

# THE ELIZABETHAN LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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## CHANNEL CROSSING

THE boat train from Paris to Dieppe was full that night, for there had been a storm all day, and no boats had risked the crossing. He felt tired and dejected as he waited at the tail end of the queue in the Customs house. A subdued buzz of conversation rose above the crowd. In front of him a young woman in skiing costume was explaining how much she loved a rough crossing, and a young man was recounting how old Harry had broken his leg at St. Moritz. A Frenchman in a greasy black hat and a shabby overcoat, hunting feverishly for his passport, was holding up the crowd. The subdued buzz became almost strident; at last the passport was found, and the queue filed on over the railway lines, to be sorted into their right classes. For a time, there was a clamour of women looking for luggage and a snorting of the steam cranes. Then gradually the clatter died down as berths and cabins were found, until only the distant thud of the engines and the laughter of a little group round the bar came faintly to him as he tried to sleep on a hard wooden seat in the third class saloon.

He was determined that he would not be sick. If only he could sleep, all would be well. Slowly he sank into a doze—he was going to sleep at last; then suddenly he woke with a start to find the ship out of the harbour now, tossing

and rolling in a diabolical way. For a time he practised a kind of stomach control, breathing in as the ship rose, and breathing out as she wallowed downwards. But it was no use; green faced, he walked unsteadily up the stairs leading from the hot, close saloon, to the deck. He was sick and sick again. He felt he had spent his whole life being sick and was condemned to being sick for eternity; then gradually he found he did not mind being sick so much. His consciousness became separated from his body, and he was able to view his sensations dispassionately. For the first time he realised the weird fierceness of the night. The sky was cloudless, except for a thunderstorm that flickered and thundered away on the Eastern horizon. A cutting wind tore through the air, tugging at the tarpaulin over the hatches and whistling through the cables. He was drenched by the salt spray that swept the deck every time the ship's blunt bow pushed its way through a wave.

Curiously, he did not mind. Every moment the connexion between himself, the real inner heart of him, and his body, as it leaned over the side, became weaker.

Then suddenly something seemed to snap and he was free. He found himself looking

down on the ship, and his body was only a dark miserable blob on the deck as the ship tossed to and fro beneath him. Higher he climbed and higher as the dawn began to break and the sun, a giant flame of angry red, suddenly rose in the East. Soon he was able to see over southern England and Normandy. He could see the labourers going to work and the city workers running for their business trains; but there was a mist over the earth, and men seemed like ants fretting, as they ran to and fro. Yet all their work was of no purpose, for they were dead, soulless creatures.

Disgusted with men he turned towards the heavens. He was above the clouds now; the world spun lazily below him like a great golden ball. Above him was pure limpid light, shining in its whiteness. The light grew brighter, and a great sound of singing filled the heavens. He was alone in space. He could see nothing now except the light, growing brighter every moment as he came nearer. Yet he felt supremely happy, for he was going to meet his God. At last he had left the world, with all its sordidness behind him; before him was freedom and everlasting life. But suddenly a terror seized on him, and he could not face the brightness of the light; it would be too revealing. Now the light began to fade; he was falling, falling into a black abyss, and a great voice was heard, "Thy time is not yet come."

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It had been one of the roughest crossings and the ship was three hours late at Newhaven. A dull drizzle was falling as the tired, pale-faced passengers struggled over the quay to the train. But he was happy because he had seen the light.

D. F. H.

## 'ONE MORE CHANCE'

(By Neville Brand: John Lane, 7/6.)

It appears to be an unwritten law among writers of "thrillers" that all humour must be avoided, and that the same plot, more or less, must suffice for every book. Mr. Brand has broken the first rule, but abided strictly by the second. The ingredients of every novel of this type are

one mysterious foreigner, one squint-eyed Chinaman, and one genuine damsel in distress; Mr. Brand has all of them. He even gives us a secret arsenal in Holland, the discovery of which would plunge the whole of Europe into war. But all the time Mr. Brand is not in his element; his sense of humour betrays him, and he cannot help poking fun at his characters. We should advise him to leave this fantastic and bizarre mode of literature, and to turn to something a little more ordinary. It needs little ability to write a thriller; this author would find his proper place in writing humorous fiction or essays.

But, apart from the stereotyped plot, this novel is very interesting and entertaining. Mr. Brand's description of a hotel lounge is written with a genius that can make the commonplace amusing. Even when he is wandering among the foreigners and Chinamen, Mr. Brand never loses his sense of humour, though he is a trifle bewildered at his own plot.

