhere else. She thought, instead, the old man had told them something about her, he had always despised her and now he had betrayed her. And she had to stop a moment and brace herself against the iron palings of the fence, beyond which lay the cypress trees and the vineyards and the olive groves and the gay Venetian statues and all the safety of other centuries.

Further along she came upon a grocery store, and gazed at the dull white provender behind its flyspecked windows. "I am Lina, from the villa," she said. "I haven't been out for a long, long time." The March wind chattered in the remnants of an awning, and on the pale face of the proprietor, staring at her from the door, lay the foregone conclusion of failure. She then thought to ask for a few potatoes, and while they were being weighed, while she felt in her pockets for the money she had not carried in years, the two men stopped across the road and waited for her.

Fleeing the store, she had to force her legs to move. Her stomach stirred with excitement, and her palms were so wet that she could not dry them on her jacket. The two men watched her as she started back toward the gate and were still watching when she stopped a moment later and turned toward them.

They made no move in her direction.

Lina found herself moving across the road. She knew even then that she was making a mistake, an irrevocable mistake, but she could not help herself, she had to talk to them. Approaching, she glared into one face, then the other. The two backed off uncomfortably and one of them took out a cigarette.

"Stop following me!" Lina cried, breaking down entirely. "If you want to talk to a girl, you should come up to her, like gentlemen!"

The two men stared at her. The one with the cigarette tried unsuccessfully to snigger, and the cigarette fell from his mouth. His companion said :

"I don't think you should worry about being followed. Not at your age, mother."

And both laughed as she retreated from them, her hand clutched to her throat, then turned and ran clumsily towards the gate. The old man did not come for several minutes, and while she waited, her forehead pressed against the coldness of the bars, the two men assumed their original position across the street. They were laughing very loudly now.

Half-way down the drive toward the villa, she glanced back over her shoulder and saw them gesticulating at the gatekeeper, who kept his back to them, arms folded, and watched her as she ran.

Inside, she hurried from room to twilight room, trying to recapture the mood of other ages which an hour before she had attempted to escape. She could not do it. Time had entered with her, like a gust of air through the front door.

The Countess simply shook her head and nodded in the direction of the dying man, whispering, "Really, my dear, why should they insult you, you are trying to excite us all for nothing." As she spoke, the Count resumed his coughing fit and dribbled weak tea upon his bathrobe. At the foot of the stairs, the butler pursed his lips and frowned upon her.

Passing through the drawing-room, she removed the cold Della Robbia from the wall, clutched it for a moment, then dropped it to the mosaic floor. As the butler shouted out his feeble horror and tiptoed rapidly up the stairs, she knelt and swept at the dusty fragments with her hand.

Lina went down into the garden. There was no moon and the figures were invisible. She felt her way to them one by one and touched the smooth stone of each, and when she was through, sat down at the implacable feet of Apollo and began to shiver. When she saw the lights in the drawing-room and the silhouettes in the doorway, she crouched down even lower in the winter grass and listened to the wind around the stone, and to her heart, and to her own name, Lina, Lina, from a home she had lost and from another she could never hope to know.

# *The Aucas and the Graduates*

## The Crisis in Islam

BY DESMOND STEWART



SINCE 1498 Europe has been a missionary continent: for its several religions, for its way of life, for its different political creeds. The missionaries have ranged from spiritual Xaviers to opportunist crackpots. The other continents show everywhere, the signs of western intrusion, whether in the white tie and tails worn by Liberian legislators, the use of swimming trunks where before the body was innocent, Gothic churches in India, or in the dignified turbaned Kurd who smiles knowingly to visiting Englishmen, and says, in the Arabic which he thinks the foreigner will understand, '*nahnu ham ariya*' ('we too are Aryans'). The missionaries are sometimes cultivated, sometimes grotesque. Their scenes of combat may be the Ming Court at Peking or the jungles of Ecuador.

In January 1956 five young American missionaries from the Good News Chapel of the Wauwatosa (Wisconsin) Plymouth Brethren Fundamentalist Church wheedled the Aucas of Ecuador from a megaphone in an aeroplane. Hovering, they dangled gifts in a white plastic bucket: machetes, bright beads and clothing. (The Aucas were accustomed to go naked through their forest, except for a pair of giant feathers in their noses.) Encouraged by the success of their dipping bucket, the five young men made a rendezvous with the friendly savages on the edge of a river, without the aeroplane. Their bodies have since been recovered, hideously mutilated. The Aucas are still accustomed to stride through their forest, naked except for two feathers.

