V.

TO SORGONO.

The various trains in the junction squatted side by side and had long, long talks before at last we were off. It was wonderful to be running in the bright morning towards the heart of Sardinia, in the little train that seemed so familiar. We were still going third class, rather to the disgust of the railway officials at Mandas.

At first the country was rather open: always the long spurs of hills, steep-sided, but not high. And from our little train we looked across the country, across hill and dale. In the distance was a little town, on a low slope. But for its compact, fortified look it might have been a town on the English downs. A man in the carriage leaned out of the window holding out a white cloth, as a signal to someone in the far off town that he was coming. The wind blew the white cloth, the town in the distance glimmered small and alone in its hollow. And the little train pelted along.

It was rather comical to see it. We were always climbing. And the line curved in great loops. So that as one looked out of the window, time and again one started, seeing a little train running in front of us, in a diverging direction, making big puffs of steam. But lo, it was our own little engine pelting off around a loop away ahead. We were quite a long

train, but all trucks in front, only our two passenger coaches hitched on behind. And for this reason our own engine was always running fussily into sight, like some dog scampering in front and swerving about us, while we followed at the tail end of the thin string of trucks.

I was surprised how well the small engine took the continuous steep slopes, how bravely it emerged on the sky-line. It is a queer railway. I would like to know who made it. It pelts up hill and down dale and round sudden bends in the most unconcerned fashion, not as proper big railways do, grunting inside deep cuttings and stinking their way through tunnels, but running up the hill like a panting, small dog, and having a look round, and starting off in another direction, whisking us behind unconcernedly. This is much more fun than the tunnel-and-cutting system.

They told me that Sardinia mines her own coal: and quite enough for her own needs: but very soft, not fit for steam-purposes. I saw heaps of it: small, dull, dirty-looking stuff. Truck-loads of it too. And truck-loads of grain.

At every station we were left ignominiously planted, while the little engines--they had gay gold names on their black little bodies--strolled about along the side-lines, and snuffed at the various trucks. There we sat, at every station, while some truck was discarded and some other sorted out like a branded sheep, from the sidings and hitched on to us. It took a long time, this did.

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All the stations so far had had wire netting over the windows. This means malaria-mosquitoes. The malaria climbs very high in Sardinia. The shallow upland valleys, moorland with their intense summer sun and the riverless, boggy behaviour of the water breed the pest inevitably. But not very terribly, as far as one can make out: August and September being the danger months. The natives don't like to admit there is any malaria: a tiny bit, they say, a tiny bit. As soon as you come to the trees there is no more. So they say. For many miles the landscape is moorland and down-like, with no trees. But wait for the trees. Ah, the woods and forests of Gennargentu: the woods and forests higher up: no malaria there!

The little engine whisks up and up, around its loopy curves as if it were going to bite its own tail: we being the tail: then suddenly dives over the sky-line out of sight. And the landscape changes. The famous woods begin to appear. At first it is only hazel-thickets, miles of hazel-thickets, all wild, with a few black cattle trying to peep at us out of the green myrtle and arbutus scrub which forms the undergrowth; and a couple of rare, wild peasants peering at the train. They wear the black sheepskin tunic, with the wool outside, and the long stocking caps. Like cattle they too peer out from between deep bushes. The myrtle scrub here rises man-high, and cattle and men are smothered in it. The big hazels rise bare above. It must be difficult getting about in these parts.

Sometimes, in the distance one sees a black-and-white peasant riding lonely across a more open place, a tiny vivid figure. I like so much the proud instinct which makes a living creature distinguish itself from its background. I hate the rabbity khaki protection-colouration. A black-and-white peasant on his pony, only a dot in the distance beyond the foliage, still flashes and dominates the landscape. Ha-ha! proud mankind! There you ride! But alas, most of the men are still khaki-muffled, rabbit-indistinguishable, ignominious. The Italians look curiously rabbity in the grey-green uniform: just as our sand-colored khaki men look doggy. They seem to scuffle rather abased, ignominious on the earth. Give us back the scarlet and gold, and devil take the hindmost.

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The landscape really begins to change. The hillsides tilt sharper and sharper. A man is ploughing with two small red cattle on a craggy, tree-hanging slope as sharp as a roof-side. He stoops at the small wooden plough, and jerks the ploughlines. The oxen lift their noses to heaven, with a strange and beseeching snake-like movement, and taking tiny little steps with their frail feet, move slantingly across the slope-face, between rocks and tree-roots. Little, frail, jerky steps the bullocks take, and again they put their horns back and lift their muzzles snakily to heaven, as the man pulls the line. And he skids his wooden plough round another scoop of earth. It is marvellous how they

hang upon that steep, craggy slope. An English labourer's eyes would bolt out of his head at the sight.

There is a stream: actually a long tress of a water-fall pouring into a little gorge, and a stream-bed that opens a little, and shows a marvellous cluster of naked poplars away below. They are like ghosts. They have a ghostly, almost phosphorescent luminousness in the shadow of the valley, by the stream of water. If not phosphorescent, then incandescent: a grey, goldish-pale incandescence of naked limbs and myriad cold-glowing twigs, gleaming strangely. If I were a painter I would paint them: for they seem to have living, sentient flesh. And the shadow envelopes them.

Another naked tree I would paint is the gleaming mauve-silver fig, which burns its cold incandescence, tangled, like some sensitive creature emerged from the rock. A fig tree come forth in its nudity gleaming over the dark winter-earth is a sight to behold. Like some white, tangled sea anemone. Ah, if it could but answer! or if we had tree-speech!

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Yes, the steep valley sides become almost gorges, and there are trees. Not forests such as I had imagined, but scattered, grey, smallish oaks, and some lithe chestnuts. Chestnuts with their long whips, and oaks with their stubby boughs, scattered on steep hillsides where rocks crop out. The train perilously winding round, half way up. Then suddenly bolting

over a bridge and into a completely unexpected station. What is more, men crowd in--the station is connected with the main railway by a post motor-omnibus.

An unexpected irruption of men--they may be miners or navvies or land-workers. They all have huge sacks: some lovely saddle-bags with rose-coloured flowers across the darkness. One old man is in full black-and-white costume, but very dirty and coming to pieces. The others wear the tight madder-brown breeches and sleeved waistcoats. Some have the sheepskin tunic, and all wear the long stocking cap. And how they smell! of sheep-wool and of men and goat. A rank scent fills the carriage.

They talk and are very lively. And they have mediaeval faces, rusé, never really abandoning their defences for a moment, as a badger or a pole-cat never abandons its defences. There is none of the brotherliness and civilised simplicity. Each man knows he must guard himself and his own: each man knows the devil is behind the next bush. They have never known the post-Renaissance Jesus. Which is rather an eye-opener.

Not that they are suspicious or uneasy. On the contrary, noisy, assertive, vigorous presences. But with none of that implicit belief that everybody will be and ought to be good to them, which is the mark of our era. They don't expect people to be good to them: they don't want it. They remind me of half-wild dogs that will love and obey, but which won't be handled. They won't have their heads touched. And they won't be

fondled. One can almost hear the half-savage growl.

