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8. Journey to the End of the Night.

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Journey to the End of the Night.

(HERMAN BANG)

Like a running sore this unending street,
with all of us at the bottom of it, filling
it from side to side, from one sorrow to the
next, moving towards an end no one has ever
seen, the end of all the streets in all the
world.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline.

~~One~~ One day in the middle of January, 1912, some twenty members of the Danish Colony in New York received a letter calling them to a meeting at the Hotel McAlpin to discuss "a matter of the greatest importance for all of us." The document was signed by Mr. M.C. Madsen, who at that time was constructing Long Beach, L.I., and was one of the most respected Danes in America.

They all ^{gathered} ~~were~~ at the appointed hour, and Mr. Madsen declared in a ^{so solemn} little speech that he was very sorry to bring up a matter which would undoubtedly give the whole party a terrible shock: - Herman Bang was coming to America!

coming to America!
This ~~was a~~ ^{indeed} surprise. Everyone was startled, ~~and surprised~~.
Only an ignorant young fellow who ^{had been} born in America and ~~did not~~ ^{had not} ~~know~~ ^{notion of} the faintest idea what was going on in the Old Country, asked naively:
Who is Herman Bang? His name was John; he was a good looking lad.

What a ~~poor~~ ^{foolish} question! Everyone knew who Herman Bang was, although very few of the persons present had ever read a line ^{of his work.} ~~written by him~~. They were mostly Danes who ^{had} ~~never~~ lived in ^{this country} ~~America~~ for a number of years, and ^{had had little chance} ~~which was naturally~~ ^{keep up with} ~~any~~ opportunity to ~~keep up with~~ contemporary Danish literature. Yet ^{they were all acquainted with the stories that circulated concerning} ~~all of them had heard some shocking or ridiculous stories~~ that curious, and ~~on that odd,~~ notorious, personality, Herman Bang - the Danish novelist, critic and lecturer who ^{a famous target of caricature.} ~~had for years been the target for the most~~ ~~His appearance was in itself an easy mark for both journalists and~~ malicious taunts and endless caricaturing. ~~Both journalists and cartoonists, a fact of which the press had taken full advantage.~~ ~~nists found in his queer appearance an easy object to make fun of,~~ and hardly any man in Denmark had ever been so roughly dealt with in the press as Herman Bang. These caricatures had found their way to the Danes in America, whereas Bang's ^{writing} ~~literature~~ had not.

"Well, you see," explained one of the older gentlemen, ^{with some} ~~very embar-~~
~~embarrassment,~~ ~~rassed as though he had to enlighten a virgin on the mysteries of love~~ ^{to}
"Herman Bang - ~~perio~~ - well...he has a certain resemblance ~~to~~ ^{to} Oscar
Wilde..." — But the ignorant youth ~~had no idea~~
~~what this meant~~ ^{was still in the dark.}

whose ideas of the Old Country
were of the haziest,

2) / And now the ignorant young man divined what was wrong with his literary compatriot, and why the news of his imminent arrival stirred up such excitement among the Danish ladies and gentlemen.

There was a muddle of ~~some~~ questions, answers, proposals and nervous little exclamations. ~~Was there no possibility to prohibit Mr. Bang from coming? - Impossible: the ship already was on the ocean...~~ How did Mr. M.C. Madsen get the revolting news? - Why, quite simply - one of Bang's friends had ~~sent~~ ^{written} a letter, requesting Mr. Madsen to help Bang ^{on} his arrival and possibly to arrange ^(At this very moment he was already sailing.) for him a lecture in New York. ~~It was Bang's intention to cross the United States, giving perhaps a lecture or two on his way. At San Francisco or Los Angeles he would board one of the steamers of the Danish East Asiatic Co. and proceed around the world.~~ ~~It really was a tour around the world.~~

he was starting for. One of the ladies remarked: ~~He was~~ ^{"they say he's} exceedingly fond of travelling, ~~as told...~~ ^{was} Her face ~~had a sour, quite disgusted~~ ^{and thoroughly disgusted,} expression as if she had mentioned one of his horrid, ineffable vices. ~~as though it were one of his unspeakable vices that she had been referring to.~~

"We must see to it that he goes ~~right~~ back on the next steamer." "The Danish Colony will never get over it!" "We simply cannot have him here!" ~~"He will scandalise the Danish Colony!"~~ "We cannot have him here!"

- "He'll ruin our reputation in this country..." - ^{"We'll all have to} ~~"he'll bring~~ ^{pay for it..."} ~~"Some of them still remembered~~ ⁱⁿ ~~"The appearance of Oscar Wilde in this~~ ^{thirty years ago, which had been} ~~"in this country."~~ ^{visit} ~~"most embarrassing for all Englishmen, living here, as an~~

^{His remark to} ~~greeted~~ the customs officers by saying, "Nothing to declare but my genius!" ~~was an inauspicious beginning, & particularly indelicate in view of the seriousness of the~~ ~~which was a rather improper remark, indeed, considering the serious~~ occasion; he bored everybody by preaching the "Science of the Beautiful"; he was ridiculed by ~~the~~ newspapers and ~~the~~ Harvard boys, snubbed by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and ^(in a dubious fashion) patronized by Walt Whitman. "But the British can afford ^(an occasional) a little scandal, ^{once in a while,} time and again," said one of the Danish gentlemen. "Representatives of small nations ^{certainly in no} ~~here~~ should be more careful. We are ~~by no means~~ in the position to challenge public opinion..."

^{Someone else} ~~Another man~~ wondered whether Herman Bang still deserved the designation to be called a Dane. Probably he was one of those modern writers who were capable only of destructive criticism; he had even scorned the Danish patriotic movement. And he led the life of a gipsy:

His idea was to cross the United States, possibly giving a lecture or two on the way.

tion of a Dane. Didn't he lead the restless life of a gipsy? Wasn't he in fact an exile from his country, an outcast vagabonding through the world? "A voluntary exile...", said the gentleman, but another ~~Danish~~ patriot interrupted him: "Not quite voluntary, if you please! ^{very} For Mr. Bang had good reasons ^{for getting out of Copenhagen,} ~~for leaving Copenhagen without delay.~~ The police ^{were} ~~was~~ after him..." Somebody inquired: "Isn't the title of his last novel ~~the~~ Homeless, or Without A Fatherland, or something ^{like that?} ~~entirely kind?~~" A lady confirmed that Herman Bang's recent work ^{did indeed bear} ~~indeed bore~~ the ominous title ^{Denied, Without a Country} ~~the Homeless ones.~~ And she added: "It is an excellent book, too. I've read it."

The last speaker, a certain Baroness ^{A.} ~~B.~~, seemed to be the only one in this circle who had actually read a book by Herman Bang. She knew the world, had lived in Paris and St. Petersburg, and was a prominent member of the Danish Colony, although some of her compatriots considered her slightly eccentric. "It is a quite fascinating book, ~~however,~~ ^{she said} ~~repeated,~~ in a mild ^{but} ~~though~~ determined ^{voice.} ~~paper.~~ ^{"It is something of a masterpiece, and it seems to me that} ~~we are very privileged to welcome the~~ ^{to be able to welcome its author} ~~author~~ of this masterpiece in New York." This unexpected opinion had its effect on ~~this bold utterance then~~ ^{Baroness's} ~~impressed and puzzled~~ the gathering. They gradually realized two basic facts, ~~both of which~~ ^{helped to calm} ~~diminished~~ their moral indignation. The ^{startling} ~~remark~~ ^{of the Baroness} reminded them, first, ~~of~~ ^{which} of the international reputation Mr. Bang enjoyed, notwithstanding certain embarrassing rumors concerning his private life. ^{And then one simply had} ~~Besides, one had to face~~ ^{to face the fact that} ~~the situation as it was,~~ the notorious compatriot (actually was) on his way. ~~to this country. There was nothing to do about anymore.~~ The Danish Colony ~~would~~ ^{had} ~~had no alternative but to keep its chin up & accept the inevitable.~~ ~~had to accept the disturbing event with courage. He would not stay for ever,~~ ~~after all. Let's try to make the best out of it!~~

A sort of grave fatalism prevailed among the Scandinavian Americans at the McAlpin Hotel. ~~Sighing~~ Still somewhat grudgingly, they finally formed a sub-committee ^{for the reception of} ~~to arrange~~ Herman Bang's ^{reception.} ~~lecture.~~ It consisted of Mr. Emil Opffer, an old schoolmate of Bang's and at that ^{time} ~~editor~~ of the Danish newspaper, Nordlyset, in New York; Mr. E.V. Eskesen, a prominent manufacturer

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I am sure he is one of those modern writers who excel only in destructive criticism. He even dared to scorn the Danish patriotic movement....

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and himself an amateur poet, and two other gentlemen. They made an appointment for a special meeting in Mr. Opffer's office.

They decided that, after all, a lecture ^{right as well} ~~should~~ be arranged for Mr. Bang. His works were very popular in Germany, ^{and} some of them had even been translated ^{and other languages} ~~generally regarded as~~ into French ~~and~~, Russian. The gentlemen had to admit ^{that} he was one of the ~~most~~ ^{outstanding} figures of modern Danish literature. ~~But no large hall would be needed, considering the dubious personal reputation of Mr. Bang. They chose~~ considered the little concert hall in the ~~French~~ Hotel Brevort, on lower Fifth Avenue, ^{which} ~~the fit locality~~. It had a seating capacity of three hundred. They had tickets printed, advertisements inserted in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers, and in order to do their very best they ^{also} ~~furthermore~~ sent out a thousand letters to Danes in New York. They ~~still~~ were ~~very~~ skeptical, of course, as to the eventual success of their efforts. But once they had made up their minds that the lecture ^{must} ~~had to~~ take place, they ^{came to see} ~~regarded~~ the whole affair as ~~being~~ connected with the patriotic cause. Each of the four gentlemen was even ready to pay his share of the inevitable deficit. ^(eagerly) ~~The subject of all this rumpus.~~

The ladies, meanwhile, ^{lively} ~~discussed~~ ^{the subject of all this rumpus.} ~~in their turn~~ the personality of that odd human being whose arrival they expected with slightly irritated curiosity. Baroness A., la femme du monde, ^{was the principal} ~~acted as the main~~ speaker at these ~~lively~~ ^{lively} tea parties. She even had a picture of Herman Bang, which was zealously examined by all her friends. The young man in the portrait was unusually and disturbingly attractive. The first thing that struck one was the prominent and finely formed back of ~~his~~ head, on which the smooth, glossy black hair gleamed; then one observed the mournful glance of the deepset eyes under their long lashes; then the infinite sensitiveness and nobility of the outline of the face, which the young man - melancholy but eager to please - turned to the ^{spectator} ~~audience~~ in half-profile.

"He looks like an Oriental prince," observed one of the ladies, half ^{disapproving, half intrigued} ~~with admiration half with~~ disapproval. The Baroness smiled: "Yet he is descended from one of our oldest ^{and} most distinguished families. Didn't

Naturally however, in view of the man's dubious personal reputation, a large hall would not be necessary.

5) ^{His Excellency Bang,} you know his fine old grandfather, the ~~most~~ physician? He was ~~one of~~

^{a real figure in our country} ~~the truly great figures of our country.~~ I ~~still~~ ^{there} remember his funeral ~~as~~ well. Several members of the royal family were ~~present~~, and representatives from all the hospitals and universities. When I saw Herman, some years ago, in St. Petersburg, he used to tell me ~~so many touching~~ stories about ~~that grand~~ old gentleman. He adored him, you know... and he was ~~really~~ ^{terribly} lonely, ~~and~~ ^{really} helpless ~~indeed~~ ^{after} ~~when~~ the old man ^{'s death} had passed away. There was no money left, just a few thousand crowns. Herman wanted to become an actor; ^{he's always had} ~~an unfortunate leaning~~ ^{this unhappy love} for the theatre. But he has no talent at all - as an actor, I mean..." She laughed softly, ^{remembering poor Herman Bang's total lack of} ~~while she remembered how very untalented~~ ^{of talent for the stage.} Herman Bang as an actor was. "I once saw him in Bergen," she ~~continued~~ ^{went on.}

"He played Oswald, in Ibsen's Ghosts. It was horrible, ~~absolutely horrible~~ People ~~threw rotten apples~~ bombarded him with rotten apples, but he was ^{(in such a state of} ~~so hysterical~~ ^{trance} that he hardly noticed the ~~staggering~~ ^{uproar.} scandal he was stirring up." She laughed again, while the other lady, a large-bosomed, very dignified matron, remarked with a sour smile: "That's what I ~~expected~~ ^{thought.} to hear. He makes a fool ~~out~~ of himself." A younger woman, ~~standing~~ ^{gazing at} ~~the picture~~ ^{the picture}, whispered: "But... I had no idea... ~~that~~ ^{was} he ~~is~~ so terribly handsome..."

"I'm afraid you've a disappointment ~~in store~~," said the Baroness. ^{"He's changed -"} "I must disappoint you, my dear," ~~he must be at least fifty years old by now. Poor thing,~~ ^{He's an impossible creature,} looks like that - ~~but I must admit that. Le pauvre~~, his face has become quite yellow and wrinkled. But ~~in spite of that he is irresistible.~~ ^{he is still} My goodness, how often I have been amused by him! You know, ~~he is in an impossible~~ ^{you know, always decked out in bracelets and other jewelry.} creature, always hung about with bracelets and other kinds of jewellery. It makes ~~there is~~ a soft, jingling noise when he walks through the room, and when ~~he appears in~~ evening dress, he wears a brocade waistcoat and long white

gloves, ^{under} ~~underneath~~ his coatsleeves: long ladies' ~~glove~~ gloves, you understand - ^{he is really terrific!} ~~he is really terrific!~~ Once I had dinner with him at the Imperial Castle, in St. Petersburg. ^{Did I tell you} ~~Did I already tell you~~ that the mother of the Czar ~~used~~ ^{used} to be very fond of Bang? She ~~adored~~ ^{loved to talk to him ...} chatting with him... Well, there we were, in the Imperial dining hall, ^{with} ~~and~~ all those imposing butlers

6) watching every movement we made. Now, imagine - ~~just~~ ^{just} imagine dear Herman stripping off his long white glacé: it was absolutely sen-sa-tional, ~~there~~ ^{there} All the generals and high officials ~~present~~ ^{there} were literally petrified with ~~unimaginable~~ horror. But the old Empress - smiled...sweet old darling ^{that} she is!"

The Danish ladies smiled too, although they were ^{quite} able to understand the profound horror of ~~high officials~~ ^{the dignitaries at the sight} of long ladies' gloves worn by on a Scandinavian novelist. Yet they could not help being impressed by the fact that the Baroness and the poet had ~~married~~ ^{dined} together at the Imperial Castle in St. Petersburg. "Very amusing, indeed," they agreed reluctantly. But the Baroness seemed ~~to overlook it~~ ^{not to hear}, being absorbed, once more, in ~~her~~ ^{of Herman Bang} ~~her~~ ^{still has those wonderful} fascinating portrait. "He has retained his splendid eyes," she said, as though ~~never~~ ^{go} talking to herself. "When he looks at you they pierce you through and through with a look that seems to discover everything, absolutely everything...Yes, ^{I have a great fondness for him. And then of course} I love him, ~~he stirs my heart~~, and at the same time ^{is very amusing too} ~~is very amusing~~, and you couldn't imagine a more reliable friend..."

The large-bosomed matron shrugged. ^{"I hear"} He is very effeminate and rather malicious, ~~from told~~ ^{one of those people who always seem to be} laughing at you! Probably ~~he is one of those who give us the feeling~~ ^{that they are constantly laughing at us.} She assumed her most dignified expression, while the Baroness giggled: "But who would dare to poke fun at you, my beloved. No, no: Bang is a good fellow." Whereupon she ^{launched on} ~~ventured~~ on telling a few more anecdotes, ^{"There has been gossip to the effect that} ~~about him.~~ ^{malicious friends maintain} that he is ^{the} illegitimate son of a grand duchess and a ~~road~~ ^{gigolo from the Balkans} waiter. ~~For~~ ^{Because he does have that curious combination} his personality seems a strange blend, indeed, of aristocratic ~~elements~~ ^{elements} and a somehow forced, hectic vulgarity. ~~He is definitely unfit for a~~ settled, bourgeois life. But he feels at home in the company of princes and vagabonds. ^{Burlesque shows, circuses - that's the kind of surroundings he} The circus, the cheap Variety Music Hall - those are the ^{loves.} ~~milieu he adores.~~ ^{He is always at his best when he's writing about outcasts.} In his books he always is at his best when he describes ^{the} ~~the~~ outsiders of society." She ^{paused a moment} ~~made a little pause~~, then added: "I don't understand very much about literature; but I really think he is a great

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had not, but expressed a
 writer. Have you read anything of his?" The ladies ~~said, "No, but now you~~
~~growing curiosity,~~
~~have made us curious,~~ about his things. Baroness A. offered: "I'll look find
~~out~~ some of his books for you. You are bound to weep over them. He is only
 too well informed on the ~~most tragic things...~~ ^{tragic side.} And curiously enough his
~~style is simple, candid, concise - quite in contrast with all that eccentric~~
~~those eccentric caprices that are characteristic for his personal ways."~~ ^{the opposite of his personal}
^{character."}

She went to the book-case and took out several volumes, carressing them
 as if they were living creatures. "Michael...", she smiled at one of the
 volumes as though ~~she was~~ ^{was meeting} addressing an old friend whom she ~~met~~ again after
 a too-long period of separation. "This is a marvellous story - t, you know -
 the story of Michael, the ~~beautiful young man~~ ^{the great painter} and Claude Zoret, the ageing Master,
 who loves him. The Master ~~is based to a certain extent on~~ ^{is based to a certain extent on} Rodin... It is a very sad
 story, too. I ~~must~~ ^{read the scene of the Master's death.} always cry when I re-read the poignant description of the
~~Master Master's solemn agony, and he is quite alone, though he keeps on sending~~
^{He is utterly alone,} messengers to Michael's house - the very house the Master had given him -,
 but Michael does not come. ^{Because} ~~for~~ he is madly in love, you must know - absolute-
^{drowned in} ly overwhelmed by his love for a magnificent woman, and he happens to be
 in bed with her ^{while} ~~while~~ the Master ^{is dying. He dies alone, asking over and over,} ~~where~~ ^{where is}
^{in another world, because} ~~Michael,~~ "but Michael is very far away, ~~on another planet, for~~ he is in love,
 and ~~so~~ young, and cruel - and the Master dies... It is heart-breaking," said
 the Baroness, ^{and} ~~then she~~ ^{abruptly:} added, somewhat ~~restless~~: "And, of course, a little bit
 maudlin..."

She turned over the leaves of some other volumes ^{that} she had ^{brought} ~~carried~~ from
 the book-case to the tea-table. The Danish ladies ^{while} ~~curiously~~ glanced at the
 books the ^{the hostess} ~~titles of which~~ ^(their titles) ~~recited~~ ^{cherished} as if they were the refrain
 of ^{an old} ~~a~~ song. ~~The White House~~ - that is the moving homage he paid to
 his lovely mother... And, here ~~the~~ ^{The Grey House} contains a wonderful portrait
 of his grandfather... He is incomparable when he describes very old people,
 or women who are hopelessly in love, all those meek and tragic creatures:
 they never complain, suffer silently, or they talk over extraneous things.

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"A Hopeless Generation - his first novel, he was only twenty-one then; ^{She smiled} ~~my wife said~~ is an immature piece of work, of course..." ~~She had~~ with a certain indulgence.

a mild, quasi-forgiving smile, then ~~continued~~ "But By the Wayside is a masterpiece - a very short novel, but ~~how condensed, how concentrated, how full of life!~~ ^{Gracious!} And here is Tine - ~~my heart~~ I almost had forgotten Tine though ^{it's one of the most moving of all. It's about} ~~it certainly is one of his most moving books!~~

~~It describes~~ the Prussian invasion ^{of} Slesvig, ~~you know~~ - and very impressively, too! ^(you know) For he was born ⁱⁿ the island of Als, North Slesvig, and his family left that part of Denmark just before the Prussian

~~troops~~ arrived. ^(the position of the Slesvig Danes under German domination) These early impressions - the evacuation of Als, the flight, - have probably influenced ~~the~~ the further development of his character. ~~The war of 1864 and the position of the Slesvig Danes under German domination are some of the motives that constantly recur in his books...~~

She uttered a silvery little cry as though ~~she~~ ^{she} recognising another beloved and familiar face in the ~~known~~ gallery of her souvenirs.

"The White House - oh, what a lovely story! It's ^{very bright and gay,} so bright, so gay, ~~and yet it has this undescribable flavor of a very noble and quite incurable sadness.~~

^{It was his homage to his mother, who ~~was~~ ^{was} very lovely.} ~~The White House is the immortal homage he paid to his charming mother...~~ And, here, ⁱⁿ The Grey House, ^{there's a wonderful} ~~contains a~~ and

sinister portrait of his grandfather, the old Excellency... He is ^{superb} ~~in~~ comparable when he describes ~~young~~ old people, doomed people, men and

women who have to die very soon, or women who are hopelessly in love - they ~~never complain~~ ^{never complaining} suffer silently, or they talk about quite extraneous matters... ^{He has a genius for taking you into a room full of people and giving you scraps of conversation on this and that, all seemingly irrelevant, but underneath you feel the} ~~He is wonderful, you know, when he takes into a room full of people and makes us catch little bits of the conversation that, all seemingly irrelevant, but underneath you feel the~~ on this time and that. Seemingly the chat of all those people doesn't

make very much sense; ^{tag of tragedy, the drama that they} are trying to cover up... Yes, he is really a master at conveying the essence of the thing, between the lines. All his characters give the impression of being weighed down by some ghastly mystery.

Probably those early impressions had a good deal to do with his later character - the evacuation of Als, the flight, the position of the Slesvig Danes under German rule...

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but we can always feel their secret tragedy, the drama which they try to conceal... Yes, he is a master of giving the great drama between the lines... All the characters in his books seem to be so hopelessly sad; they are somehow doomed, burdened with some horrid mystery... The acrobats in The Four Devils - oh, you must read The Four Devils, it's certainly one of the best stories he ^{ever} wrote...; and that poor little waiter who loves ^{fine} ~~various~~ things and perfumes and beautiful faces, but ^{knows} ~~realizes~~ that he will never ^{possess} ~~have~~ them, so he commits suicide... Or that story of the young nurse, Ida Brandt, who works in ^a ~~the~~ lunatic asylum, and is in love with a handsome fellow who ~~is~~ ^{is just out for what he can get.} ~~plots her~~... She pays ^{for} all his dinners, and she ~~was~~ ^{a man's purse in} carried in her bag a ^{her bag and slips it to him} large purse - a purse as a man would ^{use it} ~~have~~ one, ~~max-see~~, and she slips him the purse ^{so} under the table-cloth ^{won't know that it's not} as the waiter ~~must not notice that it isn't~~ his own money. ^{... His books are full of little touches like that,} ~~He is pays with.. There are so many touching little features~~ of this kind in all of his books," the Baroness said. ^{"But sometimes, among} ~~all these poignant little details, you will come across a sentence or a paragraph~~ ^{finds a poignant sentence, a really great sentence, among all these tender,} ~~That is really breathtaking.~~ ^{and melancholy details.} Here, in The Grey House, for instance... Yes, I'm ^{quite sure it is in this book...} ~~pretty sure, the striking paragraph I am looking for, must be in this book...~~ ~~There were...~~

And she read aloud, ^{her voice strangely hoarse} with a ~~strangely raucous~~ voice as though she ~~had suddenly~~ had a sudden lump in her throat:

It is said that he who looks on Jehova, dies. But I say: if a single
creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his
soul, he would die. And if it were conceivable that a man should see himself
to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his
head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

There was a long silence.

Finally one of the women said: "I wonder if he will have a good time in this country. After all, we are a tough people, here in America - and he seems to be... how shall I say... somehow morbid..."

*

9)
When Hermann Bang arrived, one morning late in January, he was received by a large committee. It was the Baroness A. who recognised him - a frail,

trembling little figure among the ^{other} more robust ~~other~~ travellers. But she could hardly conceal the shock she felt at the change that had come over him; he could hardly conceal her terror about his changed appearance, her eyes ^{green} round with fright ^{as} she ^{shook hands with} him and said: "Hello, Herman... dear Hermann..." ^{His smile was potted and distraught.} ~~He had a pale, distracted smile.~~ "Hello, hello..." ^{he} babbled, "Nice to see you... so many people... charming... enchanté..." He ^{glanced} ~~looked~~ around with an almost panic-stricken look, as if the dock were ^{poppled with} ~~poppled with~~ with a scared, almost panic glance, ~~as if he saw here~~ ^{ghosts.} ~~ghosts.~~ It was obvious that he ~~did~~ recognised none of them.

Mr. Opffer, Bang's old schoolmate, finally exclaimed with ~~his~~ forced joviality: "Hello, old boy! You look fine... ^{Herman T} ~~didn't~~ ^{change} at all..."

Herman Bang slowly turned ^{his face} towards him ^{the} ~~his~~ yellow, ~~his~~ wrinkled, wretched face. For a few seconds it seemed numb, ~~hostile~~ ^{like} the face of a dead ^{man} the horrifying face of a royal mummy. Then he smiled again, and now his smile was indulgent, ~~friendly~~ and understanding, though slightly contemptive ^{and} still and infinitely tired. "Oh, isn't this Emil?" he said. "Old Emil Opffer. ^{Good} ~~of you to come!~~ ^{Of course we don't} ~~of course we don't~~ ^{change...} ~~change...~~"

They took him to the Hotel Astor. The ladies of the reception committee were ^{both delighted and appalled.} ~~half-delighted, half-fearful~~ with his personality. All of them ^{they had} ~~agreed:~~ "Here, the most nervous creature ^{they had} ~~live~~ ever seen." They observed that he trembled constantly as though mercilessly shaken by a gigantic fist. ^{His walk} ~~he was constantly trembling as though a gigantic fist kept on shaking him mercilessly.~~ ^{His walk} ~~His way of walking~~ (also) was surprising, - a ^{quick} ~~quick~~ and at the same time ^{deliberate} ~~deliberate~~ sort of trip; sometimes one might have thought him tiptoeing over glowing stones. Everyone was inclined to treat him as a very old man or a sick ^{by} ~~little~~ little boy. He was so utterly weak and helpless.

