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NOW CAME STILL EVENING ON

Also by Horace Annesley Vachell

LITTLE TYRANNIES
DISTANT FIELDS
MY VAGABONDAGE
WHERE FANCY BECKONS
AVERIL
GIFT FROM GOD
HILARY TRENT
THE ACTOR
BLINKERS
EXPERIENCES OF A BOND STREET JEWELLER
THE GOLDEN HOUSE
LEAVES FROM ARCADY
LORD SAMARKAND
MOONHILLS
PHOEBE'S GUEST HOUSE
WHITEWASH



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

NOW CAME STILL EVENING ON

by

Horace Annesley Vachell



CASELL AND COMPANY LTD.
LONDON, TORONTO, MELBOURNE & SYDNEY

To
MY GRANDMOTHER
JOSEPHINE VACHELL

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CHAPTER ONE

March, 7945

A WEST COUNTRY MAN spoke of me (delightfully, so I flattered myself) as an "octogeranium," and this pleased me because the geraniums in my garden outlive othes flowers and carry on, so to speak, valiantly to the end. There are about a hundred Species of the plant which are at their best in temperate zones, I read Cicero's *De Senectute* when I was a boy, but I cannot Recall what he wrote (if anything) about climate affecting old age. Again, he was done to death in 43 B.C., when he was still in the prime of life in his sixty-fourth year. His pow&f at this time, according to Plutarch, was at its greatest height, io which Hallam also testifies. As a child he was something of a weakling, but so was Sandow, who became the worlds strongest man.

A temperate climate is an octogenarian's best friend. It is true that some forty years ago, a centenarian, interviewed by a *Daily Mail* reporter, attributed his great age to "intemperance in all things," which provoked protest from the *unco guid* and the rigidly righteous. It also provoked from the most brilliant advocate at the bar significant comment. Would that I could set down his words, but he made it plain to me and others (who suggested that liberties had been taken with our underpinning) that a lively appreciation of God's good creatures, even if such appreciation were inordinate, was conducive to longevity. He spoke of the centenarian as a sound pippin, adding: "If we don't give our senses work to do, they atrophy and do us in." I held my tongue, thinking of Old Parr who married a young wife when he was a hundred and thirty! He worked in the fields. I thought also of Cornaro, whose book *How to Live to be a Hundred* calls to mind Juvenal's famous line: "Et propter vitam, vivendi perdere causas." Cornaro was told by his doctor that food and wine were poison to him; so he (practically) did without them! If I can find this book in my uncatalogued library, I shall re-read it.

My great-aunt, Miss Julia Moore, niece of Sir John Moore, underwent an operation for cataract when she was a centenarian, and could read *The Times* without spectacles when the film

was cut from her shrewd old eyes! She retained her faculties to the last, and told me that she could remember the illuminations in London after the battle of Trafalgar! A wonderful link with the past. I have written elsewhere of another centenarian whom I met in Devon. I asked him to what he attributed his long and still active life. He replied curtly: "I never called in a doctor." This much amused Cyril Maude, whose guest I was at the time. On my next visit, I suggested that we should pay our respects to the old gentleman, but he was no longer on earth. I asked Cyril Maude for details of his passing; he replied: "Well, he called in a doctor." R.I.P.

Macaulay's priggish schoolboy would say: "Long life is a synonym for vitality." But—is it? Excess of vitality is a menace to old age, eating away reserves of strength. Sandow died a comparatively young man. On the other hand, the late Lord Desborough, a famous "blue" and the most ardent of sportsmen, retained his vigour to the end. And so we must admit that exceptions make hay of cut-and-dried counsels of perfection. Our most distinguished dramatist is a vegetarian, a total abstainer and a non-smoker. Such enforced abstinence appears to agree with him. Happily there are others. At a Saintsbury Club dinner I sat next a fellow member, the late Professor Armstrong. He was then (I think) in his ninetieth year, still a valiant trencherman and a lover of good wine and good talk. In every sense of the words he had lived a full and useful life. That perhaps is an adequate reason for his tale of years.

2

The lines that follow the title of my book must be set down.

**Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad.**

Sober is the right adjective. It might be "sobering" in its dispassionate sense. I have never thought that the wild freshness of morning was more to be desired than evening's best light. The air at dawn is too wild and fresh. Many men have assured me that early manhood had been unhappy because of its uncertainties. Probably this uncertainty affects all who are seeking the temple of Fame distracted, as well they may be, by the myriad paths leading to it. The temple is in the centre

of a labyrinth—which might be described as the Maze of Conjecture. At the moment vast sums are to be squeezed out of this impoverished nation to secure for our children a better education. Will a sustained effort be made to find out what each child can do best? Time and money will be wasted if square pegs are to be jammed into round holes, or t'other way about. When I was a youngster, other young men were pitchforked into unholy Orders, the Services and the Bar. Most of us wriggled through, at heart rebels against authority, lamentably conscious that we had no outstanding aptitudes for our jobs. Too much was expected of cadets of ancient families, whose heads—jovial blades—disdained trade and fondly believed that money should be inherited rather than earned. Now the golden age of the leisured classes has passed, so—*Laus Deo!*—have the pomps and vanities of yesterday. Leisure will be the privilege of the old.

**Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestick ease.**

At home——! We have the impudence to tell French people that they have no word for home! No single word. They have two: *chez moi*; and the two are more expressive (and charming) than one. Milton—why isn't he read by our young people?—links leisure with domestic ease. But the blind poet who could see so clearly into all hearts, was not thinking of the servant problem, as we have to do. Can there be ease in the home when the cap-and-apron brigade are on strike? Probably the genial Professor Joad would reply: "Indisputably there will be no peace till underlings are made to feel at home in the homes of others, till the odious noun 'servitude' is put on the index." Service, free from the henbane of rancour, is an ennobling word. The King is proud to call himself the servant of his people: a platitude to be rubbed in to the Man in the Street and the tub-thumpers on every corner. . . .

Some years ago I wrote a book entitled *My Vagabondage*. In it I wandered where Fancy, beguiling nymph, beckoned, seeking the lanes and by-ways rather than the macadamized thoroughfares. I hope to do the same in this volume. High road and low road are used antithetically by most of us, not (I suggest) in that popular song "Loch Lomond." The

gentleman (presumably) chose the low road because it was the easier route to travel, and he made sure that he would be in Scotland before his sweetheart. Burns did not write the rather inexplicable words. Why are we told that the pair would never meet again by Loch Lomond? Age grows increasingly curious about such trivial matters. Age, I confess regretfully, remembers doggerel, if it has a lilt to it, and forgets lines which should be unforgettable. Age takes the low road to the nearest easy chair. In that chair he (or she) feels at home with leisure. Possibly, the more active a man has been in youth and manhood, speaking physically, the more active he will be, mentally, when his limbs have lost resiliency. Old flesh is at its best at table, if—a big IF—the board is not groaning beneath the weight of too much provaunt. A kinsman of mine, the most hospitable of hosts, surprised his guests when he told them that he hoped they would leave the dining-room feeling ungorged. Better too little of the best than a surfeit. I have never met an epicure who was a glutton. Colonel Newnham Davis (the Dwarf of Blood) was the outstanding epicure of the Beefsteak Club; but he ate and drank sparingly. It occurs to me that an octogenarian, alone with his best friends, his books, ought to practise a like abstinence. When I was President of the Dickens Fellowship I met ardent Dickensians who assured me that Dickens was their one and only fare. Would our greatest novelist have accepted this as a compliment? There are Jane Austen devotees here in Bath who read no other author. Jane would have poked sly fun at them. My humour was tickled when a Scot of my acquaintance refused to attend a ball in Edinburgh, because (so he affirmed) he was a-w^eary of hearing from every lip: "Oo a say, Janet." I bestowed on him my deepest sympathy.

I have now leisure to renew friendship with books delightfully bound and printed on pre-war paper. At some (too many) I stare coldly. Because their pages are still uncut, I feel that they wish to cut me. Friendly booksellers have admonished me to keep editions *de luxe* in glazed bookcases. And there, as a rule, they remain in splendid isolation, a lock-up, a gilt-edged investment. I prefer their poor relations which carry on them my finger-prints. My first edition of *Piclivic*, bought by my father, is disgracefully stained and dog-eared; a few pages are missing, but I like to cuddle it although I may not read it. My

Aldine edition of the poetical works of Coleridge, published in 1840, has an inscription: *Charles Brodrick Scott, Eton, July 30th, 1843, from his sincere friend Edward Coleridge.* Under the inscription is written (possibly by my grandfather): "Edward Coleridge, nephew of the poet, Fellow of Exeter College, 1823, Assistant Master at Eton 1824-1850." This edition, in three volumes, bound in calf, is in immaculate condition! Obviously it was not read by a schoolboy, by my grandfather or by me. With it I inherited a cheaper edition which has been read.

