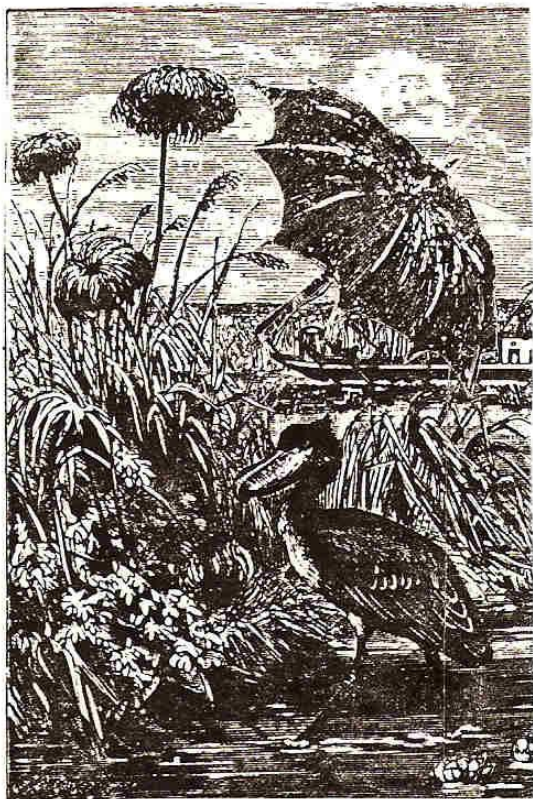


dave calder
UMBRELLAS



The vicar turns, the handful of damp earth goes in, the mourners' breath hangs on the air. Behind them range row upon row of furred umbrellas, each bearing its owner's name on a brass plate fixed to the ferrule. The handle, of course, is underground, still firmly grasped.

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The umbrellas are dancing, whirl of ramrod smartness and flouncing black balldresses. The womens' spikes point outwards and the mens' threaten their impressive handles. This may be the other way round, their sex life is obscure.

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In a field 'somewhere in England' the umbrellas point their loaded muzzles to the enemy skies 'purely for defensive purposes'. On attack, we're told, they'd simply open out. However, it has appeared that everyone not lying in the grass beneath them would get wet, and that even the privileged few would get lumbago. Accordingly, the government has cancelled its order for umbrellas and is ordering swordsticks so that at least a few raindrops will get stabbed.

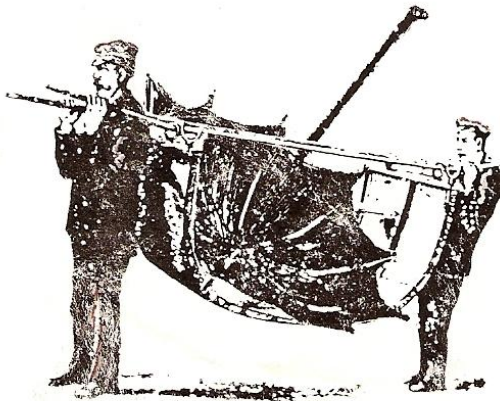
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A novel way of failing to commit suicide: hold rolled umbrella by handle, ferrule pressed to belly. Transfer grip to spines and heave forward. At the moment of greatest pressure, when the blunt tip is squeezing a penny's width roll of flesh back into you, the canopy should open and tear, making further attempt impossible. And, even better, you can blame your continuing unhappiness upon the umbrella.

An umbrella is trapped in the spokes of a bicycle. Other umbrellas gather round shaking their ferrules. Disgusting, disgraceful. The innocent bicycle, pushed against the wall, keeps trying to point out that it is the one that cannot move. Several umbrellas, interpreting this as an attempt to flee, promptly jam themselves into the back wheel.

The umbrellas float down the street like mournful jellyfish, their prey captive to the single stiffened tentacle. They must eat or die - out here in the wild weather any umbrella without meat on its hook ends crumpled below the concrete cliffs or twists over and over, its torn and spiny torment a terrible warning to the passing perfect hemispheres.

The umbrella is in the left-hand drawer. He stood naked in the moonlight that lay in puddles on the floor. One of her breasts, round and white, was staring at him.



Funfundzwanzigste Lektion (Cours Assimil)

I have seen him and I have given him back his umbrella.
I have seen her and I have given her back her umbrella.
I have seen you and I have given you back your umbrella.
I have seen them and I have given them back thier umbrella.
Give me back my umbrella.