The members of the committee were surprised ^{to find} ~~that they found~~ his apartment at the ~~Astor~~ ^{hang} full of flowers and visiting-cards. The telephone ^{rang} ~~was~~ constantly ^{ringing}; visitors were announced by the score. He wanted to see all of them. Not only Danes appeared, but also Swedes, Norwegians, Fins, Germans, and even some Americans. The bell-boys delivered

16) one box of flowers after another. And in the middle of this ^{looming through} ~~yearning crowd~~ ⁱⁿ ~~that it belonged~~ his drawingroom, sat Herman Bang, in a fantastic dressing-gown of brocade, bewildered, scared and pleased, faintly smiling.

"You have so many friends," whispered the Baroness A. "Isn't it wonderful?" He ~~was~~ squeezed her hand.

The next day Bang wanted to see the sights of New York City. The consensus of opinion among the members of the ~~the~~ Committee, however, was that it would be sheer murder to let him out on the streets alone. The traffic of the metropolis would certainly frighten him out of his wits. Mr. Eskensen, manufacturer and amateur poet, sent a young man from his office to escort Bang wherever he went. ~~It was a tough, robust fellow, who had been chosen as a guide and guardian angel.~~ ^{that and handsome (named Johnny)} On street ~~corner~~ crossings he almost carried the slim little figure of Herman Bang, and on trains he literally ~~took~~ ^{picked him up} as one would ~~take~~ a child, and put him down on a seat. "Thank you," smiled the poet. "Thank you very much." And the ~~boy~~ ^{boy} ~~guardian angel~~:

"You're perfectly welcome, sir, I'm sure."

~~"What is your name?" asked the poet.~~

~~"John," said the guardian angel.~~ ^{boy}

~~Johnny had been~~ ^{born} in this country. "But my folks came from Denmark," he declared proudly.

The poet seemed ~~very~~ very interested in every detail of John's life, past, present, or future. How much money did he earn in Mr. Eskensen's office? Was he living with his family? How many brothers and sisters did he have? What was his fiancée's name? Was she blonde or dark? Was he very much in love with her? ~~The guardian angel~~ ^{The guardian angel Johnny} laughed, slightly ~~flushed~~ ^{flushed}. "I guess so. ~~She's all right.~~ ^{She's a good sort.}"

But the poet went on asking questions. "Is your fiancée very pretty? Does she love you very much?" ~~The guardian angel~~ ^{Johnny} ~~thought that she was~~ ^{was supposed} crazy about him. "You know how ~~those~~ girls are," he added mysteriously. The poet said: "You are very strong." And the guardian-angel seemed flat-

The guide and guardian angel turned out to be that muscular old good-looking young man named Johnny.

Jonny considered it his duty to show this foreigner so much as possible of New York. Besides he was ^{as} proud of the city as if he had built it himself. They went up-town and down-town, and Herman Bang had to visit China Town and Harlem and Brooklyn and Central Park. "It's bigger than Copenhagen, isn't it?" Jonny asked ~~it~~ for the seventh time, and laughed heartily ~~at~~ ^{at} his own little joke. But Bang ~~was~~ ^{was brooding.} ~~remained serious.~~ "It's tremendous," he said. "It's huge. Like a monster with innumerable ~~members~~ ^{limbs} - greedy and

cruel and ~~gross~~ ^{enormous} - and constantly growing...growing, growing, growing... ~~reaching out farther & farther -~~ ^{enlarging on more and more room...} killing and creating human beings..."

- Jonny was somewhat ~~surprised~~ ^{put off}, even embarrassed by this confused, poetical talk. "This is the Times Building," he explained. "Pretty tall, isn't it?"

- And Herman Bang, again with his anxious, distorted smile: "It's tremendous...tremendous..." - Jonny grew ~~more~~ ^{a little} worried. "What ~~do~~ ^{do} you mean, Mr. Bang?"

[To continue directly
with "Wherever..."
the poet made -]

tered. - "Very athletic," said the poet ^{appreciatively} ~~appreciatingly~~ ^{John} ~~the guardian~~
~~and~~ declared that he was an amateur boxer: " - and a pretty good one,
 too, they say."

Man set 11 a.

~~The poet seemed more fascinated by~~ ^{John's} naive, clumsy chat than by
 any curiosities which New York had to offer. "This is the Times Building,"
 explained John. "Pretty tall, isn't it?" The poet had an absent-minded
 smile. "Tremendous," he nodded, and then repeated with grave, almost horrified
 voice: "It's tremendous...tremendous..." ^{His companion} ~~the tough angel~~ asked: "What'd you=
 mean, Mr. Bang?" ~~mean~~ The poet made a hasty little gesture as if ~~he~~

John's boss had told him in
 advance that Mr. Bang was a little
 queer. He was certainly right.

^{Frying to wave} ~~mean to frighten~~ away something that was disturbing him, a nightmare, an
 ghoulish ~~vision~~ vision. He laughed, somewhat convulsively. "It's idiotic. I'm
 seeing midday chimeras..." - "What ^{do} you see?" ~~John~~ ^{John} ~~remembered that~~
~~his boss had~~ ^{about} ~~told him, in advance, that~~ Mr. Bang ^{was} ~~was~~ a little funny.
 well - he certainly was.

"I am nervous," the poet ^{said} ~~explained~~, apologetically. "But it somehow struck
 me - you and the building together. It reminded me of a young god, ^{new} talking
 among huge rocks... ~~among the rocks~~ and he plays with him... There is a new
 wilderness, a new jungle, new mountains - the skyscrapers, piled up ^{by} human
 hands... There is a new innocence, a new strength... Yes, there are New Gods,"
 he whispered, standing motionless ⁱⁿ the middle of Times Square, surrounded
 by cars as by dangerous monsters.

'Ore, he ^{all night} ~~is~~ nuts,' thought John. He was terrified. At the same time he
 liked his odd protégé more than ever. ~~mean~~ 'Poor little guy,' he felt,
 while with gentle determination ^{he urged him on:} ~~while he begged him, with a gentle though determined voice:~~ "Come along,
 Herman! Come ^{on} ~~now~~! You can't stand here, you're ^{holding up} ~~blocking~~ the traffic -
 don't you hear? ^{All the} ~~other damned~~ drivers are shouting at you..."

And he ^{pushed} ~~maneuvered~~ him across the street - a reliable, ^{guide} ~~man~~ ^{man}, pro-
 tecting the frail and problematic child of another land, of another age.

"Thanks," murmured the poet when they had safely reached the other side
 of the street. "Thank you, John."

12) He did not know himself whether he was thanking him for his ~~protection~~ protection against the aggressive cars and the rude drivers - or for his having called him Herman.

Then came the evening of Herman Bang's lecture at the Hotel Brevort. The members of the arrangement committee arrived very early, although Danish affairs in New York usually ^{begin} ~~begin~~ an hour or so ^{late} ~~late~~ ~~the~~ ~~known~~ ~~ago~~ ~~type~~. Mr. Opffer, Mr. Eskensen and the other gentlemen were surprised to find the hall already half filled. By the time ^{John} ~~the~~ ~~guardian-angel~~ delivered his precious charge, - the speaker - , the hall was filled to seating capacity, and people ^{had begun} ~~begin~~ to take up standing room against the walls. Finally Mr. Eskensen had to close the doors. Outside he heard angry words. A furious voice was calling the respectable committee "a bunch of stupid fools" ^{for taking} ~~for taking~~ a hall ~~that~~ ^{was obviously} ~~which~~ ~~no one~~ ~~could~~ ~~use~~ was not half large enough. At last people were standing outside on the street and could not even get into the vestibule.

The Baroness A. was more worried by this surprising crowd than she would have been by an empty house. "What do they come for?" she kept ~~ask~~ asking herself. "It can't be genuine literary interest. ^{Are they waiting} ~~Do they want to~~ ~~watch a great fiasco, a strange performance?~~ ^{for a large-scale fiasco.} Are they just attracted by his bad reputation? Do they want to inspect the notorious model of so many cartoons in the Copenhagen magazines?"

"I'm so very happy," she said to Herman Bang. "We have never had such a crowd before. It's a great evening, Herman." ^{said nothing} ~~I am very happy.~~ But he ~~did not answer~~. He was exceedingly nervous. "Where is John?" he asked. John was chatting, somewhere in the background, with a machinist.

"I want you to stand at this door, next to the platform, while I am reading," said Bang. And to the Baroness, as if this ^{explained everything} ~~was a simple explanation~~ ^{quite simply} ~~for everything~~: "He is my guardian-angel, you know."

The ladies and gentlemen who had received Herman Bang at the ^{last} ~~harbour~~, ^{only a few days before}

13)

hardly recognised him when he ^{stepped out} ~~appeared~~ on the platform. ^{The transformation was amazing. Suddenly} He seemed ~~nothing~~ nervous nor bashful, ^{any more} ~~any more~~. ^{What an amazing transformation!} This man, ~~the~~ improvising a little opening speech, looked ~~like~~ ten years younger than the shriveled ~~creature~~ creature who had greeted them ^{at} the ^{dock} ~~dock~~. He was ~~bright, lively~~ eloquent. His words poured ^{out} copious and articulate: it was a ^{joy} ~~pleasure~~ to listen.

~~After the short introductory address he read the first chapter of his recent novel, ~~Without a Country~~. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For Bang did not just read the story of the great violinist who was travelling in the Orient Express Train: he was acting it. He was playing, indeed, not merely the leading character - Joan, the homeless virtuosi - , but also his various colleagues as they were chatting, gossiping, intriguing in the dining car. He transformed himself into the conceited French composer, the greedy pianist, the haughty wife of the diplomat who contemptuously watched all these behemians as though they were wild animals in a zoo. He did not stay on his chair, moved around; for now he was the waiter, balancing the tray full of glasses - and a ~~second~~ moment later, he was Joan again, the homeless one, half-aristocrat and half-gipsy. He imitated voices, fragments of conversations whirled through the room, he screamed like a woman, laughed like an old man, he spoke with French, Hungarian, English and German accents, he parodied the silly vanity of a tenor, the coquetish gestures of an ageing woman singer, the reserved elegance of the aristocratic lady. It was exceedingly amusing, very funny and very sad. The empty platform was crowded with garrulous, excited people, a motley, colourful party, witty people, silly people, or obtuse and sullen people. All of them lived, and had their own faces and gestures and their own tragedies. It was as the hypnotizing trick of a magician: the platform seemed transformed into the dining car; one could even hear the monotonous noise of the wheels.~~

~~The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled, moved, enthusiastic.~~

13 a)

After the short introductory address he read a few chapters of his novel Denied a Country. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For he did not ^{only} ~~not~~ read the story of Joán Ujhazy, "the prince of No-Country", ^{The} and great violinist, ^{and} ~~he was acting it, indeed, he was~~ ^{living} it on the stage. Yes, he actually was Joán in whose veins so ~~many~~ ^{many} bloods were intermingled; Danish ~~blood~~, and Hungarian and Roumanian ~~blood~~. The audience almost wept when Bang imitated old Ane, young Joán's Danish nurse, who used to sing ^{To} ~~for~~ him:

"There is a lovely land
Beside the sweeping billows
On Baltic's briny strand.
It winds afar in hill and dale,
Old Denmark is its name
And it is Freya's hall."

And later, in the international French boarding-school, where Joán was educated, all the boys nailed up ~~the flags of~~ over their beds the respective flags of their ~~countries~~. But Joán had no flag, ~~for he had~~ no country. "Well, his mother was a Dane," declared one of the boys. But another of his fellow-pupils ^{remarked} ~~said~~ cruelly: "You can't have half a country."

Joan had neither spoken nor moved - he sat there at the foot of Harald's bed and the colour of the foreign flag seemed reflected on his face as a deep blush. Then he asked, pretending not to have heard what had just been said: 'But why don't they live in their own countries?' 'Who?' said Harald. 'The poets.' Harald pursed his lips.....: '.....you can't do great work unless you have a longing in your heart. That's why we all live abroad, all those who count.'

There was a grave silence in the hall filled with Danish Americans, ~~when Herman Bang read this dialogue~~ But ^{The spirits of the audience revived} ~~the audience grew very gay,~~ and many shrieked with laughter, when he ^{read the scene of,} ~~performed~~ the dinner in the Orient Express. Joán shared the table with his Australian accompanist Henry Collyett, who practised ten hours a day, "and as soon as he gets out of doors he says he's longing for Melbourne."

he acted it, and more, he lived

130)
The slim little man on the platform transformed himself into the stout Dutchman, Herr Haagemester, who was accompanied by his North German 'cellist - a youth whose mouth was exactly the size of a cherry: - and Herman Bang, for a few moments, had a cherry mouth. In the next second, however, ~~he had the mighty, trained voice of M. Jean Roy of the Paris Opéra who could be heard above all the rest.~~ ^{he roared with the} ~~He slept splendidly in a sleeping car - he~~ ^{a full chorus} ~~announced - splendidly.~~ ^{then} And he assumed the haughty attitude of the German Minister at Bucharest, and his wife ^{was} ~~who~~ ^{examining} the ~~virtu~~ virtuosos through her ^{lorgnette.} ~~lorgnette~~ as though they were wild animals in a zoo.

The inspired speaker did not stay on his chair; ^{he} moved around, for now he was the waiter who balanced the tray with the cups of bouillon, - and a moment later he was Joan again, who heard the Minister's wife say to her husband: "Is he another virtuoso?" - in a tone which showed she had expected something more distinguished from him. ~~Joan's finger-tips felt sore as they touched the table-cloth... And everybody in the audience believed that Herman Bang's finger-tips, which were thin and brittle and brown with nicotine, were aching.~~

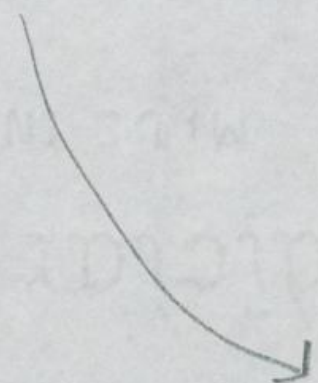
Fragments of conversations whirled through the room, every language in ~~of~~ Europe could be heard, and Bang imitated ^{that all} ~~all~~ of them. He was the French composer, Monsieur Bizot, who moved his stiff blue hands incessantly over the table-cloth, as though raking together invisible heaps of gold - perhaps the monthly rent ~~from~~ from the houses of ill fame which the composer of Legend of St. Cecilia owned in the provincial towns of the Midi. He ~~ex-~~ ^{the} claimed with ~~the voice of~~ beautiful tenor of M. Jean Roy: "To the supremacy of French art!" - clinking glasses with Monsieur Bizot, while two young Rumanians, hidden away in the opposite corner, clapped their ring-covered hands. Their dinner jackets fitted them like a skin, and so did Herman Bang's elegant dress-suit, ~~which was~~ made in London.

^{hilarity}
The ~~amusement~~ of the audience ~~in the Hotel Brevort~~ reached its climax when the mixed crowd in the Orient Express dinner car began to discuss

13e)
business: all at once the whole band of "respected colleagues" plunged into the ^{subject} ~~topic~~ of money and investments, bonuses, debentures, and dividends - while Joan alone remained silent under the ^{legitimate} ~~legitimate~~ which the ~~Minister's~~ Minister's wife turned in astonishment from one stock-jobber to another - his fellow artists. One of them declared that nothing - nothing was so safe in the long run as New York real estate: "My dear fellow, ~~the~~ the future lies in America. We shall live to see New York outgrow London." Some people, he said, swore by New Orleans; but one ^{should} ~~else~~ never ~~to~~ invest money in a place one didn't know.

But the audience ^{turned} ~~grew~~ serious again, when Herman Bang ~~said~~, transformed again into Joan, the gipsy-aristocrat: ^{(politely though firmly declared:} "No, madame, I never speculate... And for that matter I've known so few artists die rich." - A sudden silence fell upon the car. Madame de Stein, the French pianist, made a gesture of the hand as if to push straggling hair from her forehead, though there was none there - while all at once the panting noise of the train seemed to engulf everything, and the rattling of doors and windows struck upon the ear.....

The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled, ~~moved, enthusiastic.~~



14) "He is a wizard!" they exclaimed. "He is absolutely amazing! He has a thousand faces, and ^{every one} ~~each~~ of them is so ^{alive} ~~human~~..."

After the intermission he read a short story dealing with a meek ~~and~~ ^{and} humble creature, an elderly spinster by the name of Irene Holm. She is a former ballet dancer, and now has to give dancing-lessons to clumsy lads and girls in a northern village. There was no plot, no exciting action in the dreary story of Irene Holm. ^{she} ~~he~~ arrives in that remote village, with her few belongings in an old champagne basket, ^{she is always half frozen, she is} ~~and she is constantly shivering, and she is~~ infinitely pathetic with her worn-out clothes and her worn-out smile. When the "season" is over, she has to pack up her ~~own~~ champagne basket again, and the little farewell-party she arranges, is the melancholy climax of the ^{Tale.} ~~story.~~ For Mlle. Holm becomes a little tipsy - just a ^{very} ~~little~~ little bit - and her pupils persuade her to dance a solo, something serious, ^{of the} ~~the~~ kind ^{she used to perform} ~~she used to~~ in the "real theatre". And she dances la grande Napolitaine, ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{all the} affected, graceful steps and poses ^{are of} ~~are of~~ thirty years ago. She is ~~very~~ ^{and} ridiculous, very tragic. People laugh at her. It is just an ordinary failure, nothing else. Irene Holm weeps, and the sympathetic daughter of the pastor tries to comfort her.

It is just one of those minor tragedies; a rather depressing story. Yet ^{how it beat with life} ~~how interesting, how fascinating~~ was it when the author read it aloud!

He tripped and skipped over the stage, ^{in the movements of Iren's grotesque} ~~copying the grotesque and making~~ ^{or making} ~~performance.~~ spectacle of Irene Holm's unsuccessful performance. He imitated the music, the cruel laughter of the peasant ^{boys} ~~girls~~, the silly giggling of provincial girls. His face ^{was marked with} ~~was marked with~~ all the ^{suffering of} ~~being the~~ old danseuse, ^{had} ~~had~~ to ^{bear.} ~~go through~~. He seemed exhausted and his face was wet with tears when he ended his reading.

There was only one opinion, repeated again again by the entire audience: It was the greatest success in this line of entertainment that the Danes in New York had ever experienced.

15)

The show was not yet over ^{with the end of} the formal lecture. ~~He~~ Bang went on chatting, laughing, smiling, shaking hands with everybody. He ^{was} ~~wasn't~~ obviously ^{pleased by} the flowers ~~that~~ heaped up on a ~~the~~ little table on the stage. He carried several big bouquets to the bar of the hotel where a ^{large} ~~large~~ party had gathered and ^{where he was} received ~~him~~ with ^{fresh} ~~applause~~ applause. He smiled, took a bow, and then ^{turned} ~~became~~ suddenly very serious. "It's wonderful in America," he said softly to the Baroness who was standing next to him. "I am having a wonderful time here with all of you."

He was animated, he sparkled; sometimes his gaiety ^{seemed} ~~seem~~ somewhat hectic. He told humorous stories about his ~~various~~ ^{various} experiences as a ^{drama} ~~theatrical~~ critic, a lecturer and an agent. The lengthy tale of the Herman Bang tournee, twenty years ^{ago} ~~ago~~, was funny as well as touching, a real tragi-comedy. Oh, all those dreary provincial places in Denmark and Norway! ~~that~~ ^{that} they had visited! - he described them as ~~ridiculous~~ ^{ridiculous} little infernos, the very essence of boredom. "And we constantly performed ^{all the time we were putting on} ~~all those~~ ^{one-act} ~~one-act~~ plays!" ~~He~~ ^{He} laughed heartily; the mere idea of those poor dramatic attempts seemed terribly funny to him. "The people snored in the theatre - yes, they literally snored... Our impresario was ^{upset,} ~~was~~ and finally asked me to arrange a religious concert with the musical members of my company. He was a sort of expert ^{on} ~~also~~ religious concerts, you see. 'Yes, Sir,' he used to say, 'that way you appeal to the finest feelings of the people, you get the public, and the churches are not expensive.' " ~~He was very amusing as he imitated drastically the impresario's strange way of talking,~~ ^{and of moving his hands.}

The Baroness, ~~was~~ ^{was} listening with ~~me~~ ^{me} almost painful attention, was ~~enchanted~~ ^{but} ~~at the same time~~ ^{enthralled} alarmed. She screamed with laughter, she was ~~enchanted~~ ^{enchanted} delighted; yet she could not help thinking: 'There is something wrong ^{with} ~~about~~ him. I don't know what it is. He is absolutely divine, I have never seen him like this; but there is a ^{gleam} ~~gleam~~ of insanity.'

He gave an amusing and drastic imitation of the impresario's gestures and speech.

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in his eyes ^{that} ~~which~~ I don't like: ~~in fact~~, it frightens me... Perhaps he is taking drugs,' she thought, and was very worried by this new idea. 'Yes, that's probably why he has this convulsive laughter. He uses narcotics, I am sure... Poor Herman Bang. My poor friend...'

He had ^{begun} ~~started~~, meanwhile, to tell anecdotes about people he ^{had} ~~used~~ to know, in Paris, ~~and~~ Helsingfors, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. He ^{gave an} ~~described~~ ^{impressive} ~~description of~~ the permanent underground struggle of the Czech people against their Austrian suppressors. He imitated the great Viennese actress, Frau Wolters, ^{sang the praises of} ~~then he praised~~ Réjane, the Parisian vedette, ^{then} ~~thereupon he~~ plunged into a story ^{about} ~~on~~ a clown he had once seen in London. "You are at home everywhere," ^{observed} ~~remarked~~ one of the ladies admiringly. "Or - nowhere...", said Herman Bang.

And a gentleman, at the other end of the table, ⁱⁿ ~~said~~ a deep, ~~an~~ ominous voice: "Denied a Country..." - which was ~~an~~ senseless, yet ~~extremely~~ ^{strangely} disturbing.

The waiters appeared with the dessert. The large-bosomed matron who had been so afraid of Herman Bang's ^(character) ~~being~~ malicious, offered him a plate ^{of} ~~with~~ ice cream ^{and} hot chocolate sauce. ~~Then she said:~~ "It's perverse..."

Late ^{that} ~~in~~ night John ^{and} ~~the~~ guardian angel ^{returned to} ~~delivered~~ his celebrated problem-child ~~in the lobby of~~ the Astor Hotel. "You were so ^{quiet} ~~particular~~ during this ^{all} ~~whole~~ evening," Herman Bang said. "Didn't you like my lecture?" ^{The young man assured him:} "Oh, I liked it a lot, ^{and the} ~~and the~~ ^{honesty} ~~honesty~~ ^{it was said...} ~~on the contrary~~... I did. But, ^{just the same} ~~as the same~~, I felt... kind of bewildered... I had no idea you were such a ^{grand} ~~small~~ actor, and knew so many stories... And you certainly know how to deal with women! The whole bunch was crazy about you - ^{and there were some good-looking} ~~and there were pretty~~ ^{she has} ~~among them, all right.~~ That Baroness, for instance, ~~has~~ ^{she has} ~~like to make~~ ^{agree}... Why don't you make her, ~~Mr. Bang?~~ You could have her -

"That suits you perfectly, Mr. Bang," she said.

Gee, what a figure! I'd certainly like to get some-where with her...

14) like that!" He ^{snapped} ~~smacked~~ his fingers, ~~in order to show how little~~
~~effort the novelist would need to seduce the Baroness.~~

Bang ^{gave} ~~gave~~ a bleak, ^{plaintive} ~~and distant~~ smile. "I suppose you're right," he
said after a pause, and made ^{his} fidgety little gestures. "Well - good night,
(sleep well, my boy.)" then, And he ^{quickly} ~~tripped~~ toward the elevator, moving his feet in
a ^{burdensome} ~~miserable~~ way as though he ^{were} ~~was~~ walking over glowing stones.

+

Two days later Bang ^{was} ~~was~~ to leave New York on his long journey to
the Westcoast. Early in the morning John appeared at the "Astor" to
help him pack ~~in his things~~ for Bang had declared that he was absolutely
~~unable~~

Both ~~the poet and his robust guardian angel~~ were silent for a
while. Bang looked more tired and sickly than ever.

Finally John said: "I hate to see you make that trip alone...
You aren't tough enough, Mr. Bang... You look kind of pale, anyhow...
You should take along some strong fellow..."

"I'd like to take you with me," said Bang.

"Why don't you?" ^{There was} ~~said John, with a sudden hope in John's voice.~~

And Bang, after a long pause, very softly: "It would be a great
mistake, John. It would ^{be sure to} ~~certainly~~ be a fatal blunder."

John did not understand. ~~that he meant.~~

^{They said nothing further about it.}
~~They did not talk anymore.~~

Before they left the hotel, Bang gave him a cigarette box and one
of his books with a dedication. It was the Danish version of Denied
a Country. John was a little disappointed as he could hardly read ~~the~~
Danish. But he liked the cigarette box. "It's much too ^{valuable} ~~precious~~," he
said. "Ge! - it's ^{solid} ~~heavy~~ gold..."

Bang made a desperate effort to smile.

"You're so ^{good} ~~good~~," said John, and suddenly touched ^(Bang's) ~~his~~ brittle, delicate

John's voice lifted
with sudden hope.

18) fingers with his big, clumsy hand. "You should have children, ~~Mr. Bang~~
You'd be a swell daddy, ^{I know you would.} ~~Mr. Bang~~. Why don't you have a son, Mr. Bang?"

He did not answer. After a few seconds he ~~was~~ said: "We must hurry, boy. It's ^{getting} ~~very~~ late..." ~~And he added with an odd glance that seemed to embrace and at the same time to pierce his young friend John: "I'm afraid, indeed, it may be already too late..."~~

A number of friends had come to the train to see him off. There were Mr. Opffer, Mr. Madsen, Mr. ~~Eskensen~~, the large-bosomed lady, and the Baroness. Bang ~~made fidgety little gestures, uttered confused sentences, had a convulsive, distorted smile~~ ^{and} did not find his railway ticket, was haunted by the idea of losing his many bags. "Where are my things?" he kept ~~ask~~ asking nervously. "The little bag with my books...? Oh, it's terrible, dreadful... ~~like~~ like a nightmare..."

