

# IN THE HOUSE OF THE MANDARIN

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CAPTAIN IVAN KORAVITCH smoked his little brown Russian cigarette reflectively. But his eyes were alert and shining, and every now and again he twisted his moustache, and a little smile hovered over his face. He finished his cigarette, helped himself to another from the box on the table in front of him, and began to talk. Mention had been made of the strong footing which Russia had succeeded in effecting in Manchuria before she went to war with Japan, and those present expected the captain to have something to say on the subject.

'Ah, my friends, I am only a soldier. I cannot talk much about politics; it is not my business. Yes? But I think we were very clever. It was owing to the financial policy of M. de Witte that Russia, as a guarantor, enabled China to borrow money at four instead of five per cent. That led to the establishment of the Russo-Chinese Bank; and when one bases one's policy on good finance, success in other matters often arrives. For hence it was that Russia obtained the concession of the East Chinese Railway, which enabled her to continue her Trans-Siberian Railway southward through Manchuria. Oh yes, we wanted an outlet — what do you call it? We wished for expansion. Well, you also have wished for expansion, and have obtained it — all over the world. Yes?

'Of course it meant that many soldiers went to Manchuria. One can-

not obtain expansion without soldiers. Other people — like the Chinese — who do not wish themselves to be expanded by foreigners must be made to agree by soldiers. Yes, and it was very funnee. We did not always call them soldiers. We called them railway-guards. It was, for example, necessary when we promised to evacuate Manchuria to increase there our railway-guards. So their numbers were fixed at thirty thousand men, and they were recruited from the regular troops. It only meant putting green shoulder-straps and collar-patches on to a man's tunic, and there you had a "railway-guard" instead of a "soldier." Splendid!

'For a time I was attached to these railway-guards. The line connecting Port Arthur with Harbin possessed depots for them about every fifteen miles, some of them very large. At Liaoyang, for example, we had barracks to hold three thousand men. At Mukden we even used the bricks of the wall of the Chinese Temple of Earth to help construct barracks for twice that number. That is the way we evacuated Manchuria in 1902. Splendid!

'I was stationed the next year in a leetle town on the Harbin railway called Feng-Chung. It was not one of our big barracks. I had only about a hundred guards in my command, and there was not very much to do. There was also not very much with which to make amusements in one's spare time. My

subaltern, a youth named Basil Maximovitch, sometimes rode with me on horseback, or we played at cards. There were two engineers attached to the railway, but they were not very companionable.

‘There was, however, in Feng-Chung an English missionary station with a young priest of your Church, who was also a doctor — splendid! — named Linthorpe. Mr. Linthorpe had brought his sister with him, and the two of them lived quite alone, which I came to discover was very brave but not very wise. I will tell you.

‘There were at that time not only the Chinese inhabitants living in Manchuria, for the most part quiet and peaceable, but also companies of disbanded Chinese soldiers, who had previously fought against us. Ah yes, many of them were bandits rather than soldiers; robbers, who would sometimes give much trouble. Some of them roamed the country in small groups, and would suddenly swoop down on a town or village to plunder. So it was not always safe to go unarmed.

‘It was one day that I was walking down a narrow street in Feng-Chung that I heard much noise and shouting. A couple of dozen or so of these wandering Chinese had come into the town, and had met the sister of the missionary, Miss Nora Linthorpe. It did not look pleasant for her when I arrived. She was standing with her back to a wall, very pale, and they had surrounded her. Some of them had even drawn their long knives. Puff! It was nothing! They were all cowards, and I had my sword and revolver. It did not take me a few minutes to effect a rescue; and I think one or two of them had to bind up some flesh wounds. I, of course, escorted her to her brother’s house. She, poor young lady, was glad to have me walk with her, for she had received much fright. And it was thus

I came to know the Reverend Frederick Linthorpe — the first priest of your Church I had ever met.

‘From that time I often went to see Mr. Linthorpe and his sister. You must understand that she was a very pretty girl, and I was young and not bad-looking. Also, because she thought I had saved her life, — it was, as I said, nothing, — I think she admired me very much.’

And Captain Ivan Koravitch twisted his moustache and preened himself. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

‘One cannot say what might have happened, but I — I was a soldier, and I had no thoughts of marrying. Also, Nora Linthorpe had a fiancé in England, and I suppose she thought it was her duty to remember him, though — if I had chosen — bah! I did not make love to her — but I have thought she loved me a leetle. Yes?