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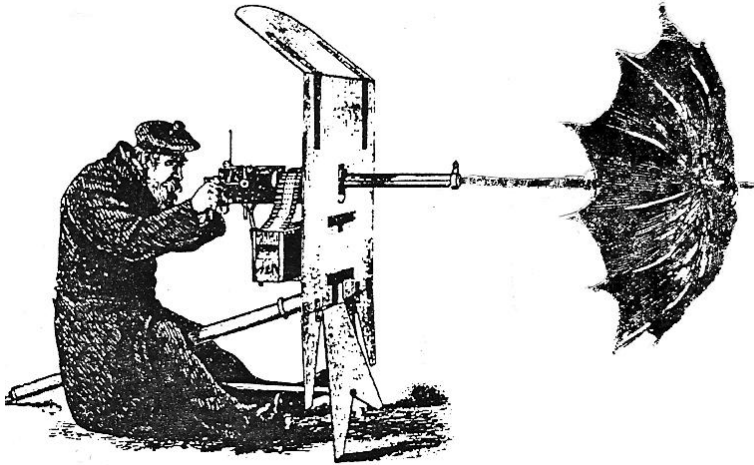
If it starts raining pennies from heaven, turn your umbrella upside down (or it'll be torn to shreds) and hold it over your head (to prevent damage from flying metal). Of course the weight of collected coin will eventually weaken your grip and all will fall - but dance on, such storms are of short duration and you'll soonbe back bent to the gutter, picking up any pennies that haven't rolled down drains.

* * * * *

A grey afternoon in the crystal palace. Her lover has just laid his umbrella at her feet for the umpteenth time."You know what I miss," she says, as the drum rhythms rise andthe veils are torn,; "I miss sitting in bed with a cup of tea and just talking."His umbrella droops.

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Flocks of umbrellas crowd the cliffs' edges. Their harsh criesdislodge boulders and birdwatchers. Fearsome curved beaks tear at struggling bowler hats and floundering bonnets. Deep below, the crowds of commuters plod their way home through the seaweed, too tired to notice the fish on their heads.



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The umbrella flapped off the table, pecked at the floor and slithered under the table. "It's heard a mouse," he explained.

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One umbrella sits in a house and dreams of another in the house across the road - sees it snug in its niche behind the coats and childrens' wellies- alone, shapely, desirable. But what can this umbrella do? It stands by the window hoping for rain and twists its handle fretfully - it is only an umbrella, after all.

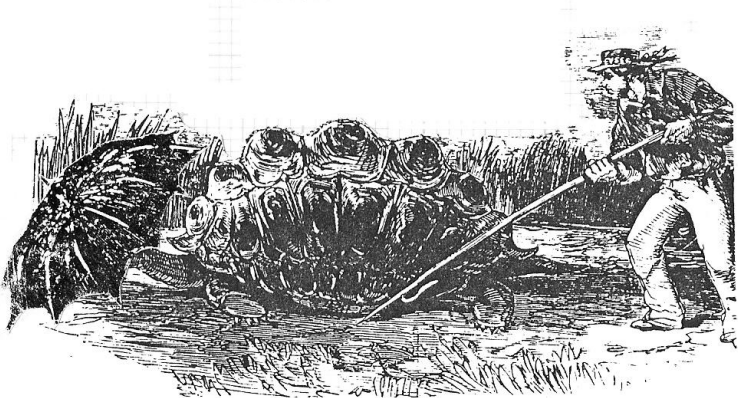
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Outside in the corridor the umbrellas are holding a standing conference. They spoke openly - their spokes opened. They got stuck in the hall. It's always like that at meetings

"Great Heavens, Holmes - that umbrella has fangs!"
"You're right, Watson - quick, throw this cup of tea over me -that'll put it off guard."

Umbrellas stand at street corners muttering - "You can never find one when you want one." The shopping trolleys never seem to cruise the roads. And yet we find them stopped, hard and awkward, on the kerb or dangerously astraddle the road's crown. Others sit as if abandoned down back streets or have halted suspiciously among the waste lands. They are all empty. Their passengers have been stolen

We have been out in the rain too long. Our umbrellas begin to shrink. No, no, not the umbrellas but ourselves - waterlogged we are swelling into amiable giant sponges.



umbrellas

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