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When he saw the great of the land listening to him he hoped that religion was "to be a truth again, not a paltry form." But his hopes were not fulfilled. Then he went through the heart-searching which must come to every serious preacher. In the Church, as he found it, he was busy expounding a Book which held the story of a Church, different in many ways from the Church as he knew it. Was that Apostolic Church gone for ever? Were the powers bestowed upon it no longer to be released? If apostles went out upon their journeys without staff or wallet, why should modern apostles not keep the same rule of the road? If in the Church at Corinth they spoke with tongues, might not the same miracle be repeated? Along such lines Irving moved backwards to the first Christian days. Carlyle took him to task. "It did not besem him, Edward Irving, to be hanging on the rearward of mankind, struggling still to chain them to old notions, not now well tenable, but to be foremost in the van, leading on by the light of the eternal stars across this hideous, delirious wilderness where we all were towards promised lands that lay ahead." Irving listened seriously to his friend, but did not change his course. The story of his study of prophecy, the emergence in the range of his experience of the "Speaking with Tongues"; the charge of heresy against him on the ground of his doctrinal views which led to his expulsion from the ministry of his Church, all this may be read in the story of his life. Much followed upon his spiritual development. It is incorrect to speak of him as though he were alone responsible for the coming into being of the Catholic Apostolic Church. He died before that Church took its final form; but his experiences both in his own thought and in his treatment by his Church belong to the springs of that movement. Not far from Regent Square is the stately and beautiful Church in which the Catholic Apostolic Church offers its worship, and gives its witness. No one can pass this Church without thinking of Irving.

The close of his life came swiftly. The Carlyles had come to London in 1834. They found their friend now an old man. That was the work of London! London, said Carlyle, had ruined that splendid Annandale man by "its volcanic stupidities and bottomless confusions." Irving had walked in that City "like an antique evangelist." Invincible in spirit, he had been worsted by that monster.

Carlyle and Jane his wife said farewell to Irving on an October day. He had come to Cheyne Row, ambling gently on his bay horse. He stayed fifteen or twenty minutes and went away in the still daylight. He had been chivalrous as ever in his demeanour. To Jane, who had once been his pupil he said: "You are like an Eve and make a little paradise wherever you are." Carlyle from the door watched him turn "the corner into Cook's grounds," and he never saw him again.

But more than thirty years afterwards Carlyle, now old and lonely, told again the story of the friend of his youth. They had attended the same church at Ecclefechan, though they were not known to each other till later. Irving was a young schoolmaster, and Carlyle a student in Edinburgh when they tramped the moors together and talked over the Eternities and also of temporal things. It was in this time that Irving took his friend one day to see Mrs. Welsh and her daughter Jane. In his charming book, *Bonnets and Shawls*, Mr. Guedalla has described that summer afternoon in 1821 when Irving took his melancholy friend to pay a call in Haddington. "It was a red dusty evening, the sky hanging huge and high, but dun as with dust or drought." So began the new life for Carlyle. It is an old story now, how Irving himself and

Jane came near to being plighted one to another, and many have speculated upon the difference it might have made if Jane had married Irving. But such speculations are vain. Jane and Thomas were predestined for each other, and their story rightly considered is one of the most beautiful and moving in the world.

Out of the multitudes of men and women whom he had known, these two came back together before the vision of the sage. Life had given him nothing better than their love. "He waits in the eternities," he wrote, "another, his brightest scholar, has left me, and gone thither. God be about us all. Amen."

It is a great calling to be a preacher; but it is a greater thing for a man to leave with those who knew him such a character as that of Irving. Invincible to the last, when it seemed as if his immediate hopes had been blasted, he still trusted in his God. "He trusted God to extremity" his biographer wrote; and the last words which they caught from him were these: "If I die, I die unto the Lord."

The spoken word dies, but the world is not so rich in such noble beings as Irving that he can be forgotten, and it is well for us that he had a friend.