‘But that is not the story. I told Mr. Linthorpe it was very dangerous for his sister to go about alone, or even to reside in Feng-Chung, and that he should send her back to England; but although he agreed she must be careful, he said — and she also — that she had her work to do with him, and duty must come first. Splendid!

‘Oh yes, splendid! But I was very sorry for them, my friends. I too was a man accustomed to duty, but I knew it is not always easy to go on doing one’s duty if there is no success. Mr. Linthorpe and his sister had lived in Feng-Chung for a year and a half to evangelize the Chinese. But with what success? Certainly they had a leetle school for some children, and people would go to them who were sick; but all the time they had only obtained one convert to their religion, a Chinese named Chang-Yung, who was a servant in the establishment of a Mandarin, Li Ting-Fang, who lived in a big house just outside the town. Chang-Yung

was grateful because Mr. Linthorpe and his sister had been kind to his father when the latter was dying of a slow and painful sickness. And the Chinaman, as you know, has much filial love for his father. Therefore, I suppose, partly to repay the kindness, he had consented to be baptized. The only convert! And yet they went on with their work, and did not complain. Me? I could not understand, but I admired — what is it you call it? — yes! — their pluck.

‘Mr. Linthorpe — I thought sometimes he should have been a soldier and not a priest. He was a very fine young man. He could shoot, and box with his fists — yes — and play cards, though he would never play for money, which I could not understand. We became great friends, and from him I learned much about your country before I came to reside here after many years.

‘Of course I made inquiries about the men who had attacked Miss Linthorpe; and I heard a very curious thing. It was my serjeant told me.

“‘These men,” he said, “they have not gone away, my captain!”

“‘No? Where are they?”

“‘They are in the house of Li Ting-Fang!”

“‘Oh!” I replied, “but that is not possible. Li Ting-Fang is peaceable. He has done much to help us. He could not be in league with robbers and bandits. He is the chief magistrate of the district.”

‘The serjeant shrugged his shoulders.

“‘Nevertheless,” he said, “it is true what I say.”

‘I wondered much, and I did not believe him. But, to satisfy my mind, I determined to pay a visit to this Li Ting-Fang. Ah yes; I did not know the Chinese so very well then! No one of our Western countries can ever get to know them as their curious minds work.

‘Of course it had to be a formal visit. I understood a leetle of the strict etiquette of the Chinese, and I had myself carried to the Mandarin’s house in a chair with attendants, and sent in my visiting-card — a big red one, with my name in Chinese. I was shown into a big room, richly furnished, and presently Li Ting-Fang entered. He was a fat old man, with a thin gray moustache, and a leetle beard just under his lower lip. He bowed gravely to me, and I returned his salutation. Then he motioned me to sit down.

‘I knew it would not do to come to my business at once. One had to observe great formalities. He spoke a leetle French at first, but when he found I knew English we talked in that language; and he spoke it much better than I.

‘After he had welcomed me to what he called his insignificant hovel, and I had replied that I was overwhelmed with its grandeur, he asked me, though he must have known, “From what Heaven-ruled and prosperous country do you come?”

“‘I am a visitor to this sublime land from the impoverished and almost unknown country called Russia!”

‘Oh yes! I knew how to answer him.

“‘What is your honorable age?”

“‘My few and miserable years are twenty-three in number. May I inquire of the length of your Excellency’s illustrious days?”

“‘I have attained unto sixty-five wasted years. How is the health of your venerable father? I trust he is yet alive?”

“‘He still encumbers my mean country. With the permission of Heaven, his insignificant health is good.”

“‘What is the number of your high-born brothers?”

“‘Alas!” I replied, “Heaven has punished the misdeeds of my ancestors

by granting but one totally unworthy son to my father — your undistinguished servant."

"A queer leetle gleam came into his eyes when I told him this, and a smile broke out over his face. Presently we came to the business of my call. He listened without a word or a gesture while I related to him the attack on Miss Linthorpe. Afterward I told him plainly that I had been informed that he was sheltering the marauders. Then he put out his hands, palms upwards, and said:—

"The matter of the assault upon the English lady shall be inquired into. I am here to administer justice, and such crimes are not permissible. But as regards what you tell me, your information is not correct. Is it likely that I should shelter within my mean establishment those whom it is my office to punish for such misdeeds? The thing is an insult to my revered ancestors!"

