

# THE DIAL

JULY 1920

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VOLUME LXIX    NUMBER 1

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BREATH ON A WINDOW PANE. BY KAHLIL GIBRAN

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## A SEASON IN HELL

BY ARTHUR RIMBAUD

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: It is generally believed that Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer* is not an imaginary or literary confession but a sincere history of his inner life up to the age of nineteen. As such it should be self-explanatory, since it deals quite explicitly with various human moods or ideas by their familiar names. Some words lead farther in Rimbaud's mind than they do in the mind of his reader, but this is the case with any writer. A summary of the important events of these nineteen years will probably give as good a key as any to references and connotations.

He was born in 1854 in Charleville (Ardennes), the son of a French army captain. On both sides he came of peasant stock, though his father's family cherished a tradition of descent from the Counts of Orange. His own impressions of his inheritance are expressed in the chapter "Bad Blood."

His mother's catholicism, "fervid, rigorous, and mystic at the same time," gave Rimbaud as harsh a bringing up as German Protestantism gave Nietzsche. Hence the rather mediaeval preoccupations of *Une Saison*.

In 1871, after numerous trauancies, he finally broke loose from his family and went to live with Paul Verlaine in Paris, at the home of Verlaine's parents-in-law. The literary and artistic talent of Paris, including Victor Hugo, admired his poetry and was at first inclined to welcome him as a boy prodigy. Fantin-Latour painted his portrait; M. Carjat the poet-photographist took his photograph; when he was turned out by Verlaine's family Théodore de Banville provided him with a garret and Madame de Banville