## DECEMBER SPRING

By H. E. BATES

ALMOST every winter, sometimes in November but more often in early December, after the fall of the last leaves, there are brief spells of damp, windless weather, after rain, when whole days in the English countryside seem like soundless preludes to spring. The grass in pastures is thick and rich with an almost spring greenness and the trees stand out with delicacy against the half-dark sky: fresh skeletoned shapes of black and red and grey and softest brown, the willows and osiers varnished a deep walnut, the trunks of sycamore and chestnut stained over with a silvery green fungus which clings to them like bright damp pollen, the smooth bark of the dog-wood as warm as claret against the harsh twigs of blackthorn. The branches of the trees are as still as death; the air is soft and mild; and the distances are half-obscured with lingering mist, so that the colours of the bare copses are dissolved into one colour, the tender blue of wood-smoke or shadows on snow.

It is the wet stillness, I think, the silent immobility of things, which creates the brief sense of spring. The land seems in suspense. Nothing is happening: but it is as though something is about to happen. The suspense is filled with mystery and expectation. Great white raindrops hang shining and motionless on all the winter-blakened twigs of sloe and birch and bramble and haw, like new snow-drop buds of glass. There is no sound or wind or sunshine: no light except in the suspended rain on the still boughs in the wet, still air. The light in the air itself is very dull, the clouds woven windlessly into a single fabric of cloud from one misty horizon to another; but the light in the rain-drops, imprisoned, as though distilled, is wonderful. It seems to belong to another time: to spring itself. Yet there is no sunshine in it: only a clear, transparent winter light, as still as death, glistening and gleaming like morning ice.

This extraordinary stillness and suspense creates a strange feeling of melancholy. Much has been written of the joy of spring, but very little of its melancholy. Yet the earliest sense of spring, coming with the first light cold evenings of February, or with the weak sunlight of flowerless January afternoons, or with these periods of

mild suspense in December, seems to me filled with an indefinable sadness. It is one of the oddest and often one of the most charming characteristics of English weather that at times one season borrows complete days from another, spring from summer, winter from spring. And it may be that these sudden still milky days of winter, which seem borrowed from April, are automatically filled with the sadness of things out of their time.

Or it may have nothing to do with these things at all; but only with ourselves, with the sudden nostalgia for the sunlight. Is there anything spring-like after all in the dark, wet days, the leafless boughs, the flowerless grass, the bare distances and that empty, sunless sky? The sheplands, with the muddy sheep gnawing desultorily among the winter turnips, are dreary wastes of flattened mud scattered with black and green trails of sheep-droppings and turnip-stalks and printed with narrow rain-filled patterns of sheep-tracks. Looking at the sheep and the squares of hurdles on the desolate turnip-land, faced, that is, with something requiring no strength of imagination to see or feel, we lose completely the illusion of spring.

It is only imagination which can and does bring it back again. A sudden breath of the soft air, the crowing of a cockerel, the cry of a blackbird: some sudden, startling, tiny thing quickens the mind into re-creation.

Not that there are no material signs of spring. Above the winter placidity of rivers and ponds and lakes, the willows and osiers have assumed a burning loveliness, their buds long and sharp as though ready to break. And in the sheltered copses of hazel and sweet-chestnut odd primroses are budded or half-opened, shining scraps of moonlight on the wet, black leaf-mould. Something seems not only about to happen, but in fact to be happening. The buds are awake before they are asleep. There is a grain of reality in the illusory spring, the faintest movement and change in the apparently motionless and changeless air of the silent winter day.

And there is, also, a small separate and actual spring in December: something apart from illusion and the chance buds of primroses and the flaming buds of willow-trees. In December the evergreens reach their April. On the edges of game preserves, in the parks of the rich of another century, and in the old mixed south-country hedges, the richness of holly-berries against the even greater richness of holly leaves is a perpetual delight. And in the parks the dark groups and corridors of cedar and cypress and box and yew take on a rich and sombre glory, melancholy and entrancing as the sense of spring itself, that they never know in summer. If there is one thing I envy above all others in the mansions and parks of the rich, it is this: the glory of their yews, and their soft green and black and yellow and blue and emerald conifers, impressive and quiet trees, planted with thought and prodigality by someone in another and more lavish age. They stand out with formal grace and loveliness against the cloudy sky and the bare deciduous trees, and above all against the expanses of fox-coloured bracken drenched with rain. And in the still winter air they seem to be stiller than all other trees: dark, static columns, funereal but lovely, inseparable and unchangeable parts of the wintry land and the suspended winter silence that seems also as if it can never change or break.