A different man to a different world, as Mr. Vincent Cronin has so well described, Fr. Matteo Ricci went to China in the last years of Queen Elizabeth the First. Possibly he had no stronger faith

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than the martyred Plymouth Brothers, but he had a very different approach. Fifteen preparatory years were spent in mastering the totality of Chinese culture, just as before he had left Europe he had made himself a master of western literature and mathematics. Then, dressing as a graduate among graduates, the friend of mandarins, Ricci lived in Peking, insinuating, oh so gently, that the Confucian system found its true fulfilment, not its annihilation, in the Catholic religion. He interpreted his own faith through the writings of Master K'ung and Master Meng, a massive work of the synthetic imagination. He allowed the converted Chinese, not to keep concubines, but at least to honour the spirits of their ancestors.

Before considering the results of missionary activity, one may ask, what is the *intention* of the missionary? What dream did the young Americans dream for the Aucas? That they should wear coloured shirts, blue jeans and pork-pie hats and work at a filling station? No one would consciously lay down his life for such a venture. Peace of mind—Union with God—the Knowledge of a personal Saviour, that is more likely what was sought. None of the young Americans *knew* (except from the outside, by conjecture, like their confrères who know from the outside that Moslem women are less happy than American women) whether the Aucas were not at one with their totem gods, were not enjoying peace of mind, were not convinced of a happy hunting ground with even more superb feathers after death. Ah, but the totem is not the true God, the Americans would reply. And there one may agree, and agree too to stop discussion, since the answers are so various. But one certain consequence of converting Aucas *en masse* to Plymouth Brotherhood would be that their jungle would become part of the 'world served by Caltex,' in the familiar advertisement: filling station attendants are needed, and workers for the oil fields and the banana groves.

Fr. Ricci's dream for China was more subtle. He was not dealing with Aucas, but with people less violent, more peaceable than Europeans, with a far older continuous culture. In a remarkable passage Mr. Cronin describes how peace was maintained in the Chinese empire: it must have impressed Ricci, a child of a disordered Italy, as much as it impresses us in 1956:

'The governor rose and signalled to the gūards. His inordinate

authority, like that of every Chinese magistrate, lay not in rigorous laws or the power of beheading, but in a humble bamboo cane, with which he possessed the right to whip any one of his subjects in public audience. Yet, so terrible were the wounds it could inflict, so arbitrary the will which wielded it, that China largely owed her incomparable order and unity to a flimsy-looking piece of wood, five feet long, three inches broad and an inch thick.'

There was nothing in the inordinate authority or the flagellation to dismay this missionary, accustomed to the Jesuit ferule. Ricci did not wish to overthrow mandarin culture and introduce European customs, except where those customs sprung directly from the faith. Onto the sound stem he wished to graft the rose of his own revelation.

Between these two ambitions, of converting Aucas to a form of Christianity embodying the American way of life, and of changing mandarins in the same way as some late Roman gentlemen (though not all) had been changed to a Hebraic mythology instead of a Hellenic one (*vide* the hymns of Prudentius, Latin Sapphics with names like Samuel in them) lie the intentions of missionaries. What of the results? The Aucas are still naked; happy or unhappy, no western sociologist can yet determine. The Chinese, as Mr. Cronin regretfully concludes, are lost. To the west? More piteously, lost to China itself. The invasion of which Fr. Ricci was the cultivated ambassador has rudely succeeded. The west has won in China. Buddha is respected in London by Judge Christmas Humphreys, and Master K'ung is honoured by Ezra Pound in Washington. In Peking they are fashioning ideograms, not for God, but for Marx, Stalin and the devious phrases of dialectical materialism. Doubtless some Marxist professors are also planning to do away with ideograms altogether, and substitute something simpler, duller, and more useful for factory organisation. The graduates who were amazed as much by Ricci's clocks and prisms as by his argumentation about religion, have discussed and discussed, and come to the conclusion that their heritage is not worth fighting for.

