

In the first decades of our century, Gyula Krudy, the Hungarian writer, resurrected Sindbad, the hero of the One Thousand and One Nights. He did this in an extraordinary way. The Hungarian Sindbad became a middle class country man. His lifestyle condensed real and aspired attitudes existed on a country-wide scale in cities and villages. His daily behavior had many real variants also... However, the behavior of Sindbad and his contemporaries contains some enigmatic elements. How did they transform the Death, the Passage of Time, the destructive corrosion of old age into serene, gentle phenomena? How did they transform the Life itself into poesy?... Through the description of Sindbad's behavior this lyrical essay unfolds some secrets of a curious generation.

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He loved the lies, the false things, the delusions, the fantasies...

Sindbad, the Sailor of the Dreams

In the autumn wind, Sindbad liked to visit those of his sweethearts he had abandoned; the faded and dreamy ladies whom time had irrevocably passed by. He found them still suffering the lies, deceptions, and delusions that built nests in their years of tedium. . . They still believe deeply in the fine, false flattery of their knights of mist, the honey-sweet words of cavaliers with cello voices who then abandoned them. Only they feel truly how much sorrow the world heaps on human beings, when brooding over their cheerless lives they commence quiet prayers, or when hiding their faces behind blue veils they fall into the fast-flowing rivers. Fallen, faded beauties are all of them, the suicidal girls resting alongside sandy river banks, the deceived ladies crying softly in the November rain, and the aging women who wait for their swains shamefacedly behind the curtains of hackney-cabs on cold winter evenings. They thirsted for a life loomed from dreams and poesy, small magics of sweet sentences, gentle music of soothing and stroking words... "And yet would dreaming be worthwhile if all dreams came true?" sighed Sindbad, who often thought about the yearnings of his sweethearts before abandoning them. For him the ladies had been the dearest incompetents of world - except, perhaps, of one, Mrs. Happyvillager, the Lady from a small country inn who herself whispered cheerful lies into the ears of the dumbfounded sailor while sitting on an aged sofa.

One should not suffer from lies, but should love them for their beauties, funs, and charms when lies deepen fables and secrets. (1). Sindbad loved lies very much. Perhaps the loveliest memories of his life were those moments, when, in the moonlight, kneeling by the walls of village churches, he made tender vows to his moony sweethearts. Sighs lighted up joyless eyes, bows filled up tired souls with vibrating, soft melodies such nights, and in the snuggling close of the feminine shoulders a real poetry evoked. Ribbons fluttered in the night wind on hems of silk blouses while the amorous women were immersed in the enchantment of the dream... From dreams, delusions, and lovely follies the sailor fashioned a consoling, colored world, and shared it with everyone. He longed for nothing more, though he lived a long life, and travelled to distant lands. The Esoteric, the Unimaginable, the Dreamlike Beauties he sought everywhere: in the colors of red wines, in the chirping of crickets on mild summer evenings, and in the enigmatic sorrow of sumac trees. Solely the beauties he sensed in the infinitely vary events of world: whatever around him was ridiculous, grotesque, repulsive and ugly, that all fell through the sieve of his impressions.

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Sindbad roamed the world in deep humility, because he felt himself to be very wee. He felt that everything is inexplicably mysterious, as the eternal reviving of nature, or the continuous changes of seasons and weathers (2). On blue winter evenings he was amazed the crows flew to and fro above the church steeple. Walking through fragrant forests, on the kisses he meditated. He travelled the Carpathian towery villages, the Transdanubian ruinous castles, the Meadowlands graveyards overrun with ivies, and never failed to take a close look at everything. He sailed down sometimes on windswept, zigzagged streets, and for a long time he watched how the dead leaves flew up from the deserted tables of garden pubs. At the Russian border, he wondered at the flavors of Roast Pheasant stuffed with sweet chestnuts. However, heavily engrossed in all small experiences, he never recognized any natural or social rules of surroundings.

