

Theme for Children

By Maxim Gorky.

Every man has a stain upon his conscience. I am no exception. But the majority look at these adornments very simply; they wear them lightly as starched shirts. But for me I never wear such shirts, and probably for that cause feel my stain very uncomfortable. In one word—I wish to confess.

I do not confess merely because I have no other agreeable recreations in my life, or because confession is the only way in which I can attract the attention of others; I do not enter into confidences because it gives me an opportunity to expose my virtues. Not at all. I am not guided by any one of those motives which usually impel men to public confession. I confess only because I feel the time has come. And so I have taken up my pen with the intention of using it as a brush for the cleansing of my soul from that dark stain which has pained me for years.

It all began on a merry May day, when, walking up the street, I met a schoolgirl known to me. Her name was Lisotchka; she had merry hazel eyes—though now they were sad; a rosy, clear-cut, animated face—now pale and dead; a walk like a bird's flight—now she could barely move a foot.

"Lisotchka, how d'ye do? May I ask after the health of your dolls?" I forgot to mention the class she was in. It was the fourth. I loved to play with her dolls; after relations with men such play revives and animates.

"Good morning," answered Lisotchka; and in her voice I heard tears. "What is the matter?" I asked in alarm. I confess I loved her; and she returned my love with the force and passion of her twelve summers. I was myself then only fifty-three.

"They—they have again set composition," she said through her tears.

"A composition? Is the theme so said that even before writing it makes you cry?"

She smiled.

"Yes. You are all right. You are not forced to write compositions!"

"Alas, Lisotchka, I am. Only you are forced by your master, and I by circumstances. We won't say which is worse off. But don't cry; I will write your composition. What is the theme?"

"Water, its Importance in Nature and in Human Life." Write it! Dear! Got me five marks!"

"I will try!"

The reason I offered to write her composition so unhesitatingly was that that kind of work was familiar to me. On one occasion a teacher of literature awarded me two marks for a composition written for a fifth class schoolgirl on the subject of "The Positive Traits in the Characters of Skalozub and Moltchaln." On another occasion I received one mark for a composition written for a sixth class boy, on the theme, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Respect for Parents," or something of that kind.

But though I knew the task I had undertaken, I thought for a moment before beginning. I desired that my little girl should gain full marks. How must I write it so that she should receive the whole five?

After a moment's thought I decided. Before writing a word, I must convince myself that I was not a giant six feet high, but a little rosy-cheeked schoolgirl twelve years old.

It seemed beyond doubt that when the teacher names the theme he takes into account the child's knowledge of the subject, its psychology, its style, and finally, its idealistic view of and relation to the subject. That was beyond doubt. The conclusion was that I, as far as I possibly could, should imitate a child. Admirable!

And we conversed together on the subject of the elasticity of friendship's bonds; how it happens that you walk away from a friend's house, and yet come to him, and prevent him sleeping. Then we spoke of wine and of people who drink wine, and we made the following discovery: People who have money in their pockets or credit at a wine merchant's may buy wine, whereas those who have neither, cannot.

When I returned home I lay on the sofa, lighted a cigarette, and fell asleep—a thing I did not intend to do. I was awakened by a friend who came to call—a thing which it appeared he had no intention of doing. He had left his house without having any thought of coming to me; yet came. When my friend left it was too late to write about water.

The composition was to be ready by Saturday, so there remained two days. But on the following day I again failed, not through friendship, but through wine, which this time proved itself an enemy. When the last day came, I set down to write of

"Water and its Importance in Nature and Human Life." My head ached badly, but I wrote resolutely to the end. I then read it over, failed to understand a word; and after coming to the conclusion that I must have imitated a child with great success, and would more than satisfy the teacher, I took it to my schoolgirl.

She met me joyfully. "It's done! How good! Five marks, eh? Of course for you are a writer—Come and play dolls!"

We went, and played, and then I returned home and slept peacefully. On Sunday I called at her house. Her mother came into the room as majestic as a church clock-tower; and her eyes gazed at me like two revolver muzzles.

"Ah, this is you—my dear sir! You?"

"I am almost certain it is I, no one else."

"No joking?"

"? ! ?"

"You are an author! A writer! Do you hear?"

"I think I hear—But I am not sure I understand—"

"What have you done with my daughter?"

"Allow me to try to remember."

"Look at her!"

I left the room and looked. She lay in a little bed, and cried bitterly.

"Lisotchka!" I began.

"Akh, maman, maman, tell the dornik Matvel to cut him with a knife—with an axe—to kill him!" cried Lisotchka.

This was amazing.

"Explain—"

"Take your detestable composition, which made my daughter the laughing-stock of the whole school, and which is responsible for her not getting a single mark. Take it please, and—"



MAXIM GORKY.

I departed. I carefully concealed the composition in my pocket and walked home. It seemed to me that my pocket contained a whole Atlantic Ocean and its mysteries. On arriving home, I read the composition. Read it yourself!