The loveliest lines of the poet are in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware. . . .

There are many anthologies, good, bad and indifferent. Has one small volume been published giving merely a few enchanting lines from each of our poets which could be committed to memory as "happy living things"? Walter de la Mare could do it. It would be a labour of love to me, but I am not pre-supituous enough to essay it.

CA Dictionary of Quotations, however good, is little more than a book of reference. The anthology I have in mind would be small enough to carry in one's pocket. It might be the work of a syndicate. An impassioned lover of Shelley, for example, might be invited by an enterprising compiler to furnish what he deems to be the past pluperfect passage in the poet's works. If he happened to be an authority, he would be accepted as such, disarming acrid criticism. In my dictionary of quotations not a line from "The Sensitive Plant" is to be found;

there are only two lines from "The Cloud"! "**The Sensitive Plant**" was written in 1820, when Shelley was **twenty-eight**, after he had left England.

**Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness.**

Why do these lines drift back to me? Partly because my mother repeated them to me when I was a boy at Harrow. **She** bribed her children to commit to memory what pleased her fastidious taste. Years afterwards, when I complained of sleeplessness, she urged me to recall, if I could, one after the other, all the lilting, melodious, soothing verses still dear to her. "If sleep," she said, "doesn't come to you, you will be better employed than trying to count sheep passing through a gate." She was right. To be frank I have to admit that repeating "The Cloud" or "The Ode to the West Wind" kept them verdantly fresh in my memory, but they did not bring sleep to me. Rather the contrary. It is exasperating to realize how much one has forgotten; and the hunt for the mislaid word becomes too exciting. On the other hand, jingles such as Macaulay's *Lays*, or even music-hall songs of the eighties, are narcotic, swiftly so: I am

**Charmed with Arcadian pipe, the pastoral reed
Of Hermes, or his opiate rod.**

The anthology I have in mind would be a potpourri.

**The roses soon withered that hung o'er the wave
But some blossoms were gathered, while freshly they shone,
And a dew was distilled from their flowers that gave
All the freshness of summer, when summer was gone.**

It might also be likened to a cellar of good wines, first growths. Every great wine has its season. We sip claret in Spring, burgundy in chill October. I have no favourite wine and no great poet who takes pride of place. The finest hock, say a Stein-oerg Cabinet of 1868, or a Chateau d'Yquem, should be drunk sparingly. If I were dying of thirst on one of the dog-days, I should prefer a cool tankard of lager to either of them. If he **were** alive, George Saintsbury might agree with me; and so would the Elia of our day, E. V. Lucas. I would summon E. V.

from the shades to compile my anthology, but he might refuse to return to Upsidonia.

3

Upsidonia——/

My old friend, Archibald Marshall, gave me a copy of his book, thus entitled, in 1920. I have all his novels dealing with the backbone of England, the squirarchy. What would he write about the Upsidonia of 1945? The squires may have had their day; but the yeomen of England will take their place. Upsidonia to me means a passing phase; out of chaos emerges order. For a time, certain controls must be maintained till they die of their own dear officiousness. Civil servants, it is to be hoped, will treat us with less incivility. I have no faith whatever in State Autocracy. I have no faith in making people virtuous by Act of Parliament. We have fought hard for more than five years to preserve freedom of speech and action. If such freedom is withheld for another year or two, we shall value it the more highly when it burgeons afresh.