'It now appears almost certain that the day will never dawn when the K'ung orthodoxy will regain its strong hold on the intellectual life of the Chinese nation. The former adoration of the intelligentsia is over, and gone with it is the Master's authority and

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influence. The younger generation brought up in the days of the 'down with K'ung-and-Sons Movement,' will never look at Master K'ung with the same eyes of awe and respect as did their ancestors. It is indeed epoch-making that the greatest idol humanity has ever built should now be in the process of being dethroned, if not broken.'

These words are written by Liu Wu-Chi in his short history of Confucian Philosophy.

This discussion of Aucas and mandarins, groups whose crisis is either in the future or the past, not only leads into the crisis in Islam, which is in the present, but also gives us terms in which to discuss the crisis, and parallels by which to evaluate it. The crisis in Islam is not one of religious missionary activity: Islam is as barren a mission-field to Christians, of whatever sect, as Spain to Protestants. But the crisis is one of contact with western influence: and the west is as much Adam Smith as Thomas Aquinas, as much disbelief as faith. The crisis is not the Gandhian one of whether to industrialise or return to cottage industries. English Zionists or their friends assert a Middle East divided between reactionary feudal landlords and toiling masses, the latter waiting to be fired with a zeal for tractors, etc., if only Israeli technicians can once be allowed among them. This picture is far from the truth: Rabbi Elmer Berger has written of finding technological progress in the Arab countries which may soon outstrip the factories of Israel. Arabs do not need converting to the desirability of science, and Islam has never had an Auca attitude to applied science: there is no record of an Islamic Inquisition, there were no Arab Giordano Brunos. To take one Moslem country of five million, Iraq: more than a thousand young men and women are abroad, studying western technology. Each year brings its quota of graduates returning from western universities, to say nothing of the graduates, far more numerous, from western-style universities in Cairo, Beirut, Baghdad, and so on. The crisis is not at all at the level of whether western machines should be bought or not. Even the Aucas in Islam would agree with the principle behind Chang T'ai-yen's neo-Confucian formula: 'Western knowledge for practical affairs; Chinese culture for the basic pattern of life.'

The crisis in Islam is in the faith itself, the basic philosophy of life.

The tree of Islam is vast, perhaps overgrown ; in its branches, from Morocco to Indonésia, different birds roost ; but to some extent, birds recognisably of a feather, *aves islamicae*. Turbans, minarets, Kufic calligraphy, disciplined women, men dignified with assurance, grave, polite, whole—these are the feathers. The seed of the tree is Muhammad's religious experience, and the sap, belief in his experience. Here is the crisis.

The first onto the field of crisis are the Aucas of Islam. A religion is more than its documents, it is also the way that life is lived. A bird without its feathers—is it the same bird ? Like all religions, Islam is a fusion of an idea with the different peoples who accepted it. Just as the Christian humility of an oppressed minority became modified among the arrogant horse-riding tribalisms of Europe to knight-hood for some, monkhood for others ; or as life-denying Buddhism became a spiritual athleticism in Japanese Zen ; so the original ideas and revelations of Muhammad have become modified by the peoples who championed them. Muhammad's teaching had spiritualised and subtilised the Bedouin virtues of *karam* (more than English generosity) and *sharaf*, honour. As Islam spread among Persians, Greeks, Turks, Africans, Polynesians, it wove into itself threads from other ways of life as well. In all its aspects, however, the basic pattern of Islamic life reflects a pre-industrial society (just as does most Christian imagery) : men wandering from oasis to oasis, carpet-sellers, Doughty's lazy shepherd minding the herds of others, scholars, astronomers, brigands in Kurdistan or the Hindu Kush, sailors from Basra bringing the compass from China to Europe, lute-playing poets in Andaluz, knightly combatants for the *pax islamica* in Palestine. Above all, Islam has made itself the faith of the dignified poor man. No other community in the world has made such a synthesis between dignity and poverty. Poverty is regarded as a noble burden imposed by the Almighty, not a sign that the poor man is incompetent or stupid or sinful. (Poverty in the Eric Gill sense, as something distinct from penury : Muhammad himself said, hunger is blasphemy.) And while it was the lot of man to be poor, the Moslem man had more *sharaf* and more *karam* than the Christian villein or the Jewish moneylender or the Russian moujik. Religion rightly concerns itself with the immutables of human life : death, sorrow, joy, sex,

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economics, sin, poverty. But even religion cannot predict what the immutables will be.