"Why do you leave?" asked the Baroness. "Why don't you stay here, with us? Why must you go to the ~~west~~ coast?"

~~He gave her a glance as a wounded deer gazes at its merciless hunter.~~ ^{He glanced at her, as a wounded deer at the hunter.}

'He is doomed,' she felt. 'He is lost. I am sure he takes narcotics - cocaine, or morphine, or ^{whatever those terrible things are} ~~or those diabolic concoctions~~ may be called. ^{He's} His face is so terribly ^{pale} ~~white~~, and he ^{all the time} constantly trembles... Poor Herman - my poor friend...'

John helped him ~~into~~ to a seat and wrapped him up like a sick child.

"I hate to see you go," he said, once more.

"Thanks," said Herman Bang without looking at him.

His guardian-angel left him. He was alone. He was freezing in spite of the heavy blankets.

Outside the friends waved goodbye as the train started slowly to move. "He looks so bewildered," said Mr. Opffer. "So weak..."

And Mr. Eskensen wondered, "Shall we ever see him again?" - while John said to the Baroness, ^{his voice hoarse} ~~in a hoarse~~, almost suffocated;

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~~man~~ "He's a funny guy. But a good fellow - a damned good fellow,
that's what he is."

The Baroness nodded. John noticed that her beautiful eyes were ^{moist} ~~moist~~
with tears. 'She ^{is} ~~was~~ fond of him, all right,' he ^{thought. Finally she} ~~said~~
^{I've} ~~whispered~~ whispered: "You must tell me more about him, John. I know him
for such a long time; but I didn't see very much of him ~~while he was~~ in
New York. He was ^{so} ~~very~~ busy - ~~very~~ sight-seeing..." There was a little
twinkle in her eyes: a naughty little ^{spark twinge,} ~~twinkle~~ of jealousy, John thought.
But her smile ^{warmed} ~~was~~ as she added: "You must have a cup of tea
with me, ^{one of these days.} ~~soon~~. ^{Because I do want to hear} For I am very eager, indeed, to learn all about his
impressions of New York, and what he ^{liked} ~~was~~ liking best. ~~That, and above all,~~
^{(interests me:} ~~what he did like best...~~ That especially: what he liked the best..."

John was extremely flattered ^{at} the idea of having tea with the
Baroness. "Thanks," he said, and ^{looking at her it struck him again} as he looked at her he felt again
that she was a pretty woman, ~~indeed~~, still ^{quite} ~~very~~ attractive, ~~even~~,
of her mature age ^{in spite of her years.}
"Tomorrow perhaps, around five?" - ^{when he had}
"How about tomorrow, around five?" she asked - and ~~when he had~~
^{happily} they both accepted, ^{both} ~~both~~ of them blushed as though ^{swept} ~~they were~~ by a sudden
feeling of guilt.

++

He interrupted the journey at Chicago where he had another lecture
^{engagement,} ~~date~~. He met people and saw old friends again. He saw nobody. He
was blind. He heard neither the ^{pleasant} ~~pleasant~~ nor the malicious phrases ad-
dressed to him. He was deaf. He spoke, and his own voice sounded strange
to him. He did not know what he was talking about. He said: "I am
fascinated by America. It's colossal. I am eager to see more of it."
But how could he see anything ^{when} ~~as~~ he was ^{smitten} ~~stricken~~ with blindness? "I am
in a hurry," he said. "The transcontinental train... The boat is
waiting. How far ^{away} ~~is~~ San Francisco?" They said, 2000 miles or so. He
nodded: "Yes, yes, it's colossal." He was absent-minded. He did not

20)

want to visit the famous stock-yards, nor ^{did he express any interest} ~~was he interested~~ in the museum or the public library. He insisted, "I am in a hurry...": as if ~~was driving him, pressing~~ a mysterious power - a storm or a tremendous, invisible hand - ^{were} ~~was~~ driving him on, ^{driving him on} ~~urging him, pressing him~~.

He ^{stepped into} ~~entered~~ his compartment on the transcontinental train as a prisoner ^{like a prisoner entering the death-chamber, his} ~~entering the dead cell where he must await his~~ execution.

They said ~~unwillingly~~: "Have a nice trip, Mr. Bang! Don't forget to write us a post ^a ~~card~~ from Shanghai!" ^{and} ~~and then~~ ^{grinned} as if they had made ~~the most funny~~ joke.

He promised, "I certainly will."

They suggested: "You should stop at Salt Lake City. It's worth ~~seeing~~ seeing ~~it~~..."

He groaned: "Yes...certainly...of course..." He ^{shuddered} ~~trembled~~, cruelly shaken by the invisible fist.

The days were long, and ~~longer~~ longer. ^{did not leave} ~~the nights~~ He ~~hardly~~ left his compartment. He hardly slept. Without the solace of sleep he had to await the end of the night, the end of the journey.

~~He could not read~~ He spent the days and many ~~the~~ hours of the nights staring through the window at a landscape that seemed to him monotonous and yet ever-changing. ^{only thought would be:} ~~All he was able to think,~~ ^{was this:} 'How great this country is!... How ~~endless~~ huge ~~regions~~ - how endless... and how empty! I ^{never imagined it would be} ~~did not know that it is~~ so empty... These tremendous plains are not inhabited by human beings. What an abundance of room - :space for millions and millions to come...unused space for ^{future} generations; ~~men and women~~ guilty creatures, cursed, suffering creatures. ...But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die...

I ~~was not~~ ^{cannot} bear no responsibility for those innumerable tragedies that are in preparation. I am innocent, immaculate as a monk, not tainted

21)

with the ugly sin of propagation. I am detached, remote, free - as ~~the~~ travellers are. I have no country, no home, no children. No children. I am sterile.

There were ancient tribes who believed that ^athe sterile man was holy. There were others who ^{thought} ~~considered~~ him ^{curse} ~~doomed~~.

I am ^{curse} ~~doomed~~.

America is pregnant with potential life. But I am no part of it. I am doomed.

Oh, America - pregnant with future laughter, ~~hate~~ ^{hatred}, ~~love~~ ^{love}; loaded with the genius of its unborn sons, with the beauty of its unborn daughters, with the horror of coming revolutions, the atrocity of coming wars, the prosperity of promised peace... Oh, America, overburdened with possibilities and hopes - oh, endless ~~land~~ landscape, ~~tremendous landscape~~, landscape of youth - ~~it is the deadly landscape~~

that must be my death. ^{My} For ^{am} detached and sterile, and I am doomed...

This dusty wilderness ^{holds within itself my death.} ~~is my deadly landscape~~. These eternal highways have no ^{aim, no destination} ~~reason~~ for me. ^{For me} These empty plains ^{have only the numb} ~~are my death~~, and the murderous features of ~~the~~ Medusa's face.

This country kills me ^{with} ~~in~~ its very greatness. It destroys me ^{exuberant} ~~through~~ its youthfulness, its strength, its reality. I knew it when I

turned my eyes up to the buildings ~~was born~~ ^{Young creature} ~~in New York~~; when I heard and saw and felt the laughter of that ^{guide and protection} ~~angel~~ John, my ~~guardian angel~~ - who left me. This

country ^{murders} ~~kills~~ me. I knew it when I arrived. I knew it when I left Copenhagen. I knew ^{that I was setting out on} ~~my last journey~~. ~~I knew where it is going to end~~

America ^{overpowers} ~~overwhelms~~ me. I am through.

It dazes me with its rivers and ~~factories~~ ^{factories}, with its athletic youth, its ~~Negro~~ ^{Negro} songs, its cruel noise, its boredom, its ^{childish} ~~raw~~ enthusiasm, ^{its vitality} ~~its steel muscles~~, its tremendous lust for life... with its greatness, ~~its horrible greatness, its inspiring greatness, its unbearable greatness~~

its greatness which I cannot bear, am not strong enough to bear.

22)

The days pass on, and the night at last reach their end, but the train
wheels on and on,
goes on running and running, the transcontinental train, the train without
aim or destination... The ~~landscape~~ scenery changes: now the ~~train~~ ^{locomotive} has to

climb steep hills, high mountains; there are rocks and ~~some~~ deep valleys
between snow-capped peaks. The traveller in the solitude of his elegant
(compartment) felt a new apprehension; but this time it was a physical ~~pain~~ ^{pang}. His heart
- he had known it all along - ~~he knew it~~ ^{it had come} could not stand this ~~very~~ altitude. ~~The~~ Doctors
had warned him before he left; but he had smiled and shrugged in his
absent-minded ~~way~~ ^{way}. Now, ~~it had come~~ ^{it had come}, the heart-attack, the sharp pang,
the spasm: he could hardly breathe.

He swallowed his medicine, hastily. The painful fit passed. The
train speeded downhill.

He got over the dangerous attack - for the time being. But there
were other mountains to come - higher ones, very high ones: he knew it.
Would his organism stand ^(the sudden change of atmosphere) the thin air? - 'And if not...?' he thought,
with ~~an~~ ^{desperate} embittered obstinacy. 'I am through, anyway, I ~~am not going~~ ^{have no special desire} to
see San Francisco, ^{or} the Buddha temples in the Far East. I renounce the
trip around the world. ^{The shortest way to your own heart leads you}
around the world... ^{What} ~~which~~ philosopher ~~has~~ ^{may} coined that dubious ~~maxim~~ ^{epigram?}
In any case, ~~however~~ ^{he} was mistaken... I ~~have~~ ^{may} solved the riddle, halfway. I recog-
nise the cruel laws ^{that} ~~which~~ dominate my life. I accept them, shuddering
but without resistance. I accept them.

...If it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the
very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head
uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

I do not complain.

Patiently I wait for the end of the night - and I know the dawn
will shine with a bloody splendor...

He examined his map and found out that the State of Utah ~~was~~ ^{had}
~~situated in~~ ^a considerable altitude: the lowest point, in Salt Lake Valley,

4,210 feet above sea-level. "Climate healthy and delightful..." the prospect ~~was~~ assured -: 'Not for me,' thought the traveller.

He went on reading, mechanically, without really grasping the sense of the words. "Scarcety of timber and verdure... Much of the soil is strongly impregnated with salt and alkali.... Many parts are still ~~desert~~ pure desert, hopelessly barren..."

"Like me - ~~that's what it is~~ - : hopelessly barren... My heart, my soul, my brains, my body... hopelessly barren..."

And he read the amazing story of the Pioneers of Utah: ^{Brigham} ~~Young~~ Young, travelling across the plains and mountains, with 143 men, three women and two children; living in tents, wagons and log huts; protecting themselves from hostile Indians, ^{and from} ~~and from~~ wolves and other wild beasts; stubbornly faithful, according to their own special interpretation of the Holy Word. This was hardly seventy years ago, but it sounded like an ancient, heroic tale - the saga of the Mormons, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, expelled from Illinois, wandering through wilderness and unknown land, attracted by the Great West, ~~settling~~ ^{at last} settling on the shores of a Lake the waters of which were salty - salty as tears... ".
(The Dead Sea of America,
the Lake of Tears, the City of Tears, the Valley of Tears...

'I am approaching the Region of Tears. How far away is that mystic Lake? A shower of inward tears gives the answer: ~~it's not far anymore!~~ You are near the goal...'

His thoughts wandered to the matter of polygamy.
~~Those Mormons - didn't they believe in having several wives?~~
~~He remembered having read something of the kind.~~ 'How odd! 143 men, and only three women... and yet ^{in theory} every man in principle ~~only~~ claimed several females...'

~~She chuckled softly, and then was frightened by the sound of his own laughter.~~

I wouldn't make a good Mormon,' - and he chuckled softly, but was frightened by the sound of his own laughter ^{yes} in the great solitude of

24) ~~of~~ his compartment, of this train ^{the} in midst ^{swift-running} of the ~~passing~~ empty, tremendous landscape.

My Island has no women. Who is there for me to love?

He recalled, with a sudden pang, these words, spoken by Joán Ujhazy, ~~on~~ one of the last pages of ~~his last novel~~ "Denied a Country". The homeless one, melancholy hero of the novel, had tried to find home: he went to Denmark, and it was a failure. Before leaving his estranged homeland, he ~~made~~ ^{took} a walk with an old friend who also had ruined his life. "But you, Joán," he said presently - "we're still young men - why don't you ~~find~~ ^{find} a wife?" - "I?" said Joán. They were ~~now~~ ^{headlight} watching the approaching night express, the ~~locomotive~~ ^{locomotive} searched them out like a ~~deadly~~ ^{demonic} eye. - "I?" repeated Joán, and his voice was as bloodless as his face; "Erik, I must die alone."

I must die alone...

I...must....die alone...ALONE...

He was almost ~~about~~ asleep. He heard the noise of the wheels - their monotonous, agonizing rhythm, against which Joán's voice, his own dream-voice kept struggling. "This was my last tour," said Joán. "And to-night has brought it to an end. Because I have heard a greater. He can play of greater things. He plays of a new joy."

A new joy... He saw John, the ^{muscular and winged guide} ~~tough~~ ~~champion~~, dancing, jumping, flying between the ~~sky~~ skyscrapers. He was half-naked, wearing only ~~little~~ purple shorts and huge leather gloves. He was a prize fighter, he was very strong, his punch was deadly, his laughter was deadly; deadly - his youth, his strength, his cruel innocence...

'He ~~will~~ ^{will} hit me,' felt the sleeper.

And ~~the blow fell.~~ ^{the blow fell.} ~~it was painful.~~

It was very painful. He tried to get up but ~~did not succeed.~~ ^{could not} He was paralysed, he was numb. His heart ached. He pressed his chest with his

25) trembling hand. He wanted to scream but had no voice. He groaned. He knew that this was the end.

The train had stopped in the midst of a grand and terrifying landscape - a Biblical scene~~ing~~, barren and heroic, threatening and enchanting, with icy mountains~~z~~ sharply profiled against a glowing sky. The sky was pouring a hard, metallic light. Between the rocks ice-blue waters fell to the depths. The air was filled with a high, clinking noise - the triumphant song of the dawn, the cruel hymn of a beginning day.

A couple of days later Mr. Opffer, editor of the Nordlyset, received a press telegram from Ogden, Utah, ~~to the effect~~ that the great Danish author and lecturer Herman Bang had been taken from the ~~the~~ trans-continental train in a dying condition and brought to a hospital in that city where he ^{had} died at 6 a.m. Mr. Opffer immediately called up Mr. Eskensen who said: "Poor fellow! I ^{'ve been} ~~have~~ expecting ^{ing} something ^{like} of this, kind. He had such a pale little face..." - "What can we do now?" asked Mr. Opffer. Mr. Eskensen suggested ~~to~~ ^{ing} ~~have~~ ^a death-mask taken. Mr. Opffer ^{thought} ~~that~~ this ~~was~~ an excellent idea. Two lengthy telegrams were made ~~out~~ ^{out}, ~~one~~ one to the Danish Vice Consul at Ogden, Mr. Thorvald Orlob, the other to Mr. O.D. Rasmussen, owner of a chain ^{of} ~~and~~ department stores in Utah and Wyoming. Both gentlemen were only too happy to do this little ^{service} ~~work~~ for a distinguished compatriot who ^{had} died friendless in their own neighborhood. Mr. Eskensen ^{broke the news to} ~~informed~~ the Baroness. "It was ~~unavoidable~~ something like an apoplexy of the heart," he ^{said,} ~~And he added~~ "We'll have a ^{of course, perhaps} ~~as to the~~ memorial service, ~~we may hold it~~ in the little Danish church in the Bronx. We want to make it simple but dignified. A few speakers - Stephan Hansen, and Jonas Lie - ~~although~~ ^{though} he is Norwegian - , and Emile Bomen. And we hope to get Holger Birkerod to sing the Ave Maria. ^{Have} ~~Do~~ you ever hear ^{him}? He has a wonderful voice..."

But the Baroness ^{was} ~~did~~ not listen ^{ing}. She seemed petrified. She could

hardly move her fingers or her lips. ~~She only felt: He is dead.~~

"He is dead," she ~~said~~ told John, a few hours later. ~~And he knew whom she meant.~~

He wept. The tears ~~he~~ streamed copiously from his eyes which he did not cover. His face was not distorted as he cried. It was the strong and beautiful face of a mourning young god.

He shouted: "It is our fault!" - and ~~raised~~ ^{railed} his powerful fists, angrily.

"What do you mean - our fault?" ~~she said,~~

He desperately insisted: "We have killed him!" And he shook his effulgent head and the fists. Nobody is responsible. We are not to blame.

"Be quiet!" she implored him. "You are talking nonsense." ~~For he wanted to die.~~

But he went on shaking his head in despair. "We've killed him. America has killed him. He couldn't ^{take} it. He was different. The skyscrapers scared him, the big country scared him, I scared him. We have murdered him - all of us!"

She took his face between her hands. ~~She~~ It was wet with tears. She dried his face with her ~~soft, tender~~ fingers. She kissed ~~him~~ his cheeks and his lips. She tasted the bitter taste of his tears. She begged him:

"Be quiet!... Be quiet, my sweetheart - don't cry! I am with you..."

+++

VIII

8

Journey to the End of the Night.

(HERMAN BANG)

Like a running sore this unending street,
with all of us at the bottom of it, filling
it from side to side, from one sorrow to the
next, moving towards an end no one has ever
seen, the end of all the streets in all the
world.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline.

1) One day in the middle of January, 1912, some twenty members of the Danish Colony in New York received a letter calling them to a meeting at the Hotel McAlpin to discuss "a matter of the greatest importance for all of us." The document was signed by Mr. M.C. Madsen, who at that time was constructing Long Beach, L.I., and was one of the most respected Danes in America.

They all ^{gathered} ~~came~~ at the appointed hour, and Mr. Madsen declared in a ^{solo} ~~little~~ little speech that he was very sorry to bring up a matter which would undoubtedly give the whole party a terrible shock: - Herman Bang was coming to America!

This certainly was a surprise. Everyone was startled, and alarmed. Only an ignorant young fellow who was born in America and ~~had~~ ^{had not} the faintest ^{notion of} ~~idea~~ what was going on in the Old Country, asked naively: Who is Herman Bang? *His name was John; he was a good looking lad.*

What a silly question! Everyone knew who Herman Bang was, although very few of the persons present had ever read a line written by him. They were mostly Danes who ~~had~~ ^{lived in this country} lived in ~~England~~ ^{for a number of years,} and ~~they had~~ ^{scarce} had opportunity to follow contemporary Danish literature. Yet all of them had heard some shocking or ridiculous stories on that odd, notorious personality, Herman Bang - the Danish novelist, critic and lecturer who had for years been the target for the most malicious taunts and endless caricaturing. Both journalists and cartoonists found in his queer appearance an easy object to make fun of, and hardly any man in Denmark had ever been so roughly dealt with in the press as Herman Bang. These caricatures had found their way to the Danes in America, whereas Bang's literature had not.

"Well, you see," explained one of the older gentlemen - very embarrassed as though he had to enlighten a virgin on the mysteries of love -, "Herman Bang - he is - well...he has a certain resemblance with Oscar Wilde..." - *But the ignorant youth had no idea what this meant.*

2
~~And now the ignorant young man divined what was wrong with his literary compatriot, and why the news of his imminent arrival stirred up such excitement among the Danish ladies and gentlemen.~~

There was a muddle of ~~same~~ questions, answers, proposals and nervous little exclamations. ~~Was there no possibility to prohibit Mr. Bang from coming? - impossible: the ship already was on the ocean...~~ How did Mr. M.C. Madsen get the revolting news? - Why, quite simply - one of Bang's friends had sent a letter, requesting Mr. Madsen to help Bang at his arrival and possibly to arrange for him a lecture in New York. *(At this very moment he was already sailing.)* It was ~~his~~ *his* intention to cross the United States, giving perhaps a lecture or two on his way. At San Francisco or Los Angeles he would board one of the Danish East Asiatic Co.'s steamers. It really was a tour around the world he was starting for. One of the ladies remarked: "He is exceedingly fond of travelling, I'm told..." Her face had a sour, quite disgusted expression as if she had mentioned one of his horrid, ineffable vices.

"We must see to it that he goes right back on the next steamer."
- "He will scandalise the Danish Colony!" - "We cannot have him here!"
- "He'll ruin our reputation in this country..." - "...he'll bring shame upon all of us..." *(Some of them still remembered the appearance of Oscar Wilde in this country, which had been thirty years ago, which had been his most embarrassing for all Englishmen living here. He angered the custom officers by saying, "Nothing to declare but my genius!" - which was a rather improper remark, indeed, considering the serious occasion; he bored everybody by preaching the "Science of the Beautiful", he was ridiculed by all the newspapers and the Harvard boys, snubbed by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and in a dubious manner patronized by Walt Whitman. (an occasional) But the British can afford a little scandal, time and again.)*
said one of the Danish gentlemen. "Representatives of small nations ~~have~~ should be more careful. We are by no means in the position to challenge public opinion..."

Another man wondered whether Herman Bang still ~~deserved~~ *deserved* the designa-

3) I am sure he is one of those modern writers who excel only in destructive criticism. He even dared to scorn the Danish patriotic movement...

tion of a Dane. Didn't he lead the restless life of a gipsy? Wasn't he in fact an exile from his country, an outcast vagabonding through the world? "A voluntary exile...", said the gentleman, but another ~~Scandinavian~~ patriot interrupted him: "Not quite voluntary, if you please! For Mr. Bang had good reasons for leaving Copenhagen without delay. The police was after him..." Somebody inquired: "Isn't the title of his last novel ~~Homeless~~ Homeless, or Without A Fatherland, or something of this kind?" A lady confirmed that Herman Bang's recent work indeed bore the ominous title Denied Without a Country ~~the Homeless ones~~. And she added: "It is an excellent book, too. I've read it."

The last speaker, a certain Baroness ~~B.~~ ^A, seemed to be the only one in this circle who had actually read a book by Herman Bang. She knew the world, had lived in Paris and St. Petersburg, and was a prominent member of the Danish Colony, although some of her compatriots considered her slightly eccentric. "It is a quite fascinating book, indeed," she ~~reported~~ ^{said}, in a mild though determined manner. "I think we are very privileged to welcome the author of this masterpiece in New York."

This bold utterance ~~then~~ impressed and puzzled the gathering. They gradually realized two basic facts, both of which calmed down their moral indignation. The startling remark of the Baroness reminded them, first of all, of the international reputation Mr. Bang enjoyed, notwithstanding certain embarrassing rumors concerning his private life. Besides, one had to face the situation as it was; the notorious compatriot actually was on his way to this country: ~~there was nothing to do about anymore~~ The Danish Colony had to accept the disturbing event with courage. ~~He would not stay for ever, after all. Let's try to make the best out of it!~~

A sort of grave fatalism prevailed among the Scandinavian Americans at the McAlpin Hotel. ~~Sitting~~ Still somewhat grudgingly, they finally formed a sub-committee ^{for the Herman Bang's reception.} ~~to arrange a Herman Bang lecture.~~ It consisted of Mr. Emil Opffer, an old schoolmate of Bang and at that ^{time} editor of the Danish newspaper, Nordlyset, in New York, Mr. E. V. Eskesen, a prominent manufacturer

4)
and himself an amateur poet, and two other gentlemen. They made an appointment for a special meeting in Mr. Opffer's office.

They decided that, after all, a lecture should be arranged for Mr. Bang. His works were very popular in Germany, some of them had even been translated into French ^(and other languages) ~~and Russian~~. The gentlemen had to admit: he was ^(generally regarded as) ~~one of the more~~ ^{outstanding} ~~significant~~ figures of modern Danish literature. But no large hall would be needed, considering the dubious personal reputation of Mr. Bang. They ~~chose~~ ^{chose} the little concert hall in the French Hotel Brevoort, on lower Fifth Avenue, ~~the fit locality~~ ^{which}. It had a seating capacity of three hundred. They had tickets printed, advertisements inserted in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers, and in order to do their very best they furthermore sent out a thousand letters to Danes in New York. They still were very sceptical, of course, as to the eventual success of their efforts. But once they had made up their minds that the lecture ^{had to} ~~must~~ take place, they regarded the whole affair as being connected with the patriotic cause. Each of the four gentlemen was even ready to pay his share of the inevitable deficit.

The ladies, meanwhile, ^(eagerly) ~~discussed in their turn~~ the personality of that odd human being whose arrival they expected. ~~With slightly irritated curiosity~~ ^{Baroness A., la femme du monde,} acted as the main speaker at those animated tea parties. She even had a picture of Herman Bang, which was zealously examined by all her friends. The young man on the portrait was unusually and disturbingly attractive. The first thing that struck one was the prominent and finely formed back of ~~his~~ ^{his} head, on which the smooth, glossy black hair gleamed; then one observed the mournful glance of the deepset eyes under their long lashes; then the infinite sensitiveness and nobility of the outline of the face, which the young man - melancholy but eager to please - turned to the beholder in half-profile.

"He looks like an Oriental prince," observed one of the ladies, half with admiration half with ~~the~~ disapproval. The Baroness smiled: "Yet he is descended from one of our oldest, most distinguished families. Didn't

5)

(Excellency Bang,

you know his fine old grandfather, the eminent physician? He was one of the truly great figures of our country. I still remember his funerals. Several members of the royal family were present, and representatives of all the hospitals and universities. When I saw Herman, some years ago, in St. Petersburg, he used to tell me so many touching stories about that grand old gentleman. He adored him, you know... and he was woefully lonely, quite helpless indeed, when the old man had passed away. There was no money left, just a few thousand crowns. Herman wanted to become an actor; he always had this unhappy love for the theatre. But he has no talent at all - as an actor, I mean..." She laughed softly while she remembered how very untalented Herman Bang ^{was} as an actor ^{was}. "I once saw him in Bergen," she continued.

"He played Oswald, in Ibsen's Ghosts. It was horrible, ~~absolutely horrible~~.

People ~~threw rotten apples~~ ^{(in such a state of} ~~trance~~ ^{trance} ~~hysterical~~ ^{trance} that he hardly noticed the tremendous scandal he was stirring up." She laughed again, while the other lady, a large-bosomed, very dignified matron, remarked with a sour smile: "That's what I expected to hear. He makes a fool out of himself." A younger woman, dreamingly gazing at Bang's photo, whispered: "But... I had no idea... that he is so terribly handsome..."