Sindbad did not even guess that there are moral laws governing the world. His heart sunk as women pondered the rightness of their behavior in the darkness of raspberry-colored saloons; but he did not understand them, not even for a moment. He always acted in one way only: he did whatever delighted him. If the freshly fallen snow made him hungry, he hastened to the nearest inn to spend an afternoon in the company of delicious Roast Games. If the breeze brought him the smell of overripe grapes, he went immediately to the nearby village to help the harvest. When he longed for the tales of faded women perfumed with chrysanthemum smell, he went straight to their houses, knocked the door, and after some stories got asleep quietly on silk settees... In his long life he tasted everything. He was oneiromancer, preciaux goldsmith, rigorous keeper of ruinous windmills, counterfeiter with a sinister visage, obdurate abductor of women, and quiet, honored, home-lover family man. He was immeasurably rich and humiliated, forlorn, penniless poor man. He had seen death, he had seen birth, he had been to weddings, and witnessed revolting murders in autumnal forests. And for all that : at his 120 years of age, when as a sweet-smelling old cavalier he lived in a natty village, he still listened fully uncomprehending to his housemaid, who, at vespers, always exhorted him to lead an honest, moral, and right comportment.

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Sindbad spent many afternoons sitting in small, golden patisseries redolent of vanilla. He would gaze at the brown photographs that covered the walls, the tobacco-colored curtains, the beribboned shoes of the women, and the tiny medallion that quivered on the neck of the confectioner's wife. The Fineries, the Ornamented Coatings of life delighted him deeper than anything (3). With heart throbbing in throat from delight he sailed along the sunny streets, in the flowery spring, when women donned freshly tailored, brand-new, light dresses. Thirstily he listened to french-parfumed blouses of the young women, the pompous peacock feathers of the dames, the green skirts of travelling women, the pearl cufflinks of impoverished countesses, and the delicate hands of abbesses that hid tiny rings. He liked to assort sometimes his love tokens: ribbons, small silver cases, tiny jewel boxes, old-fashioned portraits, and dried leaves kept as memento. And liked to travel to distant cities where he could still remember a silk bow, a lace handkerchief, a perfume, or even only a sigh.

But perhaps more than anything, he loved to mingle in the world. To be caught up in the whirls of balls, the hilarities of brilliant bridal, or the deep gloominess of burial processions. To kneel quietly in the churches when organs were pealing, or to sing serenades with young people in sweet-smelling spring nights. To hide among the forest trees in way of May breezes, and to arrive with fresh June showers to his fading sweethearts. Suddenly to vanish amid the bloody, late October tree leaves, and emerge much later, and almost imperceptibly, in pious orisons of some young nuns... Sometimes he became mistletoe, sometimes a bronze comb in the hair of a young girl, sometimes a rose petal driven by the wind. Life resplendent with impossible colors, the holy and unfathomable life, buried him in itself as though he were an Oriental Prince in the bejeweled, enigmatic, Arabian Nights.

NOTES:

(1) Many contemporary gentlefolks suffered from the deceptions and lies that enmeshed their life, until they learned to see the poetry hidden in them. The world is slowly rearranging in lies, while moods, melodies, colors come to life, and tiny magic circles emerge of the elements of reality. Experiences with an unfamiliar savor captivate the mendacious if they fall into the enchantment of falsehood to enrich their beings. Secret delights, the intimacy of fables... Surely the human being can find beautiful what otherwise he doesn't consider to be true.

(2) Many systems of philosophy judge the external world as immeasurable and unfathomable, and considers man to be tragically defenceless, infinitely frail and fallible. Beginning with Schopenhauer's philosophy to Kafka's novels and short stories, a long line of fictional characters and real people acted out these feelings and suffered sadly. Sindbad, however, was more likely to be delighted by the mystery of the world, and its boundless complexity. It brought him a multitude of colorful events, in which he took zestful delight. Even the puniness and weakness of human beings did not distress him, rather they opened the forgotten pristine eyes of a child which can gaze in quiet wonder at the myriad motifs and moments that make up life.

(3) And this kept him from thorough experiencing of another negative phenomena of world... At deceases Sindbad was involuntary lost in the exterior details, tones, moods, emotional vibrations, strange intonations, sad colors, and many other small, isolated elements He felt the death as a source of melancholic joys. and remained impervious to its power to afflict men. The traditional human perception of time also dissolved in his mind. Living in the constant ecstasy of joys, he often had no idea of the mechanical passing of everyday time. If the towerclock chimed twelve times at noon, if grey hair appeared at the sailor's temples. if charmy young girls aged around him, he apprehended poesy and elegiac moods only even in such events - and not of upsetting signs of passage of tome on mortal men. In this way Sindbad developed slowly and quietly into a man of magical power. A man whose attitude transformed even grievously anti-human powers into charming and quiet phenomena. A man to whom the death, the passing of time, the aging, the insignificance and mediocrity of human beings never caused woes or suffering, not even a thrill.