"He spoke with much dignity, rose to his feet, and bowed. I knew that the audience was over, and that it was useless to talk more; so I left him. I was a leetle angry with myself that I had listened to my serjeant at all.

"The next day I visited Mr. Linthorpe, and told him what I had done. But he too could not believe that Li Ting-Fang had given a refuge to the bandits.

"I also," he said, "have been to see him about the attack on my sister. He expressed much concern about it, but feared by this time the men had made their escape to the hills. He is a most interesting and well-disposed man. I quite enjoyed drinking a cup of tea with him."

"He did not offer me tea," I said.

"What? Not give you tea? That was strange."

"Why?" I asked.

"It is part of the etiquette of a host

in an official visit. And Li Ting-Fang does not usually make a mistake. It was almost equivalent to a studied insult."

"I did not think very much about it at the time. It passed out of my mind. But afterward I had reason to remember it. Yes?"

"Wait a minute," went on Linthorpe; "Chang-Yung is in my house. Let us have him in, and I will ask him a question."

"Chang-Yung came into the room, and stood quite still with his arms folded and his hands tucked in the opposite sleeves of his loose coat. Also he bent his head.

"Chang-Yung," said the missionary, "velly bad piecee men makee plenty bobbery all a same Missee Linthorpe. You savvy?"

"Me savvy!" replied the Chinaman.

"Bad piecee men run away. Where to they go?"

"Me no savvy."

"Li Ting-Fang, him know where piecee men go?"

"No can do."

"All lightee."

"He knows nothing evidently," said Linthorpe when he had gone. "I believe he would tell me if he did. Your serjeant has got hold of the wrong end of the walking-stick."

"Ah, my friends, I learned many of your English idioms from this missionary: the wrong end of the walking-stick! Splendid!

"A few days afterward I had other matters in my mind. Farther up the line, toward Harbin, there was trouble. Quite a big force of these wandering bandits had attacked a station and killed some of our men. I was ordered, by telegram, to send the whole of my company, in command of my subaltern, as a reënforcement. I kept back only two, who were sick, and in an hour's time a train had taken away the re-

mainder. So I was left alone at the station, except the two engineers, and they were drinking. I thought I would go and play a game of cards without money with my friend the missionary. Also I knew it would please Nora Linthorpe to see me. Splendid!

'It was dusk when I set out. I had not very far to go — only along two streets — but I carried my sword and my revolver, as was my custom. Ah, but they were of leetle use in the face of what happened. Again I had not learned very much about the Chinese and their habits, for suddenly I was taken by a great surprise. An arm was thrown around my neck from behind, and I received a kick in the smallness of my back that threw me to the ground. Before I could recover myself I was helpless. My hands were bound tightly behind my back, and a sack or something was thrown over my head. And all the time I did not hear a sound, although I felt there was quite a leetle crowd of men around me. Then I was made to walk forward. They held me up by the arms and pushed me along. Once I cried out very loud beneath the sack, but I felt a sharp point at once against my breast, and a voice said in pigeon English: —

“Suppose makee bobbery, then killee chop-chop.”

'I had no wish to be killed chop-chop at all, so I went quietly. But I tell you, I was not feeling at all happy. We walked for some distance, and then I felt I was entering within doors. Presently the sack was removed from my head, and when I had blinked a leetle in the light of a lamp I was astonished to find that I was in the same room where Li Ting-Fang had received me a week or two before; and somehow I felt less happy still.

'Standing around me were half a dozen villainous-looking men. One of them, who had a bandage round his

head, I recognized as a fellow I had wounded with my sword when I had made the rescue of Nora Linthorpe. And he scowled at me with a very nasty grin. They had, of course, taken away my revolver and sword.

'I was beginning to see that my serjeant had been right after all, when Li Ting-Fang himself entered the room. He stood for a few moments just inside the door with a leetle smile on his face, bowed to me, and said, very politely, in his smooth silky voice, “Once again, Captain Koravitch, I welcome you to my insignificant dwelling.”

'But I was in no mood for politeness, and I said, “What is the meaning of this? Why have I been brought here like this?”