"I must disappoint you, my dear," said the Baroness. "He no longer looks like that - ~~he must be at least fifty years old by now.~~ ^{he must be at least fifty years old by now.} ~~he must admit that.~~ ^{he must admit that.} Le pauvre, his face has become quite yellow and wrinkled. But in spite of that he is irresistible. My goodness, how often I have been amused by him! You know, he is an impossible creature; always hung about with bracelets and other kinds of jewellery. There is a soft, jingling noise when he walks through the room, and when he appears in evening dress, he wears a brocade waistcoat and long white glacé underneath his coatsleeves: long ladies' ~~glacé~~ gloves, you understand - he is a scream! Once I had dinner with him at the Imperial Castle, in St. Petersburg. Did I already ^{mention} ~~say~~ that the mother of the Czar ~~is~~ ^{used} ~~used~~ to be very fond of Bang? She adored chatting with him... Well, there we were, in the Imperial dining hall, and all those imposing butlers

6)
watched every movement we made. Now, imagine - please imagine dear Herman stripping off his long white glacé: it was absolutely sen-sa-tional, I assure you! All the generals and high officials present were literally petrified with surprise and horror. But the old Empress - smiled...sweet old darling she is!"

The Danish ladies smiled too, although they were able to understand the profound horror of high officials in view of long ladies' gloves worn by a Scandinavian novelist. Yet they could not help being impressed by the fact that the Baroness and the poet had had dinner together at the Imperial Castle in St. Petersburg. "Very amusing, indeed," they agreed reluctantly. But the Baroness seemed to overhear it, being absorbed, once more, in Herman Bang's fascinating portrait. "He has retained his splendid eyes," she said, as though she was talking to herself. "When he looks at you they pierce you through and through with a look that seems to discover everything, absolutely everything...Yes, I love him; he stirs my heart, and at the same time is very amusing, and you couldn't imagine a more reliable friend..."

The large-bosomed matron shrugged. "He is very effeminate and rather malicious, I am told. Probably ~~he~~ he is one of those who give us the feeling that they are constantly laughing at us." She assumed her most dignified expression, while the Baroness giggled: "But who would dare to poke fun at you, my beloved. No, no: Bang is a good fellow." Whereupon she ventured on telling a few more anecdotes about him. "Malicious friends maintain that he is an illegitimate son of a grand duchess and a ~~good waiter~~ *gigolo from the Balkans*. For his personality seems a strange blend, indeed, of aristocratic features and a somehow forced, hectic vulgarity. ~~He is definitely unfit for a settled, bourgeois life. But he feels at home in the company of princesses and vagabonds.~~ The circus, the cheap Variety Music Hall - those are the milieus he adores. In his books he always is at his best when he describes ^{the} ~~the~~ outsiders of society." She made a little pause, then added: "I don't understand very much about literature; but I really think he is a great

7)
writer. Have you read anything of his?" The ladies said, "No; but now you have made us curious." ~~About his things.~~ Baroness A. offered: "I'll look out some of his books for you. You are bound to weep over them. He is only too well informed on the most tragic things... And, strangely enough, his literary style is simple, candid, concise - quite in contrast with all ~~that eccentric~~ those eccentric caprices that are characteristic for his personal ways."

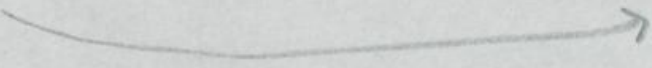
She went to the book-case and took out several volumes, carressing them as if they were living creatures. "Michael...", she smiled at one of the volumes as though she was addressing an old friend whom she met again after a too-long period of separation. "This is a marvellous story - ~~t~~, you know - the story of Michael, the effulgent youth, and ^{the great painter} Claude Zoret, ~~the ageing Master~~, who loves him. The Master has certain features of Rodin... It is a very sad story, too. I must always cry when I re-read the poignant description of the ~~Master~~ Master's solemn agony, and he is quite alone, though he keeps on sending messengers to Michael's house - the very house the Master had given him -, but Michael does not come. For he is madly in love, you must know - absolutely overwhelmed by his love for a magnificent woman, and he happens to be ^{constantly asking} in bed with her while the Master dies, and he dies quite alone, ^{where is} Michael," but Michael is very far away, on another planet, as he is in love, and is young, and cruel - and the Master dies... It is heart-breaking," said the Baroness; then she added, somewhat hastily: "And, of course, a little bit maudlin..."

She turned over the leaves of some other volumes she had carried from the book-case to the tea-table. The Danish ladies curiously glanced at the books the titles of which ^{the hostess} ~~Baroness D.~~ recited as if they were the refrain of a beloved song. ~~The White House - that is the moving homage he paid to his lovely mother... And, here too The Grey House contains a wonderful portrait of his grandfather... He is incomparable when he describes very old people, or women who are hopelessly in love, all those meek and tragic creatures: they never complain, suffer silently, or they talk over extraneous things:~~

4
7 a)

A Hopeless Generation - his first novel, he was only twenty-one when he wrote it: ~~it is~~ an immature piece of work, of course..." She had a mild, quasi forgiving smile, then continued: "But By the Wayside is a masterpiece - a very short novel, but ~~how condensed~~ how concentrated, how full of life! And here is Tine - my Lord! I almost had forgotten Tine though it certainly is one of his most moving books! It describes the Prussian invasion in Slesvig, ~~you know~~ and very impressively, too! For he was born in the island of Als, North Slesvig, and his family left that part of Denmark just before the Prussian troupes arrived. These early impressions - the evacuation of Als, the flight - have probably influenced ~~the~~ the further development of his character." ~~The war of 1864 and the position of the Slesvig Danes under German domination are some of the motives that constantly re-
cur in his books...~~

She uttered a silvery little cry as though she recognised another beloved and familiar face in the touching gallery of her souvenirs. "The White House - oh, what a lovely story! It's so bright, so gay, and yet it has this undescribable flavour of a very noble and quite incurable sadness. The White House is the ~~immortal~~ ^{touching} homage he paid to his charming mother... And, here, The Grey House, contains a grand and sinister portrait of his grandfather, the old Excellency... He is incomparable when he describes very old people, doomed people, men and women who have to die very soon, or women who are hopelessly in love - they never complain, suffer silently, or they talk about quite extraneous matters... He is wonderful, you know, when he takes ^{us} into a room full of people and makes us catch little bits of the conversation on this time and that. Seemingly the chat of all those people doesn't make very much sense;



8) but we can always feel their secret tragedy, the drama which they try to conceal... Yes, he is a master of giving the great drama between the lines... All the characters in his books seem to be ~~so hopelessly sad, they are some-~~ ~~how doomed/~~ burdened with some horrid mystery... The acrobats in The Four Devils - :oh, you must read The Four Devils, it certainly is one of the best stories he wrote...; and that poor little waiter who loves beautiful things and perfums and beautiful faces, but realizes that he will never ~~lose~~ ^{lose} them, so he commits suicide... Or that story of the young nurse, Ida Brandt, who works in the lunatic asylum, and is in love with a handsome fellow who exploits her... She pays all his dinners, and she ~~has~~ carried in her bag a large purse - a purse as a man would ~~have~~ ^{use it} ~~one~~ ^{you see} - , and she slips him the purse under the table-cloth as the waiter must not notice that it isn't his own money ~~he~~ ^{he} pays with... There are so many touching little features of this kind in all of his books," the Baroness said. "But sometimes one finds a poignant sentence, a really ^{breath-taking} ~~important~~ sentence, among all these tender, ~~and~~ melancholy details. Here, in The Grey House, for instance... Yes, I'm pretty sure, the striking paragraph I am looking for, must be in this book... ~~And here we are...~~"

And she read aloud, with a strangely raucous voice as though she ~~had certainly~~ had a sudden lump in her throat:

It is said that he who looks on Jehova, dies. But I say: if a single
creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his
soul, he would die. And if it were conceivable that a man should see himself
to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his
head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

There was a long silence.

Finally one of the women said: "I wonder if he will have a good time in this country. After all, we are a tough people, here in America - and he seems to be... how shall I say... somehow morbid..."

*

9) When Hermann Bang arrived, one morning late in January, he was received by a large committee. It was the Baroness A. who recognised him - a frail, trembling little figure among the ~~other~~ more robust other travellers. But he could hardly conceal her terror about his changed appearance; her eyes ^{grew} round with fright when she ^{shook hands with} ~~met~~ him and said: "Hallo, Herman... dear Hermann..." He had a pallid, detracted smile: ~~Hallo, hallo...~~ ^{he} ~~gabbled,~~ "Nice to see you... so many people... charming... enchanté..." He looked around with a scared, almost panic glance, as if he saw horrid ghosts. ~~It was obvious that he had recognised none of them.~~

Mr. Opffer, Bang's old schoolmate, finally exclaimed with a forced joviality: "Hello, old boy! You look fine... Didn't change at all..."

Herman Bang slowly turned ^{his face} towards him - his yellow, ~~his~~ wrinkled, wretched face. For a few seconds it seemed numb, lofty, hostile as the face of a dead: the horrifying face of a royal mummy. Then he smiled again, and now his smile was indulgent, forgiving and understanding, though slightly contempt ^{now} ~~ing~~ and infinitely tired. "Oh, isn't this Emil?" he said. "Old Emil Opffer... ^{sweet of you to come} ~~now~~ ~~fine~~! No, we don't change, old fellow. We certainly do not change..."

They took him to the Hotel Astor. The ladies of the reception committee were half-delighted, half-scared with his personality. All of them agreed: "He's the most nervous creature I've ever seen." They observed he was constantly trembling as though a gigantic fist kept on shaking him mercilessly. His way of walking also was surprising, - a hasty and at the same time toilsome sort of trip; sometimes one might have thought him tiptoeing over glowing stones. Everyone was inclined to treat him as a very old man or a sick ^{by} ~~and~~ little boy. He was so utterly weak and helpless.

The members of the committee were surprised when they found his apartment at the "Astor" full of flowers and visiting-cards. The telephone was constantly ringing; visitors were announced by the score. He wanted to see all of them. Not only Danes appeared, but also Swedes, Norwegians, Fins, Germans, and even some Americans. The bell-boys delivered

one box of flowers after another. And in the middle of this teeming crowd that thronged his drawingroom, sat Herman Bang, in a fantastic dressing-gown of brocade, bewildered, scared and pleased, faintly smiling.

"You have so many friends," whispered the Baroness A. "Isn't it wonderful?" He silently squeezed her hand.

The next day Bang wanted to see the sights of New York City. The consensus of opinion among the members of the ~~the~~ Committee, however, was that it would be sheer murder to let him out on the streets alone. The traffic of the metropolis would certainly frighten him out of his wits. Mr. Eskensen, manufacturer and amateur-poet, sent a young man from his office to escort Bang wherever he went. It was ~~a~~ ^{that} ~~tough, robust fellow~~ ^{and handsome named Johnny,} who had been chosen as a guide and ~~guardian angel~~ ^{body-guard}. On street ~~crossings~~ crossings he almost carried the slim little figure of Herman Bang, and on trains he literally took him as one would take a child, and put him down on a seat. "Thank you," smiled the poet. "Thank you very much." And the ~~guardian angel~~ ^{boy:} "You're perfectly welcome, sir, I'm sure."

~~"What is your name?"~~ asked the poet.

"John," said the ~~guardian angel~~ ^{boy.}

He was born in this country. "But my folks came from Denmark," he declared proudly.

The poet seemed to be very interested in every detail of John's life, past, present, or future. How much money did he earn in Mr. Eskensen's office? Was he living with his family? How many brothers and sisters did he have? What was his fiancée's name? Was she blond or dark? Was he very much in love with her? ~~The guardian angel~~ ^{Johnny} laughed, slightly embarrassed. "I guess so. ~~And~~ She's ~~all right~~ ^{a swell kid}."

But the poet went on asking questions. "Is your fiancée very pretty? Does she love you very much?" ~~The guardian angel~~ ^{Johnny, presumed,} thought that she was crazy about him. "You know how them girls are," he added mysteriously. The poet said: "You are very strong." And the ~~guardian angel~~ ^{lad} seemed flat-

11) tered. - "Very athletic," said the poet appreciatively. ~~The~~ ^{John} ~~guardian-~~
~~angel~~ declared that he was an amateur boxer: " - and a pretty good one,
too, they say."

Unset 11a.

~~The poet seemed more fascinated by~~ ~~John's~~ ~~naive, clumsy chat than by~~
~~any curiosities which New York had to offer.~~ "This is the Times Building,"
explained John. "Pretty tall, isn't it?" The poet had an absent-minded
smile. "Tremendous," he nodded, and then repeated with grave, almost horrified
voice. "It's tremendous...tremendous..." ^{this companion} ~~John~~ asked: "What'd'you=
~~mean, Mr. Bang?~~" Whereupon the poet made a hasty little gesture as if he
tried to frighten away something that was disturbing him, a nightmare, an
alarming vision. He laughed, somewhat convulsively. "It's idiotic. I'm
seeing midday chimeras..." - "What d'you see?" ^{John remembered that} ~~the guide~~ ^{grew rather sus-}
^{his boss had} ~~picious. Hadn't they~~ ^{about} ~~told him, in advance,~~ ^{being} ~~that Mr. Bang,~~ a little funny?
Well - he certainly was.

"I am nervous," the poet declared, apologetically. "But it somehow struck
me - you and the building together. It reminded me of a young god, ^{my} ~~walking~~
among huge rocks...gigantic rocks, and he plays with him...There is a new
wilderness, a new jungle, new mountains - the skyscrapers, piled up ^{by} human
hands...There is a new innocence, a new strength...Yes, there are New Gods,"
he whispered, standing motionless ⁱⁿ the middle of Times Square, surrounded
by cars as by dangerous monsters.

'Eze, he is nuts, ^{all night} thought John. He was terrified. At the same time he
liked his odd protégé more than ever before. 'Poor little guy,' he felt,
while he begged him, with a gentle though determined voice: "Come along,
Herman! Come along! You can't stand here, you're disturbing the traffic -
don't you hear? Them damned drivers are shouting at you..."

And he ^{pushed} ~~guided~~ him across the street - a reliable ^{guide} ~~man~~, pro-
tecting the frail and problematic child of another land, of another age.

"Thanks," murmured the poet when they had safely reached the other side
of the street. "Thank you, John."

Jonny considered it his duty to show this foreigner so much as possible of New York. Besides he was proud of the city as if he had built it himself. They went up-town and down-town, and Herman Bang had to visit China Town and Harlem and Brooklyn and Central Park. "It's bigger than Copenhagen, isn't it?" Jonny asked it for the seventh time, and laughed heartily about his own little joke. But Bang remained serious. "It's tremendous," he said. "It's huge. Like a monster with innumerable members - greedy and cruel and grand - and constantly growing...growing, growing, growing... enlarging on more and more room...killing and creating human beings..."

- Jonny was somewhat surprised, even embarrassed by this confused, poetical talk. "This is the Times Building," he explained. "Pretty tall, isn't it?"

- And Herman Bang, again with his anxious, distorted smile: "It's tremendous...tremendous..." - Jonny grew slightly worried. "What 'd you mean, Mr. Bang?"

[To continue directly,
with "Whereupon..."]

(A)
He did not know himself whether he was thanking him for his efficient protection against the aggressive cars and the rude drivers - or for his having called him Herman.

*

Then came the evening of Herman Bang's lecture at the Hotel ²⁷Beevort. The members of the arrangement committee arrived very early, although Danish affairs in New York usually commence an hour or so after the announced time. Mr. Opffer, Mr. Eskensen and the other gentlemen were surprised to find the hall already half filled. By the time ~~the~~ ^{John} ~~guardian-angel~~ delivered his precious charge, - the speaker - , the hall was filled to seating capacity, and people began to take up standing room against the walls. Finally Mr. Eskensen had to close the doors. Outside he heard angry words. A furious voice was calling the respectable committee "a bunch of stupid fools" ~~as~~ to take a hall like that ~~which everyone could see~~ was not half large enough. At last people were standing outside on the street and could not even get into the vestibule.

The Baroness ^{A.} was more worried by this surprising crowd than she would have been by an empty house. "What do they come for?" she kept on asking herself. "It can't be genuine literary interest. Do they want to watch a great fiasco, a strange performance? Are they just attracted by his bad reputations? Do they want to inspect the notorious model of so many cartoons in the Copenhagen magazines?"

^{I'm so very happy,}
"~~Everything will be fine,~~" she said to Herman Bang. "We have never had such a crowd before. It's a great evening, Herman." ~~I am very happy.~~
But he did not answer. He was exceedingly nervous. "Where is John?" he asked. John was chatting, somewhere in the background, with a machinist.

"I want you to stand at this door, next to the platform, while I am reading," said Bang. Ant to the Baroness, as if this was a simple explanation for everything: "He is my guardian-angel, you know."

The ladies and gentlemen who had received Herman Bang at the harbour,
only a few days before,

13)

hardly recognised him when he appeared on the platform. He seemed neither nervous nor bashful any ^{longer} ~~more~~. What an amazing transformation! The man who improvised a little opening speech, looked ~~ten~~ ten years younger than the pathetic creature who had greeted them on the quay. He was spright, vivid, eloquent. His words poured copious and articulate: it was a pleasure to listen.

~~After the short introductory address he read the first chapter of his recent novel, Without a Country. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For Bang did not just read the story of the great violinist who was travelling in the Orient Express Train, he was acting it. He was playing, indeed, not merely the leading character - Joan, the homeless virtuosi - , but also his various colleagues as they were chatting, gossiping, intriguing in the dining car. He transformed himself into the conceited French composer, the greedy pianist, the haughty wife of the diplomat who contemptuously watched all these behemoths as though they were wild animals in a zoo. He did not stay on his chair, moved around; for now he was the waiter, balancing the tray full of glasses - and a ~~second~~ moment later, he was Joan again, the homeless one, half-aristocrat and half-gipsy. He imitated voices, fragments of conversations whirled through the room, he screamed like a woman, laughed like an old man, he spoke with French, Hungarian, English and German accents, he parodied the silly vanity of a tenor, the coquetish gestures of an ageing woman singer, the reserved elegance of the aristocratic lady. It was exceedingly amusing, very funny and very sad. The empty platform was crowded with garrulous, excited people, a motley, colourful party, witty people, silly people, or obtuse and sodden people. All of them lived, and had their own faces and gestures and their own tragedies. It was as the hypnotizing trick of a magician: the platform seemed transformed into the dining car; one could even hear the monotonous noise of the wheels.~~

~~The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled, moved, enthusiastic.~~

13^a
After the short introductory address he read a few chapters of his novel Denied a Country. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For he did not just read the story of Joán Ujhazy, "the prince of No-Country" and great violinist, he was acting it, indeed, he was living it on the stage. Yes, he actually was Joán in whose veins so manifold sorts of blood were intermingled; Danish blood, and Hungarian and Roumanian blood. The audience almost wept when Bang imitated old Ane, young Joán's Danish nurse, who used to sing for him:

"There is a lovely land
Beside the sweeping billows
On Baltic's briny strand.
It winds afeer in hill and dale,
Old Denmark is its name
And it is Freys's hall."

And later, in the international French boarding-school, where Joán was educated, all the boys nailed up the ~~flags of~~ over their beds the respective flags of their country. But Joán had no flag, ~~for he had~~ no country. "Well, his mother was a Dane," declared one of the boys. But another of his fellow-pupils ^{remarked} ~~was~~ cruelly: "You can't have half a country."

Joan had neither spoken nor moved - he sat there at the foot of Harald's bed and the colour of the foreign flag seemed reflected on his face as a deep blush.

Then he asked, pretending not to have heard what had just been said: 'But why don't they live in their own countries?'

'Who?' said Harald.

'The poets.'

Harald pursed his lips.....:

'....you can't do great work unless you have a longing in your heart. That's why we all live abroad, all those who count.'

There was a grave silence in the hall filled with Danish Americans, ~~when Herman Bang read this dialogue,~~ But the audience grew very gay, and many shrieked with laughter, when he ^{re}described the dinner in the Orient Express. Joán shared the table with his Australian accompanist Henry Collyett, who practised ten hours a day, "and as soon as he gets out of doors he says he's longing for Melbourne."

136)
The slim little man on the platform transformed himself into the stout Dutchman, Herr Haagemester, who was accompanied by his North German 'cellist - a youth whose mouth was exactly the size of a sherry: - and Herman Bang, for a few moments, had a cherry mouth. In the next second, however, he ^{spoke with} ~~had~~ the mighty, trained voice of M. Jean Roy of the Paris Opéra who could be heard above all the rest. ~~He slept splendidly in a sleeping car - he announced - splendidly.~~ And ^{then} ~~he~~ ^{assumed} the haughty attitude of the German Minister at Bucharest and his wife who examined the ~~virtuosi~~ virtuosos through her lorgnon as though they were wild animals in a zoo.

The inspired speaker did not stay on his chair; ^{he} moved around, for now he was the waiter who balanced the tray with the cups of bouillon, - and a moment later he was Joan again, who heard the Minister's wife say to her husband: "Is he another virtuoso?" - in a tone which showed she had expected something more distinguished from ~~him~~. ~~Joan's finger-tips felt sore as they touched the table-cloth... And everybody in the audience believed that Herman Bang's finger-tips, which were thin and brittle and brown with nicotine, were aching.~~

↓
Fragments of conversations whirled through the room, every language of Europe could be heard, and Bang imitated all of them, he was the French composer, Monsieur Bizot, who moved his stiff blue hands incessantly over the table-cloth, as though raking together invisible heaps of gold - perhaps the monthly rents from the houses of ill fame which the composer of Legend of St. Cecilia owned in the provincial towns of the Midi. He ^{the} ~~claimed~~ with the beautiful tenor of M. Jean Roy: "To the supremacy of French art!" - clinking glasses with Monsieur Bizot, while two young Roumanians, hidden away in the opposite corner, clapped their ring-covered hands. Their dinner jackets fitted them like a skin, and so did Herman Bang's elegant dress-suit which was made in London.

^(Hilarity)
The ~~amusement~~ of the audience ~~in the Hotel Brevoirt~~ reached its climax when the mixed crowd in the Orient Express dinner car began to discuss

13e)
business: all at once the whole band of "respected colleagues" plunged into the topic of money and investments, bonuses, debentures, and dividends - while Joan alone remained silent under the lorgnon which the ~~first~~ Minister's wife turned in astonishment from one stock-jobber to another - his fellow artists. One of them declared that nothing - nothing was so safe in the long run as New York real estate. "My dear fellow, ~~he~~ ~~said~~, "the future lies in America. We shall live to see New York outgrow London." Some people, he said, swore by New Orleans; but one ought never to invest money in a place one didn't know.

But the audience ^{turned} ~~was~~ serious again, when Herman Bang ~~said~~, transformed again into Joan, the gipsy-aristocrat, ^{politely though firmly declared:} "No, madame, I never speculate... And for that matter I've known so few artists die rich." - A sudden silence fell upon the car. Madame de Stein, the French pianist, made a gesture of the hand as if to push straggling hair from her forehead, though there was none there - while all at once the panting noise of the train seemed to engulf everything, and the rattling of doors and windows struck upon the ear.....

The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled, moved, enthusiastic.



"He is a wizard!" they exclaimed. "He is absolutely amazing! He has a thousand faces, and each of them is so human..."

After the intermission he read a short story dealing with a meek and humble creature, an elderly spinster by the name of Irene Holm. She is a former ballet dancer, and now has to give dancing-lessons to clumsy lads and girls in a northern village. There was no plot, no exciting action in the dreary story of Irene Holm; he just arrives in that remote village, with her few belongings in an old champagne basket, and she constantly freezes, and is infinitely pathetic with her worn-out clothes and her worn-out smile. When the "season" is over, she has to pack up her poor champagne basket again, and the little farewell-party she arranges, is the melancholy climax of the sad account. For Mlle. Holm becomes a little tipsy - just a tiny little bit - and her pupils persuade her to dance a solo, something serious, of the sort ^{of dance} she used to ^{perform} in the "real theatre". And she dances la grande Napolitaine. She ^{shows} ~~performs~~ all the affected, graceful steps and poses she has learned thirty years ago. She is very ridiculous, very tragic. People laugh at her. It is just an ordinary failure, nothing else. Irene Holm weeps, and the sympathetic daughter of the pastor tries to comfort her. It is just one of those minor tragedies; a rather depressing story. Yet, how interesting, how fascinating was it when the author read it aloud! He tripped and skipped over the stage, copying the grotesque and moving spectacle of Irene Holm's unsuccessful performance. He imitated the music, the ^{boys} cruel laughter of the peasant ^{boy}, the silly giggling of provincial girls. His face was marked with all the ^{suffering} ~~gains~~ the poor old danseuse had to ^{bear} ~~go through~~. He seemed exhausted and his face was wet with tears when he ended his reading.

~~There was only one opinion, repeated again again by the entire audience: It was the greatest success in this line of entertainment that the Danes in New York had ever experienced.~~

137 The show was not yet over ^{with the end of} when the formal lecture . For Bang went on chatting, laughing, smiling, shaking hands with everybody. He evidently enjoyed the flowers that heaped up on a ~~the~~ little table on the stage. He carried several big bouquets to the bar of the hotel where a numerous party had gathered and received him with anew ~~with~~ applause. He smiled, took a bow, and then ^{turned} ~~became~~ suddenly very serious. "It's wonderful in America," he said softly to the Baroness who was standing next to him. "I am having a wonderful time here with all of you."

He was animated, he sparkled; sometimes his gaiety ^{seemed} ~~was~~ somewhat hectic. He told humorous stories about his burlesque experiences as a theatrical critic, a lecturer and an agent. The lengthy tale of the Herman Bang tournée, twenty years ago, was funny as well as touching, a real tragi-comedy. Oh, all those dreary provincial places in Denmark and Norway, ~~he described that~~ they had visited! - he described them as though they were ridiculous little infernos, the very essence of boredom. "And we constantly performed all ^{my} ~~those~~ childish one act-plays, ~~I had written,~~ He ~~had~~ ^{and} laughed heartily; the mere idea of those poor dramatic attempts seemed terribly funny to him. 'The people snored in the theatre - yes, they literally snored... Our impresario was distressed, and finally asked me to arrange a religious concert with the musical members of my company. He was a sort of expert for religious concerts, you see. 'Yes, Sir,' he used to say, 'that way you appeal to the finest feelings of the people, you get the public, and the churches are not expensive.' " He was very amusing as he imitated drastically the impresario's strange way of talking, ^{and of moving his hands.}

The Baroness who listened with an almost painful attention, was ~~was~~ enchanted and at the same time alarmed. She screamed with laughter, she was charmed, delighted; yet she could not help thinking: 'There is something wrong about him. I don't know what it is. He is absolutely divine, I have never seen him like this; but there is a certain twinkle

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in his eyes which I don't like: in fact, it frightens me... Perhaps he is taking drugs,' she thought, and was very worried by this new idea. 'Yes, that's probably why he has this convulsive laughter. He uses narcotics, I am sure... Poor Herman Bang. My poor friend...'

