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R. L. Græme Ritchie and James M. Moore

Excerpt

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PASSAGES FOR TRANSLATION

* Easy.

** Moderately difficult.

*** Difficult.

**** Very difficult.

I. DESCRIPTIVE

1.** SUNRISE.

I must not close my letter without giving you one principal event of my history, which was that—in the course of my late tour—I set out one morning before five o'clock, the moon shining through a dark and misty autumnal air, and got to the sea-coast time enough to be at the sun's levee. I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoky wreaths, and the tide—as it flowed gently in upon the sands—first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness that—before I can write these five words—was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen. It is very odd it makes no figure on paper; yet I shall remember it as long as the sun, or at least as long as I can endure. I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before. I hardly believe it.

THOMAS GRAY, *Letters*.

2.** MORNING.

He got up presently, and stood quite motionless at the window, looking out.

His lamp was still burning, but for some time he had not been writing by the light of his lamp. Insensibly the day had come and abolished his need for that individual circle of yellow light. Colour had returned to the world, clean pearly colour, clear and definite like the glance of a child or the voice of a girl, and a golden wisp of cloud hung in the sky over the tower

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of the church. There was a mist upon the pond, a soft grey mist not a yard high. A covey of partridges ran and halted and ran again in the dewy grass outside his garden railings. The partridges were very numerous this year because there had been so little shooting. Beyond, in the meadow, a hare sat up as still as a stone. A horse neighed.

Wave after wave of warmth and light came sweeping before the sunrise across the world of Matching's Easy. It was as if there was nothing but morning and sunrise in the world.

From away towards the church came the sound of some early worker whetting a scythe.

H. G. WELLS, *Mr Britling sees it through*.

3.** THE CHANGING DAY.

Every morning as I awoke, I somehow felt the day coming to me like a new gilt-edged letter, with some unheard-of news awaiting me on the opening of the envelope. And, lest I should lose any fragment of it, I would hurry through my toilet to my chair outside. Every day there was the ebb and flow of the tide on the Ganges; the various gait of so many different boats; the shifting of the shadows of the trees from west to east; and, over the fringe of shade-patches of the woods on the opposite bank, the gush of golden life-blood through the pierced breast of the evening sky. Some days would be cloudy from early morning; the opposite woods black; black shadows moving over the river. Then with a rush would come the vociferous rain, blotting out the horizon; the dim line of the other bank taking its leave in tears: the river swelling with suppressed heavings; and the moist wind making free with the foliage of the trees overhead.

Sir RABINDRANATH TAGORE, *My Reminiscences*.

4.*** A NOVEMBER AFTERNOON.

A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Over-

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head the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

The heaven being spread with this pallid screen and the earth with the darkest vegetation, their meeting-line at the horizon was clearly marked. In such contrast the heath wore the appearance of an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come: darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky. Looking upwards, a furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home. The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter. The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread.

THOMAS HARDY, *The Return of the Native*.

5.** TWILIGHT.

The day had drawn to its close. The stars had not yet come, nor the moon. Far to the west a red cloud poised on the horizon like a great whale and, moment by moment, it paled and faded until it was no more than a pink flush. On high, clouds of pearl and snow piled and fell and sailed away on easy voyages. It was the twilight—a twilight of such quietude that one could hear the soft voice of the world as it whispered through leaf and twig. There was no breeze to swing the branches of the trees or to creep among the rank grasses and set them dancing, and yet everywhere there was unceasing movement and a sound that never ceased. About them, for mile upon mile, there was no habitation of man; there was no movement anywhere except when a bird dipped and soared in a hasty flight homewards, or when a beetle went slugging by like a tired bullet.

JAMES STEPHENS, *The Demi-Gods*.

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6.** A MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

With every step upward a greater mystery surrounded me. A few stars were out, and the brown night mist was creeping along the water below: but there was still light enough to see the road, and even to distinguish the bracken in the deserted hollows. The highway became little better than a lane: at the top of a hill it plunged under the tall pines, and was vaulted over with darkness. The kingdoms that have no walls, and are built up of shadows, began to oppress me as the night hardened. Had I had companions, still we would only have spoken in a whisper, and in that dungeon of trees, even my own self would not raise its voice within me.

It was full night when I had reached a vague clearing in the woods, right up on the height of that flat hill. This clearing was called "The Fountain of Magdalen." I was so far relieved by the broader sky of the open field that I could wait and rest a little and there, at last, separate from men, I thought of a thousand things.

HILAIRE BELLOC, *The Path to Rome*.

7.** A MIDSUMMER NIGHT (*continued*).