'Again he smiled — a very nasty smile — and replied in his excellent English, “Your curiosity shall be speedily satisfied.”

'Then he made a sign to the others, and said a few words in Chinese. Immediately they forced me down into a low chair, and tied me to it with cords. Then they left the room.

'What is it that you call it when one is in a great difficulty — yes? So! A tight fix! Splendid! As Li Ting-Fang seated himself, still smiling at me, I felt I was in a very tight fix. And I was right.

“I have much to say to you, Captain Koravitch,” he began, “and I have no hesitation in saying it because I know that you will never have the chance of repeating it. I will be quite candid with you, and speak in the plain language of your damnable civilization.”

'He certainly did not put me at my ease. But I shut my mouth very firm, and looked him straight in the face. He should not see how I was feeling.

“Like your father, of whom you spoke the other day,” he went on, still

in his calm soft voice, and without any movement of his hands or body, "I had an only son, but" — and a slight sneer curled his nostrils — "in our older Eastern civilization a son is of more importance than in the barbarous Western nations. We are taught that it is not only a son's duty to revere and assist his father while the latter is living upon the earth, but also to revere and preserve his ancestral shrine when he has departed. With us a man can die happy in the knowledge that he leaves a son who will still continue to fulfill his filial duties. But when I depart from this earth I shall leave no son behind me!"

"There was just the touch of sadness in his eyes that made me exclaim, "I am sorry."

"You say that you are sorry? Listen. It is owing to your own damnable nation that I have no son. He was slain by General Gribsky at the massacre near Blagovestchenak. He was not a soldier, Captain Koravitch," — and he looked at me with the disdain that was in his voice, for the educated Chinese despise those of the military caste, — "he was a peaceable citizen. Only by the decree of Heaven did he chance to be in the locality. But they killed him."

"You must remember," I said, "that the Chinese themselves had opened fire upon Blagovestchenak. A punishment was due."

"But not to my son. I have told you he was not a soldier. I have now no one who will worship at my ancestral tablet, and those of my ancestors. The only consolation left to me is revenge. And for that I have waited patiently."

"Li Ting-Fang," I replied in as steady a voice as I could master, "I cannot see that your revenge concerns me. I was not at Blagovestchenak. I did not kill your son."

"He bowed to me, and went on, "I will explain. As I said before, you will never repeat what I tell you. I swore revenge upon your nation. It is I, by means of my money and my influence, who have organized many of the attacks upon your outposts. I have already taken many lives in return. But that is not enough. I swore that I would, in exchange for my son's life, be satisfied with nothing less than the life of a Russian of high standing, who was the only son of his father. And when you told me unconsciously that you fulfilled the condition, you uttered your own doom."

"There was silence for a full minute. I would not speak. But my heart sank within me. My friends, I was very much afraid."

"He spoke again, this cold smiling Chinaman: —

"Your men are all absent. There is no one but my servants who knows you are here, and they will not speak. To escape is impossible. To-morrow I shall begin my revenge. To-morrow you will begin to die. I have waited long. And you will also wait long before the end comes."

"Then it was I realized to the full the horror of my position. For I had heard of the tortures of the Chinese. I turned my face to him as well as I could, and cried, "You devil!"

"Then he walked toward me very slowly, and spat in my face. My God! if my hands had but been free!

"He struck a gong, and three men came in. They released me from the chair, while Li Ting-Fang said, "You will have plenty of time to-night to meditate upon what awaits you to-morrow." Then they took me out of the room, with my hands still bound behind me, and led me along a passage and down some steps. It was just as we turned to go down these steps that I caught a glimpse of Chang-Yung com-

ing along the passage. But he appeared to take no notice of what was going on. At the bottom of the steps was a door, through which they thrust me into a small dark room. Then I heard the door shut and the key turned in the lock. I was alone.

'I tell you, my friends, I have been in many dangers, but I never felt so much afraid as then. I knew that no one would ever suspect this grave Chinese Mandarin, and I could not think of any chance of a rescue. When the darkness became a little familiar I could see a small slit of light about a foot high and a few inches wide. This was the only window. It was fairly high up in the wall, but by standing up on my toe-tips I could just see through. There was no glass, and the cool night air was blowing in. There was a moon, and I could just see that the window looked out into a courtyard, on the other side of which was a high wall that surrounded Li Ting-Fang's premises.