He had started, meanwhile, to tell anecdotes about people he used to know in Paris, ~~Hans~~ Helsingfors, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. He described impressively the permanent underground struggle of the Czech people against their Austrian suppressors. He imitated the great Viennese actress, Frau Wolters. Then he praised Réjane, the Parisian vedette. Whereupon he plunged into a story on a clown he had once seen in London. "You are at home everywhere," ^{observed} ~~remarked~~ one of the ladies admiringly. "Or - nowhere...", said Herman Bang.

And a gentleman, at the other end of the table, said with a deep, ~~low~~ ominous voice: "Denied a Country..." - which was ~~some~~ senseless, yet mysteriously shocking.

The waiters appeared with the dessert. The large-bosomed matron who had been so afraid of Herman Bang's ~~being~~ ^(character) malicious, offered him a plate with ice cream and hot chocolate sauce. "That's something for you, Mr. Bang," she said. "It's pervers..."

Late at night John, ~~the guardian angel,~~ ^{and} ~~delivered~~ his celebrated problem-child ^{returned to} ~~in the lobby of~~ the Astor Hotel. "You were so taciturn during this whole evening," Herman Bang said. "Didn't you like my lecture?" - And the ^{young man assured} ~~athletic champion~~: "On the contrary... I enjoyed it, ^{very much} ~~very much~~." ^{loudly} ~~loudly~~ ^{it was good...} ~~loudly~~, I did. But, at the same time, I felt... kind of bewildered... I had no idea you were such a ^{grand} ~~swell~~ actor, and knew so many stories... And you certainly know how to deal with women! The whole bunch was crazy about you - and there were pretty babs among them, all right. That Baroness, for instance, ^{she has:} ~~was~~ a tip-top figure, I'd like to make her... Why don't you make her, ~~frankly~~ Mr. Bang? You could have her -

14)
like that!" He smacked his fingers ~~to~~ in order to show how little effort the novelist would need to seduce the Baroness.

Bang had a bleak, ^{plaintive} ~~and distant~~ smile. "You're right, I guess," he said after a pause, and made ^{his} fidgety little gestures. "Well - good night, sleep well, my boy." then, And he hastily tripped toward the elevator, moving his feet in a toilsome way as though he was walking over glowing stones.

+

Two days later Bang had to leave New York on his long journey to the westcoast. Early in the morning John appeared at the "Astor" to help him packing his things, ~~for Bang had declared that he was absolutely unable~~

Both ~~the poet and his robust guardian angel~~ were silent for a while. Bang looked more tired and sickly than ever.)

Finally John said: "I hate to see you make that trip alone... You aren't tough enough, Mr. Bang... You look kind of pale, anyhow... You should take along some strong fellow..."

"I'd like to take you with me," said Bang.

"Why don't you?" ^{There was a} ~~said John with~~ sudden hope in John's voice.

*And Bang, after a long pause, very softly: "It would be a great mistake, John. It would certainly be a fatal blunder."

John did not understand what he meant.

They did not talk anymore.

Before they left the hotel, Bang gave him a cigarette box and one of his books with a dedication. It was the Danish version of Denied a Country. John was a little disappointed as he could hardly read any Danish. But he liked the cigarette box. "It's much too precious," he said. "Gee! - it's heavy gold..."

Bang made a desperate effort to smile.

"You're so ^{good}," said John, and suddenly touched ~~him~~ ^{Bang's} brittle, delicate

18) fingers with his big, clumsy hand. "You should have children, ~~Mr. Bang~~. You'd be a swell daddy, I'm sure. Why don't you have a son, Mr. Bang?"

He did not answer. After a few seconds he merely said: "We must hurry, boy. It's ^{gettin'?} ~~very~~ late..." ~~And he added with an odd glance that seemed to embrace and at the same time to pierce his young friend John: "I'm afraid, indeed, it may be already too late..."~~

A number of friends had come to the train to see him off. There were Mr. Opffer, Mr. Madsen, Mr. ~~W~~ Eskensen, the large-bosomed lady, and the Baroness. Bang ~~made fidgety little gestures, uttered confused sentences, had a convulsive, distorted smile~~ ^{and} did not find his railway ticket, was haunted by the idea of losing his many bags. "Where are my things?" he kept on asking nervously. "The little bag with my books...? Oh, it's terrible, dreadful... ~~like~~ like a nightmare..."

"Why do you leave?" asked the Baroness. "Why don't you stay here, with us? Why must you go to the westcoast?"

He gave her a glance as a wounded deer ~~his~~ gazes at ~~it~~ its merciless hunter.

'He is doomed,' she felt. 'He is lost. I am sure he takes narcotics - cocaine, or morphine, or how those diabolic concoctions may be called. His face is so terribly ^{pale} ~~white~~, and he constantly trembles... Poor Herman - my poor friend...'

John helped him into a seat and wrapped him up like a sick child.

"I hate to see you go," he said, once more.

"Thanks," said Herman Bang without looking at him.

^{Youthful protector}
His ~~guardian angel~~ left him. He was alone. He was freezing in spite of the heavy blankets.

Outside the friends waved goodbye as the train started slowly to move. "He looks so bewildered," said Mr. Opffer. "So weak..."

* And Mr. Eskensen wondered, "Shall we ever see him again?" - while John said to the Baroness, with a raucous, almost suffocated

141)
voice: "He's a funny guy. But a good fellow - a damned good fellow, that's what he is."

The Baroness nodded. John noticed that her beautiful eyes were ^{moist} with tears. 'She is mighty fond of him, all right,' he felt - while she finally whispered: "You must tell me more about him, John. I know him for such a long time; but I didn't see very much of him while he was in New York. He was very busy - with sight-seeing..." There was a little twinkle in her eyes: a naughty little ^{stark} ~~sparkle~~ of jealousy, John thought. But her smile grew friendly as she added: "You must have a cup of tea with me, ^{one of these days} ~~shortly~~. For I am very eager, indeed, to learn all about his impressions of New York, and what he was liking best. That, ~~one~~ above all, ^(interests me:) what he did like best..."

John was extremely flattered by the idea of having tea with the Baroness. "Thanks," he said, and as he looked at her he felt again that she was a pretty woman, indeed, still fairly attractive, despite of her mature age.

"How about tomorrow, around five?" she asked - and while he happily accepted, both of them blushed as though they were struck by a sudden feeling of guilt.

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He interrupted the journey at Chicago where he had another lecture date. He met people and saw old friends again. He saw nobody. He was blind. He heard ~~neither~~ the nice nor the malicious phrases addressed to him. He was deaf. He spoke, and his own voice sounded strange to him. He did not know what he was talking about. He said: "I am fascinated by America. It's colossal. I am eager to see more of it." But how could he see anything as he was struck with blindness? "I am in a hurry," he said. "The transcontinental train... ^{on} The boat is waiting. How far ^{away} is San Francisco?" They said, 2000 miles or so. He nodded: "Yes, yes, it's colossal." He was absent minded. He did not

want to visit the famous stock-yards, nor seemed he interested in the museum or the public library. He insisted, "I am in a hurry...": as if ~~driving him, pressing~~ a mysterious power - a storm or a tremendous, invisible hand - was driving him, urging him, pressing him.

He entered his compartment on the transcontinental train as a prisoner ~~entering~~ the dead cell where he must await ^{his} execution.

They said ~~himself~~: "Have a nice trip, Mr. Bang! Don't forget to write us a post card from Shanghai!" And they ~~2~~ grinned as if they had made ^a the most funny joke.

He promised, "I certainly will."

They suggested: "You should stop at Salt Lake City. It's worthwhile seeing it..."

He groaned: "Yes...certainly...of course..." He ~~shuddered~~ ^{shuddered}, cruelly shaken by the invisible fist.

The days were long, and still longer. were the nights. He ~~hardly left~~ ^{did not leave} his compartment. He hardly slept. Without the solace of sleep he had to await the end of the night, the end of the journey.

~~He could not read.~~ He spent the days and many an hour of the nights staring through the window at a landscape that seemed to him monotonous and yet ever-changing. All he was able to think, for hours and hours, was this: 'How great this country is!... How ~~endless~~, huge, enormous - how endless... and how empty! I did not know that it is so empty... These tremendous plains are not inhabited by human beings. What an abundance of room - :space for millions and millions to come... unused space for ^{future} generations; ~~of men and women~~ guilty creatures, cursed, suffering creatures. ...But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die...

I ~~cannot~~ bear no responsibility for those innumerable tragedies that are in preparation. I am innocent, immaculate as a monk, not tainted

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with the ugly sin of propagation. I am detached, remote, free - as the travellers are. I have no country, no home, no children. No children. I am sterile.

There were ancient tribes who believed that ^athe sterile man was holy. There were others who considered him ~~doomed~~ ^{curved}.

I am ^{curved} ~~doomed~~.

America is pregnant with potential life. But I am no part of it. I am doomed.

Oh, America - pregnant with future laughter, future hatred, future love; loaded with the genius of its un-born sons, with the beauty of its un-born daughters, with the horror of coming revolutions, the atrocity of coming wars, the prosperity of promised peace... Oh, America, overburdened with possibilities and hopes - oh, endless ~~land~~ landscape, tremendous landscape, landscape of youth - : it is the deadly landscape for me. For ^{by} am detached and sterile, and I am doomed...

This dusty wilderness is my deadly landscape. These eternal highways have no goal, no aim for me. These empty plains show me the numb, the murderous features of the Medusa.

This country kills me ^{by} ~~through~~ its very greatness. It destroys me through its youthfulness, its strength, its ^{exuberant} reality. I knew it when I saw those skyscrapers, in New York; when I heard and saw and felt the laughter of that ^{young} fellow, John, my ^(guide and protection) ~~guardian~~ angel - who left me. This country kills me. I knew it when I arrived. I knew it when I left Copenhagen. I knew this was to be my last journey. ~~I knew where it is going to end.~~

America overwhelms me. I am through.

It dazes me with its rivers and manufactories, with its athletic youth, its negro songs, its cruel noise, its boredom, its naive enthusiasm, its steel muscles, ^(its vitality) its tremendous lust for life... with its greatness, ~~its horrible greatness, its inspiring greatness, its unbearable great-~~ ^{ness.}

The days pass on, and the night at last reach their end, but the train goes on running and running, the transcontinental train, the train without goal and aim... The ~~landscape~~ scenery changes: now the ^{locomotive} train has to climb steep hills, high mountains; there are rocks and ~~deep~~ deep valeys between snow-capped peaks. The traveller in the solitude of his elegant ^{compartment} felt a new apprehension; but this time it was a physical ^{pang} ~~pain~~. His heart - he knew it - ~~was~~ could not stand this high altitude. ~~The~~ Doctors had warned him before he left; but he had smiled and shrugged in his absent-minded manner. Now, there it was, the heart-attack, ~~the sharp pang,~~ the spasm: he could hardly breathe.

He swallowed his medicine, hastily. The painful fit passed. The train speeded downhill.

He got over the dangerous attack - for the time being. But there were other mountains to come - higher ones, very high ones: he knew it. ^(the sudden change of atmosphere) Would his organism stand the thin air? - 'And if not...?' he thought, with an ^{desperate} ~~embittered~~ obstinacy. 'I am through, anyhow. I am not eager to see San Francisco, ^{or} the Buddha temples in the Far East. I renounce the trip around the world. The shortest way to your own heart leads you around the world...' Which philosopher has coined this dubious bonmot? However, he was mistaken... I ^{may} ~~have~~ solved the riddle, halfway. I recognise the cruel laws ^{that} ~~which~~ dominate my life. I accept them, shuddering but without resistance. I accept them.

...If it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

I do not complain.

Patiently I wait for the end of the night - and I know the dawn will shine with a bloody splendor...

He examined his map and found out that the State of Utah was situated in considerable altitude: the lowest point, in Salt Lake Valley,

4,210 feet above sea-level. "Climate healthy and delightful..." the prospect ~~was~~ assured -: 'Not for me,' thought the traveller.

He went on reading, mechanically, without really grasping the sense of the words. "Scarcety of timber and verdure... Much of the soil is strongly impregnated with salt and alkali.... Many parts are still ~~desert~~ pure desert, hopelessly barren..."

'That's what I am - : hopelessly barren... My heart, my soul, my brains, my body... hopelessly barren...'

And he read the amazing story of the Pioneers of Utah: President Young, travelling across the plains and mountains, with 143 men, three women and two children; living in tents, wagons and log huts; protecting themselves from hostile Indians, prowling wolves and other wild beast; stubbornly faithful, according to their own special interpretation of the Holy Word. This was hardly seventy years ago, but it sounded like an ancient, heroic tale - the saga of the Mormons, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, expelled from Illinois, wandering through wilderness and unknown land, attracted by the Great West, finally settling on the shores of a Lake the waters of which were salty - salty as tears...
(the Dead Sea of America, /
 the Lake of Tears, the City of Tears, the Valley of Tears...

'I am approaching the Region of Tears. How far away is that mystic Lake? A shower of inward tears gives the answer: ~~It's not far anymore~~ / You are near the goal...'

~~And~~ Those Mormons - didn't they believe in having several wives? He remembered having read something of this sort. 'How odd! 143 men, and only three women... and yet every man in principle ~~could~~ claimed several females...'

~~He chuckled softly, and then was frightened by the sound of his own laughter~~

I wouldn't make a good Mormon,' - and he chuckled softly, but was frightened by the sound of his own laughter in the great solitude of

24/ ~~at~~ his compartment, of this trains in ^{the} midst of the passing-by, empty, tremendous landscape.

My Island has no women. Who is there for me to love?

He recalled, with a sudden pang, these words, spoken by Joan Ujhazy, on one of the last pages of ~~his last novel~~ "Denied a Country". The homeless one, melancholy hero of the novel, had tried to find home: he went to Denmark, and it was a failure. Before leaving his estranged homeland, he made a walk with an old friend who also had ruined his life. "But you, Joan," he said presently - "we're still young men - why don't you get a wife?" - "I?" said Joan. They were both watching the approaching night express; the light of its locomotive searched them out like a fiery eye. - "I?" repeated Joan, and his voice was as bloodless as his face; "Erik, I must die alone."

I must die alone...

I...must....die alone...ALONE...

He was almost ~~alone~~ asleep. He heard the noise of the wheels - their monotonous, agonizing rhythm, against which Joan's voice, his own dream-voice kept struggling. "This was my last tour," said Joan. "And to-night has brought it to an end. Because I have heard a greater. He can play of greater things. He plays of a new joy."

A new joy... He saw John, the tough ~~knave~~ ^(and winged guide), dancing, jumping, flying between the ~~my~~ skyscrapers. He was half-naked, wearing only ~~little pants~~ purple shorts and huge leather gloves. He was a prize fighter, he was very strong, his punch was deadly, his laughter was deadly; deadly - his youth, his strength, his cruel innocence...

'He'll hit me,' felt the sleeper.

And there was the blow. ~~It was painful~~

It was very painful. He tried to get up but did not succeed. He was paralysed, he was numb. His heart ached. He pressed his chest with his

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trembling hand. He wanted to scream but had no voice. He groaned. He knew that this was the end.

The train had stopped in the midst of a grand and terrifying landscape - a Biblical scenery, barren and heroic, threatening and enchanting with icy mountains, sharply profiled against a glowing sky. The sky was pouring a hard, metallic light. Between the rocks ice-blue waters fell to the depths. The air was filled with a high, clinking noise - the triumphant song of the dawn, the cruel hymn of a beginning day.

A couple of days later Mr. Opffer, editor of the Nordlyset, received a press telegram from Ogden, Utah, telling that the great Danish author and lecturer Herman Bang had been taken from the ~~the~~ trans-continental train in a dying condition and brought to a hospital in that city where he died at 6 a.m. Mr. Opffer immediately called up Mr. Eskensen who said: "Poor fellow! I have expected something of this kind. He had such a pale little face..." - "What can we do now?" asked Mr. Opffer. Mr. Eskensen suggested to have the death-mask taken. Mr. Opffer said this was an excellent idea. Two lengthy telegrams were made up out, the one to the Danish Vice Consul at Ogden, Mr. Thorvald Orlob, the other to Mr. O.D. Rasmussen, owner of a chain and department stores in Utah and Wyoming. Both gentlemen were only too happy to do this little thing for a distinguished compatriot who ^{had} died friendless in their own neighborhood.

Mr. Eskensen informed the Baroness. "It was ~~an event~~ something like an apoplexy of the heart," he declared. ~~And he added~~ "As to the memorial service, we may hold it in the little Danish church in the Bronx. We want to make it simple but dignified. A few speakers - Stephan Hansen, and Jonas Lie - although he is Norwegian - , and Emile Bomen. And we hope to get Holger Birkerod to sing the Ave Maria. Did you ever hear him? He has a wonderful voice..."

But the Baroness did not listen. She seemed petrified. She could

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hardly move her fingers or her lips. ~~She only felt: he is dead.~~

"He is dead," she ~~said~~ told John, a few hours later. ~~And he knew when she meant.~~

He wept. The tears ~~he~~ streamed copiously from his eyes which he did not cover. His face was not distorted as he cried. It was the strong and beautiful face of a mourning young god.

He shouted: "It is our fault!" - and rose his powerful fists, angrily.

"What do you mean - our fault?" ~~his sister~~

He desperately insisted: "We have killed him!" And he shook his effulgent head and the fists. *(Nobody is responsible. We are not to blame.)*

"Be quiet!" she implored him. "You are talking nonsense. ~~For he wanted to die.~~"

But he went on shaking his head in despair. "We've killed him. America has killed him. He couldn't ^{take} it. He was different. The skyscrapers scared him, the big country scared him, I scared him. We have murdered him - all of us!"

She took his face between her hands. ~~It~~ It was wet with tears. She dried his face with her ~~soft, tender~~ fingers. She kissed ~~his~~ his cheeks and his lips. She tasted the bitter taste of his tears. She begged him:

"Be quiet!...Be quiet, my sweetheart - don't cry! I am with you..."

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VIII

Journey to the End of the Night.

(HERMAN BANG)

Like a running sore this unending street,
with all of us at the bottom of it, filling
it from side to side, from one sorrow to the
next, moving towards an end no one has ever
seen, the end of all the streets in all the
world.

Louis-Ferdinand Celine.

One day in the middle of January 1912, some twenty members of the Danish Colony in New York received a letter calling them to a meeting at the Hotel McAlpin to discuss "a matter of the greatest importance for all of us." The document was signed by Mr. M.C. Madsen, who at that time was constructing Long Beach, L.I., and was one of the most respected Danes in America.

They all gathered at the appointed hour, and Mr. Madsen declared in a solemn little speech that he was very sorry to bring up a matter which would undoubtedly give the whole party a terrible shock: - Herman Bang was coming to America!

This was indeed a surprise. Everyone was startled. Only an ignorant young fellow who had been born in America and whose ideas of the old country were of the haziest, asked naively: Who is Herman Bang? His name was John: he was a good-looking lad.

What a foolish question! Everyone knew who Herman Bang was, although very few of the persons present had ever read a line of his work. They were mostly Danes who had lived in this country for a number of years, and had had little opportunity to keep up with contemporary Danish literature. Yet they were all acquainted with the stories that circulated concerning that curious, and notorious personality, Herman Bang - the Danish novelist, critic and lecturer, for years a famous target of caricature. His appearance was in itself an easy mark for both journalists and cartoonists, a fact of which the press had taken full advantage. These caricatures had found their way to the Danes in America, whereas Bang's writing had not.

"Well, you see," explained one of the older gentlemen, with some embarrassment, "Herman Bang - - well...he has a certain resemblance to Oscar Wilde..." - But the ignorant youth was still in the dark.

There was a muddle of questions, answers, proposals and nervous little exclamations. How did Mr. M.C. Madsen get the revolting news? - Why, quite simply - one of Bang's friends had written a letter, requesting Mr. Madsen to help Bang on his arrival and possibly to arrange a lecture for him in New York. He must have sailed already. His idea was to cross the United States, possibly giving a lecture or two on the way. At San Francisco or Los Angeles he would board one of the steamers of the Danish East Asiatic Co. and proceed around the world. One of the ladies remarked: "They say he's exceedingly fond of travelling..." Her face was sour and thoroughly disgusted, as though it were one of his unspeakable vices that she had been referring to.

"We must see to it that he goes back on the next steamer."
"The Danish Colony will never get over it!" "We simply cannot have him here!" - "He'll ruin our reputation in this country ..."-
"We'll all have to pay for it..."- Some of them still remembered Oscar Wilde's visit thirty years ago, which had been most embarrassing for all Englishmen in this country. His remark to the customs officers - Nothing to declare but my genius! - was an inauspicious beginning, and particularly indelicate in view of the seriousness of the occasion; he bored everybody by preaching the "Science of the Beautiful"; he was ridiculed by newspapers and

Harvard boys, snubbed by Harriet Beecher Store, and patronized in a dubious fashion by Walt Whitman. "But the British can afford a little scandal once in a while," said one of the Danish gentlemen. "Representatives of small nations should be more careful. We are certainly in no position to challenge public opinion..."

Someone else wondered whether Herman Bang still deserved to be called a Dane. Probably he was one of those modern writers who were capable only of destructive criticism; he had even scorned the Danish patriotic movement. And he led the life of a gipsy: Wasn't he in fact an exile from his country, an outcast vagabonding through the world? "A voluntary exile..." said the gentleman, but another patriot interrupted him: "Not quite voluntary, if you please! Mr. Bang had very good reasons for getting out of Copenhagen. The police were after him..." Somebody inquired: "Isn't the title of his last novel Homeless, or Without A Fatherland, or something like that?" A lady confirmed that Herman Bang's recent work did indeed bear the ominous title "Denied A Country". And she added: "It is an excellent book, too. I've read it."

The last speaker, a certain Baroness A., seemed to be the only one in this circle who had actually read a book by Herman Bang. She knew the world, had lived in Paris and St. Petersburg, and was a prominent member of the Danish Colony, although some of her compatriots considered her slightly eccentric. "It is quite a fascinating book," she said in a mild but determined voice. "It is something of a masterpiece, and it seems to me that we are very privileged to be able to welcome its author in New York."

This unexpected opinion had its effect on the gathering. They gradually realized two basic facts, which helped to calm their moral indignation. The Baroness's startling remark reminded them first, of the international reputation which Mr. Bang enjoyed, notwithstanding certain embarrassing rumors concerning his private life. And then one simply had to face the fact that the notorious compatriot was actually on his way. The Danish Colony had no alternative but to keep its chin up and accept the inevitable.

A sort of grave fatalism prevailed among the Scandinavian Americans at the McAlpin Hotel. Still somewhat grudgingly, they finally formed a sub-committee for the reception of Herman Bang. It consisted of Mr. Emil Opffer, an old schoolmate of Bang's and at that time editor of the Danish newspaper, Nordlyset, in New York; Mr. E.V. Eskesen, a prominent manufacturer and himself an amateur poet, and two other gentlemen. They made an appointment for a special meeting in Mr. Opffer's office.

They decided that, after all, a lecture might as well be arranged for Mr. Bang. His works were very popular in Germany, and some of them had even been translated into French, and other languages. The gentlemen had to admit that he was generally regarded as one of the outstanding figures of modern Danish literature. Naturally however, in view of the man's dubious personal reputation, a large hall would not be necessary. They chose the little concert hall in the Hotel Brevoort, on lower Fifth Avenue, which had a seating capacity of three hundred. They had tickets printed, advertisements inserted in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers, and they also sent out a thousand letters to Danes in

New York. They were still sceptical, of course, as to the eventual success of their efforts. But once they had made up their minds that the lecture must take place, they came to see the whole affair as connected with the patriotic cause. Each of the four gentlemen was even ready to pay his share of the inevitable deficit.

The ladies, meanwhile, eagerly discussed the subject of all this rumpus. Baroness A., la femme du monde, was the principal speaker at these lively tea parties. She even had a picture of Herman Bang, which was zealously examined by all her friends. The young man in the portrait was unusually and disturbingly attractive. The first thing that struck one was the prominent and finely formed back of his head, on which the smooth, glossy black hair gleamed; then one observed the mournful glance of the deepset eyes under their long lashes; then the infinite sensitiveness and nobility of the outline of the face, which the young man - melancholy but eager to please - turned to the spectator in half-profile.

"He looks like an Oriental prince," observed one of the ladies, half disapproving, half intrigued. The Baroness smiled: "Yet he is descended from one of our oldest and most distinguished families. Didn't you know his fine old grandfather, His Excellency Bang, the physician? He was a real figure in our country.. I remember his funeral so well. Several members of the royal family were there, and representatives from all the hospitals and universities. When I saw Herman some years ago in St. Petersburg, he used to tell me stories about the old gentleman. He adored him, you know... and

he was terribly lonely, really helpless after the old man's death. There was no money left, just a few thousand crowns. Herman wanted to become an actor; he's always had an unfortunate leaning for the theatre. But he has no talent at all - as an actor, I mean..." She laughed softly, remembering poor Herman Bang's total lack of talent for the stage. "I once saw him in Bergen," she went on. "He played Oswald, in Ibsen's Ghosts. It was horrible. People bombarded him with rotten apples, but he was in such an hysterical trance that he hardly noticed the uproar." She laughed again, while the other lady, a large-bosomed, very dignified matron, remarked with a sour smile: "That's what I thought. He makes a fool of himself." A younger woman, gazing at the picture, whispered: "But ... I had no idea ...he was so terribly handsome..."

