

R.R.S. DALLAWAY by Virginia Woolf. Mrs. Dalloway said she would find the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued from heaven on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than all these courses of the sea, was the air in the early morning; like the flap of a vailing; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and wet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was)—solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees above the smoke winding off them and the roofs rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?"—"was that it?—"I prefer men to cauliflowers"—"was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace it was—Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished—how strange it was!—a few sayings like this about cabbages. She stiffened a little on the kerb, waiting for Durtall's van to pass. A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the blue eye, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright. For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. Thirst! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leader climbed dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest trumps, the most dejected of miseries can be hatched out of it. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June. The King and Queen were at the Palace. And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air, whirling, as the day wore on, would unwind them, and set down on their lawns and pitches the bounding ponies, whose forefeet just struck the ground and up they sprung, the whirling young men, and laughing girls in their transparent muslins who, even now, after dancing all night, were taking their absurd wootly dogs for a run; and even now, at this hour, discreet old dowagers were shooting out in their motor cars on errands of mystery; and the shopkeepers were fidgeting in their windows with their paste and diamonds, their lovely old sea-green brooches in evidence, very nearly to kindle and illuminate; to give her party, But how strange, on entering the Park, the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks; the pouched birds waddling; and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms, who but Hugh Whitbread? Her old friend Hugh—the admirable Hugh! "Good-morning to you, Clarissa!" said Hugh, rather extravagantly, for they had known each other as children. "Where are you off to?" "I love walking in London," said Mrs. Dalloway. "Really it's better than walking in the country." They had just come up—unfortunately—to see doctors. Other people came to see pictures; go to the opera; take their daughters out; the Whitbreads came "to see doctors." Times without number Clarissa had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home. Was Evelyn ill again? Evelyn was a good deal out of sorts, said Hugh, intimating by a kind of pout or swell of his very well-covered, manly, extremely handsome, perfectly upholstered body (he was almost too well dressed always, but presumably had to be, with his little hat at Court) that his wife had some internal ailment, nothing serious, which, as an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway would rather understand without requiring him to specify. Ah yes, she did of course; what a nuisance; and felt very sisterly and obliging, but not presuming at the same time with her life hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? For Hugh always made her feel, as he hustled on, raising his hat quite extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen, and of course he was coming to her party to-night, Evelyn absolutely insisted, only a little late he might be after the party at the Palace to which he had to take one of Jim's boys,—she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish; but attached to him, partly from having known him always, but she did think him a good sort in his own way, though Richard was nearly driven mad by him, and as for Peter Walsh, he had never to this day forgiven her for I don't know what. She could remember scene after scene at Bourton—Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block. When his old mother wanted him to give up shooting or to take her to Bath he did it, without a word; he was really unselfish, and as for saying, as Peter did, that he was able; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning in Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all that. For now it suddenly it would come over her, if he were with her now, which perhaps was the reward of having cared for people ever beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink—Peter never saw a thing of the kind that interested him; Wagner's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded the perfect hostess he called her (She had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said. So she had too—not to marry him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together his morning for instance? Some committee, she never asked what. But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. A had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her moment when someone told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! Never should she forget all that! Poor Indian women did presumably—silly, pretty, filthy pink pompoos. And she wasted her pity. For he was quite happy, he assured her—perfectly free. It made her angry still. She had reached the Park gates. She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly. She would no the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense of the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had felt it. She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her it was absolutely absorbing. I am this, I am that. Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. If you put her in a room with some one, up we china cocktail, she had seen them all lit up once; and remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton—such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and thence throwing a shilling into the Serpentine. But every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab, must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolute, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bite in the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But what cover? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open: Fear no more the heat o' the sun Nor the furious winter's rags! Tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing. Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, L Scapy Sponge and Mrs. Asquith's Memoirs and Big Game Shooting in Nigeria, all spread open. Ever so many books there were; but none that seemed to amuse her and make that indescribably dried-up little woman look, as Clarissa came in, just for a moment cordial; before they settled down to should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought and turned and walked back towards Bond Street, annoyed, because it was silly to have her hard for no one was doing for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people (d) for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked it in a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a row-boat stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's. That she held herself well was true; and had nice hands and feet; and dressed well, in a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; hing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dallos flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an ic d, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop where, before the War, you could buy almost perfect gloves. And her old Uncle William used to say a in the middle of the War. He had said, "I have had enough." Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not hop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party. Elizabeth really cared for her dog most of all. The whole house this morning smelt of tar. Still, bett n sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book! Better anything, she was inclined to say. But it might be only a phase, as Richard said, such as all girl badly treated of course; one must make allowances for that, and Richard said she was very able, had a really historical mind. Anyhow they were inseparable, w she treated people who came to lunch she did not care a bit, it being her experience that the religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes); dulled t lf for the Austrians, but in private inflicted positive torture, so insensitive was she, dressed in a green mackintosh coat. Year in year out she wore that coat; sh superiority, your inferiority; how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all he the War—poor embittered unfortunate creature! For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice, man! But not in this world. No. It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves plowed down in quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole pan chier to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry's the florists. She advanced, light, tall, very upright, to be greeted at once by button-faced ood in cold water with the flowers. There were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac, and carnations, masses of carnations. There were roses; t as she stood talking to Miss Pym who owed her help, and thought her kind, for kind she had been years ago; very kind, but she looked older, this year, turne l ac with her eyes half closed, snuffing in, after the street uproar, the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness. And then, opening her eyes, how fresh like trillie pri in the red carnations, holding their heads up; and all the sweet peas spreading in their bowls, tinged violet, snow white, pale—as if it were the evening and g mmer's day, with its almost black-black sky, its delphiniums, its carnations, its arum lilies was over; and it was the moment between six and seven when every fl very flower seems to burn by itself, softly, purely in the misty beds; and how she loved the grey-white moths spinning in and out, over the cherry pie, over the choosing, nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, wer er, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when—oh! a pistol shot in the street outside! "Dear, those motor cars," said Miss Pym, going to the window to l weet peas, as if those motor cars, those tyres of motor cars, were all HER fault. The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to th drew of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by, who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a band of the very gre draw the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey. Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxfo d invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second d them with her wing; they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes banded tight and her lips gaping wide. But nobody kn e Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew. Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, said audibly, humorously of course: "and himself unable to pass, heard him. Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel ey complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend? Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded he sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; her alloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Bo motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his ey about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being lo vement, for a purpose? But for what purpose? "Let us go on, Septimus," said his wife, a little woman, with large eyes in a saloon pointed face; an Italian girl. But Lucrezia hers blinds. Was it the Queen in there—the Queen going shopping? The chauffeur, who had been opening something, turning something, shutting something, got on to the box ur, five years now, jumped, started, and said, "All right!" angrily, as if she had interrupted him. People must notice; people must see. People, she thought, looking at the cro ur, his horses and their clothes, which she admired in a way; but they were "people" now, because Septimus had said, "I will kill myself"; an awful thing to say. Suppose th y out to butchers' boys and women. Help! Only last autumn she and Septimus had stood on the Embankment wrapped in the same cloak and, Septimus reading a pal d man's face who saw them! But failure one conceals. She must take him away into some park. "Now we will cross," she said. She had a right to his arm, though it ve, only twenty-four, without friends