The long stocking caps they wear as a sort of crest, as a lizard wears his crest at mating time. They are always moving them, settling them on their heads. One fat fellow, young, with sly brown eyes and a young beard round his face folds his stocking-foot in three, so that it rises over his brow martial and handsome. The old boy brings his stocking-foot over the left ear. A handsome fellow with a jaw of massive teeth pushes his cap back and lets it hang a long way down his back. Then he shifts it forward over his nose, and makes it have two sticking-out points, like fox-ears, above his temples. It is marvellous how much expression these caps can take on. They say that only those born to them can wear them. They seem to be just long bags, nearly a yard long, of black stockinette stuff.

The conductor comes to issue them their tickets. And they all take out rolls of paper money. Even a little mothy rat of a man who sits opposite me has quite a pad of ten-franc notes. Nobody seems short of a hundred francs nowadays: nobody.

They shout and expostulate with the conductor. Full of coarse life they are: but so coarse! The handsome fellow has his sleeved waistcoat open, and his shirt-breast has come unbuttoned. Not looking, it seems as if he wears a black undervest. Then suddenly, one sees it is his own hair. He is quite black inside his shirt, like a black goat.

But there is a gulf between oneself and them. They have no inkling of our crucifixion, our universal consciousness. Each of them is pivoted and limited to himself, as the wild animals are. They look out, and they see other objects, objects to ridicule or mistrust or to sniff curiously at. But "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" has never entered their souls at all, not even the thin end of it. They might love their neighbour, with a hot, dark, unquestioning love. But the love would probably leave off abruptly. The fascination of what is beyond them has not seized on them. Their neighbour is a mere external. Their life is centripetal, pivoted inside itself, and does not run out towards others and mankind. One feels for the first time the real old mediaeval life, which is enclosed in itself and has no interest in the world outside.

And so they lie about on the seats, play a game, shout, and sleep, and settle their long stocking-caps: and spit. It is wonderful in them that at this time of day they still wear the long stocking-caps as part of their inevitable selves. It is a sign of obstinate and powerful tenacity. They are not going to be broken in upon by world-consciousness. They are not going into the world's common clothes. Coarse, vigorous, determined, they will stick to their own coarse dark stupidity and let the big world find its own way to its own enlightened hell. Their hell is their own hell, they prefer it unenlightened.

And one cannot help wondering whether Sardinia will resist right through. Will the last waves of enlightenment and world-unity break over them and wash away the stocking-caps? Or is the tide of enlightenment

and world-unity already receding fast enough?

Certainly a reaction is setting in, away from the old universality, back, away from cosmopolitanism and internationalism. Russia, with her Third International, is at the same time reacting most violently away from all other contact, back, recoiling on herself, into a fierce, unapproachable Russianism. Which motion will conquer? The workman's International, or the centripetal movement into national isolation? Are we going to merge into one grey proletarian homogeneity?--or are we going to swing back into more-or-less isolated, separate, defiant communities?

Probably both. The workman's International movement will finally break the flow towards cosmopolitanism and world-assimilation, and suddenly in a crash the world will fly back into intense separations. The moment has come when America, that extremist in world-assimilation and world-oneness, is reacting into violent egocentricity, a truly Amerindian egocentricity. As sure as fate we are on the brink of American empire.

For myself, I am glad. I am glad that the era of love and oneness is over: hateful homogeneous world-oneness. I am glad that Russia flies back into savage Russianism, Scythism, savagely self-pivoting. I am glad that America is doing the same. I shall be glad when men hate their common, world-alike clothes, when they tear them up and clothe themselves fiercely for distinction, savage distinction, savage

distinction against the rest of the creeping world: when America kicks the billy-cock and the collar-and-tie into limbo, and takes to her own national costume: when men fiercely react against looking all alike and being all alike, and betake themselves into vivid clan or nation-distinctions.

The era of love and oneness is over. The era of world-alike should be at an end. The other tide has set in. Men will set their bonnets at one another now, and fight themselves into separation and sharp distinction. The day of peace and oneness is over, the day of the great fight into multifariousness is at hand. Hasten the day, and save us from proletarian homogeneity and khaki all-alikeness.

I love my indomitable coarse men from mountain Sardinia, for their stocking-caps and their splendid, animal-bright stupidity. If only the last wave of all-alikeness won't wash those superb crests, those caps, away.

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We are struggling now among the Gennargentu spurs. There is no single peak--no Etna of Sardinia. The train, like the plough, balances on the steep, steep sides of the hill-spurs, and winds around and around. Above and below the steep slopes are all bosky. These are the woods of Gennargentu. But they aren't woods in my sense of the word. They are thin sprinkles of oaks and chestnuts and cork-trees over steep

hill-slopes. And cork-trees! I see curious slim oaky-looking trees that are stripped quite naked below the boughs, standing brown-ruddy, curiously distinct among the bluey grey pallor of the others. They remind me, again and again, of glowing, coffee-brown, naked aborigines of the South Seas. They have the naked suavity, skin-bare, and an intense coffee-red colour of unclothed savages. And these are the stripped cork-trees. Some are much stripped, some little. Some have the whole trunk and part of the lower limbs ruddy naked, some only a small part of the trunk.

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It is well on in the afternoon. A peasant in black and white, and his young, handsome woman in rose-red costume, with gorgeous apron bordered deep with grass-green, and a little, dark-purple waistcoat over her white, full bodice, are sitting behind me talking. The workmen peasants are subsiding into sleep. It is well on in the afternoon, we have long ago eaten the meat. Now we finish the white loaf, the gift, and the tea. Suddenly looking out of the window, we see Gennargentu's mass behind us, a thick snow-deep knot-summit, beautiful beyond the long, steep spurs among which we are engaged. We lose the white mountain mass for half an hour: when suddenly it emerges unexpectedly almost in front, the great, snow-heaved shoulder.

How different it is from Etna, that lonely, self-conscious wonder of Sicily! This is much more human and knowable, with a deep breast and

massive limbs, a powerful mountain-body. It is like the peasants.

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The stations are far between--an hour from one to another. Ah, how weary one gets of these journeys, they last so long. We look across a valley--a stone's throw. But alas, the little train has no wings, and can't jump. So back turns the line, back and back towards Gennargentu, a long rocky way, till it comes at length to the poor valley-head. This it skirts fussily, and sets off to pelt down on its traces again, gaily. And a man who was looking at us doing our round-about has climbed down and crossed the valley in five minutes.

The peasants nearly all wear costumes now, even the women in the fields: the little fields in the half-populated valleys. These Gennargentu valleys are all half-populated, more than the moors further south.

It is past three o'clock, and cold where there is no sun. At last only one more station before the terminus. And here the peasants wake up, sling the bulging sacks over their shoulders, and get down. We see Tonara away above. We see our old grimy black-and-white peasant greeted by his two women who have come to meet him with the pony--daughters handsome in vivid rose and green costume. Peasants, men in black and white, men in madder-brown, with the close breeches on their compact thighs, women in rose-and-white, ponies with saddle-bags, all begin to trail up the hill-road in silhouette, very handsome, towards the

far-off, perched, sun-bright village of Tonara, a big village, shining like a New Jerusalem.

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The train as usual leaves us standing, and shuffles with trucks--water sounds in the valley: there are stacks of cork on the station, and coal. An idiot girl in a great full skirt entirely made of coloured patches mops and mows. Her little waistcoat thing is also incredibly old, and shows faint signs of having once been a lovely purple and black brocade. The valley and steep slopes are open about us. An old shepherd has a lovely flock of delicate merino sheep.