At the moment, a duchess in our West Country is doing her own cooking. Her husband, who told me this, never mentioned Upsidonia; he accepted good-humouredly one item in our colossal Bill of Pains and Penalties. Two old gentlewomen are alone in a big house keeping it in order. No complaints drop from their lips. Lovely gardens arc overgrown with weeds. The herbaceous border in my garden, once the pride of my heart, displays nothing but cabbages. The only gardener I have left is more upset over this than I am. Even as Nansen and Shackleton at South and North Poles let fancy dwell upon the meals they would enjoy when they returned home, so my fancy dwells upon the larkspur, the hollyhocks, Canterbury bells, phlox and imperial salvia who will come back to their border. In fine, I live in the garden of my dreams. Never again shall I keep servants to wait on servants. . . .

An acrobat once said to me: "If you wish to enjoy standing on your feet, try standing on your head." It is true, so a champion skater informed me at Wengen, that certain brilliant feats—such as achieving a perfect circle facing the onlookers—cannot be achieved without (at first) suffering great pain in the hip joints. Accordingly, I cheer myself up with the thought that living in Upsidonia, painful though it is, may be

a blessing in disguise. I regard this book as a causerie between the man I am and the man I would like to be; so I shall set down without apology what drifts into my headpiece. As I write, the watch on the Rhine has degenerated into a fantastic wash-out. Eisenhower has told us that the enemy is "whipped." If this be a fact, it has not provoked pealings of church bells or salvos. It has provoked from our sedentary sentimentalists wails of anguish. Yesterday a lady drank tea with us. To our amazement (and amusement) she spoke of the heroes of our Air Force as "butchers." We were making war, so she protested vehemently, on civilians; and it was no excuse to plead in rebuttal that our women and children had been bombed by the enemy, that the Boche began the bombing. I hasten to add that she appeared to me to be a charming and intelligent woman. I held my tongue, being her host. As so often happens, what I should have liked to say to her blew into my head long after she had left us. She spared us the cliché "Two Wrongs don't make a Right," but she sincerely believed that it was a Christian duty to turn the cheek to the smiter. Somebody did point out that our bombing of factories, bridges and railway yards had saved countless lives of our troops. To this she turned an indifferent ear; she had heard that before. I ought to have said that modern war is indisputably war on civilians. No war can be waged without public opinion behind it. Eighty million Germans wanted war. The Prussian military caste in Hunland is a small minority. A colossal majority acclaimed war and coveted world dominion. Civilians wanted war. Goering was sure that he could terrorize our civilians when he blitzed Bath and Coventry. And to-day the misbegotten Goebbels affirms that we are stabbing Germany in the back! The *Hcrrenvolk* are, it would seem, a law unto themselves, the holy fatherland became Upsidonia when a "bloodthirsty guttersnipe" was accepted as the Fuehrer, and their Fuehrer, standing on his swollen head, has turned the whole world upside-down.

4

I lay no claim to the severely critical faculty. If, for instance, I was challenged to dissect a sonnet beloved by me, possibly for sentimental reasons, I should feel that I was cutting up my own

flesh and blood. There are famous passages in our poets which I cannot enjoy, their ethers escape me. To some men poetry is anathema. Frith, the painter, was commandeered to take the Iron Duke round the galleries at Burlington House. They paused before a Turner. Under the picture was one line of poetry. The hero of Waterloo glared at that: "Good God!" he growled, "poetry," and passed on. I should be glad if some reader of these pages could tell me the line beneath the picture.

A poet is a wizard, a spell-binder. Stories told in verse, such as *Aurora Leigh*, could be better told in prose, but I do not apply this to the *Iliad* or the *Acneid*, or to our Border Ballads. These, of course, were not read. They were passed from lip to lip. Not long ago a young man of considerable parts assured me that de Musset was not a poet. Then I cited one line, which I heard first from a Breton peasant, a young girl. We were standing on firm sands, watching the wavelets. She murmured:

Oix la mer vient mourir sur une plage endormie.

My young friend had never heard this line, but he admitted that it was poetry. "The Song of the Banjo" cannot be compared with "The Ode to the West Wind," but one line, I submit, establishes Kipling as a poet:

The lean locked ranks go roaring down to die.

This line and the line from the Frenchman arc linked together in my memory.

I knew Henry Newbolt but slightly. We met once, I think, at John Murray's house in Albemarle Street, in the room where Byron's diaries were tossed on to the fire. I wish that I had asked him to speak of the appeal of poetry to the ordinary man or woman. What marks would he have accorded to rhyme apart from reason? We speak of the rhythm of life. Often we are unaware of it. Pope, as a baby, lisped in numbers; all children learn nursery rhymes. But the prose of life, as soon as we leave the nursery, grows increasingly omnipotent. And then, maybe, as still evening creeps on we go back: we feel once more the touch of a vanished hand and the kind voices of long ago.

