

THE CRIMES OF KING MYRRHUS

By Helene Picard

King Myrrhus was weighted down with years and crimes. He was weary of his burdens. He wished to make confession and die, and thereafter to enter into the peace of the gods.

One morning he quitted his palace, a staff in his hand. He directed his steps toward a forest in whose depths lived a wise man, sanctified by silence, abstinence, poverty and meditation.

At the end of the afternoon a vagabond, who smelt of the bark of the trees and of the damp grasses, pointed out to him the way to a clearing.

There King Myrrhus found the hermit's cabin. He knocked at the door. The once potent but now humble monarch saw before him a man taller, older and more furrowed than himself.

This man also had a white beard and a brow creased with wrinkles. But he was weighted down not with sins but with virtues. This was manifest in his quiet movements, his low and even voice, his clear eyes and his gentle assurance of manner.

Some forest animals lay at his feet. A candle in a saucer sent forth a few feeble rays of light.

"Welcome, stranger!" the sage said to Myrrhus. "Here are bread, water and fruit. If you wish to sleep there is a bundle of dry moss for you. You will dream of your youth and of the brookside where you were born."

"I poisoned my father in order to succeed him."

And when he had made this terrible confession Myrrhus fell at the sage's feet and bowed his head in the dust.

"If you repent," said his host, "and your crime is forgiven, this heavy stone will turn in your hand to a frail, dry leaf. Take this stone, Myrrhus, and in your soul execrate your paricide."

Myrrhus, almost in a faint, took the stone, and suddenly he felt in his hand a dead leaf, which blew out through the cabin door.

The king smiled sadly. Still kneeling at the wise man's feet he said:

"I stole a box of jewels which my sister entrusted to me. It represented the ransom of her husband and the fortune of her son. But I repent."

The hermit dropped another stone into Myrrhus' hand. It also changed into a leaf. A hare ate it. Myrrhus wiped the sweat from his brow.

"I have tortured my dogs, my horses and my slaves. But I repent."

He stretched out his hand toward the mysterious sage and the sharp stone, smooth and glittering as a knife blade, which the latter put into it, was also transformed into a dead leaf. The sigh which Myrrhus gave rose in the air and was lost in the thin smoke of the twigs which burned in the fireplace.

"What are you cooking in that pot?" asked Myrrhus.

"Some roots which I am going to eat for supper."

"How good they smell! What do you season them with?"

A lamb bleated at the sage's naked feet and the rays from the candle shone in his tranquil face.

"Ah! hermit," said the king, "how I envy you! The presence of the gods makes itself felt about you and it seems as if they were going to take their places at your table or play the forest flute, seated on your cabin stools."

"Talk to me about yourself," said the sage. "Your heart is not yet purged. I am still listening."

Myrrhus offered his open hand to his confessor and judge. He flinched a little under the weight of the stone which the latter next gave him. But it changed to a dead leaf and he handed it back. The sage crushed it under his foot and bent over Myrrhus.

"Speak!" he said, in a low voice. The conversation lasted a long time. The night had come and a sudden storm tossed the branches of the pines and the firs outside.

"Speak!" the sage continued. And each time Myrrhus found a dead leaf in his hand, instead of the stone the man of many virtues gave him. But he still felt as burdened as he did when he entered the hermit's hut. The storm frightened him. He trembled like a tree shaken to the roots.

"You haven't told everything," the sage whispered.

"No."

"I am listening."

"I corrupted a man who sang, who loved life and who worked in his shop. I was jealous of his industry, of his freedom from care, of the winged phrases which came out of his mouth. I taught him to drink, to blaspheme, to gamble, to insult women, to scorn mercy, to renounce hope and to hate the sun. I made him rich and sad. He died cursing me."

Deadly pale, torn with anguish and despair, King Myrrhus again extended his hand.

The stone which the sage dropped into it escaped and fell to the floor with a crash that shook the cabin.

It turned to a rock at Myrrhus' feet. The tempest tossed the trees and the recluse lifted his head.

"I repent, old man. I am ready to do anything you command me to do to expiate my misdeeds. But tell me, is there no pardon? Can't I be washed clean of this crime?"

"I don't know," the sage answered. "I am not yet close enough to the gods, in spite of my eighty years of contemplation and solitude, either to condemn you or to reassure you in their name, my son."