And at last we move. In one hour we shall be there. As we travel among the tree slopes, many brown cork-trees, we come upon a flock of sheep. Two peasants in our carriage looking out, give the most weird, unnatural, high-pitched shrieks, entirely unproduceable by any ordinary being. The sheep know, however, and scatter. And after ten minutes the shrieks start again, for three young cattle. Whether the peasants do it for love, I don't know. But it is the wildest and weirdest inhuman shepherd noise I have ever heard.

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It is Saturday afternoon and four o'clock. The country is wild and uninhabited, the train almost empty, yet there is the leaving-off-work

feeling in the atmosphere. Oh twisty, wooded, steep slopes, oh glimpses of Gennargentu, oh nigger-stripped cork-trees, oh smell of peasants, oh wooden, wearisome railway carriage, we are so sick of you! Nearly seven hours of this journey already: and a distance of sixty miles.

But we are almost there--look, look, Sorgono, nestling beautifully among the wooded slopes in front. Oh magic little town. Ah, you terminus and ganglion of the inland roads, we hope in you for a pleasant inn and happy company. Perhaps we will stay a day or two at Sorgono.

The train gives a last sigh, and draws to a last standstill in the tiny terminus station. An old fellow fluttering with rags as a hen in the wind flutters, asked me if I wanted the Albergo, the inn. I said yes, and let him take my knapsack. Pretty Sorgono! As we went down the brief muddy lane between hedges, to the village high-road, we seemed almost to have come to some little town in the English west-country, or in Hardy's country. There were glades of stripling oaks, and big slopes with oak trees, and on the right a saw-mill buzzing, and on the left the town, white and close, nestling round a baroque church-tower. And the little lane was muddy.

Three minutes brought us to the high-road, and a great, pink-washed building blank on the road facing the station lane, and labelled in huge letters: RISTORANTE RISVEGLIO: the letter N being printed backwards. Risveglio if you please: which means waking up or rousing, like the word reveille. Into the doorway of the Risveglio bolted the flutterer.

"Half a minute," said I. "Where is the Albergo d'Italia?" I was relying on Baedeker.

"Non c'è più," replied my rag-feather. "There isn't it any more." This answer, being very frequent nowadays, is always most disconcerting.

"Well then, what other hotel?"

"There is no other."

Risveglio or nothing. In we go. We pass into a big, dreary bar, where are innumerable bottles behind a tin counter. Flutter-jack yells: and at length appears mine host, a youngish fellow of the Esquimo type, but rather bigger, in a dreary black suit and a cutaway waistcoat suggesting a dinner-waistcoat, and innumerable wine-stains on his shirt front. I instantly hated him for the filthy appearance he made. He wore a battered hat and his face was long unwashed.

Was there a bedroom?

Yes.

And he led the way down the passage, just as dirty as the road outside, up the hollow, wooden stairs also just as clean as the passage, along a hollow, drum-rearing dirty corridor, and into a bedroom. Well, it contained a large bed, thin and flat with a grey-white counterpane, like

a large, poor, marble-slabbed tomb in the room's sordid emptiness; one dilapidated chair on which stood the miserablest weed of a candle I have ever seen: a broken wash-saucer in a wire ring: and for the rest, an expanse of wooden floor as dirty-grey-black as it could be, and an expanse of wall charted with the bloody deaths of mosquitoes. The window was about two feet above the level of a sort of stable-yard outside, with a fowl-house just by the sash. There, at the window flew lousy feathers and dirty straw, the ground was thick with chicken-droppings. An ass and two oxen comfortably chewed hay in an open shed just across, and plump in the middle of the yard lay a bristly black pig taking the last of the sun. Smells of course were varied.

The knapsack and the kitchenino were dropped on the repulsive floor, which I hated to touch with my boots even. I turned back the sheets and looked at other people's stains.

"There is nothing else?"

"Niente," said he of the lank, low forehead and beastly shirt-breast. And he sullenly departed. I gave the flutterer his tip and he too ducked and fled. Then the queen-bee and I took a few mere sniffs.

"Dirty, disgusting swine!" said I, and I was in a rage.

I could have forgiven him anything, I think, except his horrible shirt-breast, his personal shamelessness.

We strolled round--saw various other bedrooms, some worse, one really better. But this showed signs of being occupied. All the doors were open: the place was quite deserted, and open to the road. The one thing that seemed definite was honesty. It must be a very honest place, for every footed beast, man or animal, could walk in at random and nobody to take the slightest regard.

So we went downstairs. The only other apartment was the open public bar, which seemed like part of the road. A muleteer, leaving his mules at the corner of the Risveglio, was drinking at the counter.

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This famous inn was at the end of the village. We strolled along the road between the houses, down-hill. A dreary hole! a cold, hopeless, lifeless, Saturday afternoon-weary village, rather sordid, with nothing to say for itself. No real shops at all. A weary-looking church, and a clutch of disconsolate houses. We walked right through the village. In the middle was a sort of open space where stood a great, grey motor-omnibus. And a bus-driver looking rather weary.

Where did the bus go?

It went to join the main railway.

When?

At half-past seven in the morning.

Only then?

Only then.

"Thank God we can get out, anyhow," said I.

We passed on, and emerged beyond the village, still on the descending great high-road that was mended with loose stones pitched on it. This wasn't good enough. Besides, we were out of the sun, and the place being at a considerable elevation, it was very cold. So we turned back, to climb quickly uphill into the sun.

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We went up a little side-turning past a bunch of poor houses towards a steep little lane between banks. And before we knew where we were, we were in the thick of the public lavatory. In these villages, as I knew, there are no sanitary arrangements of any sort whatever. Every villager and villageress just betook himself at need to one of the side-roads. It is the immemorial Italian custom. Why bother about privacy? The most socially-constituted people on earth, they even like to relieve themselves in company.

We found ourselves in the full thick of one of these meeting-places. To get out at any price! So we scrambled up the steep earthen banks to a stubble field above. And by this time I was in a greater rage.

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Evening was falling, the sun declining. Below us clustered the Sodom-apple of this vile village. Around were fair, tree-clad hills and dales, already bluish with the frost-shadows. The air bit cold and strong. In a very little time the sun would be down. We were at an elevation of about 2,500 feet above the sea.

No denying it was beautiful, with the oak-slopes and the wistfulness and the far-off feeling of loneliness and evening. But I was in too great a temper to admit it. We clambered frenziedly to get warm. And the sun immediately went right down, and the ice-heavy blue shadow fell over us all. The village began to send forth blue wood-smoke, and it seemed more than ever like the twilit West Country.

But thank you--we had to get back. And run the gauntlet of that stinking, stinking lane? Never. Towering with fury--quite unreasonable, but there you are--I marched the q-b down a declivity through a wood, over a ploughed field, along a cart-track, and so to the great high-road above the village and above the inn.

It was cold, and evening was falling into dusk. Down the high-road came wild half-ragged men on ponies, in all degrees of costume and not-costume: came four wide-eyed cows stepping down-hill round the corner, and three delicate, beautiful merino sheep which stared at us with their prominent, gold-curious eyes: came an ancient, ancient man with a stick: came a stout-chested peasant carrying a long wood-pole: came a straggle of alert and triumphant goats, long-horned, long-haired, jingling their bells. Everybody greeted us hesitatingly. And everything came to a halt at the Risveglio corner, while the men had a nip.

I attacked the spotty-breast again.

Could I have milk?

No. Perhaps in an hour there would be milk. Perhaps not.