"I'm afraid you've a disappointment in store, my dear," said the Baroness. "He's changed - he must be at least fifty by now. Poor thing, his face has become quite yellow and wrinkled. But he is still irresistible. My, how often I have been amused by Him! He's an impossible creature, you know, always decked out in bracelets and other jewelry. It makes a soft, jingling noise when he walks through a room. And with evening dress he wears a brocade waistcoat, and long white glacés under his coatsleeves: long ladies' gloves, you understand - he is really terrific! Once I had dinner with him at the Imperial Castle, in St. Petersburg. Did I tell you that the mother of the Czar used to be very fond of Bang? She loved to talk to him...Well, there we were, in the Imperial dining hall, with all those imposing butlers watching every movement we made. Now imagine - just imagine dear Herman stripping

off his long white glacé: it was absolutely sen-sa-tional! All the generals and high officials there were literally petrified with horror. But the old Empress - smiled...sweet old darling that she is!"

The Danish ladies smiled too, although they were quite able to understand the profound horror of the dignitaries at the sight of long ladies' gloves on a Scandinavian novelist. Yet they could not help being impressed by the fact that the Baroness and the poet had dined together at the Imperial Castle in St. Petersburg. "Very amusing, indeed," they agreed reluctantly. But the Baroness seemed not to hear, being absorbed once more in the fascinating portrait of Herman Bang. "He still has those wonderful eyes," she said, as though talking to herself. "When he looks at you they go through and through you, as if he were discovering everything, absolutely everything...Yes, I have a great fondness for him. And then of course he's very amusing too, and you couldn't imagine a more reliable friend..."

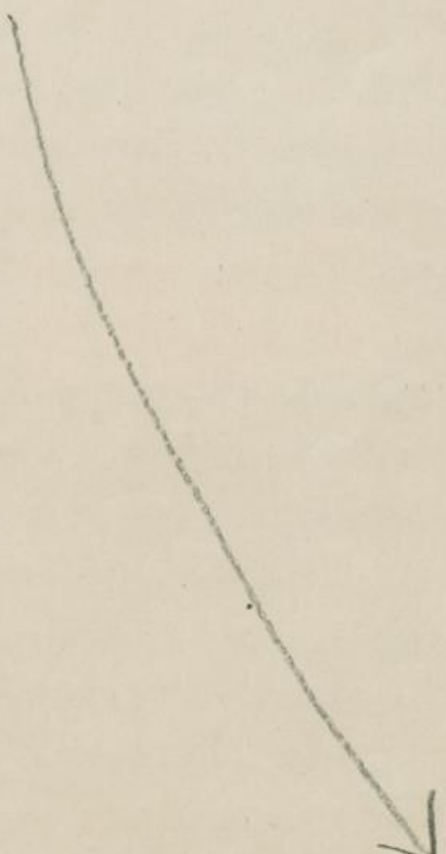
The large-bosomed matron shrugged. "I hear he is very effeminate and rather malicious. Probably one of those people who always seem to be laughing at you." She assumed her most dignified expression, while the Baroness giggled: "But who would dare to poke fun at you, my beloved. No, no: Bang is a good fellow." Whereupon she launched on a few more anecdotes. "There has been gossip to the effect that he is the illegitimate son of a grand duchess and a gigolo from the Balkans. Because he does have that curious combination of aristocratic elements and a somehow forced, hectic vulgarity. Burlesque shows, circuses - that's the kind of

surroundings he loves. He is always at his best when he's writing about outcasts." She paused a moment, then added: "I don't understand very much about literature; but I really think he is a great writer. Have you read anything of his?" The ladies had not, but expressed a growing curiosity. Baroness A. offered: "I'll find some of his books for you. You are bound to weep over them. He is only too well informed on the tragic side. And curiously enough his style is simple, candid, concise - quite the opposite of his personal character."

She went to the book-case and took out several volumes, caressing them as if they were living creatures. "Michael...", she smiled at one of the volumes as though addressing an old friend whom she was meeting again after a too-long period of separation. "This is a marvelous story, you know - the story of Michael, the beautiful young man, and the great painter Claude Zoret, who loves him. The Master is based to a certain extent on Rodin... It is a very sad story, too. I always cry when I read the scene of the Master's death. He is utterly alone, though he keeps sending messengers to Michael's house - the very house the Master had given him-, but Michael does not come. Because he is madly in love - absolutely drowned in his love for a magnificent woman, and he happens to be in bed with her while the Master is dying. He dies alone, asking over and over, Where is Michael?, but Michael is very far away, in another world, because he is in love, and young, and cruel ~~and the Master dies... It is heart-breaking,~~" said the Baroness, and she added, somewhat abruptly: "~~And, of course, a little bit maudlin...~~"

And then, while he kisses her face, and her arms and shoulders, a voice hits him from outside, from the garden - a hard voice, dry and hostile; it says: 'Monsieur Michael! The Master is dead.' It is like a stone thrown through the open window... He pales, trembles, groans ... But she, the woman he loves - the magnificent monster - clings to him, caresses him, whispers: 'Be quiet! - Be quiet, my sweetheart - don't cry! I am with you...!'

The Baroness, after a pause, repeated, ^{very softly:} ~~in a strangely farcical voice:~~
"Be quiet!... Don't cry, my sweetheart... And the Master - dead...
It is very horrible, very great..."



She turned over the leaves of some other volumes that she had brought to the tea-table. The Danish ladies glanced curiously at the books while the hostess recited their titles as if they were the cherished refrain of an old song. "A Hopeless Generation - his first novel, he was only twenty-one then: an immature piece of work, of course..." She smiled with a certain indulgence. "But By the Wayside is a masterpiece - a very short novel, but so packed with life! And here is Tine - Gracious! I almost had forgotten Tine though it's one of the most moving of all. It's about the Prussian invasion of Slesvig. He was born, you know, in the island of Als, in North Slesvig, and his family left that part of Denmark just before the Prussian troops arrived. Probably those early impressions had a good deal to do with his later character - the evacuation of Als, the flight, the position of the Slesvig Danes under German rule..."

She uttered a silvery little cry as though recognizing another familiar face in the gallery of her souvenirs. "The White House - oh, what a lovely story! It's very bright and gay but with a strange undertow of incurable sadness. It was his homage to his mother, who was very lovely...And, here, in The Grey House, there's a wonderful and sinister portrait of his grandfather, the old Excellency...He is superb when he describes old people, doomed people, men and women, who have to die very soon, or women who are hopelessly in love - they suffer silently, never complaining, or they talk about quite extraneous matters... ~~He has a genius for taking you into a room full of people and giving you scraps of conversation on this and that, all seemingly irrelevant, but~~

underneath you feel the tug of tragedy, the drama that they are trying to cover up ...Yes, he is really a master at conveying the essence of the thing, between the lines. All his characters give the impression of being weighed down by some ghastly mystery... The acrobats in The Four Devils -: o, you must read The Four Devils, it's one of the best stories he ever wrote...; and that poor little waiter who loves fine things and perfumes and beautiful faces, but knows he will never have them, so he commits suicide... Or that story of the young nurse, Ida Brandt, who works in a lunatic asylum, and is in love with a handsome fellow who is just out for what he can get. She pays for all his dinners, and she carried a man's purse in her bag and slips it to him, under the table-cloth so the waiter won't know that it's not his own money...His books are full of little touches like that," the Baroness said. But sometimes, ~~among all these poignant little details,~~ you will come across a sentence or a paragraph that is really breathtaking. Here, in The Grey House, for instance...Yes, I'm quite sure it is in this book..."

And she read aloud, her voice strangely hoarse as though she had a sudden lump in her throat:

It is said that he who looks on Jehova, dies. But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die. And if it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

There was a long silence.

Finally one of the woman said: " I wonder if he will have a good time in this country. After all, we are a tough people, here in America - and he seems to be ...how shall I say ...some-how morbid..."

* * *

When Herman Bang arrived, one morning late in January, he was received by a large committee. It was the Baroness A. who recognized him - a frail, trembling little figure among the other more robust travellers. But she could hardly conceal the shock she felt at the change that had come over him; her eyes grew round with fright as she shook hands with him and said: " Hello, Herman... dear Herman..." His smile was pallid and distraught. "Nice to see you... so many people... charming...enchante..." He glanced around with an almost panic-stricken look, as if the dock were peopled with ghosts.

Mr. Opffer, Bang's old schoolmate, finally exclaimed with forced joviality: "Hello, old boy! You look fine...Haven't changed at all..."

Herman Bang slowly turned towards him the yellow, wrinkled, wretched face. For a few seconds it seemed numb, hostile like the face of a dead man: the horrifying face of a royal mummy. Then he smiled again, and now his smile was indulgent and understanding, though slightly contemptuous, still and infinitely tired. "Oh, isn't this Emil?" he said. " Old Emil Opffer...Good of you to come! No, we don't change, old fellow. Of course we don't change..." -

They took him to the Hotel Astor. The ladies of the reception

committee were both delighted and appalled. They all agreed that he was the most nervous creature they had ever seen. They observed that he trembled constantly as though mercilessly shaken by a gigantic fist. His walk was also surprising- a quick and at the same time burdensome sort of trip; sometimes one might have thought him tiptoeing over glowing stones. Everyone was inclined to treat him as a very old man or a sickly little boy. He was so utterly weak and helpless.

The members of the committee were surprised to find his apartment at the Astor full of lowers and visiting-cards. The telephone rang constantly; visitors were announced by the score. He wanted to see all of them. Not only Danes appeared, but also Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Germans, and even some Americans. The bell-boys delivered one box of flowers after another. And in the middle of this babbling throng in his drawing room sat Herman Bang, in a fantastic dressing-gown of brocade, bewildered, scared and pleased, faintly smiling.

"You have so many friends" whispered the Baroness A. "Isn't it wonderful?" He squeezed her hand.

The next day Bang wanted to see the sights of New York City. The consensus of opinion among the members of the Committee, however, was that it would be sheer murder to let him out on the streets alone. The traffic of the metropolis would certainly frighten him out of his wits. Mr. Eskensen, manufacturer and amateur poet, sent a young man from his office to escort Bang wherever he went. The guide and guardian angel turned out to be that muscular and good-looking young man named Johnny. On street crossings he almost

carried the slim little figure of Herman Bang, and on trains he literally picked him up, as one would a child, and put him down on a seat. "Thank you," smiled the poet. "Thank you very much." And the boy: "You're perfectly welcome, sir, I'm sure."

Johnny had been born in this country. "But my folks came from Denmark," he declared proudly.

The poet seemed very interested in every detail of John's life, past, present, or future. How much money did he earn in Mr. Eskensen's office? Was he living with his family? How many brothers and sisters did he have? What was his fiancée's name? Was she blonde or dark? Was he very much in love with her? The guardian angel laughed, slightly flustered. "I guess so. She's a good sort."

But the poet went on asking questions. "Is your fiancée very pretty? Does she love you very much?" Johnny supposed that she was crazy about him. "You know how girls are," he added mysteriously. The poet said: "You are very strong." And the guardian-angel seemed flattered.- "Very athletic," said the poet appreciatively. John declared that he was an amateur boxer: " - and a pretty good one, too, they say."

Johnny considered it his duty to show this foreigner as much as possible of New York. Besides he was as proud of the city as if he had built it himself. They went up-town and down-town, and Herman Bang had to visit China Town and Harlem and Brooklyn and Central Park. "It's bigger than Copenhagen, isn't it?" Johnny asked for the seventh time, and laughed heartily at his own little joke. But Bang was brooding. "It's tremendous", he said. "It's huge. Like a monster with innumerable limbs - greedy and cruel

and enormous- and constantly growing ...growing, growing, growing... reaching out farther and farther -...killing and creating human beings..." - Johnny was somewhat put off by this confused, poetical talk. "This is the Times Building," he explained. "Pretty tall, isn't it?" - And Herman Bang, again with his anxious, distorted smile: "It's tremendous...tremendous..." - Johnny grew a little worried. "What do you mean, Mr. Bang?" The poet made a hasty little gesture as if trying to wave away something that was disturbing him, a nightmare, an ghoulish vision. He laughed, somewhat convulsively. "It's idiotic. I'm seeing midday chimeras..." "What do you see?" John's boss had told him in advance that Mr. Bang was a little queer. He was certainly right.

"I am nervous," the poet said, apologetically. "But it somehow struck me - you and the building together. It reminded me of a young god, walking among huge rocks... and he plays with him... There is a new wilderness, a new jungle, new mountains - the skyscrapers, piled up by human hands...There is a new innocence, a new strength...Yes, there are New Gods," he whispered, standing motionless in the middle of Times Square, surrounded by cars as by dangerous monsters.

'Gee, he is nuts all right' thought John. He was terrified. At the same time he liked his odd protégé more than ever. 'Poor little guy', he felt, while with gentle determination he urged him on: "Come along, Herman! Come on! You can't stand here, you're holding up the traffic - don't you hear? All the drivers are shouting at you..."

And he pushed him across the street - a reliable guide,

protecting the frail and problematic child of another land, of another age.

"Thanks," murmured the poet when they had safely reached the other side of the street. "Thank you, John."

He did not know himself whether he was thanking him for his protection against the aggressive cars and the rude drivers - or for his having called him Herman.

* * *

Then came the evening of Herman Bang's lecture at the Hotel Breevort. The members of the arrangement committee arrived very early, although Danish affairs in New York usually begin an hour or so late. Mr. Opffer, Mr. Eskensen and the other gentlemen were surprised to find the hall already half filled. By the time John delivered his precious charge - the speaker-, the hall was filled to seating capacity, and people had begun to take up standing room against the walls. Finally Mr. Eskensen had to close the doors. Outside he heard angry words. A furious voice was calling the respectable committee "a bunch of stupid fools" for taking a hall that was obviously not half large enough. At last people were standing outside on the street and could not even get into the vestibule.

The Baroness A. was more worried by this surprising crowd than she would have been by an empty house. 'What do they come for?' she kept asking herself. 'It can't be genuine literary interest. Are they waiting for a large-scale fiasco? Are they just

attracted by his bad reputation? Do they want to inspect the notorious model of so many cartoons in the Copenhagen magazines?"

"I'm so very happy" she said to Herman Bang. "We have never had such a crowd before. It's a great evening, Herman." But he said nothing. He was exceedingly nervous. "Where is John?" he asked. John was chatting, somewhere in the background, with a machinist.

"I want you to stand at this door, next to the platform, while I am reading," said Bang. And to the Baroness, as if this explained everything quite simply. "He is my guardian-angel, you know."

The ladies and gentlemen who had received Herman Bang at the boat only a few days before hardly recognized him when he stepped out on the platform. The transformation was amazing. Suddenly he seemed neither nervous nor bashful. This man, improvising a little opening speech, looked ten years younger than the shriveled creature who had greeted them at the dock. He was lively, eloquent. His words poured out copious and articulate: it was a joy to listen.

After the short introductory address he read a few chapters of his novel Denied a country. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For he did not only read the story of Jo  n Ujhazy, the great violinist and "the prince of no-Country", he acted it, and more, he lived it on the stage. Yes, he actually was Jo  n in whose veins so many bloods were intermingled: Danish and Hungarian and Roumanian. The audience almost wept when Bang imitated old Ahe, young Jo  n's Danish nurse, who used to sing to him:

"There is a lovely land
Beside the sweeping billows
On Baltic's briny strand.
It winds afar in hill and dale,
Old Denmark is its name
And it is Freya's hall."

And later, in the international French boarding-school, where Joán was educated, all the boys nailed up over their beds the flags of their respective countries. But Joán had no flag, no country. "Well, his mother was a Dane", declared one of the boys. But another of his fellow-pupils remarked cruelly: "You can't have half a country."

Joán had neither spoken nor moved - he sat there at the foot of Harald's bed and the colour of the foreign flag seemed reflected on his face as a deep blush.

Then he asked, pretending not to have heard what had just been said:

'But why don't they live in their own countries?'

'Who?' said Harald.

'The poets.'

Harald pursed his lips....:

'....you can't do great work unless you have a longing in your heart. That's why we all live abroad, all those who count.'

There was a grave silence in the hall filled with Danish Americans. But the spirits of the audience revived and many shrieked with laughter when he read the scene of the dinner in the Orient Express. ~~Joán shared the table with his Australian accom-~~
~~panist Henry Collyett, who practised ten hours a day, " and as soon~~
~~as he gets out of doors he says he's longing for Melbourne."~~

The slim little man on the platform transformed himself into the stout Dutchman, Herr Haagemeester, who was accompanied by his North German cellist - a youth whose mouth was exactly the size of a cherry: - and Herman Bang, for a few moments, had a cherry mouth.

Th the next second, however, he roared with the voice of M. Jean Roy of the Paris Opéra who could be heard above a full chorus. And then he assumed the haughty attitude of the German Minister at Bucharest, and his wife examining the virtuosos through her lorgnette.

~~The inspired speaker did not stay on his chair; he moved around, for now he was the waiter who balanced the tray with the cups of bouillon, - and a moment later he was Joán again, who heard the Minister's wife say to her husband: "Is he another virtuoso?" - in a tone which showed she had expected something more distinguished from him.~~

~~Fragments of conversations whirled through the room, every language in Europe could be heard, and Bang imitated them all. He was the French composer, Monsieur Bizot, who moved his stiff blue hands incessantly over the table-cloth, as though raking together invisible heaps of gold - perhaps the monthly rent from the houses of ill fame which the composer of Legend of St. Cecilia owned in the provincial towns of the Midi. He exclaimed with the beautiful tenor of M. Jean Roy: "To the supremacy of French art!" - clinking glasses with Monsieur Bizot, while two young Roumanians, hidden away in the opposite corner, clapped their ring-covered hands. Their dinner jackets fitted them like a skin, and so did Herman Bang's elegant dress-suit, made in London.~~

The hilarity of the audience reached its climax when the mixed crowd in the Orient Express dinner car began to discuss business: all at once the whole band of "respected colleagues" plunged into the subject of money and investments, bonuses, debentures, and

dividends - while Joánalone remained silent under the lorgnette which the Minister's wife turned in astonishment from one stock-jobber to another - his fellow artists. One of them declared that nothing - nothing was so safe in the long run as New York real estate: " My dear fellow, the future lies in America. We shall live to see New York outgrow London." Some people, he said, swore by New Orleans; but one should never invest money in a place one didn't know.

But the audience turned serious again, when Herman Bang transformed once more into Joán, the gipsy-aristocrat and politely though firmly declared: "No, Madame, I never speculate...And for that matter I've known so few artists die rich." - A sudden silence fell upon the car. Madame de Stein, the French pianist, made a gesture of the hand as if to push straggling hair from her forehead, though there was none there - while all at once the panting noise of the train seemed to engulf everything, and the rattling of doors and windows struck upon the ear.....

The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled. "He is a wizard!" they exclaimed. " He is absolutely amazing! He has a thousand faces, and every one of them is so alive..."

After the intermission he read a short story dealing with a meek and elderly spinster by the name of Irene Holm. She is a former ballet dancer, and now has to give dancing-lessons to clumsy lads and girls in a northern village. There was no plot, no exciting action in the dreary story of Irene Holm: She arrives in that remote village, with her few belongings in an old champagne basket, she is always half frozen, she is infinitely pathetic with her worn-

out clothes and her worn-out smile, When the "season" is over, she has to pack up her champagne basket again, and the little farewell-party she arranges is the melancholy climax of the tale. For Mlle. Holm becomes a little tipsy - just a very little bit-, and her pupils persuade her to dance a solo, something serious, the kind she used to perform in the "real theatre". And she dances la grande Napolitaine, with all the affected, graceful steps and poses of thirty years ago. She is ridiculous and very tragic. People laugh at her. It is just an ordinary failure, nothing else. Irene Holm weeps, and the sympathetic daughter of the pastor tries to comfort her. It is just one of those minor tragedies: a rather depressing story. Yet how it beat with life when the author read it aloud! He tripped and skipped over the stage in the movements of Irene's grotesque performance. He imitated the music, the cruel laughter of the peasant boys, the silly giggling of provincial girls. His face was marked with all the suffering of the old danseuse. He seemed exhausted and his face was wet with tears when he ended his reading.

The show was not yet over with the end of the formal lecture. Bang went on chatting, laughing, smiling, shaking hands with everybody. He was obviously pleased by the flowers heaped up on a little table on the stage. He carried several big bouquets to the bar of the hotel where a large party had gathered and where he was received with fresh applause. He smiled, took a bow, and then turned suddenly very serious. "It's wonderful in America," he said softly to the Baroness who was standing next to him. "I am having a wonderful time here with all of you."

He was animated, he sparkled; sometimes his gaiety seemed somewhat hectic. He told humorous stories about his experiences as a drama critic, a lecturer and an agent. The lengthy tale of the Herman Bang tournée, twenty years before, was funny as well as touching, a real tragi-comedy. Oh, all those dreary provincial places in Denmark and Norway that they had visited! - he described them as ridiculous little infernos, the very essence of boredom. "And all the time we were putting on those childish one-act plays!" He laughed heartily; the mere idea of those poor dramatic attempts seemed terribly funny to him. "The people snored in the theatre - yes, they literally snored... Our impresario was upset, and finally asked me to arrange a religious concert with the musical members of my company. He was a sort of expert on religious concerts, you see. 'Yes Sir,' he used to say, 'that way you appeal to the finest feelings of the people, you get the public, and the churches are not expensive.'" He gave an amusing and drastic imitation of the impresario's gestures and speech.

The Baroness, listening with almost painful attention, was enchanted but at the same time alarmed. She screamed with laughter, she was enthralled; yet she could not help thinking: 'There is something wrong with him. I don't know what it is. He is absolutely divine, I have never seen him like this; but there is a gleam in his eyes that I don't like: it frightens me... Perhaps he is taking drugs,' she thought, and was very worried by this new idea. 'Yes, that's probably why he has this convulsive laughter. He uses narcotics, I am sure...Poor Herman Bang. My poor friend...'

He had begunn meanwhile, to tell anecdotes about people he had known in Paris, Helsingfors, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. He gave an impressive description of the permanent underground struggle of the Czech people against their Austrian suppressors. He imitated the great Viennese actress, Frau Wolters, sang the praises of Rêjane, the Parisian vedette, then plunged into a story about a clown he had once seen in London. "You are at home everywhere," observed one of the ladies admiringly. " Or - nowhere...", said Herman Bang.

And a gentleman at the other end of the table said in a deep, ominous voice: " Denied a Country..." - which was senseless, yet strangely disturbing.

The waiters appeared with the dessert. The large-bosomed matron who had been so afraid of Herman Bang's malicious character offered him a plate of ice cream with hot chocolate sauce. "That suits you perfectly, Mr. Bang," she said . "It's perverse.."

Late that night John and his celebrated problem-child returned to the Astor Hotel. "You were so quiet all evening," Herman Bang said. "Didn't you like my lecture?" The young man assured him: " Oh, I liked it a lot, honestly I did, it was swell...But just the same I felt...kind of bewildered... I had no idea you were such a grand actor, and knew so many stories...And you certainly know how to deal with women! The whole bunch was crazy about you - and there some goodlookers there too. That Baroness, for instance - Gee, what a figure! I'd certainly like to get somewhere with her --- Why don't you make her, Mr. Bang? You could

have her -like that!" He snapped his fingers.

Bang gave a bleak, plaintive smile. "I suppose you're right", he said after a pause, and made his fidgety little gestures. "Well - good night then, sleep well, my boy." And he tripped quickly toward the elevator, moving his feet in a burdensome way as though he were walking over glowing stones.

* * *

Two days later Bang was to leave New York on his long journey to the West coast. Early in the morning John appeared at the Astor to help him pack.

Both were silent for a while. Bang looked more tired and sickly than ever. Finally John said: "I hate to see you make that trip alone...You aren't tough enough, Mr. Bang...You look kind of pale, anyhow...You should take along some strong fellow..."

"I'd like to take you with me," said Bang.

"Why don't you?" John's voice lifted with sudden hope.

And Bang, after a long pause, very softly: "It would be a great mistake, John. It would be sure to be a fatal blunder."

John did not understand.

They said nothing further about it.

Before they left the hotel, Bang gave him a cigarette box and one of his books with a dedication. It was the Danish version of Denied a Country. John was a little disappointed as he could hardly read Danish. But he liked the cigarette box. "It's much too valuable," he said. "Gee! - it's solid gold..."

Bang made a desperate effort to smile.

"You're so good," said John, and suddenly touched Bang's brittle, delicate fingers with his big, clumsy hand. "You should have children. You'd be a swell dad, I know you would. Why don't you have a son, Mr. Bang?"

He did not answer. After a few seconds he said: "We must hurry, boy. It's getting late..."

A number of friends had come to the train to see him off. There were Mr. Opffer, Mr. Madsen, Mr. Eskensen, the large-bosomed lady, and the Baroness. Bang did not find his railway ticket and was haunted by the idea of losing his many bags. "Where are my things?" he kept asking nervously. "The little bag with my books...? Oh, it's terrible, dreadful...like a nightmare..."

"Why do you leave?" asked the Baroness. "Why don't you stay here, with us? Why must you go to the West coast?"

He glanced at her, as a wounded deer at the hunter.

'He is doomed' she felt. 'he is lost. I am sure he takes narcotics - cocaine, or morphine, or whatever those terrible things are called. He's so terribly pale, and he trembles all the time...Poor Herman- my poor friend...'

John helped him to a seat and wrapped him up like a sick child.

"I hate to see you go", he said, once more.

"Thanks" said Herman Bang without looking at him.

His guardian-angel left him. He was alone. He was freezing in spite of the heavy blankets.

Outside the friends waved goodbye as the train started slowly to move. "He looks so bewildered," said Mr. Opffer. "So weak..."

And Mr. Eskensen wondered, "Shall we ever see him again?" -

while John said to the Baroness, his voice hoarse, almost suffocated: "He's a funny guy. But a good fellow - a damned good fellow, that's what he is."

The Baroness nodded. John noticed that her beautiful eyes were moist with tears. 'She's fond of him, all right,' he thought. Finally she whispered: " You must tell me more about him in New York. He was so busy - sight-seeing..." There was a little twinkle in her eyes: a naughty little twinge, of jealousy, John thought. But her smile warmed as she added: " You must have a cup of tea with me one of these days. Because I do want to hear all about his impressions of New York, and what he liked best. That especially: what he liked the best..."

John was extremely flattered at the idea of having tea with the Baroness. "Thanks" he said, and looking at her it struck him again that she was a pretty woman, still quite attractive in spite of her years.

"Tomorrow perhaps, around five?" - and when he had accepted happily, they both blushed as though swept by a sudden feeling of guilt.