The Islamic Aucas are thus in one sense right, instinctively. Hassan al-Bana, assassinated founder of the Moslem Brotherhood, or Nawab Safawi, handsome leader of the Fadayan Islam recently executed in Teheran, realised that this integrity of the Islamic man depended on belonging to a community not based on money values. Usury is as much a sin as blasphemy :

‘ Oh ye who believe, fear God and give up what is left of your demands for usury, if in truth ye are believers.

‘ If ye do it not, take notice of war from God and His prophet.’

There should be nothing outlandish to the religious westerner in this passionate desire to return to the fundamentals of faith ; and a concomitant of this desire is the belief that Jesuit missionaries, Hollywood cinemas, socialist parties, female emancipators, are all symbols of disruption. Indeed, Hassan al-Bana and Nawab Safawi were only manifesting a consciousness of their own community of the same kind as Chesterton's or Peguy's. A Roman missionary told the author of this article that in Baghdad his order did not so much preach Catholicism as point out the contradictions (*sic*) in Islam, so that the enlightened Moslem would then turn to Rome. On the Malabar Coast in India where Christian missions have been most active, the communist vote has been highest. Nor is Christian Lebanon the part of the Arab world where the penetration of Marxism makes slowest corkscrew turns. The cinemas show women slapping men, adultery, violence, all things opposed to the Islamic notion of order and fitness. The emancipation of women runs flatly counter to the whole male-assertive trend of eastern life. And as for socialism, it submits man to a purely human order of economic laws, and would, if followed, annihilate not only Islamic faith (‘ We have created you in degrees’ ) but also the Islamic community, by importing the supra-religious and supra-cultural concept of the proletariat.

The realisation of the danger is sharp. To this extent the Aucas are more perceptive than the graduates who return from abroad with foreign cars and often, foreign wives.

But the Auca reaction to the danger is hardly constructive. To

control the missions, to shut the cinemas, to forbid socialist propaganda, to make women veil themselves except for face and hands, to punish drinking with the whip—this would isolate the Moslem world, not while the Moslem world wanted it, but while the non-Moslem world permitted it. (One senses that there cannot be anything of great value in the Auca jungle, or someone would have laid claims to it already.) By using money, or open aggression, the outside world would insist on entry, and the Aucas, faithful exiles from an industrial age, would have only prayers or shotguns with which to confront invaders.

Like China, whose graduates slowly turned against the pacific teachings of Master K'ung, Islam must have strength to survive as Islam. Aucadom can give moral strength only, and a moral strength appealing only to a Nawab Safawi, not the ordinary sensual man who has seen and desired those aspects of a technical civilisation which appeal in a hot climate. But the majority of Moslems are poor, and cannot contemplate buying a refrigerator. Aucadom has, therefore, wide areas in which to spread.

Most men in most countries have a personal geography, vague as that of the Ming Chinese who regarded the 'Middle Flower' as surrounded by a few barbarous vetches and weeds. Islamic men are no exception. It is easy for them to think of Russia and America as peripheral countries, coveting and competing for the now divided, once united, lands of the Caliphate. In talk with many Iraqi students, for example, one senses their impression that a British Foreign Secretary gets up at dawn and studies till midnight one theme—how to dupe the Arabs. Abu Jassim Ler, the Baghdad John Bull, would never believe that in England few can distinguish between Iraq and Iran. To such people, particularly when the economic machine seems to be running down, there is a great appeal in Aucadom. Hassan al-Bana and Nawab Safawi both died by violence. Both preached in parts of the Moslem world where penury was widespread and where foreigners seemed exploiters. Both were men in whom the repressed violence of the Islamic peoples incarnated itself: both shouters of categorical imperatives, both men of that eloquence which in a land of jaded rhetoric speaks out the best—the willingness to die and to make others die for the prophetic formula.