Water is a wet liquid, the first appearance of which on earth is prehistoric. At first there was only a little water in the world, but since the Flood came by order of God, there has been more water than land; and from that time the water, never flowing away, remains in marshes, lakes, and seas. Water collects only in low-lying places but it cannot rest in high places because it is a liquid. If you pour it on the top of a hill it will soon flow to the bottom; for that reason the bases of hills are always surrounded by seas, lakes, and marshes. If you pour it on an orange it will also run off, although the earth is round as an orange. All the rivers also flow downwards because they begin on the tops of hills, and because water is liquid. Even if you pour it on the floor, it will flow to the lower parts, not to the higher. It can easily be distinguished from butter because it never gets solid. Fast-butler (oil) is more like water. In marshes water is dirty, in seas salt; and therefore such water is not drunk; people drink river-water, and even that only where there are no water-works. It is dangerous to drink water, as you may catch cold; better drink tea or coffee. Water also serves as a medium of communication, and those countries which have much water have great commerce; such in ancient times were Phoenicia and Greece, and in modern times, England. Fishes like to live in water. Water is very convenient for transporting merchandise on special ships which are called fleets; but you cannot walk on it as it is a liquid and slips from under your feet so that you drown. In Nature water appears when it is summer in the form of rain which makes a great deal of mud. When rain falls, it first falls on the roofs of houses, and then flows in rivulets on to the ground. When it is raining grown up people go out in galoshes and umbrellas, while children sit at home and find it very tedious. In winter, rain freezes and falls on the earth in the form of snow, which makes it very cold. In human life, water has several uses; it is used for making tea and soup and for washing; and when in washing it is used with soap, it gets into the eyes, and makes them smart. Soap and water are used for making bubbles. To make bubbles you should melt some soap in the water, take a straw, and after dipping it in the mixture, blow very carefully. At the end of the straw will grow a big, pretty bubble of varied colors; and, breaking away from the straw it will fly through the air until it bursts. When it also used for washing clothes, wash-

ing the floors of rooms; and it gives you cold if you drink it when you are very hot. People also bathe in water and some are drowned. Thus we see that the Importance of Water in Nature and in Human Life is very great.

Elizabeth Plonoff.

Such was my composition. I confess that on reading it over I felt satisfied because I found that it was written quite in the style of the fourth class of the gymnasium, and not without knowledge of a child's psychology. I knew that soap bubbles are nearer to the interest of a twelve-year-old child than the commerce of the Phoenicians; and I had therefore dealt more with soap bubbles, than with the sea as a factor of culture. I did not attempt to show the superiority of wine over water, although I might have proved it brilliantly. I did not attempt to show how necessary it was in the interests of the revenue to place an excise duty on water—though why should I not have done so. I have seen it proved by men with highly developed feelings of patriotism! I had not said a word that a fourth class schoolgirl could not know, and it seemed to me that I had said everything she could know. What then did this respectable schoolmaster want?

Let him try himself to write a composition for a twelve-year-old schoolgirl; I should like to see him do it!

Why had he given my protegee a note? I felt aroused and insulted.

Anyone in my place would have felt the same, I believe. I decided to have it out with the schoolmaster.

I called on him and saw before me a long, skinny figure, closely resembling the letter "V" turned upside down.

"I beg to inform you," I began, "that I am the author of 'Water and Its Importance in Nature and Human Life' sent in by the fourth class pupil, Elizabeth Plonoff."

"Are you not ashamed to avow it?" he asked with scorn.

It is not about myself I came to talk—I want only to know why you gave Elizabeth no marks."

I felt sorry that I had come without arms. With what delight would I have sent a shot from a field-gun straight at the teacher.

"My good sir," I began peacefully. "You, it seems, are under the impression that a whole forest can grow up before there exists a single tree. You require from your pupil a clear exposition of the importance of water in nature, but do you not know that your pupil has no relations with nature at all, and can hardly have any idea of it. She lives in a nursery on the second floor of a big stone house, and from her apartment to nature there is a vast distance; because, as you must very well know, nature is rigorously excluded from well-built towns. Her own relatives have not troubled to introduce her to nature, and I assure you that she, Elizabeth Plonoff, would find it quite impossible to tell you where nature is, and what sort of thing she is."

"Indeed? That is all very strange. But what do you want?"

"Set Elizabeth another theme. I promise you I will not write the composition."

"Another theme? That I can do. Wait please."

"He took from his table a little book on the cover of which I read 'Paulson,' and began to turn over the leaves."

"Here we are! Let her write, 'The Sea and the Desert.'"

I looked at him kindly and imploringly.

"The Sea and the Desert," he repeated. "An admirable theme."

"But my dear sir! She has never seen the sea or been in the desert," I exclaimed in despair.

"Then she is a very backward girl. But try this: 'The Influence of Nature—'"

"Again, nature!"

"Yes, yes! Well, 'The Baltic Sea, Its Commercial, Economic, Cultural, and Political Aspects.'"

"She is not a merchant, or a politician; she is too young, she takes no interest in—"

"An impossibly backward girl. What more can I do? Suppose I suggest, 'What is there in Common between the Characters of Khelestakoff and Tehatsky?'"

Like most men I am kindly and humane up to a certain point. But, remember, I am not justifying myself—only confessing. I spanked the schoolmaster and left.