"After all, what do the gods care for the bodies out of which you have driven the spark of life, for the beasts and the slaves whom you have tortured under the lash, for the wealth which you have seized, even for the poison which you gave your father? What do these crimes matter so long as you didn't touch the souls of your victims?"

"But how," the old man concluded, breaking into tears, "could I tell you that you will be pardoned—you who have murdered joy?"

At this moment a violent wind uprooted a tree, which fell against the hut. The animals howled and fled and the candle which the hermit kept burning day and night went out.

The hour of pardon wasn't near and the gods, by bringing terror into his house, had made the hermit understand.

"Go!" he said to Myrrhus, in a gentle voice.

"I repent," groaned the aged king, who felt that the relief he sought in death was still far off.

"Go!" the hermit repeated. And with a gesture he waved Myrrhus out into the forest, still filled with the fury of the storm.

Musical Novelty.

Singing a song without any instrumental accompaniment is a musical novelty which is becoming popular; the songs must be specially written to be really successful.

Sir James M. Barrie.

The author of "Peter Pan" and "The Little Minister"—a clearer title to fame than a knighthood—in accepting the rectorship of St. Andrew's has had a few human and appealing things to say about courage. Withdrawing the veil of reticence which has made him in personal respects a good deal of a man of mystery, he tells of his earlier experience as a writer, and reminds one of the struggle so humorously and so pathetically intimated in "Margaret Ogilvy."

He says the best fun is hard work and that to be born poor is the next best thing. Poverty with this master of letters is not a figment of the imagination. He knows the stress and the grind from his own days ere he came to fame and affluence. He was alone and friendless in London. The editors rejected what he wrote. The stories for which they now pay fancy prices were a drug on the Grub Street market. The only food there was food for thought. But it was good to be alive, good to have to struggle. "Oh, to be a free lance of journalism again!" Nothing in his present fortune is so rich and precious as the memory of the days when he was poor and his way was still to make.

Then, as an instance of high courage in a different field, he cites a letter Captain Scott of the Antarctic, wrote him, when Scott knew death soon must come. Starving, their feet frozen, powerless to move, the heroes would not give in. "It would do your heart good," wrote Scott, "to be in our tent to hear our songs and our cheery conversation."

To the students of an ancient university the famous writer who has plucked the human heart springs the world over stood for great achievement and an impressive material success. But he knows—as the heart knows its bitterness and a man is aware of the cross he carries—how he came by what he has to-day. He toiled. He suffered. He kept on. He showed the same valiant spirit as that of the explorer. His address was worth a thousand ordinary speeches of moralizing platitudes made in college men.

Taking in a Pa

Particularly bright and present time are the prospects of energetic young people. It is not only pleasure in farm work, also the safest and surest income in the years ahead.

For this reason wise parents are more and more anxious they interest the boys and girls in work. Juvenile agricultural clubs are doing much to stimulate the interest of the members in special lines of farming, and too much importance cannot be given to these organizations in measuring the influences responsible for the renewal of community interest in the business of farming.

Another means for creating in the boys and girls a real desire to remain on the farm is to make them partners in the farming business. Too often the younger generation is given a lot of hard work to do on the farm and little opportunity to share in the benefits. The partnership idea will help them to understand that their labor is of value and essential to the income of the business. The boy or girl will also come to understand his or her real interest in the property owned by the family. With such an understanding it will be difficult indeed to tempt them to the uncertainties of city life.

Foreign Greetings That Amaze and Amuse

The average Canadian who, when he meets a woman friend in the street, raises his hat, shakes hands, and says, politely, "How do you do?" would be astonished if he could see some of the strange forms such greetings take in other lands.

Thus, when a South Sea Islander meets anyone whom he wishes to honor, he pours a jar of water over his head; and the native of Central Africa on such an occasion strips the other man of his robe and ties it round his own waist.

The native of the Gold Coast favors a form of salutation little less strange; for, after bowing profoundly, he slips his outer garment from his shoulders and holds it under his arm; while in Morocco, when a man on horseback sees a friend approaching, he charges full tilt at him, reins up his horse suddenly within a few feet of him, and fires a revolver over his head.