When the author's next book appears, let it be of situations more commonplace than the extravagant ones in "One More Chance," for now Mr. Brand is wasting his talents in a grotesque sphere.

R. D. B.

## SPARE TIME AT AN AMERICAN SCHOOL

THERE are many activities in which one can pass the time profitably in an American school. Chief of these is the editing of literary journals, which are published very frequently; at the author's school there are two principal papers—the *School Magazine* and *The Dragon*. *The Dragon* is published twice a term and offers an opportunity for boys who enjoy writing stories, poems, or essays; it also prints a few reproductions of drawings. There is not much business concerned with it; the editor-in-chief does most of the work in selecting the articles; anyone may write an article for the main part of the magazine, but the members of the editorial board write the reviews of school life and the editorials. To be elected to the board one must

write a story, poem, or essay, and an editorial for each issue.

But to amuse oneself in spare time, one need not only be a journalist. There are two debating societies—the Civics and the Junior Civics. The Civics club is for the boys in the upper three forms; it meets on alternate Tuesdays for about an hour; every one is called upon to make a speech on some occasion during the term. A speech on current events and two other speeches on interesting problems of the time comprise an ordinary meeting; once or twice a term there is a debate, followed by a general discussion. The speeches are, as a rule, spoken with the aid of notes, though the master in charge—the faculty advisor—encourages speeches made without notes.

This covers some of the spare-time activities at school. There are, however, many boys who are not engaged in any, while the more energetic belong to several "clubs." In the American school there is no promotion until the end of a school year, when the whole form moves up. So the cleverer boys will have a considerable amount of spare time, because they are forced to go at the speed of the weaker members. Again, my school is in the country, with none of the diversions of a city surrounding it; all the boys are boarders and so have little chance to do anything outside the life of the school. Finally, by the American system of school periods, there is unsupervised work for every class. This means that, out of six or seven periods a day, only three or four will be actually spent in class with a master. The other periods and the evenings are spent in doing home work. With this large number of free periods, everyone has a fair amount of liberty, and by working quickly can do extra work if it is wished. Many do not attempt extra work, however, but prefer to spend their spare time listening to gramophones, or reading books, or, most often, just "horsing around," doing nothing.

H. S. H.

## CORFE CASTLE

The relics still remain, a noble pile,  
Stretching their masons' art into the sky.  
Round them sad ravens fly,  
And from their lofty nests see many a mile.

Thou art the shattered guardian of a town  
That once with humble eyes reviewed thy  
might;  
At last a single night,  
A joy for Cromwell, brought the fortress down.

Thy stones and tiles have long borne bloody  
stains,  
Thy widowed walls resist the wind and rain;  
And now men throng again,  
Who come to see thee and thy proud remains.

H. B. B.

## THE FOX AND THE GRAPES

SOMEWHERE between Samaria and the Jordan there flows the Wady Farah, a tributary of a brook called Cherith; it makes a small green inlet in the barren hill plateaux of Syria and Palestine, those which divide the greater river from the sea. And on the northern side of the Wady Farah there straggled one of the unkempt villages typical of that country, living precariously on the few strips of fertile land which the stream irrigated. Now the summer heat nearly always dries up these little hill streams, and the vital question of rain before harvest troubles the inhabitants year after year, for a drought in the late summer means a famine in the winter; a famine or the money lenders, and bondage after a few years struggling to make good again. But this year all was rejoicing. The rains had come down with gratifying turbulence, and a torrent had done its work before it disappeared on the fourth day. It was about a fortnight later that the crops had been taken in, and now the vineyards were ripe to be picked; the birds were at them already, and it would not do to linger.