My doctor, a canny Scot, admonishes me to take things easily, a counsel of perfection to any young man. He raised

a smile when he went on: "A patient of mine with a dicky heart played three rounds of golf, missed a two-foot putt on the last green, and died." Well, well, it was a timely giving-up of the ghost. He didn't linger on to be a nuisance to himself and everybody else. Certainly a short life is not necessarily a merry one; and is there anything more pathetic than forced merriment? Soldiers bound for the Front sing gaily; their sweet-hearts kissing them good-bye smile. This is as it should be, but it's piteous to behold.

Old age ought to take things easily. I try to do so in an **old** house that has a tranquil atmosphere. I was conscious of this when I first saw it, and later on I attempted to describe my *Golden House*, because thousands of sunsets seemed to radiate out of its stones, stones quarried (so I learnt) not in Ham, as many suppose, but near Bath. Bath stone turns grey. Before the war I chuckled because I was within a fifteen minutes' walk of a Dover sole, but, looking from my windows, I might be in the depths of Arcadia. The broad terrace below the courtyard, with a Roman bath at one end of it and a Flying Mercury at the other, was (and is) a parade. Up and down it walked Pope, Sheridan and other giants of old. In my water garden there is a grotto. Here a daughter of the house kept tryst with a lover of lower social degree. A Roman father discovered this and whirled the pair asunder. What became of the man I don't know, but the maid (I'm assured) died of a broken heart, and nightingales—so the pretty legend runs—refused to sing in the grove. I was warned that the ghost of the maiden still haunts the grotto, which enshrines a "wishing well," but I have not been privileged to see her. Indeed, I fear me that the story is apocryphal. . . .

However, I love Bath because the resurrection of the dead is no outworn clause in my creed. We have Lord Chesterfield's testimony : " Yes; I'm here in Bath, but I died two years ago," or words to that effect. Whenever I stroll from Brock Street into Royal Crescent, I am tempted to raise my hat at the corner, because I vow that I do see with sharpest definition the noble head of George Saintsbury bending over his desk busily writing. Oddly enough I cannot see either Nelson or Charles Dickens; these two giants had no love for the Queen City. After death **it is reasonable to suppose that we do come back to " pleasant fields traversed so oft in life's morning march when the spirit**

was young." Does the essential spirit in us ever grow old? I have in this room the original drawing by Riley, in charcoal, of the picture which hangs in the Luxembourg, *Le Conteur du Legende*. The Bretons used to believe in *Les Revenants*, who, so they assured me, came back to their own hearths. At night the *triple*d was taken from smouldering cinders so that it might afford cooler sitting.

When Bath was blitzed, on the night of April 27th, 1942, a bomb fell within two hundred yards of my bedroom. I slipped a coat over my pyjamas and hurried to the end of the terrace. The whole city seemed to be ablaze, doomed to annihilation. A jagged bit of shrapnel (now on my desk) whizzed past my head, so I returned to the house. It seemed incredible that such a catastrophe could be; it became a personal affair. Some windows were shattered. In our basement were neighbours who had fled from their small houses. I did not join them; I went back to bed. If I had to go down, I preferred to go down—warm. This, I reflected, was the abomination of desolation. My first reaction was humiliating. I lay conscience-stricken, because my sympathies had merely trickled to Coventry. Now it was my turn. Millions of my fellow-countrymen must have felt as I did. A sage put it neatly: "Our sense of a calamity is in inverse ratio to our distance from it." I crawled like a snail to the conviction that Omniscience inflicted on us a world war to bring home to the individual the claims of others. Next day, early on Monday morning, I surveyed the destroyed areas, still smouldering. Most of the houses built by the Woods had been spared. Acres of slums were wiped out. Already the City Fathers were vouchsafed a vision of a better Bath. One of them predicted lugubriously that it would take fifty years to complete the restoration. I told him that San Francisco, after the earthquake and fire, had risen from its ashes in six years.

