

PIRANDELLO AND THE ITALIAN HUMORISTS

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ITALIAN literature, especially during the last decade, throughout all its schools and its prevailing aesthetics, reveals psychological attitudes, currents of thoughts and states of mind fundamentally similar, exhibiting one unanimous and uniform desire, namely, to produce "humour", or, to use a strictly Italian term, to produce "ironia" (irony). *In tristitia hilaris, in hilaritate tristis*, the chosen motto which characterizes, for example, all the work of Carlo Dossi, might be aptly adopted by writers so widely different as Alberto Cantoni and Luigi Pirandello, for it would faithfully describe their state of mind. Verga and D'Annunzio had believed in the sway of fiery and carnal passion, in nature marvellous and mighty, in the irresistible fatality of instinct. Fogazzaro had believed in profound underlying sentiments, in the spirit that triumphs over the flesh, in the moral sense that comes from God, and in the mission of the individual. But their art, perhaps because it was too great and too personal, did not attract to itself many followers. After the utterances of Carducci, the prophet of Italy, of Pascoli, the devotee of mystery, of D'Annunzio, the writer of hymns to divine Nature, the inexhaustible art of this nation took refuge in "ironia". Still fresh in Italy is the memory of a genuine and unexpected success won by a young writer who was prematurely cut off from a career of assured fame, Guido Gozzano. Leaving the oft trodden highways, he plunged eagerly into the dangerous and difficult paths of simplicity, and his poetry rightly appears to be a revelation. It was exquisite and delightful verse, full of pathos and of the most delicate sense of humour, and it revealed depths of really valuable matter that could not be taken too seriously, and yet for which it would be difficult to find either a substitute or a competitor. There then arose some who suddenly deceived themselves into thinking—we do not yet know whether in good or in bad faith—that they had found something really new and great to place in competition with the past, and which was called "Futurism". It had not in Italy any better fate than, at a later date, was meted out to it elsewhere. It neither produced nor introduced anything good or serious.

Headed by a man of genuine talent, F. T. Marinetti, this school flooded Italy and Europe with manifestos, programmes and books in greatest profusion, and propounded and published broadcast the strangest and most unconvincing theories, only to amuse the world and then to fall into derision. It drew after it good intellects and excellent workers, and frittered away in folly energies that, employed in other directions, would have produced notable work. Here and there one of this persuasion discovered the right road in time and saved himself—Luciano Folgore with his original caricaturist style, and better than all, Aldo Palazzeschi. Gozzano and Palazzeschi worked in harmony side by side, drinking deeply of the fountains of art, and producing works of interest which displayed, in elegant form, the pathos of disillusionment and of primitive child-like ingenuousness, deprecated current ideas, and cleverly avoided the ordinary modes of thought and forms of expression. They wrote the most delicate and delightful irony. They denied everything and asserted nothing, astutely and aristocratically. Read, for example, the celebrated *Signorina Felicita* of Guido Gozzano, and the *Lasciatemi divertire* of Palazzeschi. The one directs its irony against that pure, simple, tranquil life for which we feel vague yearnings; the other against those conventional words and flowery phrases which, having now lost their ancient significance, have come to resemble lifeless and grotesque beings on which we may lawfully bestow at the same time our pity and our smiles.

More remarkable and more consistent is, however, a similar transition in the novel and the short story. An attitude of mind tending towards irony, without actually reaching it, appeared the aptest and readiest for regaining originality and with it celebrity. Among those who in such an attempt won notable victories, Italy numbers writers of no mean reputation, although that type of literature has been cultivated only in its simplest and handiest form; that is, in the short story. The list of ironical story writers, in fact, included such names as Moretti, Beltramelli, Provenzal, Bontempelli, who are ironists, even though their flights are short. Writers of greater name and more robust powers succeeded in utilising irony to scale the rougher and more complex paths of narrative literature, cultivating the art of novel-writing. Guido da Verona, in his early days, delighted to give free play to those broad and sincere inspirations which only he can know who has seen much, enjoyed much, loved and known much. In this spirit he wrote most spicy pages in such fragmentary creations as those of the *Cavaliere dello Spirito Santo* (Knight of the Holy Spirit). He maintained the same high level also in the complete novel, of which