Was there anything to eat?

No--at half past seven there would be something to eat.

Was there a fire?

No--the man hadn't made the fire.

Nothing to do but to go to that foul bedroom or walk the high-road. We turned up the high-road again. Animals stood about the road in the

frost-heavy air, with heads sunk passively, waiting for the men to finish their drinks in the beastly bar--we walked slowly up the hill. In a field on the right a flock of merino sheep moved mistily, uneasily, climbing at the gaps in the broken road bank, and sounding their innumerable small fine bells with a frosty ripple of sound. A figure which in the dusk I had really thought was something inanimate broke into movement in the field. It was an old shepherd, very old, in very ragged dirty black-and-white, who had been standing like a stone there in the open field-end for heaven knows how long, utterly motionless, leaning on his stick. Now he broke into a dream-motion and hobbled after the wistful, feminine, inquisitive sheep. The red was fading from the far-off west. At the corner, climbing slowly and wearily, we almost ran into a grey and lonely bull, who came stepping down-hill in his measured fashion like some god. He swerved his head and went round us.

We reached a place which we couldn't make out: then saw it was a cork-shed. There were stacks and stacks of cork-bark in the dusk, like crumpled hides.

"Now I'm going back," said the q-b flatly, and she swung round. The last red was smouldering beyond the lost, thin-wooded hills of this interior. A fleece of blue, half-luminous smoke floated over the obscure village. The high-way wound down-hill at our feet, pale and blue.

And the q-b was angry with me for my fury.

"Why are you so indignant! Anyone would think your moral self had been outraged! Why take it morally? You petrify that man at the inn by the very way you speak to him, such condemnation! Why don't you take it as it comes? It's all life."

But no, my rage is black, black, black. Why, heaven knows. But I think it was because Sorgono had seemed so fascinating to me, when I imagined it beforehand. Oh so fascinating! If I had expected nothing I should not have been so hit. Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.

I cursed the degenerate aborigines, the dirty-breasted host who dared to keep such an inn, the sordid villagers who had the baseness to squat their beastly human nastiness in this upland valley. All my praise of the long stocking-cap--you remember?--vanished from my mouth. I cursed them all, and the q-b for an interfering female....

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In the bar a wretched candle was weeping light--uneasy, gloomy men were drinking their Saturday-evening-home-coming dram. Cattle lay down in the road, in the cold air as if hopeless.

Had the milk come?

No.

When would it come.

He didn't know.

Well, what were we to do? Was there no room? Was there nowhere where we could sit?

Yes, there was the stanza now.

Now! Taking the only weed of a candle, and leaving the drinkers in the dark, he led us down a dark and stumbly earthen passage, over loose stones and an odd plank, as it would seem underground, to the stanza: the room.

The stanza! It was pitch dark--But suddenly I saw a big fire of oak-root, a brilliant, flamy, rich fire, and my rage in that second disappeared.

The host, and the candle, forsook us at the door. The stanza would have been in complete darkness, save for that rushing bouquet of new flames in the chimney, like fresh flowers. By this firelight we saw the room. It was like a dungeon, absolutely empty, with an uneven, earthen floor, quite dry, and high bare walls, gloomy, with a handbreadth of window high up. There was no furniture at all, save a little wooden bench, a foot high, before the fire, and several home-made-looking rush mats

rolled up and leaning against the walls. Furthermore a chair before the fire on which hung wet table-napkins. Apart from this, it was a high, dark, naked prison-dungeon.

But it was quite dry, it had an open chimney, and a gorgeous new fire rushing like a water-fall upwards among the craggy stubs of a pile of dry oak roots. I hastily put the chair and the wet corpse-cloths to one side. We sat on the low bench side by side in the dark, in front of this rippling rich fire, in front of the cavern of the open chimney, and we did not care any more about the dungeon and the darkness. Man can live without food, but he can't live without fire. It is an Italian proverb.
We had found the fire, like new gold. And we sat in front of it, a little way back, side by side on the low form, our feet on the uneven earthen floor, and felt the flame-light rippling upwards over our faces, as if we were bathing in some gorgeous stream of fieriness. I forgave the dirty-breasted host everything and was as glad as if I had come into a kingdom.

So we sat alone for half an hour, smiling into the flames, bathing our faces in the glow. From time to time I was aware of steps in the tunnel-like passage outside, and of presences peering. But no one came. I was aware too of the faint steaming of the beastly table-napkins, the only other occupants of the room.

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In dithers a candle, and an elderly, bearded man in gold-coloured corduroys, and an amazing object on a long, long spear. He put the candle on the mantel-ledge, and crouched at the side of the fire, arranging the oak-roots. He peered strangely and fixedly in the fire. And he held up the speared object before our faces.

It was a kid that he had come to roast. But it was a kid opened out, made quite flat, and speared like a flat fan on a long iron stalk. It was a really curious sight. And it must have taken some doing. The whole of the skinned kid was there, the head curled in against a shoulder, the stubby cut ears, the eyes, the teeth, the few hairs of the nostrils: and the feet curled curiously round, like an animal that puts its fore-paw over its ducked head: and the hind-legs twisted indescribably up: and all skewered flat-wise upon the long iron rod, so that it was a complete flat pattern. It reminded me intensely of those distorted, slim-limbed, dog-like animals which figure on the old Lombard ornaments, distorted and curiously infolded upon themselves. Celtic illuminations also have these distorted, involuted creatures.

The old man flourished the flat kid like a bannerette, whilst he arranged the fire. Then, in one side of the fire-place wall he poked the point of the rod. He himself crouched on the hearth-end, in the half-shadow at the other side of the fire-place, holding the further end of the long iron rod. The kid was thus extended before the fire, like a hand-screen. And he could spin it round at will.

But the hole in the masonry of the chimney-piece was not satisfactory. The point of the rod kept slipping, and the kid came down against the fire. He muttered and muttered to himself, and tried again. Then at length he reared up the kid-banner whilst he got large stones from a dark corner. He arranged these stones so that the iron point rested on them. He himself sat away on the opposite side of the fire-place, on the shadowy hearth-end, and with queer, spell-bound black eyes and completely immovable face, he watched the flames and the kid, and held the handle end of the rod.

We asked him if the kid was for the evening meal--and he said it was. It would be good! And he said yes, and looked with chagrin at the bit of ash on the meat, where it had slipped. It is a point of honour that it should never touch the ash. Did they do all their meat this way? He said they did. And wasn't it difficult to put the kid thus on the iron rod? He said it was not easy, and he eyed the joint closely, and felt one of the forelegs, and muttered that was not fixed properly.

He spoke with a very soft mutter, hard to catch, and sideways, never to us direct. But his manner was gentle, soft, muttering, reticent, sensitive. He asked us where we came from, and where we were going: always in his soft mutter. And what nation were we, were we French? Then he went on to say there was a war--but he thought it was finished. There was a war because the Austrians wanted to come into Italy again. But the French and the English came to help Italy. A lot of Sardinians had gone to it. But let us hope it is all finished. He thought it was--young

men of Sorgono had been killed. He hoped it was finished.

Then he reached for the candle and peered at the kid. It was evident he was the born roaster. He held the candle and looked for a long time at the sizzling side of the meat, as if he would read portents. Then he held his spit to the fire again. And it was as if time immemorial were roasting itself another meal. I sat holding the candle.