'I sat down on the earth floor. The first thing I tried to do was to loosen the cords round my wrists, for I felt, if it was possible, it would be better to die struggling with my captors. Just a little did I loosen them, but I could not undo the knots or slip my hands free — only I had a trifle more movement in them.

'Well, I must not make my story too long or dwell upon my feelings. After what must have been hours, I think I fell asleep, sitting on the floor and leaning against the wall.

'I woke with a start. Something seemed to have made a little noise in the room. It was very dark, for the moon had set, and I could see nothing. Again! Something fell in from the window. I sprang to my feet and asked softly, "Who is there?" And I received a reply. It was simply "Sh-sh-sh!" Then I heard something being pushed through the aperture, which fell with a heavy thud on the floor.

'Immediately I sat down and groped behind me with my bound hands. And I felt several things tied together with a string, and a ray of hope came into my heart. One of the things was a small open knife. In one minute I had managed with it to cut the cord around one wrist. My hands were free. Then — oh, my friends, you can imagine my joy when I felt all that was there — a revolver, several tools, a small electric torch, and what appeared to be paper. Very carefully I turned on the torch, first taking off my tunic and stuffing it into the little window so that no light should show outside. The paper was an envelope. I tore it open, and found inside this message in English: —

"If you are able to do so quietly, try to pick the lock of the door. There are no bolts — only the lock. If not, at exactly seven o'clock in the morning you must take your chance and blow open the lock with your pistol. In either case, leave your room exactly at seven. Go straight along the corridor. Shoot anyone who hinders you, and make your way to the main entrance. I am trying to do all I can to help, but there are difficulties. If I fail, you must do your best to escape. — F. L."

'My first thought was, "Why does he not telegraph for soldiers?" Ah, I did not know then that Li Ting-Fang had seen that the wires were cut on either side of the station far along the line. Linthorpe had already discovered this.

'I looked at my watch. It was just after four. I had three hours. Immediately I made examination of the door — and then I rejoiced. The supporting beam at the side was of thick hard wood, into which the bolt of the great rough Chinese lock apparently shot. And one of my tools was a good sharp chisel. Ah, it took me long to cut away that wood, but at last I did so, and it was as I had hoped. The bolt became

visible, and I found I could open the door inward. It would not be necessary to blow open the lock. Then I waited.

'A leetle before seven I prepared myself. My revolver was loaded in six chambers, and there were a dozen extra cartridges. I determined, if the worst came, to save one of them for myself. Exactly at the hour I opened the door. I had the revolver in my right hand, and the chisel in my left. It was quite quiet outside, but when I reached the top of the steps and turned into the corridor I nearly ran into a man — a sentry — who stood with his back to me. I paused a moment — then changed the chisel into my right hand, crept forward, and aimed at his neck. He fell all in a heap. Splendid!

'Then I went on — very softly. The door of the room into which I had been taken the previous evening stood open, and I had to pass it. I tripped slightly on a rug, and held my breath. Then a voice came from the room: —

"Is that you, Koravitch? Come in!"

'I started with astonishment. I entered the room. And I will tell you what I saw.

'Standing in the middle of the room was Linthorpe. And he did not look at all like a missionary. He was dressed in Chinese costume — very fine! And he held in his hand a revolver, which was pointed straight at the head of Li Ting-Fang, who sat in a chair with his fat hands above his head and his yellow face gone white. And Linthorpe, without looking away from the Mandarin, gave a little laugh, and said: —

"That's all right. Now we'll get out of this. Listen you, Ting-Fang! You will walk with us to the outer gate, and if you so much as speak one word to your men I shoot. Do you understand?"

'Li Ting-Fang looked at him venomously, and said in his soft silky voice,

"May Heaven curse your swine-begotten ancestors!"

"It is n't a question of ancestors, my friend, unless you want to join your own. Get up!"

'As we walked he held the revolver pressed against the back of the Mandarin's head. Oh, he was not converting Chinamen at the moment, this brave missionary. I have said he ought to have been a soldier. Splendid! There were two or three men in the courtyard, and one of them made as if he would have attacked us, and then drew back. So we reached the gate.