To uncover the head is the Canadian way of showing politeness and respect; but the Chinaman, when he wishes to be polite, puts his hat on his head if it is not there already; while the gentleman of Japan shows his respect by taking off his shoes. If, whilst walking in Mandalay, you should chance to meet the King of Burma, you would be expected to stop and remove your shoes; but you would be allowed to approach the Shah of Persia only if your feet were bare.

If the natives of Chittagong should chance to see two Canadian women kiss each other on meeting, they would open their eyes in wonder; for their method of greeting is to place mouth and nose on each other's cheek and take a long and vigorous sniff. Translated into English, they would

say to each other, not "Kiss me," but "Smell me." And when a Mongolian father is in an affectionate mood, he does not kiss his children; he smells their hair.

Among Arabs the common practice is to kiss the feet or knees; but if the person saluted is of higher rank, the hem of his garment must be kissed.

Where the Briton says, "How do you do?" the Frenchman, "How do you carry yourself?" and the German, "How does it go?" or "How do you find yourself?" the Arab, after shaking his friend's hand about a dozen times, greets him with the words, "The peace be upon you," to which he receives for answer, "Upon you be the peace."

When he inquires after his friend's health, the stereotyped reply is, "Praise be to God!" "Is it well with thee?" he continues. "God bless and preserve thee!" answers his friend; and thus the dialogue continues for some minutes before the two men "get to business."

If you were to make a formal call on a Jupi of Brazil, your host would offer you a seat and would sit absolutely silent for about a minute. Then he would startle you by exclaiming in a loud voice, "Are you there?" as if he were still doubtful of your presence.

When a Basuto greets his chief he addresses him as "Wild Beast," which, however uncomplimentary it may sound, is music to the chief's ears, for it is a tribute to his courage and ferocity. And if a good Moslem meets a Jew he greets him with the words, "Death to you!" to which the Jew, not to be outdone in politeness, responds, "The same to you!"

Coronation of Roumania's Sovereigns Next Fall.

The coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie of Rumania, which will take place in the heart of the beautiful Transylvanian Alps, will be on a scale of lavishness and regal grandeur hitherto unknown in the Balkans. A magnificent cathedral of Byzantine design, costing millions of francs, has been especially erected in Sibiu for the crowning of Europe's most beautiful Queen and King Ferdinand. The Rumanian Parliament has appropriated an immense sum for the event. Most of the reigning sovereigns and heads of state throughout Europe have been invited.

King Ferdinand and Queen Marie ascended the throne just before the beginning of the World War, and the continuance of the struggle made it necessary to postpone the coronation from year to year. August 16, which has been finally chosen for the event, is the anniversary of Rumania's entry into the war.

Massive crowns of gold, surmounted by rare stones, have been made for the Rumanian rulers and the Queen has replaced all her precious jewels which were confiscated by the Bolsheviks early in the war by gems and jewelry of even greater beauty and worth. Her pearls alone are said to represent millions of francs.

The wedding of their second daughter, Maria, to King Alexander of Jugo-Slavia, will take place early in June.

The document is consistent from the Moscow standpoint. It stands obstinately on the right to confiscate property in a revolution.

A Temporary Fool

Dr. W. John Murray says the worst that a man can do is to make a temporary fool of himself, because he is predestined to be the image of Him who created him. That is, that the ultimate end of every human being is to come into the likeness of his Maker; that is his goal. No matter how long he may wander, in sin and crime, his destination is the image of his Maker, and while he is in sin, it does not yet appear what he shall be, but he shall ultimately come into His likeness.

Strange?

The doctor had called at Dan Jones' home. The occurrence was so unusual that Sid Smith, from the next farm, decided to investigate.

"Yes," answered Jones, upon being questioned, "my wife is ill. Don't know just what's ailin' her. She got up this mornin' and had breakfast for me and the hands at five, and then she did some washin' and some bakin' and the churnin' and a little cleanin', besides a-diggin' some taters and a-weedin' a patch of garden. She got dinner, and was sewin' and mendin' this afternoon when she sort o' heeled over. I can't think what can be the matter, for she's been doin' nothing but keepin' house here, easy-like, for the last fifteen years."

Gene Byrnes Says:—"Here's the Music—Write Your Own Words."