To-morrow is Easter Sunday. Our enemy is crumbling. Twenty millions in the Reich are homeless. They must have lost faith in Corporal Schicklgruber. Some have read Norman Angell, scoffing at his affirmation that war no longer pays. What are they thinking now?

This should be a happy Easter for vis.

5

When we bought our small domain in 1927, my brother and I planted out thousands of daffodils. Wild daffies go on blooming year after year. This year the plants appear to be healthy; but there are few blooms. My little granddaughter suggests that the flowers refuse to come out because we are at war. When I expressed incredulity, she said: "Maybe they'll be lovely next year after a rest-cure." The primroses are more atriotic; their enchanting crop never fails. We are likely to ave many tulips. Weeds have killed our naiads of the vale. Herewith I present a trade secret. Flowers will live much longer if at night you take the trouble to place them in fresh water *up to their necks*. I experimented with two lots of daffodils. Those who received nightly treatment lasted about twice as long. Does this apply to roses? " If customers knew what I have told you," said a florist to me, " we should lose a serious percentage of our profits."

Bless him! Wait. . . . It wasn't a him, but a her.

It is said that women have keener, more acquisitive business instincts than men. Probably a silly generalization. It may be true of housewives who are constrained to make sixpence masquerade as a shilling. And that, especially in wartime, wears them to skin and bone. Some of our girls in factories and munitions works may be sorry that the war is coming to an end. The wives and mothers who have kept the home nres burning with a minimum ration of coal, who stand patiently in queues awaiting their turn to be served, who wear shabby clothes because their own coupons are expended on their children, who listen in to the good Mrs. Buggins with the forlorn hope that the meals may be more " tasty "—these ministering angels have my warm affection and sympathy. All of them are Dames of the Empire. In the Utopia which is to succeed Upsidonia I submit that good cooks should be generously remunerated. A great chef deserves a knighthood at least. Why should a brewer be made a peer? Because he brews good ale? Oh, no. Because as a rich man he can swell party funds.

A vaulting ambition assails me. I should like this book to please (or at least interest) the old who are still young at heart and the young who were born old. Extremes would meet over the common wish to be alone with their own thoughts. The

war has marooned so many of us. Our car is jacked-up; and so am I. In pre-war days I shared with Thomas Moore and my old friend, Andre Simon (*Que Dieu vous garde* > *Andri*), the conviction that sophisticated folk could not live without dining. To-day, at night, I sup off two meagre courses. Where are the lordly dishes of yesteryear? Shall I live long enough to see once more a Stilton cheese, caviar or a *croust* of *foie gras*? Nevertheless, after a frugal supper, I dine on my memories, the good creatures are gone, "glimmering through the dream of things that were." Byron loved solitude; not, as he tells us, the solitude found in a crowd with "none to bless us, none whom we can bless," but the solitude of the godly eremite "such as on lonely Athos may be seen." The adjective challenges attention. Was there a godly side to the author of *Don Juan*? Did it reveal itself when he wrote *Childe Harold*? I think it did. At the end, when he died in Greece, it may have triumphed over the flesh.

When my maternal grandfather died, in 1881, my grandmother was left alone in a large house. My mother, a widow, lived with her children in another large house. I suggested to Mother that Grannie might be invited to live with us or, if she preferred it, we could live with her. In France and Italy, I pointed out, three generations of a family lived and died under the same roof. I was twenty at the time; wiser in my own conceit than I have ever been since. Our Lady of Many Surprises (as we called our mother) said: "Has it occurred to you that old people are sufficient unto themselves?" It had not. I gaped at her, knowing that my grandmother, when her liver functioned normally, was a most sociable person, graciously so, albeit an Olympian. Still, she had never complained of feeling lonely to me, or to anybody else. So I gulped down a fact, and left it to simmer in my too shallow mind. Then my mother went on gently: "It's so good for me to be alone sometimes." This was a blow over the heart. Having nothing to say, I said it. It did occur to me that good manners made my mother lay down a book with a smile when we bounced in on her; she was the most approachable of women. Invariably she appeared to welcome us and all visitors, but I had a glimpse of her happily alone with a happy past. Tennyson assures us that "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," but to me a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering unhappy things.