'I was wondering if we should take prisoner the Mandarin. But even at that moment he was very clever. Just as we were passing through the gate he suddenly dropped down, and caught Linthorpe's leg as he did so. Linthorpe stumbled forward, and I half fell over him. The next moment Li Ting-Fang, yelling something in Chinese, had rolled on one side, picked himself up in a very quick manner for one so fat, and was behind a pillar even before I shot at him. A shot followed from behind, and a bullet whistled past us.

"Run!" cried Linthorpe. Ah, and we did run. I laugh now as I think of the missionary drawing up his loose robe above his bare knees. It was very funny! They fired — yes — but they were bad marksmen, those Chinese, and, except for a little scratch on my side, they did not hit. So we came out safely. Splendid!

'Afterward, when Miss Linthorpe gave us a good breakfast, her brother told me the story. Oh, he was a very clever man, this missionary priest. It was due to Chang-Yung that he had discovered where I was. Chang-Yung had seen me in the corridor. He had also guessed what was to happen to me in the morning — there had been some nasty orders given — ugh! It makes me shiver even now. He knew I was

the friend of Mr. Linthorpe. Also that I had rescued his sister, to whom he was much devoted. So he climbed the wall of the compound and hurried to Mr. Linthorpe. The missionary immediately went to the station to telegraph for assistance, but found the instruments would not work, and also found the two engineers very drunk. It was then he took their revolvers, for a plan was coming into his mind. He knew I must be rescued early — or —

And Captain Ivan Koravitch shrugged his shoulders, and gave an expressive sound with his lips.

‘But it was Nora Linthorpe who thought out the clever scheme. She collected curiosities to take back to England, and had a fine Chinese costume. Also she possessed the big visiting-card of Wu-yao-chan, the governor of the province, — the English consul had presented it to her for her collection, — and her brother knew a little Chinese. So he wrote the letter to me, and made up the parcel for Chang-Yung to put through my window, hoping that the luck of being able to open my door would come to me. Then he dressed himself in the Chinese dress, and with Chang-Yung’s help, who had returned, painted with a brush in Chinese characters a short letter demanding a private interview of importance. Also he rubbed some yellow powder on his face. Chang-Yung found a friend whom he could trust, and together they carried him in a chair to Li Ting-Fang’s house. A call in the very early morning — when much business is done — is customary

with the Chinese. Linthorpe sent in Wu-yao-chan’s card, and was shown into the reception room. When the Mandarin entered he performed a very big kotow, for he thought he was in the presence of the governor. But when he looked up the pistol was at his head, and he had to hold his tongue till I appeared. Splendid!’

The captain lighted a fresh cigarette, paused for a minute or two, and then said: —

‘Miss Nora? Ah yes! I kissed her hands. I think she was very much pleased. Also she was pleased that I was safe. I think too — but — no matter. She had promised herself to another. Pough! Li Ting-Fang? Oh, he escaped. When my soldiers, who returned, surrounded his house it was empty. But one can never understand these Chinese. A few years later, after our war with Japan, I was in Paris. Our ambassador there gave a diplomatic dinner, at which I was present. Next to me sat an elderly Chinaman, an attaché at the Chinese Embassy. It was no other than Li Ting-Fang. And he said to me very politely, in his voice of silk and with his smile: —

“Did I not once have the pleasure of receiving you at my insignificant abode?”

“Yes,” I replied, as I looked him hard in the face, “and I fear my departure from your honorable presence was very abrupt.”

“No one regretted it more than my entirely unworthy self!” he answered with a bow. Splendid!’

## A PAGE OF VERSE

### LOST

BY IRIS BARRY

[*Spectator*]

WHEN the boy knocked at our door, looking in,  
We remember now that we spoke to him timidly,  
Kept him waiting in the porch,  
While we busied ourselves within over a fitting reception.

When we called him,  
We found the porch empty.  
Hop-vines and ivy trembled there,  
A frame lacking its picture.  
Nor can any tell us  
Whether he ran along the road or the field-path.

### NIGHT

BY L. B. LYON

[*Time and Tide*]

OVER the fields, the quiet fields of cattle,  
Grave fields of home, exhaling a mist-like incense,  
Forgiving fields that suffer the keen ploughshare,  
How gratefully, over these fields,  
Night gathers!

And over the lone spaces of the spirit,  
The plains of mystery and pale adventure,  
The fields, the sorrowful acres of man's striving,  
How tenderly, over those fields,  
Night falls.