

THE PENTECOST OF CALAMITY

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The Pentecost of Calamity by Owen Wister

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OWEN WISTER

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OF CALAMITY**

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**THE
PENTECOST OF
CALAMITY**

By O. C.

OWEN WISTER

Author of "The Virginian," etc.



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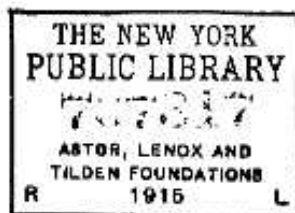
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THE PENTECOST OF CALAMITY

Ever the fiery Pentecost
Girds with one flame the countless host.

— EMERSON.

I

BY various influences and agents
the Past is summoned before
us, more vivid than a dream.

The process seems as magical as those
whereof we read in fairy legends, where cir-
cles are drawn, wands waved, mystic sylla-
bles pronounced. Adjured by these rites,
voices speak, or forms and faces shape
themselves from nothing. So, through
certain influences, not magical at all,
our brains are made to flash with visions

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of other days. Is there among us one to whom this experience is unknown? For whom no particular strain of music, or no special perfume, is linked with an inveterate association? Music and perfumes are among the most potent of these evocatory agents; but many more exist, such as words, sounds, handwriting. Thus almost always, at the name of the town Cologne, the banks of the golden stream, the German Rhine, sweep into my sight as first I saw them long ago; and from a steamer's deck I watch again, and again count, a train composed of twenty-one locomotives, moving ominous and sinister on their new errand. That was July 19, 1870. France had declared war on Prussia that day. Mobilization was beginning before my eyes. I was ten.

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Dates and anniversaries also perform the same office as music and perfumes. This is the ninth of June. This day, last year, I was in the heart of Germany. The beautiful, peaceful scene is plain yet. It seems as if I never could forget it or cease to love it. Often last June I thought how different the sights I was then seeing were from those twenty-one locomotives rolling their heavy threat along the banks of the Rhine. And, for the mere curiosity of it, I looked in my German diary to find if I had recorded anything on last June ninth that should be worth repeating on this June ninth.

Well, at the end of the day's jotted routine were the following sentences: "I am constantly more impressed with the Germans. They are a massive, on-