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LUMINOSITA.

... molto meno forse. Per descrivere tutto il fascino, l'incanto che presenta una città luminosa ci vorrebbe ben altro che povere parole — parole nere, buie, che dicono nulla. Bisognerebbe poter usare qualche cosa di sfavillante . . . una scia di lucciole, per esempio, che trapuntino, con la loro luminosità irrequieta, la descrizione — o poter usare, almeno, inchiostro fosforescente.

Ci sono spettacoli, punti di vista, che ci prendono tutto l'animo, entrano in noi, ci muovono, fanno soffrire quasi, ma come, dove trovare le parole adatte per poi esporli a terzi? Ci aiutiamo spesso pescando fuori certi aggettivi pomposi, bei toni, assomiglianti a quei palloni d'ogni colore panciuti, che però basta una piccola punzecchiatura per sgonfiare, e allora non rimane altro che un po' di gomma raggrinzita, floscia . . . parole vanagloriose, ricercate . . . ma lo spettacolo è ben altro invece: il suo fascino sarà forse tutta una gamma di semplicità e di puerilità.

Nella sera profonda il grillo cantò. Lanciò alto la sua stridula nota. Tacque, attendendo quasi una risposta. Nulla. Senza scomporsi, arditamente continuò solitario. In lontananza squillarono le ore: otto e mezza. Allora, d'improvviso, ubbidendo ad un solo comando, la città tutta scintillò. Lugano s'era tramutata in un cofanetto di gemme preziose. Una collana di diamanti fulgidissimi era posata tutt'intorno al lago; ed era un rincorrersi di luce da Castagnola, a Melide, Bissone, Morcote. Il ponte di Melide soffuso così com'era di luce aranciata, dava un senso di pace, di riposo completo. L'immensa croce federale — luce bianca in campo di luce rossa — posata sopra Caprino, salutava dall'altra sponda la regina del Ceresio. E su su, lungo tutto il Brè, a centinaio le lampadine elettriche. Rigida, verticale quasi, la linea della funicolare del S. Salvatore, sembrava un altissimo razzo di fuoco d'artificio, lanciandosi arditamente ad incontrar le stelle, e fissatosi così nello spazio, il fiocco in alto formato dallo scintillare del ristorante lassù. E scintillava il Generoso. Il Boglia. Tutto il golfo di Lugano. Meraviglioso. Sulle acque, dai riflessi cupi, rotti di bagliori rossastri, verdastri, filavano via rapidi in battelli pure trasformati in cofanetti di gemme . . . Scherzi di luce davan l'illusione che i quattro boschetti del parco Ciani, rientranti nel lago, fossero altrettante isolette, così, come risalta-

a decent fellow, to which I replied that I never had any doubts about it. This reply was perhaps a bit unfortunate, as it seemed to put a slight doubt into his head whether I was really congenial. Anyhow, after much fidgeting and coughing, which betrayed a certain nervousness, which I had never noticed before, he acquainted me with the fact that he suffered from a complaint which is commonly called "love-sickness." — As an explanatory remark, I ought to mention that Sergeant Röstli was a member of the worthy guild of bakers. — The cause of this not unfrequent disease was apparently the daughter of a well-to-do miller, from whom the sergeant bought his flour. "Oh, you artful devil," I thought to myself. He bargained, no doubt, not only for the sacks of flour, but also for the daughter of his supplier; this man had an eye for business. To cut a long story short, he asked me point blank whether I would be agreeable to compose the letters to his heart's desire, as he was not very handy with his pen, and considering the report which I had written previous for him, he thought I would be the very man for this job. This request put me somehow in a quandary; first of all, I had but little experience in this kind of work; secondly, the person to whom I had to address myself in the most endearing terms was a complete stranger to me. An undertaking of this kind was certainly not as easy as it looked. Was it an honest thing to do? I asked myself; but after Sergeant Röstli assured me with a faltering voice (so different to the one I used to hear) that Röstli was awfully fond of him, and asked him, before taking a tender farewell, behind the garden wall, to write to her, I made up my mind to accept his proposal. To enable me to execute this task in an efficient manner, I had to cross-examine the sergeant rather thoroughly, a task in which I found a certain delight; his stammering answers to some of my searching questions made up for a few of the humiliations I had undergone previously.

I explained to him that, as he did not possess a photograph of Röstli, he must give me an accurate description of her appearance, as I could hardly talk in my letters of heavenly blue eyes, when in reality they were green or black; nor could I write about a dainty little rosy mouth, when this organ was rather an outside, or again about the sweet little ears, in case they were like cabbage leaves. Then the colour of the hair would be of great importance, in case I alluded

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vano, rischiarate da potenti riflettori, nell'oscurità intorno. Due altri riflettori (poca roba . . . ventisettemila candele ognuno!) si fissavano ora qua ora là, sui monti, formando così chiazze biancastre, interrompendo la monotonia d'una massa oscura.

