

OSCAR WILDE (attr.)
(1854-1900)

The Reverse of the Medal

Oscar Wilde, the author of one of the finest comedies in the language, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, was at the height of his fame sentenced to two years' hard labour for homosexual practices. *Teleny*, or *The Reverse of the Medal*, issued in a private edition of two hundred copies in 1893, has often been attributed to him. It tells the story of a young man, Camille des Grioux, and his hopeless adoration for René Teleny, a pianist. The first volume of the book is almost entirely heterosexual in tone; the second volume almost entirely homosexual. The style certainly occasionally recalls Wilde, as does the melodramatic conclusion of the book. In the following scene des Grioux, driven to desperation by a love he thinks cannot be returned, finds himself on one of the London bridges, and is about to throw himself into the Thames when Teleny appears out of the darkness to stop him.

'Leave me alone! Why did you not let me die? This world is hateful to me, why should I drag on a life I loathe?'

'Why? For my sake.' Thereupon he whispered softly, in that unknown tongue of his, some magic words which seemed to sink into my soul. Then he added, 'Nature has formed us for each other; why withstand her? I can only find happiness in your love, and yours alone; it is not only my heart but my soul that panteth for yours.'

With an effort of my whole being I pushed him away from me, and staggered back.

'No, no!' I cried, 'do not tempt me beyond my strength; let me rather die.'

'Thy will be done, but we shall die together, so that at least in death we may not be parted. There is an afterlife; we may then, at least, cleave to one another like Dante's Francesca and her lover Paulò. Here,' said he, unwinding a silken scarf that he wore round his waist, 'let us bind ourselves closely together, and leap into the flood.'

I looked at him, and shuddered. So young, so beautiful, and I was thus to murder him! The vision of Antinous as I had seen it the first

from *Teleny*

time he played appeared before me.

He had tied the scarf tightly round his waist, and he was about to pass it round me.

'Come.'

The die was cast. I had not the right to accept such a sacrifice from him.

'No,' quoth I, 'let us live.'

'Live,' added he, 'and then?'

He did not speak for some moments, as if waiting for a reply to that question which had not been framed in words. In answer to his mute appeal I stretched out my hands towards him. He – as if frightened that I should escape him – hugged me tightly with all the strength of irrepressible desire.

'I love you!' he whispered, 'I love you madly! I cannot live without you any longer.'

'Nor can I,' said I faintly; 'I have struggled against my passion in vain, and now I yield to it, not tamely, but eagerly, gladly. I am yours, Teleny! Happy to be yours, yours for ever and yours alone!'

For all answer there was a stifled hoarse cry from his innermost breast; his eyes were lighted up with a flash of fire; his craving amounted to rage; it was that of a wild beast seizing his prey; that of the lonely male finding at last a mate. Still his intense eagerness was more than that; it was also a soul issuing forth to meet another soul. It was a longing of the senses, and a mad intoxication of the brain.

Could this burning, unquenchable fire that consumed our bodies be called lust? We clung as hungrily to one another as the famished animal does when it fastens on the food it devours; and as we kissed each other with ever-increasing greed, my fingers were feeling his curly hair, or paddling the soft skin of his neck. Our legs being clasped together, his phallus, in strong erection, was rubbing against mine no less stiff and stark. We were, however, always shifting our position, so as to get every part of our bodies in as close contact as possible; and thus feeling, clasping, hugging, kissing, and biting each other, we must have looked, on that bridge amid the thickening fog, like two damned souls suffering eternal torment.

The hand of Time had stopped; and I think we should have continued goading each other in our mad desire until we had quite lost our senses – for we were both on the verge of madness – had we not been stopped by a trifling incident.

A belated cab – wearied by the day's toil – was slowly trudging its way homeward. The driver was sleeping on his box; the poor, broken-down jade, with its head drooping almost between its knees, was likewise slumbering – dreaming, perhaps, of unbroken rest, of new-mown hay, of the fresh and flowery pastures of its youth; even the slow rumbling of the wheels had a sleepy, purring, snoring sound in its irksome sameness.

'Come home with me,' said Teleny, in a low, nervous and trembling voice; 'come and sleep with me,' added he, in the soft, hushed and pleading tone of the lover who would fain be understood without words.

I pressed his hands for all answer.

'Will you come?'

'Yes,' I whispered, almost inaudibly.

This low, hardly-articulate sound was the hot breath of vehement desire; this lisped monosyllable was the willing consent to his eagerest wish.

Then he hailed the passing cab, but it was some moments before the driver could be awakened and made to understand what was wanted of him.

As I stepped in the vehicle, my first thought was that in a few minutes Teleny would belong to me. This thought acted upon my nerves as an electric current, making me shiver from head to foot.

My lips had to articulate the words 'Teleny will be mine,' for me to believe it. He seemed to hear the noiseless murmur of my lips, for he clasped my head between his hands, and kissed me again and again.

Then, as if feeling a pang of remorse – 'You do not repent, do you?' he asked.

'How can I?'

'And you will be mine – mine alone?'

'I never was any other man's, nor ever shall be.'

'You will love me for ever?'