The air was full of midsummer, and its mixture of exaltation and fear cut me off from ordinary living. I now understood why our religion has made sacred this season of the year; why we have, a little later, the night of St John, the fires in the villages, and the old perception of fairies dancing in the rings of the summer grass. A general communion of all things conspires at this crisis of summer against us reasoning men that should live in the daylight, and something fantastic possesses those who are foolish enough to watch upon such nights.

So I, watching, was cut off. There were huge, vague summits, all wooded, peering above the field I sat in, but they merged into a confused horizon. I was on a high plateau, yet I felt myself to be alone with the immensity that properly belongs to plains alone. I saw the stars, and remembered how

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I had looked up at them on just such a night when I was close to the Pacific, bereft of friends and possessed with solitude. There was no noise; it was full darkness. The woods before and behind me made a square frame of silence, and I was enchased here in the clearing, thinking of all things.

HILAIRE BELLOC, *The Path to Rome*.

8.* A COLD NIGHT-JOURNEY.

The night and the snow came on together, and dismal enough they were. There was no sound to be heard but the howling of the wind, for the noise of the wheels and the tread of the horses' feet were rendered inaudible by the thick coating of snow which covered the earth, and was fast increasing every moment. The streets of Stamford were deserted as they passed through the town; and its old churches rose, frowning and dark, from the whitened ground. Twenty miles farther on, two of the front outside passengers, wisely availing themselves of their arrival at one of the best inns in England, turned in for the night at the 'George' at Grantham. The remainder wrapped themselves more closely in their coats and cloaks, and leaving the light and warmth of the town behind them, pillowed themselves against the luggage, and prepared, with many half-suppressed moans, again to encounter the piercing blast which swept across the open country.

CHARLES DICKENS, *Nicholas Nickleby*.

9.* THE SHAP GRADIENT.

They passed by Lancaster, skirting the sea on which the moon shone bright, setting the fishing-boats in silver as they lay scarcely moving on the waves. Then, so to speak, the train set its face up against Shap Fell, and, puffing heavily, drew up into the hills, the scattered grey stone houses of the north, flanked by their gnarled and twisted ash trees, hanging upon the edge of the streams, as lonely, and as cut off from the world (except the passing train) as they had been in Central Africa. The moorland roads, winding amongst the heather,

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showed that the feet of generations had marked them out, and not the line, spade and theodolite, with all the circumstance of modern road makers. They, too, looked white and unearthly in the moonlight, and now and then a sheep, aroused by the snorting of the train, moved from the heather into the middle of the road, and stood there motionless, its shadow filling the narrow track, and flickering on the heather at the edge.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM,
Scottish Stories (Beattock for Moffat).

10.*** THE EAST COAST OF SCOTLAND.

Nothing is wilder than the long stretch of sandy coast which runs from the East Neuk of Fife right up to Aberdeen.

Inland, the wind-swept fields, with their rough walls, without a kindly feel upon the top, as in the west, look grim and uninviting in their well-farmed ugliness.

The trees are low and stunted, and grow twisted by the prevailing fierce east winds, all to one side, just like the trees so often painted by the Japanese upon a fan.

The fields run down, until they lose themselves in sandy links, clothed with a growth of bent.

After the links, there intervenes a shingly beach, protected here and there by a low reef of rocks, all honeycombed and limpet-ridden, from which streamers of dulse float in the ceaseless surge.

Then comes the sea, grey, sullen, always on the watch to swallow up the fishermen, whose little brown-sailed boats seem to be scudding ceaselessly before the easterly haar towards some harbour's mouth.

Grey towns, with houses roofed with slabs of stone, cluster round little churches built so strongly that they have weathered reformations and the storms of centuries.

Grey sky, grey sullen sea, grey rocks, and a keen whistling wind that blows from the North Sea, which seems to turn the very air a steely grey, have given to the land a look of hardness not to be equalled upon earth.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, *Scottish Stories (A Princess).*

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11.* AN ORKNEY SEASCAPE.

From the top of Wideford Hill nearly all the islands may be seen ; and no one who goes there on a clear day will hesitate to admit that the scene before him, looking seaward, is one of exquisite beauty. In calm weather the sea, land-locked by the islands, resembles a vast lake, clear and bright as a mirror, and without a ripple save from the gentle impulse of the tide. Here a bluff headland stands out in bold relief against the horizon, there the more distant islet is almost lost in sea and sky ; on one side a shelving rock sends out a black tongue-like point, sharp as a needle, losing itself in the water where it forms one of those reefs so fatal to strangers, but which every Orkney boatman knows as we do the streets of our native town.

Dr JOHN KERR, *Memories Grave and Gay*.

12.** WOLF'S CRAG.