It does break, however, at last. The wind rises and changes, the shining rain-drops are shaken from the boughs, the bare trees are lashed with sudden fury, the south-west wind cries in the house and the trees again with the old eternal moaning winter melancholy, and the brief December spring is gone.

## UN NOUVEAU RAMBOUILLET

[D'UN CORRESPONDANT FRANÇAIS]

S'IL faut en croire une information tout récemment publiée par un organe parisien de la presse du soir, le domaine de Rambouillet, qui constitue la résidence automnale du Président de la République Française, serait sur le point de subir une concurrence redoutable, susceptible, affirme-t-on, de porter à son prestige une atteinte mortelle. La réputation de Rambouillet est, cependant, l'une des plus célèbres dont puissent s'enorgueillir nos forêts nationales. Son emplacement est, entre tous, favorisé. A peine est-on sorti de Paris par la voie triomphale du Bois et la route ombragée de Saint-Cloud, qu'on s'engage, sous l'immense voûte d'un feuillage trainant jusqu'au sol ses longues ramures, vers la cité des Rois. Versailles s'offre aux regards, émouvante, silencieuse, toute baignée du souvenir de sa gloire lointaine. Puis, de nouveau, ce sont les bois fléchés de soleil, ces bois ancestraux dont la ceinture encercle Paris de verdure et d'oiseaux, et qui, jadis, s'enracinaient jusqu'au cœur de Lutèce, puisque notre *Louvre* actuel n'est, on le sait, que l'héritier de l'antique "*Luporum silva*," la forêt des Loups. Ces bois franchis, voici Saint-Cyr et son Ecole militaire, pépinière d'officiers, réplique française de Sandhurst, et qui entretient avec les cadets britanniques les plus cordiales relations d'amitié. Une fois encore frémit l'appel de la route, et c'est Rambouillet qui surgit à nos yeux, son château, son parc, son pavillon de chasse et ses historiques "tirés."

Petite ville provinciale, d'allure paisible et réservée, Rambouillet n'existe guère que par la vertu des chasses présidentielles qui y sont, chaque automne, organisées. L'élégance de ses battues est notoire. Les meilleurs fusils de la diplomatie internationale s'y rencontrent pour rivaliser d'exploits cynégétiques, et la valeur d'un ambassadeur—rare prodige—ne s'y mesure qu'à son tableau de lièvres ou de perdreaux. C'est dire l'originalité et le paradoxal attrait de Rambouillet.

Or, on annonce sous le manteau que l'heure est proche où les chasses présidentielles se dérouleraient dans un domaine nouveau. L'ambitieux rival du vieux rendez-vous de chasse ne serait autre que le majestueux château de Champs, l'une des plus belles demeures historiques de France, dont les jardins, les bassins, les futaies, l'étang et le parc s'étendent sur quatre cents hectares, au flanc d'un large coteau incliné en pente douce vers la Marne. Ce merveilleux domaine, où abonde la plume et le poil, et qui allie à l'utilitarisme d'un gibier pléthorique, le charme d'un style architectural très pur, vient d'être offert à l'Etat par son propriétaire, avec un raffinement de discrétion qui rehausse fort élégamment la valeur du geste.

Conçu vers la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'actuel domaine de Champs a subi bien des vicissitudes avant d'aboutir à sa présente restauration. Il fut, au cours des âges, visité par maints hôtes illustres, au nombre desquels il convient de compter, au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Monsieur, frère du Roi. Mais son hôte le plus marquant devait être la célèbre marquise de Pompadour, favorite de Louis XV, qui en devint propriétaire, en 1757, et l'animait de sa grâce légère, ainsi que de sa désinvolte frivolité.

Il est encore trop tôt pour prononcer si le Chef de l'Etat décidera d'abandonner Rambouillet au profit de Champs; mais on peut, sans témérité, prévoir le jour où les nouveaux tirés assembleront, sur les coteaux de la Marne, les costumes sans apprêts de nos Excellences, bieh prosaïques reflets des robes fleuries et tendres des marquises d'antan.

R. L. V.