* * *

He interrupted the journey at Chicago where he had another lecture engagement. He met people and saw old friends again. He saw nobody. He was blind. He heard neither the pleasant nor the malicious phrases addressed to him. He was deaf. He spoke, and his own voice sounded strange to him. He did not know what he was talking about. He said: " I am fascinated by America. It's

colossal. I am eager to see more of it." But how could he see anything when he was smitten with blindness? "I am in a hurry", he said. "The transcontinental train...The boat is waiting. How far is San Francisco?" They said, 2000 miles or so. He nodded: "Yes, yes, it's colossal." He was absent-minded. He did not want to visit the famous stock-yards, nor did he express any interest in the museum or the public library. He insisted: "I am in a hurry...": as if a mysterious power - a storm or a tremendous, invisible hand- were driving, driving him on.

He stepped into his compartment on the transcontinental train like a prisoner entering the death-chamber.

They said: "Have a nice trip, Mr. Bang! Don't forget to write us a postcard from Shanghai!" and grinned as if they had made a joke.

He promised, "I certainly will."

They suggested: "You should stop at Salt Lake City. It's worth seeing..."

He groaned: "Yes...certainly...of course..." He shuddered, cruelly shaken by the invisible fist.

The days were long, and the nights longer. He did not leave his compartment. He hardly slept. Without the solace of sleep he had to await the end of the night, the end of the journey.

He spent the days and many hours of the nights staring through the window at a landscape that seemed to him monotonous and yet over-changing. For hours and hours his only thought would

be: 'How great this country is!...How huge - how endless... and how empty! I never imagined it would be so empty...These tremendous plains are not inhabited by human beings. What an abundance of room- : space for millions and millions to come...unused space for future generations; guilty creatures, cursed, suffering creatures....But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die...

I bear no responsibility for those innumerable tragedies that are in preparation. I am innocent, immaculate as a monk, not tainted with the ugly sin of propagation. I am detached, remote, free - as travellers are. I have no country, no home, no children, No children. I am sterile.

There were ancient tribes who believed that a sterile man was holy. There were others who thought him cursed!

I am cursed.

America is pregnant with potential life. But I am no part of it. I am doomed.

Oh, America - pregnant with future laughter, hatred, love; loaded with the genius of its unborn sons, with the beauty of its unborn daughters, with the horror of coming revolutions, the atrocity of coming wars, the prosperity of promised peace... Oh, America, overburdened with possibilities and hopes - oh, endless landscape, landscape of youth- : landscape that must be my death. For I am detached and sterile, and I am doomed...

This dusty wilderness holds within itself my death. These eternal highways have no aim, no destination for me. For me these empty plains have only the numb and murderous features of Medusa's face.

This country kills me with its very greatness. It destroys me with its youthfulness, its strength, its exuberant reality. I knew it when I turned my eyes up to the buildings in New York; when I heard and saw and felt the laughter of that young creature, John, my guide and protector - who left me. This country murders me. I knew it when I arrived. I knew it when I left Copenhagen. I knew that I was setting out on my last journey.

America overpowers me. I am through.

It dazes me with its rivers and factories, with its athletic youth, its Negro songs, its cruel noise, its boredom, its childish enthusiasm, its muscles of steel, its vitality, its tremendous lust for life... with its greatness, its greatness which I am not strong enough to bear.

The days pass on, and the nights at last reach their end, but the train wheels on and on, the transcontinental train, the train without aim or destination...The scenery changes: now the locomotive has to climb steep hills, high mountains; there are rocks and deep valleys between snow-capped peaks. The traveller in the solitude of his elegant compartment felt a new apprehension; but this time it was a physical pang. His heart - he had known it all along - could not stand this altitude. Doctors had warned him before he left; but he had smiled and shrugged in his absent-minded way. Now it had come, the heart-attack, the spasm: he could hardly breathe.

He swallowed his medicine, hastily. The painful fit passed. The train speeded downhill.

He got over the dangerous attack - for the time being. But

there were other mountains to come- higher ones, very high ones: he knew it. Would his organism stand the sudden change of atmosphere, the thin air? - ' And if not...?' he thought, with desperate obstinacy. 'I am through, anyway. I have no special desire to see San Francisco, nor the Buddha temples in the Far East. I renounce the trip around the world. The shortest way to your own heart leads you around the world.'. What philosopher coined that dubious epigram? In any case, he was mistaken... I may solve the riddle, halfway. I recognize the cruel laws that dominate my life. I accept them, shuddering but without resistance, I accept them.

...If it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

I do not complain.

Patiently I wait for the end of the night - and I know the dawn will shine with a bloody splendor...'

He examined his map and found out that the State of Utah had a considerable altitude: the lowest point, in Salt Lake Valley, 4,210 feet above sea-level. "Climate healthy and delightful..." the prospect assured -: 'Not for me.' thought the traveller.

He went on reading, mechanically, without really grasping the sense of the words. " Scarcity of timber and verdure...Much of the soil is strongly impregnated with salt and alkali....Many parts are still pure desert, hopelessly barren..."

*Like me - : hopelessly barren...My heart, my soul, my brains, my body...hopelessly barren...'

And he read the amazing story of the Pioneers of Utah: Brigham Young, travelling across the plains and mountains, with 143 men, three women and two children; living in tents, wagons and log huts; protecting themselves from hostile Indians, and from wolves and other wild beasts; stubbornly faithful, according to their own special interpretation of the Holy Word. This was hardly seventy years ago, but it sounded like an ancient, heroic tale - the saga of the Mormons, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, expelled from Illinois, wandering through wilderness and unknown land, attracted by the Great West, settling at last, on the shores of a Lake the waters of which were salty - salty as tears ...: the Dead Sea of America, the Lake of Tears, the City of Tears, the Valley of Tears...

'I am approaching the Region of Tears. How far away is that mystic Lake? A shower of inward tears gives the answer: You are near the goal...'

His thoughts wandered to the matter of polygamy. 'How odd! 143 men, and only three women...and yet in theory every man claimed several females...

I wouldn't make a good Mormon,' and he chuckled softly, but was frightened by the sound of his own laughter in the great solitude of his compartment, of this train in the midst of the swift-running, empty, tremendous landscape.

My Island has no women. Who is there for me to love?

He recalled, with a sudden pang, these words, spoken by Joán Ujhazy, on one of the last pages of Denied a Country. The homeless one, melancholy hero of the novel, had tried to find home: he went

to Denmark, and it was a failure. Before leaving his estranged homeland, he took a walk with an old friend who also had ruined his life. "But you, Joán," he said presently - "we're still young men - why don't you find a wife?" - "I?" said Joán. They were watching the night express approaching; the locomotive headlight searched them out like a demonic eye. - "I?" repeated Joán, and his voice was as bloodless as his face; "Erik, I must die alone."

I must die alone...

I...must....die alone...ALONE...

He was almost asleep. He heard the noise of the wheels- their monotonous, agonizing rhythm, against which Joán's voice, his own dream-voice kept struggling. "This was my last hour", said Joán. "And to-night has brought it to an end. Because I have heard a greater. He can play of greater things. He plays of a new joy."

A new joy ...He saw John, the muscular and winged guide, dancing, jumping, flying between the skyscrapers. He was half-naked, wearing only purple shorts and huge leather gloves. He was a prize fighter, he was very strong, his punch was deadly, his laughter was deadly; deadly - his youth, his strength, his cruel innocence...

'He will hit me', felt the sleeper.

And the blow fell.

It was very painful. He tried to get up but could not! He was paralysed, he was numb. His heart ached. He pressed his chest with his trembling hand. He wanted to scream but had no voice. He groaned. He knew that this was the end.

The train had stopped in the midst of a grand and terrifying landscape - a Biblical scene, barren and heroic, threatening and enchanting, with icy mountains sharply profiled against a glowing sky. The sky was pouring a hard, metallic light. Between the rocks ice-blue waters fell to the depths. The air was filled with a high, clinking noise - the triumphant song of the dawn, the cruel hymn of a beginning day.

A couple of days later Mr. Opffer, editor of the Nordlyset, received a press telegram from Ogden, Utah, to the effect that the great Danish author and lecturer Herman Bang had been taken from the transcontinental train in a dying condition and brought to a hospital in that city where he had died at 6 a.m. Mr. Opffer immediately called up Mr. Eskensen who said: "Poor fellow! I've been expecting something like this. He had such a pale little face..." - What can we do now?" asked Mr. Opffer. Mr. Eskensen suggested having a death-mask taken. Mr. Opffer thought this an excellent idea. Two lengthy telegrams were made out, one to the Danish Vice Consul at Ogden, Mr. Thorvald Orlob, the other to Mr. O.D. Rasmussen, owner of a chain of department stores in Utah and Wyoming. Both gentlemen were only too happy to do this little service for a distinguished compatriot who had died friendless in their own neighborhood.

Mr. Eskensen broke the news to the Baroness. "It was something like an apoplexy of the heart," he said. "We'll have a memorial service, of course, perhaps in the little Danish church in the Bronx. We want to make it simple but dignified. A few

speakers - Stephan Hansen, and Jonas Lie - though he is Norwegian -,
and Emile Bomén. And we hope to get Holger Birkerød to sing the
Ave Maria. Have you ever heard him? He has a wonderful voice..."

But the Baroness was not listening. She seemed petrified.
She could hardly move her fingers or her lips.

"He is dead," she told John, a few hours later.

He wept. The tears streamed copiously from his eyes which
he did not cover. His face was not distorted as he cried. It was
the strong and beautiful face of a mourning young god.

He shouted: " It is our fault! " - and raised his powerful
fists, angrily.

"What do you mean- our fault?"

He insisted desperately: "We have killed him!" And he
shook his effulgent head and his fists.

"Be quiet!" she implored him. "Nobody is responsible. We are
not to blame.- You are talking nonsense."

But he went on shaking his head in despair. "We've killed
him. America has killed him. He couldn't take it. He was differ-
ent. The skyscrapers scared him, the big country scared him, I
scared him. We have murdered him - all of us!"

She took his face between her hands. It was wet with tears.
She dried his face with her fingers. She kissed his cheeks and
his lips. She tasted the bitter taste of his tears. She begged
him:

"Be quiet!...Be quiet, my sweetheart- don't cry! I am with
you...."

* * *

Journey to the End of the Night.

(HERMAN BANG)

Like a running sore this unending street,
with all of us at the bottom of it, filling
it from side to side, from one sorrow to the
next, moving towards an end no one has ever
seen, the end of all the streets in all the
world.

Louis-Ferdinand Celine.

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One day in the middle of January 1912, some twenty members of the Danish Colony in New York received a letter calling them to a meeting at the Hotel McAlpin to discuss " a matter of the greatest importance for all of us." The document was signed by Mr. M.C. Madsen, who at that time was constructing Long Beach, L.I., and was one of the most respected Danes in America.

They all gathered at the appointed hour, and Mr. Madsen declared in a solemn little speech that he was very sorry to bring up a matter which would undoubtedly give the whole party a terrible shock: - Herman Bang was coming to America!

This was indeed a surprise. Everyone was startled. Only an ignorant young fellow who had been born in America and whose ideas of the old country were of the haziest, asked naively: Who is Herman Bang? His name was John: he was a good-looking lad.

What a foolish question! Everyone knew who Herman Bang was, although very few of the persons present had ever read a line of his work. They were mostly Danes who had lived in this country for a number of years, and had had little opportunity to keep up with contemporary Danish literature. Yet they were all acquainted with the stories that circulated concerning that curious, and notorious personality, Herman Bang - the Danish novelist, critic and lecturer, for years a famous target of caricature. His appearance was in itself an easy mark for both journalists and cartoonists, a fact of which the press had taken full advantage. These caricatures had found their way to the Danes in America, whereas Bang's writing had not.

"Well, you see," explained one of the older gentlemen, with some embarrassment, "Herman Bang - - well...he has a certain resemblance to Oscar Wilde..." - But the ignorant youth was still in the dark.

There was a muddle of questions, answers, proposals and nervous little exclamations. How did Mr. M.C. Madsen get the revolting news? - Why, quite simply - one of Bang's friends had written a letter, requesting Mr. Madsen to help Bang on his arrival and possibly to arrange a lecture for him in New York. He must have sailed already. His idea was to cross the United States, possibly giving a lecture or two on the way. At San Francisco or Los Angeles he would board one of the steamers of the Danish East Asiatic Co. and proceed around the world. One of the ladies remarked: " They say he's exceedingly fond of travelling..." Her face was sour and thoroughly disgusted, as though it were one of his unspeakable vices that she had been referring to.

"We must see to it that he goes back on the next steamer."
"The Danish Colony will never get over it!" "We simply cannot have him here!" - "He'll ruin our reputation in this country ..."-
"We'll all have to pay for it..."- Some of them still remembered Oscar Wilde's visit thirty years ago, which had been most embarrassing for all Englishmen in this country. His remark to the customs officers - Nothing to declare but my genius! - was an inauspicious beginning, and particularly indelicate in view of the seriousness of the occasion; he bored everybody by preaching the "Science of the Beautiful"; he was ridiculed by newspapers and

Harvard boys, snubbed by Harriet Beecher Store, and patronized in a dubious fashion by Walt Whitman. "But the British can afford a little scandal once in a while," said one of the Danish gentlemen. "Representatives of small nations should be more careful. We are certainly in no position to challenge public opinion..."

Someone else wondered whether Herman Bang still deserved to be called a Dane. Probably he was one of those modern writers who were capable only of destructive criticism; he had even scorned the Danish patriotic movement. And he led the life of a gipsy: Wasn't he in fact an exile from his country, an outcast vagabonding through the world? "A voluntary exile..." said the gentleman, but another patriot interrupted him: "Not quite voluntary, if you please! Mr. Bang had very good reasons for getting out of Copenhagen. The police were after him..." Somebody inquired: "Isn't the title of his last novel Homeless, or Without A Fatherland, or something like that?" A lady confirmed that Herman Bang's recent work did indeed bear the ominous title "Denied A Country". And she added: "It is an excellent book, too. I've read it."

The last speaker, a certain Baroness A., seemed to be the only one in this circle who had actually read a book by Herman Bang. She knew the world, had lived in Paris and St. Petersburg, and was a prominent member of the Danish Colony, although some of her compatriots considered her slightly eccentric. "It is quite a fascinating book," she said in a mild but determined voice. "It is something of a masterpiece, and it seems to me that we are very privileged to be able to welcome its author in New York."

This unexpected opinion had its effect on the gathering. They gradually realized two basic facts, which helped to calm their moral indignation. The Baroness's startling remark reminded them first, of the international reputation which Mr. Bang enjoyed, notwithstanding certain embarrassing rumors concerning his private life. And then one simply had to face the fact that the notorious compatriot was actually on his way. The Danish Colony had no alternative but to keep its chin up and accept the inevitable.

A sort of grave fatalism prevailed among the Scandinavian Americans at the McAlpin Hotel. Still somewhat grudgingly, they finally formed a sub-committee for the reception of Herman Bang. It consisted of Mr. Emil Opffer, an old schoolmate of Bang's and at that time editor of the Danish newspaper, Nordlyset, in New York; Mr. E. V. Eskesen, a prominent manufacturer and himself an amateur poet, and two other gentlemen. They made an appointment for a special meeting in Mr. Opffer's office.

They decided that, after all, a lecture might as well be arranged for Mr. Bang. His works were very popular in Germany, and some of them had even been translated into French, ^{Russian,} and other languages. The gentlemen had to admit that he was generally regarded as one of the outstanding figures of modern Danish literature. Naturally however, in view of the man's dubious personal reputation, a large hall would not be necessary. They chose the little concert hall in the Hotel Brevoort, on lower Fifth Avenue, which had a seating capacity of three hundred. They had tickets printed, advertisements inserted in the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish newspapers, and they also sent out a thousand letters to Danes in

New York. They were still sceptical, of course, as to the eventual success of their efforts. But once they had made up their minds that the lecture must take place, they came to see the whole affair as connected with the patriotic cause. Each of the four gentlemen was even ready to pay his share of the inevitable deficit.

The ladies, meanwhile, eagerly discussed the subject of all this rumpus. Baroness A., la femme du monde, was the principal speaker at these lively tea parties. She even had a picture of Herman Bang, which was zealously examined by all her friends. The young man in the portrait was unusually and disturbingly attractive. The first thing that struck one was the prominent and finely formed back of his head, on which the smooth, glossy black hair gleamed; then one observed the mournful glance of the deepset eyes under their long lashes; then the infinite sensitiveness and nobility of the outline of the face, which the young man - melancholy but eager to please - turned to the spectator in half-profile.

"He looks like an Oriental prince," observed one of the ladies, half disapproving, half intrigued. The Baroness smiled: " Yet he is descended from one of our oldest and most distinguished families. Didn't you know his fine old grandfather, His Excellency Bang, the physician? He was a real figure in our country.. I remember his funeral so well. Several members of the royal family were there, and representatives from all the hospitals and universities. When I saw Herman some years ago in St. Petersburg, he used to tell me stories about the old gentleman. He adored him, you know... and

he was terribly lonely, really helpless after the old man's death. There was no money left, just a few thousand cronos. Herman wanted to become an actor; he's always had an unfortunate leaning for the theatre. But he has no talent at all - as an actor, I mean..." She laughed softly, remembering poor Herman Bang's total lack of talent for the stage. "I once saw him in Bergen," she went on. "He played Oswald, in Ibsen's Ghosts. It was horrible. People bombarded him with rotten apples, but he was in such an hysterical trance that he hardly noticed the uproar." She laughed again, while the other lady, a large-bosomed, very dignified matron, remarked with a sour smile: "That's what I thought. He makes a fool of himself." A younger woman, gazing at the picture, whispered: " But ... I had no idea ...he was so terribly handsome..."

"I'm afraid you've a disappointment in store, my dear," said the Baroness. " He's changed - he must be at least fifty by now. Poor thing, his face has become quite yellow and wrinkled. But he is still irresistible. My, how often I have been amused by Him! He's an impossible creature, you know, always decked out in bracelets and other jewelry. It makes a soft, jingling noise when he walks through a room. And with evening dress he wears a brocade waistcoat, and long white glacés under his coatsleeves: long ladies' gloves, you understand - he is really terrific! Once I had dinner with him at the Imperial Castle, in St Petersburg. Did I tell you that the mother of the Czar used to be very fond of Bang? She loved to talk to him...Well, there we were, in the Imperial dining hall, with all those imposing butlers watching every movement we made. Now imagine - just imagine dear Herman stripping

off his long white glacé: it was absolutely sen-sa-tional! All the generals and high officials there were literally petrified with horror. But the old Empress - smiled...sweet old darling that she is!"

The Danish ladies smiled too, although they were quite able to understand the profound horror of the dignitaries at the sight of long ladies' gloves on a Scandinavian novelist. Yet they could not help being impressed by the fact that the Baroness and the poet had dined together at the Imperial Castle in St. Petersburg. "Very amusing, indeed," they agreed reluctantly. But the Baroness seemed not to hear, being absorbed once more in the fascinating portrait of Herman Bang. "He still has those wonderful eyes," she said, as though talking to herself. "When he looks at you they go through and through you, as if he were discovering everything, absolutely everything...Yes, I have a great fondness for him. And then of course he's very amusing too, and you couldn't imagine a more reliable friend..."

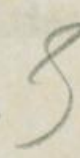
The large-bosomed matron shrugged. "I hear he is very effeminate and rather malicious. Probably one of those people who always seem to be laughing at you." She assumed her most dignified expression, while the Baroness giggled: "But who would dare to poke fun at you, my beloved. No, no: Bang is a good fellow." Whereupon she launched on a few more anecdotes. "There has been gossip to the effect that he is the illegitimate son of a grand duchess and a gigolo from the Balkans. Because he does have that curious combination of aristocratic elements and a somehow forced, hectic vulgarity. Burlesque shows, circuses - that's the kind of

surroundings he loves. He is always at his best when he's writing about outcasts." She paused a moment, then added: " I don't understand very much about literature; but I really think he is a great writer. Have you read anything of his?" The ladies had not, but expressed a growing curiosity. Baroness A. offered: "I'll find some of his books for you. You are bound to weep over them. He is only too well informed on the tragic side. And curiously enough his style is simple, candid, concise - quite the opposite of his personal character."

She went to the book-case and took out several volumes, caressing them as if they were living creatures. "Michael...", she smiled at one of the volumes as though addressing an old friend whom she was meeting again after a too-long period of separation. "This is a marvelous story, you know - the story of Michael, the beautiful young man, and the great painter Claude Zoret, who loves him. The Master is based to a certain extent on Rodin... It is a very sad story, too. I always cry when I read the scene of the Master's death. He is utterly alone, though he keeps sending messengers to Michael's house - the very house the Master had given him-, but Michael does not come. Because he is madly in love - absolutely drowned in his love for a magnificent woman, and he happens to be in bed with her while the Master is dying. He dies alone, asking over and over, Where is Michael?, but Michael is very far away, in another world, because he is in love, and young, and cruel - and the Master dies...It is heart-breaking," said the Baroness, and she added, somewhat abruptly: "And, of course, a little bit maudlin..."

She turned over the leaves of some other volumes that she had brought to the tea-table. The Danish ladies glanced curiously at the books while the hostess recited their titles as if they were the cherished refrain of an old song. "A Hopeless Generation - his first novel, he was only twenty-one then: an immature piece of work, of course..." She smiled with a certain indulgence. "But By the Wayside is a masterpiece - a very short novel, but so packed with life! And here is Tine - Gracious! I almost had forgotten Tine though it's one of the most moving of all. It's about the Prussian invasion of Slesvig. He was born, you know, in the island of Als, in North Slesvig, and his family left that part of Denmark just before the Prussian troops arrived. Probably those early impressions had a good deal to do with his later character - the evacuation of Als, the flight, the position of the Slesvig Danes under German rule..."

She uttered a silvery little cry as though recognizing another familiar face in the gallery of her souvenirs. "The White House - oh, what a lovely story! It's very bright and gay but with a strange undertow of incurable sadness. It was his homage to his mother, who was very lovely...And, here, in The Grey House, there's a wonderful and sinister portrait of his grandfather, the old Excellency...He is superb when he describes old people, doomed people, men and women, who have to die very soon, or women who are hopelessly in love - they suffer silently, never complaining, or they talk about quite extraneous matters...~~He has a genius for taking you into a room full of people and giving you scraps of conversation on this and that, all seemingly irrelevant, but~~



underneath you feel the tug of tragedy, the drama that they are trying to cover up ...Yes, he is really a master at conveying the essence of the thing, between the lines. All his characters give the impression of being weighed down by some ghastly mystery... The acrobats in The Four Devils -: o, you must read The Four Devils, it's one of the best stories he ever wrote...; and that poor little waiter who loves fine things and perfumes and beautiful faces, but knows he will never have them, so he commits suicide... Or that story of the young nurse, Ida Brandt, who works in a lunatic asylum, and is in love with a handsome fellow who is just out for what he can get. She pays for all his dinners, and she carried a man's purse in her bag and slips it to him, under the table-cloth so the waiter won't know that it's not his own money... ~~His books~~ ~~are full of little touches like that,~~ the Baroness said, "But sometimes, among all these poignant little details, you will come across a sentence or a paragraph that is really breathtaking. Here, in The Grey House, for instance...Yes, I'm quite sure it is in this book..."

And she read aloud, her voice strangely hoarse as though she had a sudden lump in her throat:

It is said that he who looks on Jehova, dies. But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die. And if it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

There was a long silence.

Finally one of the woman said: " I wonder if he will have a good time in this country. After all, we are a tough people, here in America - and he seems to be ...how shall I say ...some-how morbid..."

* * *

When Herman Bang arrived, one morning late in January, he was received by a large committee. It was the Baroness A. who recognized him - a frail, trembling little figure among the other more robust travellers. But she could hardly conceal the shock she felt at the change that had come over him; her eyes grew round with fright as she shook hands with him and said: " Hello, Herman... dear Herman..." His smile was pallid and distraught. "Nice to see you... so many people... charming...enchante..." He glanced around with an almost panic-stricken look, as if the dock were peopled with ghosts.

Mr. Opffer, Bang's old schoolmate, finally exclaimed with forced joviality: "Hello, old boy! You look fine...Haven't changed at all..."

Herman Bang slowly turned towards him the yellow, wrinkled, wretched face. For a few seconds it seemed numb, hostile like the face of a dead man: the horrifying face of a royal mummy. Then he smiled again, and now his smile was indulgent and understanding, though slightly contemptuous, still and infinitely tired. "Oh, isn't this Emil?" he said. " Old Emil Opffer...Good of you to come! No, we don't change, old fellow. Of course we don't change..." -

They took him to the Hotel Astor. The ladies of the reception

committee were both delighted and appalled. They all agreed that he was the most nervous creature they had ever seen. They observed that he trembled constantly as though mercilessly shaken by a gigantic fist. His walk was also surprising- a quick and at the same time burdensome sort of trip; sometimes one might have thought him tiptoeing over glowing stones. Everyone was inclined to treat him as a very old man or a sickly little boy. He was so utterly weak and helpless.

The members of the committee were surprised to find his apartment at the Astor full of lowers and visiting-cards. The telephone rang constantly; visitors were announced by the score. He wanted to see all of them. Not only Danes appeared, but also Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Germans, and even some Americans. The bell-boys delivered one box of flowers after another. And in the middle of this babbling throng in his drawing room sat Herman Bang, in a fantastic dressing-gown of brocade, bewildered, scared and pleased, faintly smiling.

"You have so many friends" whispered the Baroness A. "Isn't it wonderful?" He squeezed her hand.

The next day Bang wanted to see the sights of New York City. The consensus of opinion among the members of the Committee, however, was that it would be sheer murder to let him out on the streets alone. The traffic of the metropolis would certainly frighten him out of his wits. Mr. Eskensen, manufacturer and amateur poet, sent a young man from his office to escort Bang wherever he went. The guide and guardian angel turned out to be that muscular and good-looking young man named Johnny. On street crossings he almost

carried the slim little figure of Herman Bang, and on trains he literally picked him up, as one would a child, and put him down on a seat. "Thank you," smiled the poet. "Thank you very much." And the boy: "You're perfectly welcome, sir, I'm sure."

Johnny had been born in this country. "But my folks came from Denmark," he declared proudly.

The poet seemed very interested in every detail of John's life, past, present, or future. How much money did he earn in Mr. Eskensen's office? Was he living with his family? How many brothers and sisters did he have? What was his fiancée's name? Was she blonde or dark? Was he very much in love with her? The guardian angel laughed, slightly flustered. "I guess so. She's a good sort."

