



urprises

How tightly packed in we were on that bus platform ! And how stupid and ridiculous that young man looked ! And what was he doing ? Well, if he wasn't actually trying to pick a quarrel with a chap who—so he claimed ! the young fop ! kept on pushing him ! And then he didn't find anything better to do than to rush off and grab a seat which had become free ! Instead of leaving it for a lady !

Two hours after, guess whom I met in front of the gare Saint-Lazare ! The same fancy-pants ! Being given some sartorial advice ! By a friend !

You'd never believe it !



ream

I had the impression that everything was misty and nacreous around me, with multifarious and indistinct apparitions, amongst whom however was one figure that stood out fairly clearly which was that of a young man whose too-long neck in itself seemed to proclaim the character at once cowardly and quarrelsome of the individual. The ribbon of his hat had been replaced by a piece of plaited string. Later he was having an argument with a person whom I couldn't see and then, as if suddenly afraid, he threw himself into the shadow of a corridor.

27

Another part of the dream showed him walking in bright sunshine in front of the gare Saint-Lazare. He was with a companion who was saying: "You ought to have another button put on your overcoat."

Whereupon I woke up.

28



esitation

I don't really know where it happened . . . in a church, a dustbin, a charnel-house? A bus, perhaps? There were . . . but what were there, though? Eggs, carpets, radishes? Skeletons? Yes, but with their flesh still round them, and alive. I think that's how it was. People in a bus. But one (or two?) of them was making himself conspicuous, I don't really know in what way. For his megalomania? For his adiposity? For his melancholy? Rather . . . more precisely . . . for his youth, which was embellished by a long . . . nose? chin? thumb? no: neck, and by a strange, strange, strange hat. He started to quarrel, yes, that's right.

35

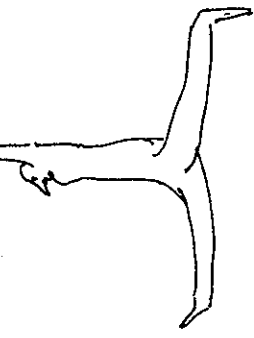
with, no doubt, another passenger (man or woman? child or old age pensioner?) This ended, this finished by ending in a commonplace sort of way, probably by the flight of one of the two adversaries.

I rather think that it was the same character I met, but where? In front of a church? in front of a charnel-house? in front of a dustbin? With a friend who must have been talking to him about something, but about what? about what? about what?

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he subjective side

I was not displeased with my attire this day. I was inaugurating a new, rather sprightly hat, and an overcoat of which I thought most highly. Met X in front of the gare Saint-Lazare who tried to spoil my pleasure by trying to prove that this overcoat is cut too low at the lapels and that I ought to have an extra button on it. At least he didn't dare attack my head-gear.

A bit earlier I had roundly told off a vulgar type who was purposely ill-treating me every time anyone went by getting off or on. This happened in one of those unspeakably foul

39

omnibi which fill up with hoi polloi precisely at those times when I have to consent to use them.



nother subjectivity

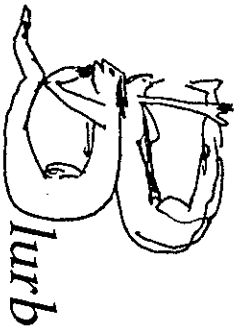
Next to me on the bus platform today there was one of those half-baked young fellows, you don't find so many of them these days, thank God, otherwise I should end up by killing one. This particular one, a brat of something like 26 or 30, irritated me particularly not so much because of his great long featherless-turkey's neck as because of the nature of the ribbon round his hat, a ribbon which wasn't much more than a sort of maroon-coloured string. Dirty beast! He absolutely disgusted me! As there were a lot of people in our bus at that hour I took advantage of all the pushing and shoving there is every time

41

anyone gets on or off to dig him in the ribs with my elbow. In the end he took to his heels, the milk-sop, before I could make up my mind to tread on his dogs to teach him a lesson. I could also have told him, just to annoy him, that he needed another button on his overcoat which was cut too low at the lapels.

42

impression which the novelist X has etched
with rare felicity.



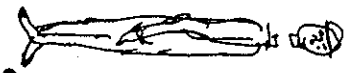
In this new novel, executed with his accustomed *brio*, the famous novelist X, to whom we are already indebted for so many masterpieces, has decided to confine himself to very clear-cut characters who act in an atmosphere which everybody, both adults and children, can understand. The plot revolves, then, round the meeting in a bus of the hero of this story and of a rather enigmatic character who picks a quarrel with the first person he meets. In the final episode we see this mysterious individual listening with the greatest attention to the advice of a friend, a past master of Sartorial Art. The whole makes a charming



Logical analysis

Bus.
Platform.
Bus platform. That's the place.
Midday.
About.
About midday. That's the time.
Passengers.
Quarrel.
A passengers' quarrel. That's the action.
Young man.
Hat. Long thin neck.
A young man with a hat and a plaited cord
round it. That's the chief character.
Person.
60

A person.
A person. That's the second character.
Me.
Me.
Me. That's the third character, narrator.
Words.
Words.
Words. That's what was said.
Seat vacant.
Seat taken.
A seat that was vacant and then taken. That's
the result.
The gare Saint-Lazare.
An hour later.
A friend.
A button.
Another phrase heard. That's the conclusion.
Logical conclusion.
61



ignorance

Personally I don't know what they want of me. Yes, I got on an S bus about midday. Were there a lot of people? Of course there were, at that hour. A young man with a felt hat? It's quite possible. Personally I don't examine people under a microscope. I don't give a damn. A kind of plaited cord? Round his hat? I'll agree that's a bit peculiar, but it doesn't strike me personally as anything else. A plaited cord . . . He had words with another man? There's nothing unusual about that.