an example is that complex and interesting work, *Sciogli la treccia Maria Maddallena*, which contains pages delightfully suffused with a bitterness and genuine irony that can, perhaps, hold its own with that which characterises the two true masters of that style of writing, Alfredo Panzini and Luigi Pirandello. Though both are experienced composers and analysers of mental states, both sceptics of everything and everybody, they show nevertheless very distinct differences in character. Panzini, as Luigi Tonelli remarked, is a universal ironist, cultured and well-balanced. His sense of order, exactness, and harmony is not only exterior but interior. That is why he loses himself in too profound meditations, and lucubrations in which it is very easy to wander about as in a labyrinth. He describes, and afterwards thinks over what he has described, and then sets to work suddenly to describe it again. Scarcely has he begun to fly when he touches the earth once more, and thus saves himself. Yet the inner conflict of his soul between what he would like to see and what he actually does see is not thereby suppressed. If he may be called a misogynist, it is because he has so high an ideal of womanhood; if he despises morality, political life, education, and so many other modern things, the reason is that he has an ideal superior to this *modernity*. Hence his attitude cannot be other than polemical. Nevertheless, he no longer cherishes any hopes. His ideals seem to him those of a bygone age, ideals that can never return, and reality—this miserable, sordid, and senseless reality—insuperable.

At this point the humour of Panzini comes into line with that of Pirandello. It might rather be said that the smile of Panzini's irony is the herald of the cold sneer with which Pirandello's irony presents itself. A deeper thinker than Panzini, Pirandello differs from him chiefly in the hallucination that sometimes dominates him. With this form of "ironia" Pirandello was born, and he inevitably grew up as a short story writer. "The principal characters of Pirandello's novels," writes Luigi Russo in *Narratori*, p. 185, "were no longer resigned to their fate, but they gesticulated and laughed, sometimes wildly, seized with an insane and reckless mirth which was the straight road to madness and death." Thus Pirandello's humour was the result, not of an ordered and philosophic contrast between what life in its bare reality is, and all those artificial illusions with which men cloak it; the artist even accentuated such a contrast to the last extremity, and seemed to take a malignant joy in tracing amid disasters the fleeing triumph of naked and stern reality. Hence intellectual cynicism is attributed to him when it was simply a case of hopeless sadness. The "ironia" of Pirandello

is therefore very different from that of Panzini. It contains an element of terror; it is more sarcastic; it is bitter, and sometimes fierce. It is not employed solely at the expense of any particular individual, or of any particular class or category, but is directed against mankind as mankind, inasmuch as man is a creature by his very nature miserable and ignorant, knowing nothing with certainty save that he must suffer. It is directed against every living creature, against the world, against life itself. It has at its base a scepticism resembling in many of its aspects that of Anatole France. Pirandello is more absolute. He has no reservations, no half-tones. Virtue, honesty, truth are with him but illusions, either hypocrisy or mere folly. They are masks under which men strive to hide with false physiognomies the real, grim features of vice, cupidity, wickedness, and lying. Even where a smile can be found in Pirandello's works, it is always a sad smile which, when it does not end in a sob, becomes a harsh, strident, and savage laugh.