The roar of the sea had long announced their approach to the cliffs, on the summit of which, like the nest of some sea-eagle, the founder of the fortalice had perched his eyry. The pale moon, which had hitherto been contending with flitting clouds, now shone out, and gave them a view of the solitary and naked tower, situated on a projecting cliff that beetled on the German Ocean.

On three sides the rock was precipitous ; on the fourth, which was that towards the land, it had been originally fenced by an artificial ditch and drawbridge, but the latter was broken down and ruinous, and the former had been in part filled up, so as to allow passage for a horseman into the narrow courtyard, encircled on two sides with low offices and stables, partly ruinous, and closed on the landward front by a low embattled wall, while the remaining side of the quadrangle was occupied by the tower itself, which, tall and narrow, and built of a greyish stone, stood glimmering in the moonlight, like the sheeted spectre of some huge giant.

A wilder or more disconsolate dwelling, it was perhaps

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difficult to conceive. The sombrous and heavy sound of the billows, successively dashing against the rocky beach at a profound distance beneath, was to the ear what the landscape was to the eye—a symbol of unvaried and monotonous melancholy, not unmingled with horror.

Sir WALTER SCOTT, *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

13.* THE BREAKING OF THE STORM.

The crags which rose between the beach and the mainland, to the height of two or three hundred feet, afforded in their crevices shelter for unnumbered sea-fowl, in situations seemingly secured by their dizzy height from the rapacity of man. Many of these wild tribes, with the instinct which sends them to seek the land before a storm arises, were now winging towards their nests with the shrill and dissonant clang which announces disquietude and fear.

The disk of the sun became almost totally obscured ere he had altogether sunk below the horizon, and an early and lurid shade of darkness blotted the serene twilight of a summer evening. The wind began next to arise; but its wild and moaning sound was heard for some time, and its effects became visible on the bosom of the sea, before the gale was felt on shore. The mass of waters, now dark and threatening, began to lift itself in larger ridges, and sink in deeper furrows, forming waves that rose high in foam upon the breakers, or burst upon the beach with a sound resembling distant thunder.

Sir WALTER SCOTT, *The Antiquary*.

14.* A LONELY BOAT.

In returning from a cruise to the English coast, you see often enough a fisherman's humble boat far away from all shores, with an ugly black sky above, and an angry sea beneath; you watch the grisly old man at the helm carrying his craft with strange skill through the turmoil of waters, and the boy, supple-limbed, yet weather-worn already, and with

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steady eyes that look through the blast ; you see him understanding commandments from the jerk of his father's white eyebrow....Stale enough is the sight, and yet when I see it I always stare anew, because that a poor boat, with the brain of a man and the hands of a boy on board, can match herself so bravely against black Heaven and Ocean.

Well, so when you have travelled for days and days over an Eastern Desert without meeting the likeness of a human being, and then at last see an Englishman and his servant come listlessly slouching along from out the forward horizon, you stare at the wide unproportion between this slender company and the boundless plains of sand through which they are keeping their way.

A. W. KINGLAKE, *Eothen*.

15.*** THE 'MERRY MEN.'

The night, though we were so little past midsummer, was as dark as January. Intervals of a groping twilight alternated with spells of utter blackness ; and it was impossible to trace the reason of these changes in the flying horror of the sky. The wind blew the breath out of a man's nostrils ; all heaven seemed to thunder overhead like one huge sail ; and when there fell a momentary lull on Aros, we could hear the gusts dismally sweeping in the distance.

Over all the lowlands of the Ross, the wind must have blown as fierce as on the open sea ; and God only knows the uproar that was raging around the head of Ben Kyaw. Sheets of mingled spray and rain were driven in our faces. All round the isle of Aros the surf, with an incessant, hammering thunder, beat upon the reefs and beaches. Now louder in one place, now lower in another, like the combinations of orchestral music, the constant mass of sound was hardly varied for a moment. And loud above all this hurly-burly I could hear the changeful voices of the Roost and the intermittent roaring of the Merry Men.

At that hour, there flashed into my mind the reason of the name that they were called. For the noise of them seemed

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almost mirthful, as it out-topped the other noises of the night; or if not mirthful, yet instinct with a portentous joviality. Nay, and it seemed even human. As when savage men have drunk away their reason, and, discarding speech, bawl together in their madness by the hour; so, to my ears, these deadly breakers shouted by Aros in the night.

R. L. STEVENSON, *The Merry Men*.

16.** THE STORM AT YARMOUTH.

The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me.

As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.

CHARLES DICKENS, *David Copperfield*.

17.** THE SHIPWRECK AT YARMOUTH.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so