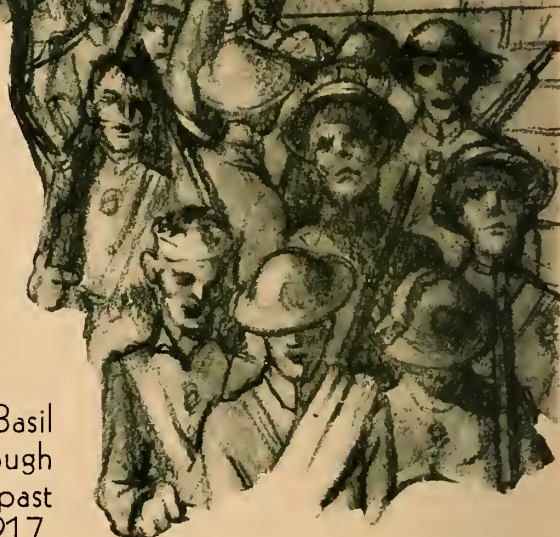


# PARADE of SHADOWS



by

*Basil Rathbone*



The author of this distinguished story as he appears in "Anna Karenina"

A NEW DAY is dawning, and a great stillness, as if the whole world had suddenly stopped breathing, awaits her coming. A clinging mist from the canal shrouds the sleeping town of Merville, France. An outer door bangs and footsteps echo down the empty cobble-stone streets. Slowly the Eastern sky pales in anticipation and then, ruby-lipped, rises to greet the dawn. The tall Flemish poplars sway gently. The early morning breeze softly chases the cold mist to her bed in the river, while birds circle joyously against an opal heaven.

Quite suddenly the dawn gives birth to day. Brightly colored shutters are flung back by sleepy-eyed townfolk. A tumbrel filled with turnips clatters down the main street. Our soldiers begin to busy themselves about their morning duties. Soon the whole town is astir. Civilians hurry through the narrow streets to open shops and offices.

A handful of speculators waits patiently until midday brings the inevitable rush of uniformed men, tired and thirsty after their morning's work on parade. While tillers of the soil long since have made their way to where fields of wheat stand ripening in the sun. Here, out in the country, a warm breeze carries to the passer-by a delicious odor of mellowing fruits and crops. In cottage gardens ripe plums and apples nod carelessly. Down a dusty road comes a troop of cavalry at the trot. Three or four heavy motor lorries rumble lazily after them, followed by a significant fleet of swift

Eighteen years later Basil Rathbone looks through the window of the past upon a day in July, 1917, when the Horsemen of Death rode the world

light cars with red crosses painted on their sides.

● THE SUN bears on its course. The afternoon passes heavily. The Evening Star, forerunner to the night, signals the day to rest. The Angelus is heard. Twilight—the streets resound with a strange medley of music—old pianos, gramophones, male voices, rising and falling unevenly on the still evening air—from well-filled cafés.

The tired day blushes to meet the night and lingers a brief while to look back with passionate longing as its lengthening shadows cover the sad earth. The river mirrors their embrace. The mist rouses itself from lethargy and, creeping through the silent town, tenderly enfolds the darkened streets.

A week passes. Each sweet soft night of sleep is balm to our hurt minds. Each day I dream and lovingly turn back the pages of my life and look longingly into the past. There is no future for us now; only a present and

a past. Tick-tick-tick-tick—the second, minutes, hours creep by until the dawn of the last day of our time "on rest" colors the little piece of sky that I lie watching through my bedroom window. In an adjoining room I hear the heavy breathing of the two young subalterns who have recently joined our battalion. They have been with us for a week, and tonight they will go with us, back "into the line." Our losses were severe "last time up." Captain Hilliard, myself and eight men were all of "D" Company that returned. The two newcomers knew nothing of our losses, and so they ate like horses, and slept like children.

Away in the distance I hear the intermittent rumble of heavy artillery. After a few minutes, it  
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**Parade of Shadows**

(Continued from page thirty-two)

stops and there is no sound but the faint murmur of approaching day, and the heavy breathing of the young subalterns.

● A Cock crows in the yard outside, and is answered a moment later by the ruler of the some other roosts not far distant. Someone moves in the room above me; a dull indeterminate sound. I am reminded of my school days when, waking early, I would hear the maid rising and a cold fear—a presentiment of imminent danger would creep over me. I always knew when there was trouble in store for me at school, even before I had committed the fault for which I was eventually punished.