This derisive attitude, which accompanies all the work of Pirandello in its various forms, naturally resulted in a deformation of the style, which had to be adapted to and brought into conformity with the prevailing mental attitude of the author, giving it both in narration and in dialogue that form and that technique with which Russo found fault: "a scrappy prose, devoid of picturesqueness, harsh in tone, with a syntactical construction which is not synthetic, like that of Verga's epic prose, but analytic, broken into a continual succession of short intellectual statements which depict to the life all the agitation of a never-ending and hopeless soliloquy." In my opinion, this is merely another way of saying that Pirandello's prose consistently maintains a stately purity of its own, a peculiar excellence which can be better understood by one who does not lose sight of the intellectual characteristics of the author. It is not—as Russo fails to observe—that the style is habitually harsh and unpleasing, but that the author sometimes with marvellous ductility of mind can adapt his own style, with perfect fidelity and consistency, to the asperities and sudden vicissitudes of the things and facts that he has seen or imagined. It is the form which best answers to the thought, and which is most adapted to what the writer wished to represent. It is, indeed, the logical consequence of that complex spiritual process which moved the writer from the day of his birth, and which dominated him in his manifestations alike as a short story writer, a novelist, and a dramatist.

† Could one possibly discuss in detail the individual stories written by Pirandello, the ponderous collection of which is the result of

strenuous and patient work of the writer during that early period of successful and famous youthful activity? I consider it too arduous a task, if not an impossible one, so great is the volume of the work and so varied and multiform is the matter. Nor does it seem indispensable for one to give a chronological enumeration of the many volumes which bear on their covers the titles of the first story in the collection. Here is the charming introduction to the first story of the volume entitled *Quand'ero matto* (When I was mad): *The Halfpenny*.

"At the outset, I ask for the fullest liberty to state that I am now in my right mind. Oh, as far as that goes, also poor. Also bald. But at first, when I was still...I...I mean to say when I was the respected gentleman, Fausto Bandico, and rich, and had on my head all my lovely hair, it is now proved and established beyond a doubt that I was mad. A little leaner of course; but still with these eyes that are so,—shall I call it panic-stricken? (that is how they have remained since those days)—in my pale face, all scored over with the usual markings that were traced on it by my prolonged sufferings...But certainly mad, proven mad, proven absolutely... From carelessness, ever so often, I relapse. Just in flashes. But my brave Martha puts them out suddenly for me; a clever woman she is, with certain terrible little words of hers: cold drops that quench them! For example, the other evening...But that does not matter much; let us proceed. Whatever could happen to a poor wise man, a wise and poor man, reduced to living more frugally than an ant?...The thinner the thread, the more delicate the embroidery. I have read somewhere, I do not know where. But it would be necessary first of all to learn how to embroider...

"Well, the other evening, I was going home. There could not be, I think, a greater annoyance than that which the persistence of a beggar causes, when you haven't a penny in your pocket, and when he sees in your face that you are quite disposed to give him one. It was, in my case, a girl. Without cessation, in a whining voice, for a quarter of an hour she went on repeating behind me the same two or three phrases. I was deaf; I never looked at her. At a certain point, she left me; she laid siege, and attached herself, like a mosquito, to a newly married couple. 'Will they give her that half-penny?' I said to myself. Ah, you do not know, girl! The first time that a newly married couple walk arm in arm, they think they have the eyes of everyone directed on their back; they feel embarrassed at the novelty of all those eyes coming to gaze at them, and cannot possibly stay to give alms to the poor. A

little later, indeed, I heard someone running after me, crying: 'Master, Master...' And there she was again, with the same whining monotone as before. I could bear with it no more, and cried exasperated: 'No!' That made it worse! I was as if, with that No, I had given the cue to another pair of phrases held in reserve for such a case as this. I snorted at her once; snorted again and lastly; ugh! I raised my stick. Like this. She drew to one side, instinctively raising her arms as a screen for her head, and under her elbow she moaned to me. 'Just a farthing!' Good heavens! what eyes she opened in her lean face, under her reddish, tangled hair. All the vices of the street seemed to swarm in those eyes, and her precocity made them frightful. (I do not put any note of exclamation because, now I am in my right mind, nothing ever astonishes me.)