On just such a sultry afternoon, then, when the drab landscape had been scorched into a threatening ochre, and the hill ranges on the horizon looked as though they were just going to shimmer through the heat waves, a scene was taking place in a little enclosed vineyard attached to the blank south wall of a house there. It belonged to one of the land-owning peasants in the village, but at the moment the whole population was doing its best to forget the heat in a siesta, taken under the squalid but simple conditions which were much the same in every

wretched hovel. Outside there was a heavy stillness which seems to settle down anywhere, when there are no men or women to be seen, but one knows that they are there, comatose in their homes. It has a peculiar effect, as though it has crept up unawares, and glided round the corners, and over the walls, and then settles down to brood over the sleepy animals and faintly stirring leaves, that still show a vestige of life; it feels, when one enters such a sphere of influence, that a vague oppressive force is trying to stop anything energetic, because active movements usually have a purpose, and that immediately dispels its power over the mind. It may be found in any hot, still place, and in the walled vineyard this indefinable atmosphere, this soft but powerful air spirit, was well settled. The grapes were hanging limply from the stalks, and they were finding difficulty in supporting the clusters, poor as the very best grapes of that country are; the leaves on the vines and on the currant bushes in the middle of the garden were moving now and then, but trace of wind there was none. A bird came flying from the west, but as it reached the village its flight became aimless, and at last it alighted on top of the wall where it joined the house. The main root of the vine was planted at this corner, and some of the better clusters were to be found above it. The raven, for such it was, pecked listlessly at the biggest for the juice it gave; and then went on to the next one, and the next, and the next . . . The bird did not stop, nor did it hurry; in fact, anyone watching would have thought that it looked just like an automatic bird, pecking mechanically at the fruit.

But the next creature which entered the vineyard gave a different impression altogether; different, and yet the same, for there was one thing about it which might be connected with the raven, but it was so indefinable that perhaps that first impression was wrong after all—except that there had been something about its carriage, the way it wandered in by the wall door, left ajar by the children of the owner before the mid-day meal. The small red foxes, which lived in the rocky scrub beyond the watered lands, usually had a more purposive air than this one, they usually looked sinister, and much too efficient. If it came to that, why

was the fox prospecting anywhere at this time of the day? It was at least five hours too early.

As the raven went on from one grape to another, its eye was wandering round the other parts of the garden, and although not very active it was so wide open that little could have missed it. And, sure enough, when the fox came into view, it was surprised into stopping its desultory progression from grape to grape altogether. The raven looked down at the fox and a faint gleam of interest appeared—its eye glittered a little; the fox looked up at the raven and it, too, was interested. It stopped and stared, but there the bird sat, its head cocked to one side, twitching a wing feather now and then. And the fox in its turn sat back on the dry grass, waving the end of its tail, waving it graciously to and fro, as it looked abstractedly at the grapes, for it seemed to be falling into a deep reverie which was taking the grape as its central theme, weaving a philosophy of life round a purple globe of pleasure. But just as one was expecting the fox to stretch itself out on the ground and fall into a lazy sleep, the raven took upon itself to give a particularly disturbing twitch. The fox started, and gave an answering twitch, or rather it was an indescribable tremor, which ran down the whole length of the body and ended in a flick of the tail. It rose and approached the big root to climb up, perhaps because a grape was better than nothing when one was thirsty. This would not have taken much effort, but, just as the overhanging leaves were about to hide the bird, it stopped and yawned up at the grotesque silhouette there on the top of the wall.

It would be difficult to know what were the raven's thoughts when it looked down the open throat, but its reaction was immediate; it spread its wings and flew sullenly away into the east, and one might have heard a sardonic croak if one had been listening, something as desolate as the bittern, as heartless as the cuckoo in May. The raven has a queer and ghastly way with it; to see it fly away into the evening dusk, and to hear it give voice with such deliberate threat as the fox may have heard it, strikes a chord of delusion and death, all too vivid within that brutal land. Even the red fox was disturbed, for it advanced no farther, but turned away from the vine and wandered out of the garden.

And, as it wandered, the mere movement seemed to break the spell which the raven's departure had cast over the spot, and the peaceful heat reasserted itself quite quickly in the psychic gap created by the contrast of the cowered bird to the pulsing, vital fox.

When the animal reached the gate it tossed its head, rather as though it had said to itself that, after all, grapes were not very satisfactory, however thirsty one might be, and in any case they were probably sour. But the tail of the red fox was waving as graciously as it had ever done, and the lines of its body, as it walked past in the shadow of the bushes, showed that below it all there was nothing else that prompted this retreat but a listlessness, engendered of the declining sun and the peaceful colours which were vaguely swaying in the walled garden. It may be that foxes live in holes in the ground, but when a red fox walks abroad and someone is lucky enough to see it, he would forgive a land for much that can produce a creature which moves as if it were the spirit of life itself; of the life which is found in that ruthless land, and which anyone would naturally envisage as red and urgent and delightful.