But the poet went on asking questions. "Is your fiancée very pretty? Does she love you very much?" Johnny supposed that she was crazy about him. "You know how girls are," he added mysteriously. The poet said: "You are very strong." And the guardian-angel seemed flattered.- "Very athletic," said the poet appreciatively. John declared that he was an amateur boxer: " - and a pretty good one, too, they say."

Johnny considered it his duty to show this foreigner as much as possible of New York. Besides he was as proud of the city as if he had built it himself. They went up-town and down-town, and Herman Bang had to visit China Town and Harlem and Brooklyn and Central Park. "It's bigger than Copenhagen, isn't it?" Johnny asked for the seventh time, and laughed heartily at his own little joke. But Bang was brooding. "It's tremendous", he said. "It's huge. Like a monster with innumerable limbs - greedy and cruel

and enormous- and constantly growing ...growing, growing, growing... reaching out farther and farther -...killing and creating human beings..." - Johnny was somewhat put off by this confused, poetical talk. "This is the Times Building," he explained. "Pretty tall, isn't it?" - And Herman Bang, again with his anxious, distorted smile: "It's tremendous...tremendous..." - Johnny grew a little worried. "What do you mean, Mr. Bang?" The poet made a hasty little gesture as if trying to wave away something that was disturbing him, a nightmare, an ghoulish vision. He laughed, somewhat convulsively. "It's idiotic. I'm seeing midday chimeras..." "What do you see?" Johnn's boss had told him in advance that Mr. Bang was a little queer. He was certainly right.

"I am nervous," the poet said, apologetically. "But it somehow struck me - you and the building together. It reminded me of a young god, walking among huge rocks... and he plays with him... There is a new wilderness, a new jungle, new mountains - the skyscrapers, piled up by human hands...There is a new innocence, a new strength...Yes, there are New Gods," he whispered, standing motionless in the middle of Times Square, surrounded by cars as by dangerous monsters.

'Gee, he is nuts all right' thought John. He was terrified. At the same time he liked his odd protégé more than ever. 'Poor little guy', he felt, while with gentle determination he urged him on: "Come along, Herman! Come on! You can't stand here, you're holding up the traffic - don't you hear? All the drivers are shouting at you..."

And he pushed him across the street - a reliable guide,

protecting the frail and problematic child of another land, of another age.

"Thanks," murmured the poet when they had safely reached the other side of the street. "Thank you, John."

He did not know himself whether he was thanking him for his protection against the aggressive cars and the rude drivers - or for his having called him Herman.

* * *

Then came the evening of Herman Bang's lecture at the Hotel Breevort. The members of the arrangement committee arrived very early, although Danish affairs in New York usually begin an hour or so late. Mr. Opffer, Mr. Eskensen and the other gentlemen were surprised to find the hall already half filled. By the time John delivered his precious charge - the speaker-, the hall was filled to seating capacity, and people had begun to take up standing room against the walls. Finally Mr. Eskensen had to close the doors. Outside he heard angry words. A furious voice was calling the respectable committee " a bunch of stupid fools" for taking a hall that was obviously not half large enough. At last people were standing outside on the street and could not even get into the vestibule.

The Baroness A. was more worried by this surprising crowd than she would have been by an empty house. 'What do they come for?' she kept asking herself. 'It can't be genuine literary interest. Are they waiting for a large-scale fiasco? Are they just

attracted by his bad reputation? Do they want to inspect the notorious model of so many cartoons in the Copenhagen magazines?"

"I'm so very happy" she said to Herman Bang. "We have never had such a crowd before. It's a great evening, Herman." But he said nothing. He was exceedingly nervous. "Where is John?" he asked. John was chatting, somewhere in the background, with a machinist.

"I want you to stand at this door, next to the platform, while I am reading," said Bang. And to the Baroness, as if this explained everything quite simply. "He is my guardian-angel, you know."

The ladies and gentlemen who had received Herman Bang at the boat only a few days before hardly recognized him when he stepped out on the platform. The transformation was amazing. Suddenly he seemed neither nervous nor bashful. This man, improvising a little opening speech, looked ten years younger than the shriveled creature who had greeted them at the dock. He was lively, eloquent. His words poured out copious and articulate: it was a joy to listen.

After the short introductory address he read a few chapters of his novel Denied a country. The audience was spellbound from beginning to end. For he did not only read the story of Joán Ujhazy, the great violinist and "the prince of no-Country", he acted it, and more, he lived it on the stage. Yes, he actually was Joán in whose veins so many bloods were intermingled: Danish and Hungarian and Roumanian. The audience almost wept when Bang imitated old Ahe, young Joán's Danish nurse, who used to sing to him:

"There is a lovely land
Beside the sweeping billows
On Baltic's briny strand.
It winds afar in hill and dale,
Old Denmark is its name
And it is Freya's hall."

And later, in the international French boarding-school, where Joân was educated, all the boys nailed up over their beds the flags of their respective countries. But Joân had no flag, no country. "Well, his mother was a Dane", declared one of the boys. But another of his fellow-pupils remarked cruelly: " You can't have half a country."

Joân had neither spoken nor moved - he sat there at the foot of Harald's bed and the colour of the foreign flag seemed reflected on his face as a deep blush.

Then he asked, pretending not to have heard what had just been said:

'But why don't they live in their own countries?'

'Who?' said Harald.

'The poets.'

Harald pursed his lips.....:

'....you can't do great work unless you have a longing in your heart. That's why we all live abroad, all those who count.'

There was a grave silence in the hall filled with Danish Americans. But the spirits of the audience revived and many shrieked with laughter when he read the scene of the dinner in the Orient Express. ~~Joân shared the table with his Australian accom-~~
~~panist Henry Collyett, who practised ten hours a day, " and as soon~~
~~as he gets out of doors he says he's longing for Melbourne."~~

The slim little man on the platform transformed himself into the stout Dutchman, Herr Haagemester, who was accompanied by his North German cellist - a youth whose mouth was exactly the size of a cherry: - and Herman Bang, for a few moments, had a cherry mouth.

In the next second, however, he roared with the voice of M. Jean Roy of the Paris Opéra who could be heard above a full chorus. And then he assumed the haughty attitude of the German Minister at Bucharest, and his wife examining the virtuosos through her lorgnette.

~~The inspired speaker did not stay on his chair; he moved around, for now he was the waiter who balanced the tray with the cups of bouillon, - and a moment later he was Joán again, who heard the Minister's wife say to her husband: "Is he another virtuoso?" - In a tone which showed she had expected something more distinguished from him.~~

~~Fragments of conversations whirled through the room, every language in Europe could be heard, and Bang imitated them all. He was the French composer, Monsieur Bizot, who moved his stiff blue hands incessantly over the table-cloth, as though raking together invisible heaps of gold - perhaps the monthly rent from the houses of ill fame which the composer of Legend of St. Cecilia owned in the provincial towns of the Midi. He exclaimed with the beautiful tenor of M. Jean Roy: "To the supremacy of French art!" - clinking glasses with Monsieur Bizot, while two young Roumanians, hidden away in the opposite corner, clapped their ring-covered hands. Their dinner jackets fitted them like a skin, and so did Herman Bang's elegant dress-suit, made in London.~~

The hilarity of the audience reached its climax when the mixed crowd in the Orient Express dinner car began to discuss business: all at once the whole band of "respected colleagues" plunged into the subject of money and investments, bonuses, debentures, and

dividends - while Joánalone remained silent under the lorgnette which the Minister's wife turned in astonishment from one stock-jobber to another - his fellow artists. One of them declared that nothing - nothing was so safe in the long run as New York real estate: "My dear fellow, the future lies in America. We shall live to see New York outgrow London." Some people, he said, swore by New Orleans; but one should never invest money in a place one didn't know.

But the audience turned serious again, when Herman Bang transformed once more into Joán, the gipsy-aristocrat and politely though firmly declared: "No, Madame, I never speculate...And for that matter I've known so few artists die rich." - A sudden silence fell upon the car. Madame de Stein, the French pianist, made a gesture of the hand as if to push straggling hair from her forehead, though there was none there - while all at once the panting noise of the train seemed to engulf everything, and the rattling of doors and windows struck upon the ear.....

The applause was tremendous. Everybody was thrilled. "He is a wizard!" they exclaimed. "He is absolutely amazing! He has a thousand faces, and every one of them is so alive..."

After the intermission he read a short story dealing with a meek and elderly spinster by the name of Irene Holm. She is a former ballet dancer, and now has to give dancing-lessons to clumsy lads and girls in a northern village. There was no plot, no exciting action in the dreary story of Irene Holm: She arrives in that remote village, with her few belongings in an old champagne basket, she is always half frozen, she is infinitely pathetic with her worn-

out clothes and her worn-out smile, When the "season" is over, she has to pack up her champagne basket again, and the little farewell-party she arranges is the melancholy climax of the tale. For Mlle. Holm becomes a little tipsy - just a very little bit-, and her pupils persuade her to dance a solc, something serious, the kind she used to perform in the "real theatre". And she dances la grande Napolitaine, with all the affected, graceful steps and poses of thirty years ago. She is ridiculous and very tragic. People laugh at her. It is just an ordinary failure, nothing else. Irene Holm weeps, and the sympathetic daughter of the pastor tries to comfort her. It is just one of those minor tragedies: a rather depressing story. Yet how it beat with life when the author read it aloud! He tripped and skipped over the stage in the movements of Irene's grotesque performance. He imitated the music, the cruel laughter of the peasant boys, the silly giggling of provincial girls. His face was marked with all the suffering of the old danseuse. He seemed exhausted and his face was wet with tears when he ended his reading.

The show was not yet over with the end of the formal lecture. Bang went on chatting, laughing, smiling, shaking hands with everybody. He was obviously pleased by the flowers heaped up on a little table on the stage. He carried several big bouquets to the bar of the hotel where a large party had gathered and where he was received with fresh applause. He smiled, took a bow, and then turned suddenly very serious. "It's wonderful in America," he said softly to the Baroness who was standing next to him. "I am having a wonderful time here with all of you."

He was animated, he sparkled; sometimes his gaiety seemed somewhat hectic. He told humorous stories about his experiences as a drama critic, a lecturer and an agent. The lengthy tale of the Herman Bang tournée, twenty years before, was funny as well as touching, a real tragi-comedy. Oh, all those dreary provincial places in Denmark and Norway that they had visited! - he described them as ridiculous little infernos, the very essence of boredom. "And all the time we were putting on those childish one-act plays!?" He laughed heartily; the mere idea of those poor dramatic attempts seemed terribly funny to him. "The people snored in the theatre - yes, they literally snored... Our impresario was upset, and finally asked me to arrange a religious concert with the musical members of my company. He was a sort of expert on religious concerts, you see. 'Yes Sir,' he used to say, 'that way you appeal to the finest feelings of the people, you get the public, and the churches are not expensive.'" He gave an amusing and drastic imitation of the impresario's gestures and speech.

The Baroness, listening with almost painful attention, was enchanted but at the same time alarmed. She screamed with laughter, she was enthralled; yet she could not help thinking: 'There is something wrong with him. I don't know what it is. He is absolutely divine, I have never seen him like this; but there is a gleam in his eyes that I don't like: it frightens me... Perhaps he is taking drugs,' she thought, and was very worried by this new idea. 'Yes, that's probably why he has this convulsive laughter. He uses narcotics, I am sure...Poor Herman Bang. My poor friend...'

He had begunn meanwhile, to tell anecdotes about people he had known in Paris, Helsingfors, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. He gave an impressive description of the permanent underground struggle of the Czech people against their Austrian suppressors. He imitated the great Viennese actress, Frau Wolters, sang the praises of Réjane, the Parisian vedette, then plunged into a story about a clown he had once seen in London. "You are at home everywhere," observed one of the ladies admiringly. " Or - nowhere...", said Herman Bang.

And a gentleman at the other end of the table said in a deep, ominous voice: " Denied a Country..." - which was senseless, yet strangely disturbing.

The waiters appeared with the dessert. The large-bosomed matron who had been so afraid of Herman Bang's malicious character offered him a plate of ice cream with hot chocolate sauce. "That suits you perfectly, Mr. Bang," she said . "It's perverse.."

Late that night John and his celebrated problem-child returned to the Astor Hotel. "You were so quiet all evening," Herman Bang said. "Didn't you like my lecture?" The young man assured him: " Oh, I liked it a lot, honestly I did, it was swell...But just the same I felt...kind of bewildered... I had no idea you were such a grand actor, and knew so many stories...And you certainly know how to deal with women! The whole bunch was crazy about you - and there some goodlookers there too. That Baroness, for instance - Gee, what a figure! I'd certainly like to get somewhere with her --- Why don't you make her, Mr. Bang? You could

have her -like that!" He snapped his fingers.

Bang gave a bleak, plaintive smile. "I suppose you're right", he said after a pause, and made his fidgety little gestures. "Well - good night then, sleep well, my boy." And he tripped quickly toward the elevator, moving his feet in a burdensome way as though he were walking over glowing stones.

* * *

Two days later Bang was to leave New York on his long journey to the West coast. Early in the morning John appeared at the Astor to help him pack.

Both were silent for a while. Bang looked more tired and sickly than ever. Finally John said: "I hate to see you make that trip alone...You aren't tough enough, Mr. Bang...You look kind of pale, anyhow...You should take along some strong fellow..."

"I'd like to take you with me," said Bang.

"Why don't you?" John's voice lifted with sudden hope.

And Bang, after a long pause, very softly: "It would be a great mistake, John. It would be sure to be a fatal blunder."

John did not understand.

They said nothing further about it.

Before they left the hotel, Bang gave him a cigarette box and one of his books with a dedication. It was the Danish version of Denied a Country. John was a little disappointed as he could hardly read Danish. But he liked the cigarette box. "It's much too valuable," he said. "Gee! - it's solid gold..."

Bang made a desperate effort to smile.

"You're so good," said John, and suddenly touched Bang's brittle, delicate fingers with his big, clumsy hand. "You should have children. You'd be a swell dad, I know you would. Why don't you have a son, Mr. Bang?"

He did not answer. After a few seconds he said: "We must hurry, boy. It's getting late..."

A number of friends had come to the train to see him off. There were Mr. Opffer, Mr. Madsen, Mr. Eskensen, the large-bosomed lady, and the Baroness. Bang did not find his railway ticket and was haunted by the idea of losing his many bags. "Where are my things?" he kept asking nervously. "The little bag with my books...? Oh, it's terrible, dreadful...like a nightmare..."

"Why do you leave?" asked the Baroness. "Why don't you stay here, with us? Why must you go to the West coast?"

He glanced at her, as a wounded deer at the hunter.

'He is doomed' she felt. 'he is lost. I am sure he takes narcotics - cocaine, or morphine, or whatever those terrible things are called. He's so terribly pale, and he trembles all the time...Poor Herman- my poor friend...'

John helped him to a seat and wrapped him up like a sick child.

"I hate to see you go", he said, once more.

"Thanks" said Herman Bang without looking at him.

His guardian-angel left him. He was alone. He was freezing in spite of the heavy blankets.

Outside the friends waved goodbye as the train started slowly to move. "He looks so bewildered," said Mr. Opffer. "So weak..."

And Mr. Eskensen wondered, "Shall we ever see him again?" -

while John said to the Baroness, his voice hoarse, almost suffocated: "He's a funny guy. But a good fellow - a damned good fellow, that's what he is."

The Baroness nodded. John noticed that her beautiful eyes were moist with tears. 'She's fond of him, all right,' he thought. Finally she whispered: " You must tell me more about him in New York. He was so busy - sight-seeing..." There was a little twinkle in her eyes: a naughty little twinge, of jealousy, John thought. But her smile warmed as she added: " You must have a cup of tea with me one of these days. Because I do want to hear all about his impressions of New York, and what he liked best. That especially: what he liked the best..."

John was extremely flattered at the idea of having tea with the Baroness. "Thanks" he said, and looking at her it struck him again that she was a pretty woman, still quite attractive in spite of her years.

"Tomorrow perhaps, around five?" - and when he had accepted happily, they both blushed as though swept by a sudden feeling of guilt.

* * *

He interrupted the journey at Chicago where he had another lecture engagement. He met people and saw old friends again. He saw nobody. He was blind. He heard neither the pleasant nor the malicious phrases addressed to him. He was deaf. He spoke, and his own voice sounded strange to him. He did not know what he was talking about. He said: " I am fascinated by America. It's

colossal. I am eager to see more of it." But how could he see anything when he was smitten with blindness? "I am in a hurry", he said. "The transcontinental train...The boat is waiting. How far is San Francisco?" They said, 2000 miles or so. He nodded: "Yes, yes, it's colossal." He was absent-minded. He did not want to visit the famous stock-yards, nor did he express any interest in the museum or the public library. He insisted: "I am in a hurry...": as if a mysterious power - a storm or a tremendous, invisible hand- were driving, driving him on.

He stepped into his compartment on the transcontinental train like a prisoner entering the death-chamber.

They said: "Have a nice trip, Mr. Bang! Don't forget to write us a postcard from Shanghai!" and grinned as if they had made a joke.

He promised, "I certainly will."

They suggested: "You should stop at Salt Lake City. It's worth seeing..."

He groaned: "Yes...certainly...of course..." He shuddered, cruelly shaken by the invisible fist.

The days were long, and the nights longer. He did not leave his compartment. He hardly slept. Without the solace of sleep he had to await the end of the night, the end of the journey.

He spent the days and many hours of the nights staring through the window at a landscape that seemed to him monotonous and yet over-changing. For hours and hours his only thought would

be: 'How great this country is!...How huge - how endless... and how empty! I never imagined it would be so empty...These tremendous plains are not inhabited by human beings. What an abundance of room- : space for millions and millions to come...unused space for future generations; guilty creatures, cursed, suffering creatures....But I say: if a single creature were to see another creature to the very depths of his soul, he would die...

I bear no responsibility for those innumerable tragedies that are in preparation. I am innocent, immaculate as a monk, not tainted with the ugly sin of propagation. I am detached, remote, free - as travellers are. I have no country, no home, no children, No children. I am sterile.

There were ancient tribes who believed that a sterile man was holy. There were others who thought him cursed!

I am cursed.

America is pregnant with potential life. But I am no part of it. I am doomed.

Oh, America - pregnant with future laughter, hatred, love; loaded with the genius of its unborn sons, with the beauty of its unborn daughters, with the horror of coming revolutions, the atrocity of coming wars, the prosperity of promised peace... Oh, America, overburdened with possibilities and hopes - oh, endless landscape, landscape of youth- : landscape that must be my death. For I am detached and sterile, and I am doomed...

This dusty wilderness holds within itself my death. These eternal highways have no aim, no destination for me. For me these empty plains have only the numb and murderous features of Medusa's face.

This country kills me with its very greatness. It destroys me with its youthfulness, its strength, its exuberant reality. I knew it when I turned my eyes up to the buildings in New York; when I heard and saw and felt the laughter of that young creature, John, my guide and protector - who left me. This country murders me. I knew it when I arrived. I knew it when I left Copenhagen. I knew that I was setting out on my last journey.

America overpowers me. I am through.

It dazes me with its rivers and factories, with its athletic youth, its Negro songs, its cruel noise, its boredom, its childish enthusiasm, its muscles of steel, its vitality, its tremendous lust for life... with its greatness, its greatness which I am not strong enough to bear.

The days pass on, and the nights at last reach their end, but the train wheels on and on, the transcontinental train, the train without aim or destination...The scenery changes: now the locomotive has to climb steep hills, high mountains; there are rocks and deep valleys between snow-capped peaks. The traveller in the solitude of his elegant compartment felt a new apprehension; but this time it was a physical pang. His heart - he had known it all along - could not stand this altitude. Doctors had warned him before he left; but he had smiled and shrugged in his absent-minded way. Now it had come, the heart-attack, the spasm: he could hardly breathe.

He swallowed his medicine, hastily. The painful fit passed. The train speeded downhill.

He got over the dangerous attack - for the time being. But

there were other mountains to come- higher ones, very high ones: he knew it. Would his organism stand the sudden change of atmosphere, the thin air? - ' And if not...?' he thought, with desperate obstinacy. 'I am through, anyway. I have no special desire to see San Francisco, nor the Buddha temples in the Far East. I renounce the trip around the world. The shortest way to your own heart leads you around the world.' What philosopher coined that dubious epigram? In any case, he was mistaken... I may solve the riddle, halfway. I recognize the cruel laws that dominate my life. I accept them, shuddering but without resistance, I accept them.

...If it were conceivable that a man should see himself to the very depths of his soul, he would have no hesitation in laying his head uncomplainingly on the block and accepting his inevitable punishment.

I do not complain.

Patiently I wait for the end of the night - and I know the dawn will shine with a bloody splendor...'

He examined his map and found out that the State of Utah had a considerable altitude: the lowest point, in Salt Lake Valley, 4,210 feet above sea-level. "Climate healthy and delightful..." the prospect assured -: 'Not for me.' thought the traveller.

He went on reading, mechanically, without really grasping the sense of the words. " Scarcity of timber and verdure...Much of the soil is strongly impregnated with salt and alkali....Many parts are still pure desert, hopelessly barren..."

*Like me - : hopelessly barren...My heart, my soul, my brains, my body...hopelessly barren...'

And he read the amazing story of the Pioneers of Utah: Brigham Young, travelling across the plains and mountains, with 143 men, three women and two children; living in tents, wagons and log huts; protecting themselves from hostile Indians, and from wolves and other wild beasts; stubbornly faithful, according to their own special interpretation of the Holy Word. This was hardly seventy years ago, but it sounded like an ancient, heroic tale - the saga of the Mormons, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, expelled from Illinois, wandering through wilderness and unknown land, attracted by the Great West, settling at last, on the shores of a Lake the waters of which were salty - salty as tears ...: the Dead Sea of America, the Lake of Tears, the City of Tears, the Valley of Tears...

'I am approaching the Region of Tears. How far away is that mystic Lake? A shower of inward tears gives the answer: You are near the goal...'

His thoughts wandered to the matter of polygamy. 'How odd! 143 men, and only three women...and yet in theory every man claimed several females...'

I wouldn't make a good Mormon,' and he chuckled softly, but was frightened by the sound of his own laughter in the great solitude of his compartment, of this train in the midst of the swift-running, empty, tremendous landscape.

My Island has no women. Who is there for me to love?

He recalled, with a sudden pang, these words, spoken by Joán Ujhazy, on one of the last pages of Denied a Country. The homeless one, melancholy hero of the novel, had tried to find home: he went

to Denmark, and it was a failure. Before leaving his estranged homeland, he took a walk with an old friend who also had ruined his life. "But you, Joán," he said presently - "we're still young men - why don't you find a wife?" - "I?" said Joán. They were watching the night express approaching; the locomotive headlight searched them out like a demonic eye. - "I?" repeated Joán, and his voice was as bloodless as his face; "Erik, I must die alone."

I must die alone...

I...must....die alone...ALONE...

He was almost asleep. He heard the noise of the wheels- their monotonous, agonizing rhythm, against which Joán's voice, his own dream-voice kept struggling. "This was my last hour", said Joán. "And to-night has brought it to an end. Because I have heard a greater. He can play of greater things. He plays of a new joy."

A new joy ...He saw John, the muscular and winged guide dancing, jumping, flying between the skyscrapers. He was half-naked, wearing only purple shorts and huge leather gloves. He was a prize fighter, he was very strong, his punch was deadly, his laughter was deadly; deadly - his youth, his strength, his cruel innocence...

'He will hit me ', felt the sleeper.

And the blow fell.

It was very painful. He tried to get up but could not! He was paralysed, he was numb. His heart ached. He pressed his chest with his trembling hand. He wanted to scream but had no voice. He groaned. He knew that this was the end.

The train had stopped in the midst of a grand and terrifying landscape - a Biblical scene, barren and heroic, threatening and enchanting, with icy mountains sharply profiled against a glowing sky. The sky was pouring a hard, metallic light. Between the rocks ice-blue waters fell to the depths. The air was filled with a high, clinking noise - the triumphant song of the dawn, the cruel hymn of a beginning day.

A couple of days later Mr. Opffer, editor of the Nordlyset, received a press telegram from Ogden, Utah, to the effect that the great Danish author and lecturer Herman Bang had been taken from the transcontinental train in a dying condition and brought to a hospital in that city where he had died at 6 a.m. Mr. Opffer immediately called up Mr. Eskensen who said: "Poor fellow! I've been expecting something like this. He had such a pale little face..." - What can we do now?" asked Mr. Opffer. Mr. Eskensen suggested having a death-mask taken. Mr. Opffer thought this an excellent idea. Two lengthy telegrams were made out, one to the Danish Vice Consul at Ogden, Mr. Thorvald Orlob, the other to Mr. O.D. Rasmussen, owner of a chain of department stores in Utah and Wyoming. Both gentlemen were only too happy to do this little service for a distinguished compatriot who had died friendless in their own neighborhood.

Mr. Eskensen broke the news to the Baroness. "It was something like an apoplexy of the heart," he said. "We'll have a memorial service, of course, perhaps in the little Danish church in the Bronx. We want to make it simple but dignified. A few

speakers - Stephan Hansen, and Jonas Lie - though he is Norwegian -, and Emile Bomén. And we hope to get Holger Birkerød to sing the Ave Maria. Have you ever heard him? He has a wonderful voice..."

But the Baroness was not listening. She seemed petrified. She could hardly move her fingers or her lips.

"He is dead," she told John, a few hours later.

He wept. The tears streamed copiously from his eyes which he did not cover. His face was not distorted as he cried. It was the strong and beautiful face of a mourning young god.

He shouted: " It is our fault! " - and raised his powerful fists, angrily.

"What do you mean- our fault?"

He insisted desperately: "We have killed him!" And he shook his effulgent head and his fists.

"Be quiet!" she implored him. "Nobody is responsible. We are not to blame.- You are talking nonsense."

But he went on shaking his head in despair. "We've killed him. America has killed him. He couldn't take it. He was different. The skyscrapers scared him, the big country scared him, I scared him. We have murdered him - all of us!"

She took his face between her hands. It was wet with tears. She dried his face with her fingers. She kissed his cheeks and his lips. She tasted the bitter taste of his tears. She begged him:

"Be quiet!...Be quiet, my sweetheart- don't cry! I am with you...."

* * *