But their formula, so exciting compared with the cautious wisdom

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of a Nuri Said, or so sincere compared with the opulent promises of lying ministers, are not the formulas of the Prophet. They arouse the same enthusiasm as the early preaching of Muhammad—the preaching of a sacred group, conferring privilege and honour in the world to come, always arouses enthusiasm among the poor ; but their message is not the same. Islam, like Christianity, has been many things among many peoples. But its starting impetus—the seraphic coal carried to Muhammad—was not the negations of an inferiority complex. The last thing Muhammad was, was an Auca. Students in Damascus, the most rigorous of the larger Moslem cities, may dispute whether ablutions are more pleasing to God if made from glass or if made from pewter. Such disputes were not the pre-occupation of the Arab whose serious youth and meditative manhood erupted into the tremendous :

Recite in the name of thy Lord who created.

This conception of the Prophet as volcanic sincerity is Carlylean, and Carlyle's estimate of Muhammad wears better than the assessments of orientalist : because perhaps he had in him something of the prophet, while those who know all about *hamza* and the Syriac loan words in the Quran, know nothing of the passion of a man to whom God has spoken. A logical positivist could make nothing of such revelations. No one to whom God is an 'as if,' a hypothesis, can do more than gape, or scold, at a prophet : just as no one who has not lived with a people and loved them and hated them can know their feelings and their dreams. Muhammad was not afraid of contradicting himself. Indeed, so deep a nature can go beyond the realm of consistency and contradiction : apparent inconsistencies are realised as being islands in an archipelago of truth, a common bedrock under the shallow dividing seas.

Islam, the religion of submission to Allah, does not involve the range of theological disputation over the *man* Muhammad that has, in Europe, created the word Christology. Muhammad was a man, a mortal : on this Aucas must agree with graduates, as the Quran itself says :

' Muhammad is no more than a prophet : many prophets have died before him. If he died or were killed, would you retreat ?

(England's arbiter of verbal elegance rebukes those who pedantically write Muhammad with a dot under the h ; he may be right. But the retention of Mohammedan for Moslem by such writers as Mr. Cronin is as misleading a barbarism as it would be for an Arab to speak of Christians as tritheists.) But on the *prophet* Muhammad there is dispute. Indeed, the dispute on what Muhammad was as a prophet, and what his revelation was and is, takes us to the heart of the religious crisis in Islam.

Before the dispute, the indisputable, or at least, the undisputed. It is agreed that Muhammad, the posthumous son of Abdullah, the husband of the rich merchant Khadijah, the citizen of Mecca (a Venetian-type ploutopolis) produced in his own lifetime a series of prophecies which were collated after his death by the third of his successors, the Caliph Uthman. There is no serious textual problem in the Quran.

Now the dispute : what are the revelations ?

We may summarise the possible answers to this question.

(1) Muhammad's claim : that the revelations came from God, and were a statement in Arabic of the eternal religion of the Prophets : the Quran is written in the persona of God, in accord with Muhammad's belief that the revelations come from outside himself, and are not his own conscious productions.

' We have made it a Quran in Arabic, that you may understand. And it is in the Umm al-Kitab with Us.' . . . (Umm al-Kitab is almost untranslatable ; *the source of the Scriptures* is an approximation.)

(2) Orthodox Islam accepted, and accepts, the Prophet's view of the Quran. By emphasising Muhammad's illiteracy (which depends on whether one translates the word *ummi* as 'illiterate', or as 'unversed in foreign scriptures') the origin of the Quran is shown to be miraculous.

In the Islamic Middle Ages, the great schism which divided Moslem theologians was about the miraculous book : was It created in time, or was It existent before time began ? The orthodox party, to whom the victory finally went, stated that the Quran was created before the world, the eternal prototype of Scripture. Against this view, the

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Mu'atazilites, or freethinkers of Islam, had taken their stand on the absoluteness transcendence and oneness of God, arguing that to posit an eternal Quran would be to undermine the uniqueness of God. This medieval wrangle interests few modern Moslems.

(3) The Christians of Muhammad's time at first viewed the Prophet favourably, just as the Quran accepted them as 'people of the Book,' 'Nearest in friendship to the believers.' The Negus of Ethiopia protected Moslem exiles from Mecca, and Waraqah bin Nawfal, an Arab Christian, recognised Muhammad's message as the same *namūs* (Greek *nomos*) as had been sent down to Moses. With the growth of Moslem power, however, the Christians discarded this friendly attitude, and the medieval attitude to the Quran was as a demonic medley of Biblical thefts. Those Europeans (Voltaire, Gibbon, Napoleon, etc.) who elevated Muhammad from the hell where Dante put him, did so more as deists, anxious to attack the Church, than as believers in his prophetic sincerity.