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A young woman appeared, hearing voices. Her head was swathed in a shawl, one side of which was brought across, right over the mouth, so that only her two eyes and her nose showed. The q-b thought she must have toothache--but she laughed and said no. As a matter of fact that is the way a head-dress is worn in Sardinia, even by both sexes. It is something like the folding of the Arab's burnoose. The point seems to be that the mouth and chin are thickly covered, also the ears and brow, leaving only the nose and eyes exposed. They say it keeps off the malaria. The men swathe shawls round their heads in the same way. It seems to me they want to keep their heads warm, dark and hidden: they feel secure inside.

She wore the workaday costume: a full, dark-brown skirt, the full white bodice, and a little waistcoat or corset. This little waistcoat in her case had become no more than a shaped belt, sending up graceful, stiffened points under the breasts, like long leaves standing up. It was

pretty--but all dirty. She too was pretty, but with an impudent, not quite pleasant manner. She fiddled with the wet napkins, asked us various questions, and addressed herself rather jerkily to the old man, who answered hardly at all--Then she departed again. The women are self-conscious in a rather smirky way, bouncy.

When she was gone I asked the old man if she was his daughter. He said very brusquely, in his soft mutter, No. She came from a village some miles away. He did not belong to the inn. He was, as far as I understood, the postman. But I may have been mistaken about the word.

But he seemed laconic, unwilling to speak about the inn and its keepers. There seemed to be something queer. And again he asked where we were going. He told me there were now two motor-buses: a new one which ran over the mountains to Nuoro. Much better go to Nuoro than to Abbasanta. Nuoro was evidently the town towards which these villages looked, as a sort of capital.

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The kid-roasting proceeded very slowly, the meat never being very near the fire. From time to time the roaster arranged the cavern of red-hot roots. Then he threw on more roots. It was very hot. And he turned the long spit, and still I held the candle.

Other people came strolling in, to look at us. But they hovered behind

us in the dark, so I could not make out at all clearly. They strolled in the gloom of the dungeon-like room, and watched us. One came forward--a fat, fat young soldier in uniform. I made place for him on the bench--but he put out his hand and disclaimed the attention. Then he went away again.

The old man propped up the roast, and then he too disappeared for a time. The thin candle guttered, the fire was no longer flamy but red. The roaster reappeared with a new, shorter spear, thinner, and a great lump of raw hog-fat spitted on it. This he thrust into the red fire. It sizzled and smoked and spit fat, and I wondered. He told me he wanted it to catch fire. It refused. He groped in the hearth for the bits of twigs with which the fire had been started. These twig-stumps he stuck in the fat, like an orange stuck with cloves, then he held it in the fire again. Now at last it caught, and it was a flaming torch running downwards with a thin shower of flaming fat. And now he was satisfied. He held the fat-torch with its yellow flares over the browning kid, which he turned horizontal for the occasion. All over the roast fell the flaming drops, till the meat was all shiny and browny. He put it to the fire again, holding the diminishing fat, still burning bluish, over it all the time in the upper air.

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While this was in process a man entered with a loud Good evening. We replied Good-evening--and evidently he caught a strange note. He came

and bent down and peered under my hat-brim, then under the q-b's hat-brim, we still wore hats and overcoats, as did everybody. Then he stood up suddenly and touched his cap and said Scusi--excuse me. I said Niente, which one always says, and he addressed a few jovial words to the crouching roaster: who again would hardly answer him. The omnibus was arrived from Oristano, I made out--with few passengers.

This man brought with him a new breezy atmosphere, which the roaster did not like. However, I made place on the low bench, and the attention this time was accepted. Sitting down at the extreme end, he came into the light, and I saw a burly man in the prime of life, dressed in dark brown velvet, with a blond little moustache and twinkling blue eyes and a tipsy look. I thought he might be some local tradesman or farmer. He asked a few questions, in a boisterous familiar fashion, then went out again. He appeared with a small iron spit, a slim rod, in one hand, and in the other hand two joints of kid and a handful of sausages. He stuck his joints on his rod. But our roaster still held the interminable flat kid before the now red, flameless fire. The fat-torch was burnt out, the cinder pushed in the fire. A moment's spurt of flame, then red, intense redness again, and our kid before it like a big, dark hand.

"Eh," said the newcomer, whom I will call the girovago, "it's done. The kid's done. It's done."

The roaster slowly shook his head, but did not answer. He sat like time and eternity at the hearth-end, his face flame-flushed, his dark eyes

still fire-abstract, still sacredly intent on the roast.

"Na-na-na!" said the girovago. "Let another body see the fire." And with his pieces of meat awkwardly skewered on his iron stick he tried to poke under the authorised kid and get at the fire. In his soft mutter, the old man bade him wait for the fire till the fire was ready for him. But the girovago poked impudently and good humouredly, and said testily that the authorised kid was done.

"Yes, surely it is done," said I, for it was already a quarter to eight.

The old roasting priest muttered, and took out his knife from his pocket. He pressed the blade slowly, slowly deep into the meat: as far as a knife will go in a piece of kid. He seemed to be feeling the meat inwardly. And he said it was not done. He shook his head, and remained there like time and eternity at the end of the rod.

The girovago said Sangue di Dio, but couldn't roast his meat! And he tried to poke his skewer near the coals. So doing his pieces fell off into the ashes, and the invisible onlookers behind raised a shout of laughter. However, he raked it out and wiped it with his hand and said No matter, nothing lost.

Then he turned to me and asked the usual whence and whither questions. These answered, he said wasn't I German. I said No, I was English. He looked at me many times, shrewdly, as if he wanted to make out

something. Then he asked, where were we domiciled--and I said Sicily. And then, very pertinently, why had we come to Sardinia. I said for pleasure, and to see the island.

"Ah, per divertimento!" he repeated, half-musingly, not believing me in the least.

Various men had now come into the room, though they all remained indistinct in the background. The girovago talked and jested abroad in the company, and the half-visible men laughed in a rather hostile manner.

At last the old roaster decided the kid was done. He lifted it from the fire and scrutinised it thoroughly, holding the candle to it, as if it were some wonderful epistle from the flames. To be sure it looked marvellous, and smelled so good: brown, and crisp, and hot, and savoury, not burnt in any place whatever. It was eight o'clock.

"It's done! It's done! Go away with it! Go," said the girovago, pushing the old roaster with his hand. And at last the old man consented to depart, holding the kid like a banner.

"It looks so good!" cried the q-b. "And I am so hungry."

"Ha-ha! It makes one hungry to see good meat, Signora. Now it is my turn. Heh--Gino--" the girovago flourished his arm. And a handsome,

unwashed man with a black moustache came forward rather sheepishly. He was dressed in soldier's clothes, neutral grey, and was a big, robust, handsome fellow with dark eyes and Mediterranean sheepishness. "Here, take it thou," said the girovago, pressing the long spit into his hand. "It is thy business, cook the supper, thou art the woman.--But I'll keep the sausages and do them."

The so-called woman sat at the end of the hearth, where the old roaster had sat, and with his brown, nervous hand piled the remaining coals together. The fire was no longer flamy: and it was sinking. The dark-browed man arranged it so that he could cook the meat. He held the spit negligently over the red mass. A joint fell off. The men laughed. "It's lost nothing," said the dark-browed man, as the girovago had said before, and he skewered it on again and thrust it to the fire. But meanwhile he was looking up from under his dark lashes at the girovago and at us.