Longfellow wrote: " **There** is **no** greater sorrow than **to be mindful of the happy** time in misery." Self-pity makes us miserable.

6

Yesterday **was** Good Friday. My daughter provided hot-cross buns made at home, toothsome delicacies. Josephine, my granddaughter, aged eleven, ate two at breakfast. Then she posed an awkward question: " Aren't these buns too good for Good Friday? " Undeniably they were——! The child went on: " You told me that my grannie wore black on Good Friday and fasted. I've feasted." I was not present. My daughter wriggled out of an impasse by diverting attention to an engraving hanging awry on the wall. Josephine was told to put it straight. When she returned to the table, she was invited to say grace. My daughter wants to know what I would have said. I should have laughed shamelessly and held my tongue. The two-a-penny cross buns of my childhood were not toothsome. As children we had to attend the three-hour service in the church at Hursley which was restored by Keble with the handsome profits accruing from the sales of *The Christian Year*. After this too long ordeal, we sat down to salt cod and egg sauce, followed by milky rice! Our thoughts dwelt upon the Easter Feast Day. An erudite parson told me that the Early Christians fasted for physical not ascetical reasons. Abstinence was enforced on the body to make it healthier. Then, and not till then, it became a temple fit for the spirit. I accepted this as convincing. But I am not scholar enough to question my informant's scholarship. I should like to have a brief talk with Mahatma Gandhi. I regard him as the world's champion faster and Pacifist. Shakespeare was a valiant trencherman; Bernard Shaw is a vegetarian. Has diet affected their plays? Shaw would deal with this theme obliquely, possibly with his tongue in his cheek. Fasting, as a whole-time job, would provoke Homeric laughter from the Swan of Avon. Anyway, till the end of Time, uncivil war will rage between ideals of the spirit and lusts of the flesh.

7

We have wallowed in a warm, sunny, windless **March**. **To-day, on Easter Eve, a wind is blowing; so the month may make**

its exit as a roaring lion. I apprehend a cold April, behaving like a raucous witch. The Clerk of the Weather is not devoid of humour. The Gulf Stream maliciously changes its course. It's not surprising that we prattle about our English weather, but I love it in all its capricious moods and tenses. When I lived in Southern California we averaged some three hundred almost cloudless days in each year! But we suffered from the merciless plague of dust assailing mucous membranes. Catarrh was chronic, which became a family joke. A girl asked my brother Arthur if he played the piano, he replied: "I play on my nasal catarrh." My catarrh vanished when I returned to England.

My daughter has just told me that yesterday (Good Friday) the local fair, with its merry-go-rounds and joy-wheels, did good business. Is this a sign of the times? Ought I to be shocked? I'm a not too miserable sinner, but I should have been shocked twenty years ago. In wartime we have to live as best we can. It would be a penance to me to sit on a joy-wheel. But the fun of the fair is honest fun. Alphonse Daudet preferred funerals to weddings because to him they were more amusing. Every Irishman would sooner attend a wake than a wedding. Had I gone to this fair yesterday, I believe that I should have felt a better Christian if I saw the children enjoying themselves, a mental and spiritual tonic. Eighty years ago the saintly Keble shocked many Hampshire squires when he encouraged the young men in Hursley to play cricket on Sunday. His own squire backed him up.

If it be true that bores are the first to be bored when listening to the small talk of others, it is permissible to affirm that those who are too easily shocked are themselves shocking.

**This world is all a fleeting show
For man's illusion given.**

Thank you, Mr. Moore. "Illusion" is excellent, so much less rancorous than delusion. Nevertheless an illusion, according to the lexicographers, is a false show. Shakespeare says that the devil's illusions might deceive a monk. They did not deceive St. Dunstan. War is a devil's illusion. Smelfungus might contend that all illusions are bad. I'm sure Moore did not think so. Gaily he left fools to be happy with their follies. I cherish certain illusions. I rejoice in my short sight, because

nearly every woman's skin appears fair to me, because a slightly blurred landscape does not reveal imperfections, because I can read small print without spectacles. To man and maid first love is a celestial illusion. To a cynic the wine of life is corked.