On Sundays at home the maid slept late and it was my mother whom I would hear moving early. On these cold dark winter mornings I would lie in bed and think how good it was to be so still and safe, while my mother and sister went out into the raw damp air to take the Holy Sacrament at St. Luke's Church.

My mother's room was next to mine. My sister's at the end of the house, and my brother's upstairs, above my mother's and overlooking the garden—the garden, with its high red brick wall covered with soft moss, ivy and rambler roses—the garden where, under a shady old elm tree, we had read Grimm's Fairy Tales when we were children—the garden where, every spring, snowdrops, crocuses, bluebells and violets contested for supremacy; where hollyhocks and sunflowers, geraniums and daisies all slept so peacefully on warm summer nights; where "Rags," our fox terror, ineffectually chased lawless sparrows and stray blackbirds when they visited us after soft rains had made our lawn a happy hunting-ground.

● MY BROTHER'S room, like mine, is now empty—empty but for its memories, and he will not come back to it. On his bed sits a legless brown toy horse and a white toy monkey with only one eye—the other eye, a boot-button, had been lost and never replaced. As a child he had loved these toys dearly, and now they sit on his bed, waiting. Through days and nights, for weeks and months

they sit waiting. But he will not come back. I had told them so when I was last home on leave—but they did not believe me and still continue to wait for their master.

In the closet in my brother's room there hangs several suits of his clothes, a heavy top coat—an old hat lies on a shelf, and an odd assortment of boots and shoes are neatly arranged in a corner. My mother is the epitome of tidiness, and she keeps my brother's room spotless and just as he had left it.

I had spent much time alone with my mother on my last leave. Like two people in a dream, we had talked of my brother, my mother and I. Like strangers, we were over polite to one another, over considerate of each other's feelings, and neither of us knew, or dared to ask, how deep was the pain of our individual and unspeakable loneliness for him.

Once more the rumble of heavy artillery. I listen for awhile, a little apprehensive. Is it our guns or theirs?

"Mother—mother darling, can you hear me?" I whisper "Listen, my darling, I want to be a little boy again and forget all this—just for a moment I want us all to be as we were. I want to think with my whole being of tea in the garden on Sundays in summer. Of the woods at Easter so full of flowers, and you, of them all, sweeter and more tender than any. Of cold nights in winter when you used to light the fire in my room, turn out the lights and sit on my bed and talk until sleep came to me. Oh mother darling I love you terribly, so terribly—"

● THERE IS a knock at the door. I hide my head beneath my army blanket. My servant comes in with my riding boots and a cup of tea which he places beside my bed.

"Six-thirty, sir," he says.

"I make a movement to denote that I hear him. When he goes I cry without restraint, until slowly, almost imperceptibly a great peacefulness comes to me. And yet—I know that I shall never see my mother again. She died suddenly a few days later.

**Cantor vs. Cagney—It's to the Death!**

(Continued from page thirty)

● CANTOR SIGHED, then turned toward the door of his bungalow office, where his daughter Marjorie was hammering a typewriter, and yelled:

"Marjorie!"

The dark and pretty Marjorie entered, smiling.

"Yes, Dad?" she questioned.

"How many pictures of Cagney are there in our house?" he demanded.

"Each of the girls have one, except Janet, and she doesn't like him—"

"Good," snapped Cantor, "Remind me to buy Janet a nice present. So there are FOUR pictures of Cagney, yes?"

"No," corrected Marjorie. "There are FIVE. I got a new one this morning and hung it over your desk—"

"FIVE, HUH?"

"Five at home, and the two I just hung up here in the office—"

Cantor RAN out of the room into the office, to see for himself.

During his brief absence Marjorie confided that little Janet has "a terrible crush on Crosby and is ever so sorry that Daddy can't sing like Bing."

"And Janet knows all THAT guy's songs, and sings 'em," said the belligerent Cantor, "But she doesn't know one of mine—NOT ONE! And I was plugging songs when Crosby was—well, doing whatever Crosby was doing when I was plugging songs. But it's this Cagney guy that's the bane of my existence. He's all I hear at home.

"Can you blame me for planning his assassination?"

● MARJORIE HAD returned to her typewriter, and while on the subject of his children, we asked Eddie to tell

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