When the fox had left, all sank back into an even more restful silence, and a ripple of quiet passed round, as if some soft but powerful air spirit had settled down more comfortably in its chosen place, casting its influence over all things near by. Just at first, though, there was an echo, which repeated itself at intervals, but even that died out soon; it was only an impression, and one felt, not heard it, this suffused wave of thought which rose and fell, but receded into the background even more and more. It might have been to guard against another life whose vitality would imperil the enchanted day-dream, for it seemed to be repeating, gently but with nothing of insistence, And in any case they were probably sour.

K. de K. B.

## WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Dans la pluie et la brûme, je me dresse,  
Siège sombre et préféré de mon Dieu :  
Mes nobles créateurs chantaient sans cesse  
La beauté de leur œuvre et du lieu.

M'ornant encor de leur pieuse adresse,  
(Deux rois de mes cloches me firent don)  
Je n'ai rien perdu de toute ma jeunesse  
Je suis l'âme de la vieille Albion.  
Je fus temple d'une blanche déesse  
(Oh les lys sous la blancheur des cieux!)  
Puis scène d'une plus sainte ivresse,  
Entourée des grands saints silencieux  
Des hauts sanctuaires, haute princesse  
Impériale, je tiens le gonfalon  
Orgueilleuse d'un orgueil qui me blesse.  
Je suis l'âme de la vieille Albion.  
Lassée du temps, vieille de vieillesse,  
Hanté par les morts orgueilleux.  
Je sens s'approcher la dernière faiblesse,  
L'agonie de la fin de mon dieu.  
Finis temps de joies et temps de liesse  
Partis les princes, dans un tourbillon!  
Fini le rythme sacré de la messe,  
Je suis l'âme de la vieille Albion.

ENVOI

Sire Dieu, c'est à vous que j'adresse  
Ma Plainte. Déserte comme Sion,  
Voyez Sire Dieu, toute ma détresse.  
Je suis l'âme de la vieille Albion.

X. Y. Z.

## THE DREAM

HE knew that he was dreaming, because he felt that he would not ordinarily have been driving a steam roller down the Great North Road; besides, he seemed to understand how this one was controlled; it had one of those steering-wheels he had always wanted—one that you had to twist round three or four times before the machine showed the slightest inclination to turn. While he was driving, he tried to remember all he knew about dreams; it was essential that one shouldn't see any snakes; if he did see one, he would turn the other way and pretend that he hadn't noticed it. Except for this, he thought, it was all plain sailing; or at least, it would have been, if his steam roller hadn't developed an alarming tendency to go faster and faster. He had now quite forgotten how to stop the machine, and somehow or other was quite unable to avoid running over the ranks of policemen that had sprung up like the Cadmaeans; it was a pity, but it suggested an infinite number of interesting questions. "What

happened when one ran over a policeman? Did it leave merely a picture imprinted on the road?" Suddenly he realised that he would never be able to turn the next corner, which was not surprising, since he was by this time travelling faster than he had ever been before. What on earth was the man talking about? "The accused, John Henry Bumblepast, was driving a steam roller. When apprehended, the accused admitted he had no licence for driving steam rollers; the Court considers it extremely doubtful whether a steam roller can be included in the category of invalid chairs. Accused was wearing a red tie and pink spats . . ." No, that would not be true, for he had been a staunch Tory all his life. Suppose someone had seen him—but they evidently had seen him. But it didn't matter, as the Clerk of the Court had turned into a white rabbit. He looked about him; he felt that there was something wrong with his legs, and he looked down to see what was the matter. He found that he now had four legs; no, he had five by now. "It is curious," he said, and he felt instinctively that this remark was neither profound nor original enough for such an occasion. But he was growing more and more legs; really, he would have to present himself to the nation. He tried to cut a small caper, and noticed with satisfaction that this had the effect of reducing the alarming production of legs. His legs had disappeared now, except for the two usual ones. He saw a fruit stall in the distance, and went to ask for some fruit. The fruit man stared at him, looked all round him, and at length said, "Well, really Bumblepast, I mean to say; you must not disappear in this unprecedented manner." He looked down; yes, he was disappearing from the legs upwards; he tried hastily to remember what the Cheshire cat had done in such circumstances. Even if it was only his face that could be seen, it would not be so bad, although it would be annoying for other people to see a face walking five feet above the pavement. He wondered how one shook hands with a face. But all these reflections did not help him to reappear; he supposed he would have to walk about in a vanished condition for the rest of his life. It would be difficult trying to persuade people that he was there, when they could not see him at all. It was all very disturbing.