The girovago talked continually. He turned to me, holding the handful of sausages.

"This makes the tasty bit," he said.

"Oh yes--good salsiccia," said I.

"You are eating the kid? You are eating at the inn?" he said. I replied that I was.

"No," he said. "You stay and eat with me. You eat with me. The sausage is good, the kid will soon be done, the fire is grateful."

I laughed, not quite understanding him. He was certainly a bit tipsy.

"Signora," he said, turning to the q-b. She did not like him, he was impudent, and she shut a deaf ear to him as far as she could. "Signora," he said, "do you understand me what I say?"

She replied that she did.

"Signora," he said, "I sell things to the women. I sell them things."

"What do you sell?" she asked in astonishment.

"Saints," he said.

"Saints!" she cried in more astonishment.

"Yes, saints," he said with tipsy gravity.

She turned in confusion to the company in the background. The fat soldier came forward, he was the chief of the carabinieri.

"Also combs and bits of soap and little mirrors," he explained

sarcastically.

"Saints!" said the girovago once more. "And also ragazzini--also youngsters--Wherever I go there is a little one comes running calling Babbo! Babbo! Daddy! Daddy! Wherever I go--youngsters. And I'm the babbo."

All this was received with a kind of silent sneer from the invisible assembly in the background. The candle was burning low, the fire was sinking too. In vain the dark-browed man tried to build it up. The q-b became impatient for the food. She got up wrathfully and stumbled into the dark passage, exclaiming--"Don't we eat yet?"

"Eh--Patience! Patience, Signora. It takes time in this house," said the man in the background.

The dark-browed man looked up at the girovago and said:

"Are you going to cook the sausages with your fingers?"

He too was trying to be assertive and jesting, but he was the kind of person no one takes any notice of. The girovago rattled on in dialect, poking fun at us and at our being there in this inn. I did not quite follow.

"Signora!" said the girovago. "Do you understand Sardinian?"

"I understand Italian--and some Sardinian," she replied rather hotly. "And I know that you are trying to laugh at us--to make fun of us."

He laughed fatly and comfortably.

"Ah Signora," he said. "We have a language that you wouldn't understand--not one word. Nobody here would understand it but me and him--" he pointed to the black-browed one. "Everybody would want an interpreter--everybody."

But he did not say interpreter--he said intreprete, with the accent on the penultimate, as if it were some sort of priest.

"A what?" said I.

He repeated with tipsy unction, and I saw what he meant.

"Why?" said I. "Is it a dialect? What is your dialect?"

"My dialect," he said, "is Sassari. I come from Sassari. If I spoke my dialect they would understand something. But if I speak this language they would want an interpreter."

"What language is it then?"

He leaned up to me, laughing.

"It is the language we use when the women are buying things and we don't want them to know what we say: me and him--"

"Oh," said I. "I know. We have that language in England. It is called thieves Latin--Latino dei furbi."

The men at the back suddenly laughed, glad to turn the joke against the forward girovago. He looked down his nose at me. But seeing I was laughing without malice, he leaned to me and said softly, secretly:

"What is your affair then? What affair is it, yours?"

"How? What?" I exclaimed, not understanding.

"Che genere di affari? What sort of business?"

"How--affari?" said I, still not grasping.

"What do you sell?" he said, flatly and rather spitefully. "What goods?"

"I don't sell anything," replied I, laughing to think he took us for some sort of strolling quacks or commercial travellers.

"Cloth--or something," he said cajolingly, slyly, as if to worm my secret out of me.

"But nothing at all. Nothing at all," said I. "We have come to Sardinia to see the peasant costumes--" I thought that might sound satisfactory.

"Ah, the costumes!" he said, evidently thinking I was a deep one. And he turned bandying words with his dark-browed mate, who was still poking the meat at the embers and crouching on the hearth. The room was almost quite dark. The mate answered him back, and tried to seem witty too. But the girovago was the commanding personality! rather too much so: too impudent for the q-b, though rather after my own secret heart. The mate was one of those handsome, passive, stupid men.

"Him!" said the girovago, turning suddenly to me and pointing at the mate. "He's my wife."

"Your wife!" said I.

"Yes. He's my wife, because we're always together."

There had become a sudden dead silence in the background. In spite of it the mate looked up under his black lashes and said, with a half smile:

"Don't talk, or I shall give thee a good bacio to-night."

There was an instant's fatal pause, then the girovago continued:

"Tomorrow is festa of Sant 'Antonio at Tonara. Tomorrow we are going to Tonara. Where are you going?"

"To Abbasanta," said I.

"Ah Abbasanta! You should come to Tonara. At Tonara there is a brisk trade--and there are costumes. You should come to Tonara. Come with him and me to Tonara tomorrow, and we will do business together."

I laughed, but did not answer.

"Come," said he. "You will like Tonara! Ah, Tonara is a fine place. There is an inn: you can eat well, sleep well. I tell you, because to you ten francs don't matter. Isn't that so? Ten francs don't matter to you. Well, then come to Tonara. What? What do you say?"

I shook my head and laughed, but did not answer.

To tell the truth I should have liked to go to Tonara with him and his mate and do the brisk trade: if only I knew what trade it would be.

"You are sleeping upstairs?" he said to me.

I nodded.

"This is my bed," he said, taking one of the home-made rush mats from against the wall. I did not take him seriously at any point.

"Do they make those in Sorgono?" I said.

"Yes, in Sorgono--they are the beds, you see! And you roll up this end a bit--so! and that is the pillow."

He laid his cheek sideways.

"Not really," said I.

He came and sat down again next to me, and my attention wandered. The q-b was raging for her dinner. It must be quite half-past eight. The kid, the perfect kid would be cold and ruined. Both fire and candle were burning low. Someone had been out for a new candle, but there was evidently no means of replenishing the fire. The mate still crouched on the hearth, the dull red fire-glow on his handsome face, patiently trying to roast the kid and poking it against the embers. He had heavy, strong limbs in his khaki clothes, but his hand that held the spit was brown and tender and sensitive, a real Mediterranean hand. The girovago, blond, round-faced, mature and aggressive with all his liveliness, was more like a northerner. In the background were four or five other men, of whom I had distinguished none but a stout soldier, probably chief carabiniere.

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Just as the q-b was working up to the rage I had at last calmed down from, appeared the shawl-swathed girl announcing "Pronto!"

"Pronto! Pronto!" said everybody.

"High time, too," said the q-b, springing from the low bench before the fire. "Where do we eat? Is there another room?"

"There is another room, Signora," said the carabiniere.

So we trooped out of the fire-warmed dungeon, leaving the girovago and his mate and two other men, muleteers from the road, behind us. I could see that it irked my girovago to be left behind. He was by far the strongest personality in the place, and he had the keenest intelligence. So he hated having to fall into the background, when he had been dragging all the lime-light on to himself all the evening. To me, too, he was something of a kindred soul that night. But there we are: fate, in the guise of that mysterious division between a respectable life and a scamp's life divided us. There was a gulf between me and him, between my way and his. He was a kindred spirit--but with a hopeless difference. There was something a bit sordid about him--and he knew it. That is why he was always tipsy. Yet I like the lone wolf souls best--better than the sheep. If only they didn't feel mongrel inside themselves.

Presumably a scamp is bound to be mongrel. It is a pity the untamable, lone-wolf souls should always become pariahs, almost of choice: mere scamps.