(4) The modern 'Auca,' disregarding the erosion of the bases of medieval thought, would go back to a literalist interpretation of the Quran, and in politics, a strict imitation of the first four Caliphs. This 'Aucadom' is as widespread in Islam as fundamentalism in some Protestant societies; the Wahabis in Saudi Arabia, or the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, both exhibit the 'Auca' attitude to the religious crisis.

(5) The Arab nationalist (of whom Gamal Abdul Nasser is only the most spectacular example) exalts the Prophet. But in conversation, many nationalists admit that their admiration is for the Prophet's leadership of the Arab nation, or for his stupendous crystallisation of the Arabic language in the Quran. To some of them, the Quran is only a more splendid *Mein Kampf*.

(6) The Arab materialist, whether rich and capitalist, or poor and socialist, believes that Muhammad, like everyone else, was prompted by economic motives. Materialists are usually too busy making money, or conspiring to take it, to bother about religion. When they do so, they imply that Muhammad was anxious to restore the pilgrim trade to the Kaaba, and introduced a new religion for this purpose. The best quotation I can find for this point of view comes in Gerald de Gaury's *Rulers of Mecca*. The British Colonel,

having spoken of the precarious nature of Meccan prosperity, writes :

‘The town was depending for its wealth on the caravan trade, for its food supply and the safety of the pilgrims on the mercy of tribes outside its control. How soon this danger and other material, as well as spiritual, considerations directed his thoughts towards religious reform and a return to monotheism is unknown. . . .’

(7) Psychoanalysts have made havoc with other great men, attributing Byron’s ardour to his club-foot and Caesar’s genius to his epilepsy. Muhammad’s inspiration may be regarded by such as a paranormal outburst, and his assertion of an omnipotent Allah a more than usually severe desire for a father, since Muhammad was a posthumous child. This attitude to the Quran, it must thankfully be recorded, is not common among Islamic graduates. But some such notions may be expected among the stream of Arab students returning with Ph.D.s in Psychology from the United States.

This consideration of the Quran, and attitudes to it, may seem too detailed. ‘You have said,’ someone might object, ‘that a religion is more than its documents : that it is something organic, which changes among peoples and periods.’ The objection would be weighty if one were considering Christianity, and if one spent too long on the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon is only part of a much bigger whole, and, one was always told at school, was not to be taken literally. No Christian society has ever tried to model itself on the exhortations to perfection there delivered. But in contrast to Christianity, Islam is far simpler and far more practical—is indeed, meant to be practised. Its one miracle is the Quran ; its two articles of faith are the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad ; and the Quran, the link between God and Muhammad, gives, not counsels of perfection, but detailed regulations for everyday life.

It therefore makes a great deal of difference to the graduates, the leaders of the Moslem peoples, what the Quran is. Is it a primitive *Mein Kampf*, composed by an Arab burning to make his nation great ? If so, it remains admirable, but not necessarily binding, unless once more it *can be used* for a nationalist purpose. Is it a cunning compilation of magic phrases, to seduce the peasants into belief so as to maintain a social system ? In this case, sweep it away, as Mao has

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swept away Master K'ung ; unless you are part of the ruling class, in which case, hang onto it, to quell the people. Is it an interesting pathological work of literature, like Rimbaud's poems or Blake's prophecies ? In which case, analyse it for a Ph.D. over a glass of whisky, and look elsewhere, or nowhere, for guidance. Is it the guide to life of my grandfather, something to which I should pay lip-service, but whose words are not binding, beautiful though they are when well recited, and evocative though they are, for their associations with my childhood ? In which case, honour it as the English honour Shakespeare. Or is the Quran what it claims to be, the word of God ?

If the word of God, what then ? Must the graduate enrol in the Moslem Brotherhood ?