And then I saw him again an hour or two later? Why not? There are a lot of things

65

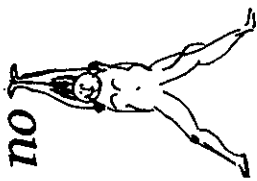
in life that are more peculiar than that. For instance, I remember my father was always telling me about . . .

66



Exclamations

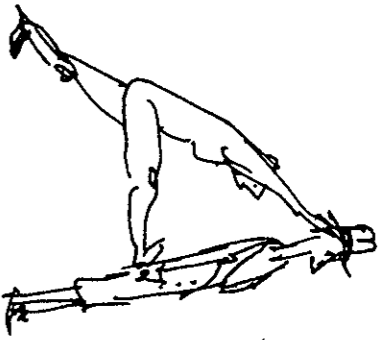
Goodness! Twelve o'clock! time for the bus!
what a lot of people! what a lot of people!
aren't we squashed! bloody funny! that chap!
what a face! and what a neck! two-foot long!
at least! and the cord! the cord! I hadn't
seen it! the cord! that's the bloody funniest!
oh! the cord! round his hat! A cord! bloody
funny! too bloody funny! here we go, now
he's yammering! the chap with the cord! at
the chap next to him! what's he saying! The
other chap! claims he trod on his toes!
They're going to come to blows! definitely!
no, though! yes they are, though! go wonn!
go wonn! bite him in the eye! charge! hit...



ou know

Well, you know, the bus arrived, so, you know, I got on. Then I saw, you know, a citizen who, you know, caught my eye, sort of. I mean, you know, I saw his long neck and I saw the plait round his hat. Then he started to, you know, rave, at the chap next to him. He was, you know, treading on his toes. Then he went and, you know, sat down.

Well, you know, later on, I saw him in the Cour de Rome. He was with a, you know, pal, and he was telling him, you know, the pal was: "You ought to get another button put on your coat." You know.



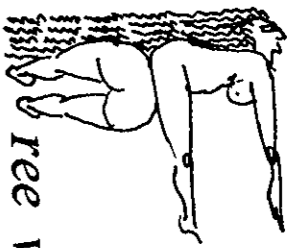
sides

The bus arrived bulging with passengers. Only hope I don't miss it, oh good, there's still just room for me. One of them queer sort of mug he's got with that enormous neck was wearing a soft felt hat with a sort of little plait round it instead of a ribbon just showing off that is and suddenly started hey what's got into him to vituperate his neighbour the other chap isn't taking any notice of him reproaching him for deliberately treading seems as if he's looking for trouble but he'll climb down on his toes. But as there was a free seat inside didn't I say so he turned his back and made haste to occupy it.

95

About two hours later coincidences are peculiar he was in the Cour de Rome with a friend a fancy-pants of his own sort who was pointing with his index finger to a button on his overcoat what on earth can he be telling him?

96



ree verse

the bus
full
the heart
empty
the neck
long
the ribbon
plaited
the feet
flat
flat and flattened
the place
vacant

140

and the unexpected meeting near the station
with its thousand extinguished lights
of that heart, of that neck, of that ribbon, of
those feet,
of that vacant place,
and of that burton.

141



Unexpected

They were sitting round a café table when Albert joined them. René, Robert, Adolphe, Georges and Théodore were there.

"How's everything?" asked Robert amicably.

"All right," said Albert.

He called the waiter.

"I'll have a picon," he said.

Adolphe turned towards him:

"Well, Albert, what's new?"

"Nothing much."

"Nice day," said Robert.

"Bit cold," said Adolphe.

"Oh I say, I saw something funny today," said Albert.

195

"It is warm though," said Robert.

"What?" asked René.

"In the bus, going to lunch," replied Albert.

"What bus?"

"The S."

"What did you see?" asked Robert.

"I had to wait for at least three before I could get on."

"Not surprising at that time of day," said Adolphe.

"Well, what did you see?" asked René.

"We were terribly squashed," said Albert.

"Good opportunity for pinching bottoms."

"Pooh," said Albert. "'That's got nothing to do with it.'"

"Go on, then."

"There was a queer sort of chap next to me."

"What was he like?" asked René.

"Tall, skinny, with a queer sort of neck."

"What was it like?" asked René.

"As if someone'd been having a tug of war with it."

"An elongation," said Georges.

"And his hat, now I come to think of it: a queer sort of hat."

"What was it like?" asked René.

"Didn't have a ribbon, but a platted cord round it."

196

"Funny," said Robert.

"Then again," continued Albert, "he was the peevish type."

"How come?" asked René.

"He started to pick on the chap next to him."

"How come?" asked René.

"He said he was treading on his toes."

"On purpose?" asked Robert.

"On purpose," said Albert.

"And then what?"

"Then what? He simply went and sat down."

"Is that all?" asked René.

"No. Funny thing is, I saw him again two hours later."

"Where?" asked René.

"In front of the gare Saint-Lazare."

"What was he doing there?"

"I don't know," said Albert. "He was walking up and down with a pal who was calling his attention to the fact that the button of his overcoat was a bit too low."

"That is in fact the advice I was giving him," said Theodore.

197