Capriccio scherzoso di luci e spruzzi d'acqua le fontane. E alta, leggera, saliva l'acqua soffusa di tenui colori, per poi cadere silenziosa, come un fiocco di seta, nella vasca sotto.

Un intreccio di lampadine rosse, bianche il Municipio, la stazione, il Kursaal, gli alberghi,

i negozi. Illuminati a giorno la Cattedrale, le altre Chiese, le ville sparse sulle colline.

Luce, luce ovunque. E così per una quindicina di giorni Lugano brillò, salutando . . . elettricamente i molti che venivano a goderne la sua bellezza, a subirne il suo fascino.

E l'aria esalava lieve profumo di caprifoglio e di rose. . . .

E le rondini, ritornate a primavera, intesevano i nidi, gorgheggiando le loro canzoni d'amore, nella luminosità del sole. . . .

E. G. L.

to golden locks, when in reality they were straight and ginger.

I also wanted to know approximately the size of Röstli, explaining that I could hardly write about her tender, slight appearance, in case she should weigh over 12 stone; also the size of her boots would be required, as I had visions of bringing in the "fairly feet which had stepped into a lonely soldier's life."

These questions were very embarrassing to Sergeant Röstli, and also to me. He blushed violently on several occasions; but when I, as a final shot, asked him with a piercing look whether he had ever before kissed his Röstli, he simply went purple. He flatly refused to answer, but after I had explained in so many words that this was a most important matter, as sooner or later that would have to appear in the letters, he admitted that he had tried, but somehow had missed the mark. I looked at him in a sort of "how could you, sergeant, way. I also found out that Röstli was fond of dancing, and could play the piano with one finger; also that she was rather sentimental; the latter fact was important. I made my mind up to rub it in thickly.

After having devoured a bottle of Neuchâtel in honour of Röstli and the future happiness of the two lovers, I was told to depart, the sergeant explaining to me that it would not do for us to be seen together. This rather hurt my pride a little. Here was I asked to collaborate in paving the way to eternal bliss, and yet I must not be seen with the one for whom I was willing to expose some of my tenderest and innermost feelings; but with a click of my heels and a brave military salute, I drowned those feelings, and went back to the place which harboured so many disappointments. That night I could not sleep for a long time; visions of Röstli kept me awake. From the description received that night, she answered many of my longings. Was I in love with Röstli, too? I asked myself. What a disaster that would be; and for the first time since I slept with 36 of my comrades in the same *sanctuary*. I did not mind the awful snoring of some of them. It sounded like music; it was like a symphony of love, and the last words which I whispered into a hard pillow were, "Good night, Röstli, dear."

The following evening, instead of going out, I stayed behind, in order to compose the first letter to the unknown one. It was what I considered short and sweet, not too much to the

point, and yet intimating that an aching heart was filled with a great longing. It was so to say, the opening chapter to life's greatest drama. When I showed it that night to Sergeant Röstli, it met with his approval, although he thought that a sign depicting a kiss, or a mark intimating a falling tear might have conveniently been inserted. But I strongly objected to this, as I thought it wiser to play the big guns later on, when the signs of her affection would be more apparent. That letter was copied the same night by the sergeant on pink paper; the envelope bore a stamp rather crookedly put on, which, according to the sergeant's explanation, meant exactly the one thing which I would not mention in the letter.

These were days of anxiety for both of us. What would happen to me, I argued, should this letter rudely end Sergeant Röstli's love aspirations? Would not his wrath fall on my innocent head? and what would my life be then? Curiously enough, I dreamt that night of a soldier's funeral. Was it prophetic? I wondered the next morning on waking up. Then one morning came a blue envelope addressed to Sergeant Röstli. One sharp glance at it revealed to me that the stamp, too, was pasted on at an impossible angle, which evoked in me a sigh of relief. With eager eyes, I watched the recipient opening this little *billet-doux*. After persual he put it in his tunic, with fingers which slightly trembled, and when we were alone a handshake from the sergeant rewarded me for my labours of love. "She liked it," he said, and two days later a second letter left the barracks, a little longer, a little more tender, containing "one chaste kiss" for the first time. I had again to rule out tears, explaining that a sergeant should not weep over a thing like this, anyhow, not in the beginning. If it should be necessary later on, we could always hold the letter under the pump.

Again a reply came back, in which Röstli wrote that she never thought that her admirer could write such loving letters. That evening we drank another bottle of Neuchâtel in a far-away little inn, lest the sergeant should be seen in company with the one who could not make a bed, or the one who wore a pair of pink pyjamas.

In the meantime, the treatment which was meted out to me by the sergeant improved considerably, and dark hints were passed round amongst my comrades that I must have bribed