R. D. B.

## L O S T !

Lost: a greyhound near the river; answers to name of Remus.—*Notice displayed at Putney.*

Flumen adest; nec non prope flumen devius errat,

Umber; et est dictus nomen habere Remum.

Perdu—mon chien,  
Tout près du bord  
De la Tamise;  
Son nom—c'est bien  
Aimé Médor,  
Que l'on s'avise.

Lugete O catuli citi lacones,  
Noster perditus est catellus Umber;  
Noster qui Remus est vocatus ille;  
Nunc ripam prope fluminis vagatur.

Κύων τις ὠχρὸς ποταμίας ὄχθης ἀπο  
ἀποπτος ὄχθωκ' ὄνομα δὲ ῥεμὸς κλύει.

Down beside the rolling river, where Leander  
boat-club row,  
Wanders, lost, my handsome greyhound, Remus  
is his name, you know;  
Faithfullest of handsome greyhounds, but a day  
or two ago.

A PORTRAIT IN  
MINIATURE

THERE was a certain doll-like quality about Ethelred Flummery's fair hair and blue eyes; but the air of innocence, which these gave him, was dispelled by a nose, which caused him to have the appearance of one who is eternally seeking, and seeking he always was; during his five years of school life he had tasted every experience, which an old cathedral town could offer him, and this habit he carried out into the world with him.

He was clever; amongst the intellectual clique at school years before the normal age, he yet despised all forms of mental achievement. His one interest was swimming, and to this he devoted all his energies.

Contrary to the general expectation he did not get a scholarship at Oxford, but went to Thaddæus College as a commoner. Here he did little work, ending with a third.

For a short time after coming down from Oxford he lived at home, and it was during this period that he fell in love with Ermytrude Crashaw, a woman of considerable beauty and force of character. She came into his life with a suddenness that overpowered the self-confident Ethelred, as he said in his diary, which he only kept in times of great emotional stress, "She is absolutely wonderful; yesterday when I disagreed with her on some trifle, she knocked me down."

Ermytrude saw through the superficial down of Ethelred's appearance, and refused all his offers of marriage. He was distraught and sought to lose his sorrow in a round of gaiety. He had been left a large legacy, and this he proceeded to spend. For six years his extravagance was the talk of the county; never before had such eccentric revels been heard of. As he wrote to Paul Lucas, the one friend who stood by him during the whole period: "During that time I searched the world from top to bottom in the search for pleasure, but it was all an illusion." Then one day, after a wilder orgy than usual, something happened—he became a Roman Catholic and went into a monastery. It is impossible to tell how this came about, but in his own words, "Something seemed to crash in my mind, and then I saw the light." His relatives, who had disapproved of his wild life, were even more horrified at the new development and made every effort to dissuade him; but Ethelred stood firm: "I have had a vision," he said, "and I must follow out my destiny."

He was an incongruous figure in monk's garb, and was constantly quarrelling with the other members of the monastery, who never ceased to taunt him with his fast life; he bore their attacks with outward equanimity, but

inwardly he had a tremendous struggle, one half of his mind telling him to give up his religious life and go back to his former ways, the other telling him that only through self-denial could he achieve salvation. After two years of continuous mental strife, his mind gave way, and Ethelred Flummery, once the hope of an ancient family, became a snivelling, crawling, gibbering creature in a solitary cell in a monastery. That was how he was when his friends last heard of him; since then he may have died, raving of Ermytrude, and screaming about extraordinary orgies, or he may still be living like some animal, behind the grim exterior of a Benedictine monastery. P. L. S.

## LINES WRITTEN IN ANGUISH

I languish on a bed of pain—  
Or rather sit about at ease;  
The larger of these dual knees  
Is swollen and insane.  
The movements are most singular  
Of tibia and fibula  
And other things as well.

My room is full of Xenophon,  
Homer (Il: Od:), and Sophocles;  
And gently flattens out my knees  
A mighty Latin Lexicon.  
Surrounding me front, back, and sides  
Herodotus and Euripides,  
And other things as well.

I visit doctors, surgeons, nurses;  
They give me ether, chloroform;  
My brain begins to seethe and swarm,  
I dream of yawning graves and hearses.  
I wake; they order rest and quiet;  
I start upon the appointed diet,  
And other things as well.

R. D. B. C.