"As soon as I saw those eyes, I repented of my threatening gesture. 'How old are you?' The girl looked at me, sideways, without lowering her arm, and did not reply. 'Why don't you work?' 'Would to God, I could find any to do. I can't find any.' 'You don't look for any,' said I, walking on again. 'Why have you taken up this fine trade?' I nearly said that; she followed me, renewing the exasperating chant that she was hungry; would I give her something for the love of God? Could I have taken off my coat and said to her:—'Here you are.' Who knows? At another time perhaps I could have done so. But then, at another time, I should have had a halfpenny in my pocket... Suddenly an idea occurred to me, for which I must offer my excuses in the presence of persons in their right minds. To work,—no doubt that is a good piece of advice, but one is so ready to give it... I remembered that Martha was looking for a maid. And wait a bit: I call this sudden idea foolish, not so much from the timorous joy that it raised in me, and which I recognized well enough at first as being a feeling that I had experienced from time to time when I was mad—a kind of dazzling intoxication which lasts for an instant, a flash, in which the world seems to give a great pulse and jumps up inside us—as from the reflections I made, as a poor intelligent man, to justify this madness in me, and from the way I tried to persuade myself that this was done in the interests of my wife. I thought, 'So that she may have something to eat, somewhere to sleep and something to wear, this child will serve us, without claiming anything else. It will be just an economical move for Martha.' Just so. 'Listen,' I said to the girl, 'as to money, I shall not give you any. But do you really want to work?' She stopped and cast a glance at me with those clear sullen eyes, under brows knitted

into a hateful frown; then she nodded her head over and over again. 'Yes? Well then, come with me. I will give you some work to do at my house.' The girl stopped again, perplexed. 'And what about mother?' 'You shall go and tell her afterwards. Just now come.'

"It seemed to me that I was going home through another avenue, and as if... I am ashamed to say so, but, actually it is so, it seemed to me as if the houses and trees were a prey to the agitation that I experienced. And that agitation grew, grew from point to point, as I approached my house. What would my wife say? I could not have introduced the proposal to her in a more stupid manner. That's certain: it is most certain also that this stupid manner must have tended not only to make her repudiate it, as was natural, but also to infuriate her, poor Martha. But, even now that I have come to my senses, I cannot, from continual fear lest some queer eccentricity should escape me, say two words to her, one after the other. Well, anyway, my wife did not let the opportunity slip of saying to me once more her fearful,—'What, again? again?' ... which is worse to me than an unexpected douche of water, and then she sent the girl away without even giving her anything, because, she said, her alms-giving for that day was done. Meanwhile, I think and say, that girl, if she is not already ruined, will most certainly be so before long. Yes, but what ought that to matter to me, now that I have come to my senses, and must not think any longer of such things, not in the least? 'Think of myself,' that's my new motto. It is meant to persuade me to rule by it all the acts of this my new life,—shall we call it so? But, as God wills, doing nothing of the kind... Well, well, never mind! If now, for example, I suddenly pause under the window of a house where I know there is someone weeping, I cannot help suddenly seeing in that window my own bewildered and wan image which, as it presents itself, has unfailingly the appearance of calling me from above, shaking its head at me a little, and pointing the forefinger of one hand at its breast:—And what do I do? This! It's always 'What do I do'... On every occasion. That is the basis of true wisdom. When I was mad, however..."

Certainly Pirandello does of his own free will and in almost all cases give to the beings he creates an impulse towards, and a continuous need for, *reflection*, which does not arise from observation, pure and simple, of life, but rather from deliberately reasoned motives and of set purpose. Pirandello's characters, in fact, study themselves, to know how they would look in the mirror, even to their

follies and frailties. This is so, because the author intended it to be so. "Who am I? What use am I? And in what respects do I find myself like or unlike others?" In this way, or something like it, does it appear that the important characters of Pirandello's works reflect. The interest of such enquiries consists entirely in the apparent absurdity, and in the real and profound paradoxes that arise in the heart of a creature struggling and writhing with anguish beneath the weight of his cross. In short, to drag to light, by means of a keen and merciless analysis, that poor humanity which seems so mysterious to others, to surprise it in its most secret contortions and struggles, appears to be the task and the chief aim of Pirandello's art.