Here, it seems, we are at the heart, not only of the Moslem crisis, but of the Christian crisis, indeed of every religious crisis of the twentieth century : this either/or. Either all the Quran is the word of God, or none of it. And yet, need the dilemma stand ? If we assume a God—and it is idle to discuss the question in the way we have been doing if we do not—and assume that that God wishes to communicate his purposes to mankind, as mankind evolves, do we have to assume the 'written tablet' form of revelation ? Or could we make a different picture of the process : not an angel stooping down with eternally pre-existing words on a golden tablet (like the Angel Mormon, as late as the nineteenth century) but of a spirit—the wind of the Hebrew *ruach*—affecting the brain of the prophet ? The brain of the prophet we might compare to the cave at Cumae, where the Sibyl sat among leaves ; the wind blew and the leaves formed into new patterns. The leaves in the prophetic brain are the prophet's words, and the experiences they image, just as the leaves in the poet's brain are images caught in words. But while the force which arranges the poet's leaves and makes the poem—his inspiration—is some internal explosion, the force which arranges the prophet's leaves into new patterns comes from outside. The God does not need to introduce anything new ; what is new is the rearrangement of the old.

This explanation, brief though it here is, would solve many problems. Prophecy would no longer be something fixed and therefore

dead ; as the diamond and crystal streets of the New Jerusalem seemed dead to D. H. Lawrence ; but something vital and changing ; truth not tied down to one linguistic utterance, but living through different utterances, living and expanding. The source of scripture is not some tablet in a language created before it was evolved on the lips of men, but the spirit of God. ; God communicates through the minds of men when they are ready for him. There are great prophets and lesser prophets, just as there are Beethovens and composers of one song. God does not reject the imperfect. (A practical analogy may underline the inadequacy of language as a fixed revelation. However brilliant the modern scholar of atomic fission, he would be unable to describe the process except in the most unsatisfactory manner to peoples with an undeveloped language, a language that is, that had not grown through all the processes leading up to atomic fission, with appropriate names for every stage. Even in a highly developed language like Arabic in 1956, certain modern books translated into Arabic are only fully intelligible to those already able to understand the English original from which they are translated. The Arabic, as it were, has to be translated back into English to be understood.)

Having thus rescued the prophetic truth from the false *either/or* that leads to Aucadom or apostasy, the graduates will only have begun the struggle. What is the essential truth in the Revelation ? There will be, there already is, a trend towards an enfeebling modernism : instead of the five strenuous prayers, a few quiet times ; instead of daylight fasting in Ramadan, one can give up smoking or alcohol ; one can drink alcohol in moderation ; instead of zakat, one pays one's taxes. Modernists are as numerous as motor-cars. This way leads as quickly to spiritual death in Islam as it does in other religions. The spiritual disciplines in a faith, prayer, pilgrimage, fasting, alms, are its essentials. Its laws and customs and costumes can be changed for changing times and circumstance.

Finally, who can make these changes, these steps forward in an understanding of prophecy ? Islam has traditionally three bases of faith : the Quran, the sayings of Muhámmad, and *ijma'*, or consensus of opinion among Moslems. As in other religions, there is a deep-seated desire among the learned to freeze the process, to stop change, and some Islamic doctors assert that the religion is fixed and that *ijma'*

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has no further field on which to work ; others have asserted that *ijma'* is restricted to the consensus of opinion among learned Moslems. As Gibb has pointed out, however, the issue of smoking refutes this latter hypothesis. When tobacco smoking first started, all learned doctors of Islam denounced it by analogy as *haram*, like drinking alcohol. The masses of the people thought otherwise, and today, when doctors of medicine are beginning to denounce the practice, smoking is as common as coffee-drinking among Moslems. Whether *ijma'*, learned or popular, will move fast enough, of itself, is a more serious question. The modern world outruns even committees, let alone religious councils. More likely, some great spiritual leader will reformulate the faith and acquire by his force of leadership a following which will embody the general will : this is the only way in which Rousseau's general will ever seems to show itself, and it is much the same as *ijma'*. Only, however, if some such restatement does take place, and does gain acceptance, will the peoples of Islam have a road to tread between Aucadom and graduate disbelief. Muhammad said that Moslems were to be a 'people of the middle,' between extremes. If they can achieve this in the twentieth century they will have solved a crisis not peculiar to them, but found wherever religious man confronts his creature, the machine. For though the conflict is not truly one of faith against machines, it is a conflict encouraged by man's emergence into a world of the machine, totally different from the worlds in which his religions were first evolved.