

SENSATIONS.



ittle by little the air grew thick and oily; the sky, colour of oil, was strangely streaked with slowly lengthening shafts of smoke, rising from the whitish houses. The window panes, instead of being cool and soothing, gave a harsh shock, almost painful, suggesting a shudder. The traffic on the stony road passed with a sound distinct without blare, almost veiled. The morning was unpleasant, and a sudden forked flash was not altogether unexpected. Seen clearly, it seemed to descend slowly as if selecting a comfortable pinnacle on which to alight.—I must close the

window.—The rictus of the thunder was decidedly nasty; the shudder suggested itself again, and the window was closed.

The room danced. Each repetition of vivid light gave almost the impression of a blow; the eye, puzzled, seemed to see from the back of the head—flash! flash!—blue, lilac, rose—flash! flash! Then other sensations rushed upon me, the consciousness of an awful tearing, crackling, and rolling round; something rolling wantonly in the glory of its strength, falling in key like a phrase of Bach; and still that awful sensation of dancing light—flash! flash! destroying all sense of touch, of space; all, save that of hearing, concentrated into one awful sense of sight. A friend in the room, naturally red-faced and florid, looked a pale grey almost like cigar ashes, while blue, rose, danced about the room, seemingly for minutes. While still realising my bodily presence, I felt myself rooted to the floor, my lips cold; my brain, flashing like the lightning, was becoming frenzied with the idea that my friend was as frightened as myself. I felt enraged, but powerless. I was panic-stricken.

Thank goodness it was over; what had happened?

A second endless flash lit up the room as I closed my

eyes, conscious of each throb repeated at the back of my skull with the distinctness of a telegraph machine under nimble fingers. Then the roar of the thunder simultaneously, less awful, happily, than the dancing light.

The rain at last fallen, suddenly poured down the sloping street. I talked rapidly, my thoughts were galloping indiscriminately in the future and the past. The lightning was in the room. Or cramped in the corner of a railway carriage, the train was bearing me, three years ago, through the black night, to the certain deathbed of a friend (if it were not already too late), while the night was made awful by a thunderstorm that swept across England. My thoughts still rushed wildly; dreading the next flash, I chattered on in an altered voice. A few doors in the house slammed, feet ran up and down. The lightning flashed again as I closed my eyes. Somebody knocked at the door—Monsieur, vous est-il arrivé quelque chose? la maison a été frappée.

ET CUM SPIRITU TUO.

I enter the church for Solemn High Mass. I know I am pacing like a priest in procession and feel an irresistible desire to place my finger-tips together. An old Irishman, late of the Horse Artillery, takes the red tickets, shows us to places, performs a slovenly genuflexion and returns to his station midway in the nave. I am trying to place my hat where I shall not compel some one else, or be myself obliged, to kneel upon it; for the church will be full, Father Somebody O.J. is going to preach. The air is oppressive from the earlier celebrations; the chattering girls and craped old women dotted with tottering octogenarians who have to bend both knees if at all, smell of vile soap and hidden dirt. The devout child at my side is ruminating Latin sentences which she approximates to the sound of English words. Two overfed young Englishwomen, vilely dressed, are planted just in front; one wears crimson plush, the other has constantly clipped the straggling hairs upon the nuque till now she has a festoon of bristles from ear to ear. The screen of light woodwork is overtrailed with ivy, and fairy lamps hang in each arcade. The weeping of the fiddles, the moans of the organ, warm the church. Without warning there is a loud Oh! oh! oh! . . . on my right. I turn suddenly; the sight transfixes me; it is a Saint Jerome drawn all of wriggles, stretching his hands towards the altar, with his plaintive cries, as the procession enters the church; his body is gradually collapsing under the progress of a paralytic fit. We rise and the priests begin to murmur while a small crowd around the inert sufferer under the cramped seats are baring his chest and slapping the palms of his hands. He is carried away, one man at his knees, two at his shoulders; his arms are lifeless, his beard trails upon his chest where the shirt has been rudely torn open; only his eyes are full of strength, starting as though he had been strangled, wondering if it is purgatory or hell. Sally smiles, to show me she is not frightened.

Breakfast delayed has unstrung my nerves ; the drowsy smell of spiced cigarettes ; it all passes like a dream where white and green and gold things dance a religious redowa before a flower-decked altar. The devout child tips out the contents of a purse made of a shell with a clatter. We pace, pace, pace ; we worship the Saviour, the life-giving cross ; we press unworthy lips to the feet bleeding scarlet, not less blessed that they are preposterously out of drawing and skewered with a gold nail.

APOLOGY.

The sole aim of this magazine is to gain sympathy with its views.

Intelligent ostracism meets one at every door for any view whatsoever, from choice of subject to choice of frame. If our entrance is not through an orthodox channel, it is not, therefore, entirely our fault ; we are out of date in our belief that the artist's conscientiousness cannot be controlled by the paying public, and just as far as this notion is prevalent we hope we shall be pardoned our seeming aggressiveness.