The period of his youth, which had begun and continued with such an imposing out-put of short stories, concluded with a valuable, and indeed remarkable, work of art, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. This celebrated novel, coming about ten years after his earliest attempts in *L'Esclusa*, though rendering the author's victory assured, nevertheless raised controversies and doubts which, later on, and especially with the appearance of new editions, died away gradually and at last disappeared. *The Late Mattia Pascal* is undoubtedly the most original and most significant of Pirandello's works. It is that which best helps us to the understanding of the complex artistic principle that impelled the writer to compose works so difficult to understand, the principle which, being based on a scheme corresponding so happily to the author's temperament and tendencies, has afforded him scope to develop all his virtues and all his peculiar qualities. It is important to linger with particular attention on this novel, which owes the chance of its re-birth to that impulse which later on impelled Pirandello to write for the theatre. It was, in fact, the dramatic work which brought into prominence the work he had done in the past, and impelled Italian critics to examine more carefully into the origin and development of that art which is so elusive and so difficult, and to place it in that light which is most in harmony with its essential nature and form.

This book opens with a delightful introduction, in which the reader catches a glimpse of the general trend of the incidents, and is prepared in mind to appreciate its beauties. The hero introduces himself at once as an interesting person, who will provide us with surprises and thrills. Let us briefly summarize the novel.

Mattia Pascal, librarian of Miragno, married a beautiful woman, Romilda, with whom it was almost impossible for him to live

in concord, and who brought to him a mother-in-law of the most terrible type, Pescatore, whose innate and refined treachery made life for him almost impossible. Poor Mattia suffers, endures, puts up with the temper and caprices of the two women, and when it comes to a crisis, decides to leave them in the lurch. He turns away from the house and the district, abandoning everything and everybody without a word of farewell. He takes the first train he comes across, having made up his mind to nothing less than finding a refuge in America. But he comes to a halt in the land of enchantment and irresistible temptations, at Monte Carlo. He reaches that spot by chance, and also by chance he there wins in play a very large sum. From this time onwards the unexpected possession of a very large fortune, and the sense of an unexpected change in his financial status, reopen his mind to hope, and change his outlook on the past. He now feels and believes that he can face life with a very different heart. He therefore decides to return to his own country, to his own home. But during his return journey, in the train, almost at the exact moment when he enters Italian territory, he happens to pick up a newspaper, containing a notice insignificant for others, but for him terrible. Observe how the extravagant absurdity of the plot is disguised with wonderful colouring which forces the reader to believe in and lend sympathy to the artistic fiction:

“Suicide, Suicide!” “It struck me suddenly that it might be at Monte Carlo, and I hastened to read it. But I stopped surprised at the first line printed in very small type. ‘We are informed by wire from Miragno...’ Miragno! Who can have committed suicide in our town? I read: ‘Yesterday, Saturday the 28th, from a mill-pond a corpse was dragged in a state of advanced putrefaction...’ At once my sight grew clouded. I seemed to see in the following line the name of my farm; and, as I found some difficulty in reading, with only one eye, the minute print, I stood up to nearer to the light... ‘putrefaction. The mill is situated in a farm called Stia at about two kilometres from our town. When the police authorities, with certain other people, arrived, the corpse was drawn from the water by the constabulary and placed under guard. Later it was recognized as that of our librarian.’ “I! disappeared... recognised... Mattia Pascal!” (p. 86) Dead? Drowned? A cross, a funeral speech, and oblivion. He resolves, however, that the dead man shall thrive well. Accordingly Mattia Pascal becomes suddenly Adriano Meis. The sense of being now really alone on earth, of being at present free from every bond