'And ever.'

'This will be our oath and our act of possession,' added he.

Thereupon he put his arms around me and clasped me to his breast. I entwined my arms round him. By the glimmering, dim light of the cab-lamps I saw his eyes kindle with the fire of madness. His lips – parched with the thirst of long-suppressed desire, of the

pent-up craving of possession – pouted towards mine with a painful expression of dull suffering. We were again sucking up each other's being in a kiss – a kiss more intense, if possible, than the former one. What a kiss that was!

The flesh, the blood, the brain, and that undefined subtler part of our being seemed all to melt together in an ineffable embrace.

A kiss is something more than the first sensual contact of two bodies; it is the breathing forth of two enamoured souls.

But a criminal kiss long withstood and fought against, and therefore long yearned after, is beyond this; it is as luscious as forbidden fruit; it is a glowing coal set upon the lips; a fiery brand that burns deep, and changes the blood into molten lead or scalding quicksilver.

Teleny's kiss was really galvanic, for I could taste its sapidity upon my palate. Was an oath needed, when we had given ourselves to one another with such a kiss? An oath is a lip-promise which can be, and is, often forgotten. Such a kiss follows you to the grave.

Whilst our lips clung together, his hand slowly, imperceptibly, unbuttoned my trousers, and stealthily slipped within the aperture, turning every obstacle in its way instinctively aside, then it lay hold of my hard, stiff, and aching phallus which was glowing like a burning coal.

This grasp was as soft as a child's, as expert as a whore's, as strong as a fencer's. . . .

Some people, as we all know, are more magnetic than others. Moreover, while some attract, others repel us. Teleny had – for me, at least – a supple, mesmeric, pleasure-giving fluid in his fingers. Nay, the simple contact of his skin thrilled me with delight.

My own hand hesitatingly followed the lead his hand had given, and I must confess the pleasure I felt in paddling him was really delightful.

Our fingers hardly moved the skin of the penis; but our nerves were so strained, our excitement had reached such a pitch, and the seminal ducts were so full, that we felt them overflowing. There was, for a moment, an intense pain, somewhere about the root of the penis – or rather, within the very core and centre of the reins, after which the sap of life began to move slowly, slowly, from within the seminal glands; it mounted up the bulb of the urethra, and up the narrow column, somewhat like mercury within the tube of a

thermometer – or rather, like the scalding and scathing lava within the crater of a volcano.

It finally reached the apex; then the slit gaped, the tiny lips parted, and the pearly, creamy fluid oozed out – not all at once in a gushing jet, but at intervals, and in huge, burning tears.

At every drop that escaped out of the body, a creepy almost unbearable feeling started from the tips of the fingers, from the ends of the toes, especially from the innermost cells of the brain; the marrow in the spine and within all the bones seemed to melt; and when the different currents – either coursing with the blood or running rapidly up the nervous fibres – met within the phallus (that small instrument made out of muscles and blood-vessels) a tremendous shock took place, a convulsion which annihilated both mind and matter, a quivering delight which everyone has felt, to a greater or lesser degree – often a thrill almost too intense to be pleasurable.

Pressed against each other, all we could do was try and smother our groans as the fiery drops slowly followed one another.

The prostration which followed the excessive strain of the nerves had set in, when the carriage stopped before the door of Teleny's house – that door at which I had madly struck with my fist a short time before.

CHARLES DEVEREAUX
(c1889)

Precocious Child

Venus in India, published first in Brussels in 1889, purports to be the autobiography of a British army officer who served on the North West Frontier of India. Inspired by a reading of Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, he set down at length his amorous adventures with various ladies, among them the daughters of his Colonel. The two volumes Captain Devereaux produced (volume three was never published) are full of vigour and by no means without humour.

I might have kept up my acquaintance more vigorously with the Selwyns but for Mabel. That little girl, ever since I had tickled her mound at Nowshera, evidently looked forward to being had by me very soon, and she was more than daring whenever I visited her family. She plagued beyond bearing. Her delight was by word, look or gesture, to make my yard stand, no matter whether her mother was beside her, and my embarrassment was simply enormous. Pretending to consider herself as a mere child, she would, in spite of her mother's too feeble chidings, seat herself on my lap, and, hiding her hand under her, feel for and clutch my infernal fool of an organ, which would stand furiously for her though I wished it cut off at such moments. If I happened to be spending an evening at her father's house, and to be engaged in a game of chess with one of the two girls, Mabel would find her opportunity, slip unnoticed under the table, crawl to my knees, and with her nimble fingers, unbutton my trousers, and putting in her little exciting hand take possession of all she found there. I should have laughed at it only that I was terrified lest this very forward play be discovered, I had to sit tight up against the table, and do my best to seem unconcerned, whilst Mabel's moving hand was precious nearly making me spend! A catastrophe, I am thankful to say, she never quite succeeded in bringing about. I took my opportunities to beg and implore her to be more careful of herself and me, and her reply would be to toss up her short frocks, and a complete exposure of her lovely thighs, downy motte, and sweet young slit, which she would insist on my feeling, and which I was too weak to resist doing. It was the torture