Top and bottom of it is, I regretted my girovago, though I knew it was no good thinking of him. His way was not my way. Yet I regretted him, I did.

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We found ourselves in a dining room with a long white table and inverted soup-plates, tomb-cold, lighted by an acetylene flare. Three men had accompanied us: the carabiniere, a little dark youth with a small black moustache, in a soldier's short, wool-lined great-coat: and a young man who looked tired round his blue eyes, and who wore a dark-blue overcoat, quite smart. The be-shawled damsel came in with the inevitable bowl of minestrone, soup with cabbage and cauliflower and other things. We helped ourselves, and the fat carabiniere started the conversation with the usual questions--and where were we going tomorrow?

I asked about buses. Then the responsible-looking, tired-eyed youth told me he was the bus-driver. He had come from Oristano, on the main line, that day. It is a distance of some forty miles. Next morning he was going on over the mountains to Nuoro--about the same distance again. The youth with the little black moustache and the Greek, large eyes, was his mate, the conductor. This was their run, from Oristano to Nuoro--a

course of ninety miles or more. And every day on, on, on. No wonder he looked nerve-tired. Yet he had that kind of dignity, the wistful seriousness and pride of a man in machine control: the only god-like ones today, those who pull the iron levers and are the gods in the machine.

They repeated what the old roaster said: much nicer for us to go to Nuoro than to Abbasanta. So to Nuoro we decided to go, leaving at half-past nine in the morning.

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Every other night the driver and his mate spent in this benighted Risveglio inn. It must have been their bedroom we saw, clean and tidy. I said was the food always so late, was everything always as bad as today. Always--if not worse, they said, making light of it, with sarcastic humor against the Risveglio. You spent your whole life at the Risveglio sitting, waiting, and going block-cold: unless you were content to drink aqua vitae, like those in there. The driver jerked his head towards the dungeon.

"Who were those in there?" said I.

The one who did all the talking was a mercante, a mercante girovago, a wandering peddler. This was my girovago: a wandering peddler selling saints and youngsters! The other was his mate, who helped carry the

pack. They went about together. Oh, my girovago was a known figure all over the country.--And where would they sleep? There, in the room where the fire was dying.

They would unroll the mats and lie with their feet to the hearth. For this they paid threepence, or at most fourpence. And they had the privilege of cooking their own food. The Risveglio supplied them with nothing but the fire, the roof, and the rush mat.--And, of course, the drink. Oh, we need have no sympathy with the girovago and his sort. They lacked for nothing. They had everything they wanted: everything: and money in abundance. They lived for the aqua vitae they drank. That was all they wanted: their continual allowance of aqua vitae. And they got it. Ah, they were not cold. If the room became cold during the night: if they had no coverings at all: pah, they waited for morning, and as soon as it was light they drank a large glass of aqua vitae. That was their fire, their hearth and their home: drink. Aqua vitae, was hearth and home to them.

I was surprised at the contempt, tolerant and yet profound, with which these three men in the dining-room spoke of the others in the stanza. How contemptuous, almost bitter, the driver was against alcohol. It was evident he hated it. And though we all had our bottles of dead-cold dark wine, and though we all drank: still, the feeling of the three youths against actual intoxication was deep and hostile, with a certain burning moral dislike that is more northern than Italian. And they curled their lip with real dislike of the girovago: his forwardness, his

impudent aggressiveness.

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As for the inn, yes, it was very bad. It had been quite good under the previous proprietors. But now--they shrugged their shoulders. The dirty-breast and the shawled girl were not the owners. They were merely conductors of the hotel: here a sarcastic curl of the lip. The owner was a man in the village--a young man. A week or two back, at Christmas time, there had been a roomful of men sitting drinking and roistering at this very table. When in had come the proprietor, mad-drunk, swinging a litre bottle round his head and yelling: "Out! Out! Out, all of you! Out every one of you! I am proprietor here. And when I want to clear my house I clear my house. Every man obeys--who doesn't obey has his brains knocked out with this bottle. Out, out, I say--Out, everyone!" And the men all cleared out. "But," said the bus-driver, "I told him that when I had paid for my bed I was going to sleep in it. I was not going to be turned out by him or anybody. And so he came down."

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There was a little silence from everybody after this story. Evidently there was more to it, that we were not to be told. Especially the carabiniere was silent. He was a fat, not very brave fellow, though quite nice.

Ah, but--said the little dark bus-conductor, with his small-featured swarthy Greek face--you must not be angry with them. True the inn was very bad. Very bad--but you must pity them, for they are only ignorant. Poor things, they are ignoranti! Why be angry?

The other two men nodded their heads in agreement and repeated ignoranti. They are ignoranti. It is true. Why be angry?

And here the modern Italian spirit came out: the endless pity for the ignorant. It is only slackness. The pity makes the ignorant more ignorant, and makes the Risveglio daily more impossible. If somebody let a bottle buzz round the ears of the dirty-breast, and whipped the shawl from the head of the pert young madam and sent her flying down the tunnel with a flea in her ear, we might get some attention and they might find a little self-respect. But no: pity them, poor ignoranti, while they pull life down and devour it like vermin. Pity them! What they need is not pity but prods: they and all their myriad of likes.

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The be-shawled appeared with a dish of kid. Needless to say, the ignoranti had kept all the best portions for themselves. What arrived was five pieces of cold roast, one for each of us. Mine was a sort of large comb of ribs with a thin web of meat: perhaps an ounce. That was all we got, after watching the whole process. There was moreover a dish of strong boiled cauliflower, which one ate, with the coarse bread, out

of sheer hunger. After this a bilious orange. Simply one is not fed nowadays. In the good hotels and in the bad, one is given paltry portions of unnourishing food, and one goes unfed.

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The bus-driver, the only one with an earnest soul, was talking of the Sardinians. Ah, the Sardinians! They were hopeless. Why--because they did not know how to strike. They, too, were ignoranti. But this form of ignorance he found more annoying. They simply did not know what a strike was. If you offered them one day ten francs a stint--he was speaking now of the miners of the Iglesias region.--No, no, no, they would not take it, they wanted twelve francs. Go to them the next day and offer them four francs for half a stint, and yes, yes, yes, they would take it. And there they were: ignorant: ignorant Sardinians. They absolutely did not know how to strike. He was quite sarcastically hot about it. The whole tone of these three young men was the tone of sceptical irony common to the young people of our day the world over. Only they had--or at least the driver had--some little fervour for his strikes and his socialism. But it was a pathetic fervour: a pis-aller fervour.

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We talked about the land. The war has practically gutted Sardinia of her cattle: so they said. And now the land is being deserted, the arable

land is going back to fallow. Why? Why, says the driver, because the owners of the land won't spend any capital. They have got the capital locked up, and the land is dead. They find it cheaper to let all the arable go back to fallow, and raise a few head of cattle, rather than to pay high wages, grow corn, and get small returns.

Yes, and also, chimes in the carabiniere, the peasants don't want to work the land. They hate the land. They'll do anything to get off the land. They want regular wages, short hours, and devil take the rest. So they will go into France as navvies, by the hundred. They flock to Rome, they besiege the Labor bureaus, they will do the artificial Government navvy-work at a miserable five francs a day--a railway shunter having at least eighteen francs a day--anything, anything rather than work the land.