and obligation, absolutely master of himself as never before, no longer bearing the burden of the past, and with a figure henceforth to be shaped at his own sweet will! What delight! Mattia, that is Andriano Meis, feels himself suddenly light and happy, as if he had wings. And he begins his new life. "I had with me 82,000 lire, and I should no longer have to give it to anyone! I was dead; I was dead! I had no debts, no wife, no mother-in-law; no one! Free! Free! Free! What more did I want? So thinking, I must have remained in the strangest of attitudes, on the platform of that station. I had left the door of the compartment open; I saw myself among a number of people, who were shouting something or other to me; one at last shook me and pushed me, crying aloud: 'The train is going.' 'Well, let it go, let it go, my dear sir!' I cried in my turn. 'I am changing trains!'" (p. 89) But alas! into it weariness, pain and labour once more return, until Adriano Meis becomes sick of it, bored, exasperated, and finds at last it is not possible to live outside the world and the civil state, outside the law and outside his own past and his own ego. So one fine night at Lungotevere dei Mellini in Rome... he kills Adriano Meis by drowning, and flees. Or, to speak strictly, he simulates suicide on the Tiber bridge. It needs but a hat, a stick, a paper with the name of the missing person! Adriano Meis comes to an end there in the yellow waters of the Tiber. And Mattia Pascal reappears, renews his tragi-comic relationships, and concludes, like a good philosopher, by leaving things as they are; but takes a sudden, an assuredly legitimate pleasure, in going to put a flower and a light on his own tomb.

This is, in short, the plot of the novel. But however slightly we enter on the detailed examination of these pages, we shall not fail to realise the importance that they have in the formative process of Pirandello's mentality, the place they occupy in the labour of research and experience through which the Italian writer strives to express the contrasts, sorrows, laughter and lament, of his fictitious creations. The case of impersonation which Pirandello undertakes to describe is, we may say, theoretically demonstrated to be possible. The experiment that Mattia Pascal tries on himself is cleverly led up to through pages of marvellous introduction. The character, as we said, presents himself from the very beginning as a terrible investigator of himself and of others. Observe him, when he is still Mattia Pascal, in the unbearable surroundings of his house, from which one day he is destined to flee, as he looks at himself and judges himself before the mirror: "I saw myself,

at that moment, the actor in a tragedy more ridiculous than could be imagined; my mother, who had run away with that mad woman; my wife, in the other room, who...well, let her be. Marianna Pescatore there on the ground; and I, I, short of bread, that might be called bread, for the coming day, with my beard all in a mess, my face scratched and dripping, I did not yet know whether with blood or tears of excessive laughter. I went to the mirror to find out. They were tears, but for all that I was pretty well scratched. Ah, that glance of mine, what delight it gave me! In desperation, I had begun to look elsewhere for my own welfare. So I slipped away, resolved not to enter the house again, until, if ever, I had discovered some way or other to maintain, even though poorly, my wife and myself."

But that we may the better understand with what skill and effectiveness Pirandello has entered upon the study of this most singular "case", of the way he has developed it and brought it to a successful conclusion, and the effects which he can produce from even the most bizarre situations, it will be sufficient to read the concluding lines of the book, which describe the return of Mattia Pascal. They reach such a height of lofty and penetrating humour that one cannot refrain from reproducing them: "I mounted the last stairs. With the bell-rope in my hand, while my heart leaped into my mouth, I strained my ears. Not a sound! And in the stillness I listened to the slow tink-tink of the bell, which, having been feebly rung, grew fainter and fainter. All my blood rushed to my head, and a buzzing began to sound in my ears, as if that slight tinkling, which had died away into silence, had clanged within me furiously and tumultuously. (*Il fu Mattia Pascal*, pages 124-27.) ... "Widow Pescatore, running up with a light in her hand, uttered a piercing shriek like that of a woman in agony. I closed the door with one foot, and leaping forward seized the light, which was already falling from her hand. 'Be quiet!' I cried, my face close to hers. 'Do you really take me for a phantom?' 'Alive?' she cried, astounded, with her hands in her hair. 'Alive! alive! alive!' I reiterated with fierce joy. 'You recognised me when I was dead, didn't you? When I lay there drowned?' 'And where have you come from?' she asked. 'From the mill-pond, you miser!' I howled. 'Hold the light near and take a good look at me! Is it I? Do you recognize me? Or do I still seem to you to be that wretch who was drowned at Stia?' 'Weren't you?' 'Curse you, you Gorgon! I am here, alive! And you, get up, you great donkey! Where's Romilda?' 'For mercy's sake...' groaned Pomino, getting up hastily. 'The little child... I am afraid... the milk...'