The Old Story.

"Jane not in bed at 11:30?"

"No."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She's setting up with a lovesick friend."—Louisville Courier Journal.

Defined.

So many men are tied to it

This simile it brings:

The ticker tape is nothing less

Than Fortune's apron strings.

Brooklyn Life.

Time Wasted.

Some men loaf till they grow old

And then they brag and blow

About the fortune they'd have made

Had they been along.

Beacon—"I see the proprietor of the railroad restaurant has just died."

Bygone—"Is that so? Who did he bump the sandwiches to?"

READ FROM THE EYES.

They Are Believed to Disclose the Character of the Owner.

Every feature of the human face is believed by some person or another to disclose the character of its owner. Perhaps the eyes are as trustworthy a guide in this respect as there is.

No two pairs of eyes are exactly alike, and it would be impossible to give any fixed set of rules for thus reading character. A person must rely upon his own judgment for that. Below, however, are given a few general hints on the subject.

Large, clear, blue eyes, usually denote sensibility of character, and a capacity and willingness for work. Their owner is also likely to be fond of enjoyment, jealous, and often inquisitive.

Round-eyed persons are not great thinkers. They are open-hearted, observant, and often inclined too much to luxury.

People with narrow eyes, see less think more, and feel with greater intensity.

Brown eyes denote a loving though judicious temperament.

Women with light brown eyes are fond of safety, shrewd, and often of a coquettish disposition.

Owners of deep-set eyes receive impressions accurately and definitely.

Great thinkers usually have had cold grey eyes, for grey is the color of shrewdness and talent. Eyes of this description generally denote better heads than hearts.

Green eyes occur more frequently in women than in men. They denote courage, energy and pride. Occasionally they accompany a jealous, vengeful disposition.

Black eyes are difficult to read. They often show a quick disposition, and sometimes are treacherous.

The Separate Blouse.

Since the separate blouse has more firmly than ever established itself in smart favor, no one can be found who will own up to having predicted that



THE SEPARATE BLOUSE.

this season would see it outside the pale of new modes. The lingerie blouse, however, seems to be giving way to quite as dainty models in soft silks, which, if not warmer, at least look more substantial than the sheer effects in linen, batiste and lawn.

Here is a ready made blouse that answers all purposes of dressy wear. It is made of figured China silk, of heavy quality, with trimmings of lace and narrow soutache braid stitched over coarse net. The lace is stitched upon the front of the waist in decorative design, then outlined with quarter-inch folds of soutache. The trimming extends along the line of the shoulder seams which are lost in a one-piece yoke and collar of sheer batiste stitched with silk braid. The Japanese effect appears in the sleeves which are outlined with lace and braid, with stitched or net between. These fall over under sleeves of the waist material, while the girle reproduces the effect of the Japanese sleeve.

Finer than China silk for dressy blouses is chiffon cloth which comes in a variety of figured designs as well as in plain colors. It is rich looking and requires but little trimming, if one wishes to economize, but with emplacements of braid, embroidery or lace, chiffon cloth is fashioned into a number of delicious blouses for theatre and dinner wear.

Removing a Tight Ring.

"Most girls in childhood have worn rings they have had trouble in removing from their fingers," said a jeweler, "and yet the removal of a tight ring is the simplest thing in the world, if you know how to get about it. If you try to remove a ring merely by pushing it up, the blood is forced from the lower part of the finger to the tip, thus causing it to swell. By winding thread around the finger the swelling is prevented and the operation is easy."

"You take a needle, flat in the eye, and thread it with strong but not too coarse thread. Then, very carefully, you pass the head of the needle under the ring in the direction of the wrist. By scooping the needle beforehand you facilitate matters, having done this you pull down a few inches of the thread and withdraw the empty needle—so."

"Now," said he, continuing, "wrap the long end of the thread round the finger toward the nail thus, then take the short end and unwind it—so. You see that the thread pressing as it does against the ring, cannot fall to gradually work it off, no matter how tight it may be."

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The line of demarcation is not closely drawn between the modes for young girls and their elders, and it is essential that such materials as cloth and velvet be built upon tailored models. An unusual number of pretty coats are shown this season, commanding rather more attention than skirts, although the latter are distinct because of their smart cut and perfect fit.

In the foreground is depicted a suit of very dark Nattier blue panne velvet, the coat having a vest of Oriental braid and stitching of silk braid of simpler design. From the waist line down to the hem the coat is open at the sides, with buttons and buttonholes so that the front and



COATS FOR GIRLS.

sides can be connected, if desired. The high inextensible collar is of the velvet faced with silk braid and finished with a little French tie of satin.

The second model is light tan cloth; looks remarkably well stitched with dark brown silk braids of different widths. The collar is of brown velvet outlined with braid and the entire coat is bordered with flat silk braid, as well. The buttons are of brown silk set in circles of dull gold.

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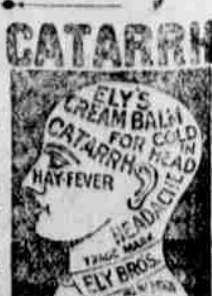
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