Yes, and what does the Government do! replies the bus-driver. They pull the roads to pieces in order to find work for the unemployed, remaking them, across the campagna. But in Sardinia, where roads and bridges are absolutely wanting, will they do anything? No!

There it is, however. The bus-driver, with dark shadows under his eyes, represents the intelligent portion of the conversation. The carabiniere is soft and will go any way, though always with some interest. The little Greek-looking conductor just does not care.

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Enters another belated traveller, and takes a seat at the end of the table. The be-shawled brings him soup and a skinny bit of kid. He eyes this last with contempt, and fetches out of his bag a large hunk of roast pork, and bread, and black olives, thus proceeding to make a proper meal.

We being without cigarettes, the bus-driver and his companion press them on us: their beloved Macedonia cigarettes. The driver says they are squisitissimi--most, most exquisite--so exquisite that all foreigners want them. In truth I believe they are exported to Germany now. And they are quite good, when they really have tobacco in them. Usually they are hollow tubes of paper which just flare away under one's nose and are done.

We decide to have a round drink: they choose the precious aqua vitae: the white sort I think. At last it arrives--when the little dark-eyed one has fetched it. And it tastes rather like sweetened petroleum, with a dash of aniseed: filthy. Most Italian liquors are now sweet and filthy.

At length we rise to go to bed. We shall all meet in the morning. And this room is dead cold, with frost outside. Going out, we glance into the famous stanza. One figure alone lies stretched on the floor in the almost complete darkness. A few embers still glow. The other men no doubt are in the bar.

Ah, the filthy bedroom. The q-b ties up her head in a large, clean white kerchief, to avoid contact with the unsavory pillow. It is a cold, hard, flat bed, with two cold, hard, flat blankets. But we are very tired. Just as we are going to sleep, however, weird, high-pitched singing starts below, very uncanny--with a refrain that is a yelp-yelp-yelp! almost like a dog in angry pain. Weird, almost gruesome this singing goes on, first one voice and then another and then a tangle of voices. Again we are roused by the pounding of heavy feet on the corridor outside, which is as hollow and resonant as a drum. And then in the infernal crew-yard outside a cock crows. Throughout the night--yea, through all the black and frosty hours this demoniac bird screams its demon griefs.

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However, it is morning. I gingerly wash a bit of myself in the broken basin, and dry that bit on a muslin veil which masquerades upon the chair as a towel. The q-b contents herself with a dry wipe. And we go downstairs in hopes of the last-night's milk.

There is no one to be seen. It is a cold, frost-strong, clear morning. There is no one in the bar. We stumble down the dark tunnel passage. The stanza is as if no man had ever set foot in it: very dark, the mats against the wall, the fire-place grey with a handful of long dead ash. Just like a dungeon. The dining-room has the same long table and eternal

table-cloth--and our serviettes, still wet, lying where we shovelled them aside. So back again to the bar.

And this time a man is drinking aqua vitae, and the dirty-shirt is officiating. He has no hat on: and extraordinary, he has no brow at all: just flat, straight black hair slanting to his eyebrows, no forehead at all.

Is there coffee?

No, there is no coffee.

Why?

Because they can't get sugar.

Ho! laughs the peasant drinking aqua vitae. You make coffee with sugar!

Here, say I, they make it with nothing.--Is there milk?

No.

No milk at all?

No.

Why not?

Nobody brings it.

Yes, yes--there is milk if they like to get it, puts in the peasant. But they want you to drink aqua vitae.

I see myself drinking aqua vitae. My yesterday's rage towers up again suddenly, till it quite suffocates me. There is something in this unsavoury, black, wine-dabbled, thick, greasy young man that does for me.

"Why," say I, lapsing into the Italian rhetorical manner, "why do you keep an inn? Why do you write the word Ristorante so large, when you have nothing to offer people, and don't intend to have anything. Why do you have the impudence to take in travellers? What does it mean, that this is an inn? What, say, what does it mean? Say then--what does it mean? What does it mean, your Ristorante Risveglio, written so large?"

Getting all this out in one breath, my indignation now stifled me. Him of the shirt said nothing at all. The peasant laughed. I demanded the bill. It was twenty-five francs odd. I picked up every farthing of the change.

"Won't you leave any tip at all?" asks the q-b.

"Tip!" say I, speechless.

So we march upstairs and make tea to fill the thermos flask. Then, with sack over my shoulder, I make my way out of the Risveglio.

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It is Sunday morning. The frozen village street is almost empty. We march down to the wider space where the bus stands: I hope they haven't the impudence to call it a Piazza.

"Is this the Nuoro bus?" I ask of a bunch of urchins.

And even they begin to jeer. But my sudden up-starting flare quenches them at once. One answers yes, and they edge away. I stow the sack and the kitchenino in the first-class part. The first-class is in front: we shall see better.

There are men standing about, with their hands in their pockets,--those who are not in costume. Some wear the black-and-white. All wear the stocking caps. And all have the wide shirt-breasts, white, their waistcoats being just like evening dress waistcoats. Imagine one of these soft white shirt fronts well slobbered, and you have mine host of the Risveglio. But these lounging, static, white-breasted men are snowily clean, this being Sunday morning. They smoke their pipes on the

frosty air, and are none too friendly.

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The bus starts at half-past nine. The campanile is clanging nine. Two or three girls go down the road in their Sunday costume of purplish brown. We go up the road, into the clear, ringing frosty air, to find the lane.

And again, from above, how beautiful it is in the sharp morning! The whole village lies in bluish shadow, the hills with their thin pale oak trees are in bluish shadow still, only in the distance the frost-glowing sun makes a wonderful, jewel-like radiance on the pleasant hills, wild and thinly-wooded, of this interior region. Real fresh wonder-beauty all around. And such humanity.

Returning to the village we find a little shop and get biscuits and cigarettes. And we find our friends the bus-men. They are shy this morning. They are ready for us when we are ready. So in we get, joyfully, to leave Sorgono.

One thing I say for it, it must be an honest place. For people leave their sacks about without a qualm.

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Up we go, up the road. Only to stop, alas, at the Risveglio. The little

conductor goes down the lane towards the station. The driver goes and has a little drink with a comrade. There is quite a crowd round the dreary entrances of the inn. And quite a little bunch of people to clamber up into the second class, behind us.

We wait and wait. Then in climbs an old peasant, in full black-and-white costume, smiling in the pleased, naïve way of the old. After him climbs a fresh-faced young man with a suit-case.

"Na!" said the young man. "Now you are in the automobile."

And the old man gazes round with the wondering, vacant, naïve smile.

"One is all right here, eh?" the young citizen persists, patronizing.

But the old man is too excited to answer. He gazes hither and thither. Then he suddenly remembers he had a parcel, and looks for it in fear. The bright-faced young man picks it from the floor and hands it him. Ah, it is all right.

I see the little conductor in his dashing, sheep-lined, short military overcoat striding briskly down the little lane with the post-bag. The driver climbs to his seat in front of me. He has a muffler round his neck and his hat pulled down to his ears. He pips at the horn, and our old peasant cranes forward to look how he does it.

And so, with a jerk and a spurt, we start uphill.

"Eh--what's that?" said the peasant, frightened.

"We're starting," explained the bright-faced young man.

"Starting! Didn't we start before?"

The bright face laughs pleasedly.

"No," he said. "Did you think we had been going ever since you got in?"

"Yes," says the old man, simply, "since the door was shut."

The young citizen looks at us for our joyful approval.