I gripped him by one arm, startled now in my turn. 'What little child?' 'My...my...my daughter,' stammered Pomino... 'Well, let us drop this discussion: tell me instead how it was that you married so quickly. Ah, you didn't mourn for me so long, my dear little widow...Perhaps not at all, eh? Is it possible that I am not to hear your voice? Look; the night is already far advanced...the day will scarcely have dawned before I am gone, and it will be as if we had never known one another. Let us make the most of these few hours. Come tell me...Romilda shrugged her shoulders, looked at Pomino, smiled nervously; then, lowering her eyes, and looking at her hands, she said: 'What can I say? Certainly I wept...' 'And you didn't deserve it,' said Pescatore with a frown. 'Thank you! But, anyway, come now...it was a little, wasn't it?' I replied. 'Those lovely eyes, which beguiled us so easily, didn't take much harm from weeping, that's certain.' 'We were left rather badly off,' said Romilda by way of excuse. 'And if it had not been for him...' 'Well done, Pomino!' I exclaimed. 'But that blackguard, Malagna, did nothing?' 'Nothing,' replied Pescatore, in a hard and cold voice. 'All he did...' Pomino interrupted. 'That is...that...' he added by way of correction, 'the poor fellow...; you know he was on the town council? Well, well, he did get a little pension for her, in view of her calamity, and then...' 'Then she consented to marry?' 'Gladly, and wanted us here all together with her... Alas! in two months...' " (p. 287).

The gray and sombre background: that first view of his native village, and later on the house in Rome where Mattia Pascal, now Adriano Meis, goes as a boarder and is still that same dolorous character moving restlessly about, with outcries and tears, and examining his life,—the whole atmosphere in which the characters of the novel live, did not please everyone. The cold and anatomical manner in which Pirandello looks upon these men and their vicissitudes was especially disliked. It was objected that this harsh and warped outlook cast so cold and inhuman a shade on the features of his characters as to give to their actions a certain wooden appearance, and that at last we begin, in dealing with all Pirandello's creations, to wonder whether they are men or marionettes. They are, in our opinion, perfect sons of their own period, pure products of Pirandello's philosophical creed, which the majority of his contemporaries delight to follow. It cannot be forgotten that it is to his special, peculiar way of looking at men and events that we owe Pirandello's humour, which is undoubtedly inimitable and admirable. If, moreover, his characters act as if they were crazy, if they weep or laugh by fits and starts, if, instead of speaking, they

stammer or become muddled, it is because at times they do not find the proper word to define the inner tragedy that tortures them. Let us not enquire whether they are at first masks, and then throwing aside the mask they reveal their own true features and become men. This distinction would lead to ambiguity and, in any case, would not fail to be arbitrary. Let us rather regard these tormented and tormenting characters of Pirandello's as A. Franci thinks they ought to be regarded, namely, as men who have their part with us, sharing in our sorrows; as beings dwelling in an atmosphere normally artificial, and seeking to express what is so far inarticulate in them. As yet they have not succeeded in doing so; hence it is that they run, stumble, get up again, and fall, in ways that lead men to regard them as mere puppets controlled by the wires of a clever showman. But it cannot therefore be said that they will not succeed.

THE WINDS OF NAZARETH

ETHEL H. BUTLER

Blow, blow, O winds of Nazareth;
 O Galilean sea;
 O little winds of Nazareth
 Bring to my heart, to me,
 A love of all the lowly things,
 A vast simplicity.

Blow, blow, O Galilean winds;
 Blow with your gentle breath;
 The world's wild winds have vanquished me,
 And life is lost in death!
 And I would feel the little winds—
 The winds of Nazareth.