I find that illusion was a name given to a thin and transparent tulle, but I cannot find corroboration of this in Littre. Littre cites Blaise Pascal, who flourished in the seventeenth century. "La vie humaine n'est qu'une illusion perpetuelle." Did Moore crib his line from Pascal; and if he did, what of it? Christian scientists hug to their hearts the illusion that there is no such thing as matter. A mirage, to a desert traveller, is another celestial illusion. What would childhood be, or second childhood, without its illusions?

8

I am now approaching the end of my first chapter, which raises the question "How long should a chapter be?" One of Mr. Punch's learned clerks tells me that five thousand words are enough. Addison disdains chapters. So does EHa. His essays are short; Macaulay's are long. There can be no median rule. It is admitted that a first chapter should whet the reader's appetite for more. When I reviewed novels I glanced at the first chapter and the last. If these pleased me I set about my task with gusto. Long ago a publisher and the manager of a famous theatre asked me (in the same year) to read scripts. A strong tincture of Scots' blood served me faithfully. Cannily I refused a beguiling invitation, distrusting (very rightly) my own judgements. It would be damnable to turn down a winner, more damnable to sponsor a "flop." Had John Murray handed me the script of *Gone with the Wind*, I am sure that I should have urged him not to publish it. It dealt at great length with a war which was forgotten by us. And yet, when I read the novel in book form, it held my interest from the first page to the last. To pass judgement on plays exercises no paramount critical faculty. The professional reader must know what the fickle public wants. Charles Frohman said to me: "A play may be worth producing if it is bad enough." I know that I should have turned down *The Bells*. But there was a superlative part in it for Henry Irving. To him the part was greater than the whole.

My wares, such as they **are**, may be condemned **by** youthful readers as "Pale tunes irresolute, blown from a **rotten flute**." Who wrote this? I don't know. It has stuck in my memory. A lady, a stranger, wrote to me the other day: "I wish you would give the names of the poets you cite." I wish I could. Another correspondent asked me to translate into English all French passages. Again, I wish I could. The *esprit Gaulois* is too often untranslatable.

I kiss my first chapter—good-bye. It has served its purpose so far as I am concerned. It amused me to write it. I shall tackle the second chapter after Easter is over, thinking of it as an Easter egg. When we were children my mother gicately thrilled us by taking us to a pretty glen. We boiled a kettle over a camp-fire. Whilst our old Nannie was laying out a scrumptious tea—there was a cake called St. Leonard's favourite—my mother hid the Easter eggs in an adjoining hedge. After tea we set gaily off to find them. *We failed to find one!* Two small boys had watched my mother. They purloined the eggs. . . .

My Easter egg may be addled.

CHAPTER TWO

MY DAUGHTER HAS THE IMPUDENCE TO POKE FUN AT ME. I had told her this morning that I was at work on a new book, not a novel.

"What's it about?" she asked.

"It's going to be a roundabout; a cosy chat with myself."

"Oh! When you talk to yourself are you at the same time a good listener?"

"The best in the world."

She winked at me.

As a matter of fact, I shall not listen too attentively to what I have to say. God forbid! I shall ask questions which I cannot answer. Let my readers answer them if they can. Here's one. After the war shall we have a Coalition government, a Conservative autocracy, or the iron rule of Socialists? The Sons (and Daughters) of Labour favour bureaucracy. They talk of government by the People, for the People, but the State is to be omnipotent. The tail will never wag the dog, and the dog may play dog in the manger. Whatever happens we shall, as usual, muddle through. Another question: are we going to feed the Germans who have robbed Europe of food? The Germans told us that they intended to feed themselves if the rest of the world starved. They will be the first to whine for rations. I shall not be too unhappy if they don't get them. What whets my curiosity is another teaser. With the fall of the Nazis, is there one man left capable not so much of statesmanship but steersmanship? Is there a pilot to take the helm? Can three alien pilots, the Big Three, work together as a Trinity in Unity? Can they steer a dismantled vessel away from the reefs?

Once more, the war news is fantastically magnificent.

But we had for luncheon, cheese (not from Cheddar but Canada), broccoli, potatoes in their jackets, and stewed rhubarb. No complaints! I muttered William of Wykeham's short grace, "Benedictus, benedicatur," and started this chapter with good appetite.

Our one tulip tree is in full bloom, but the leaves come after

the flowers. Can a botanist explain this? Ichabod is inscribed on our rock garden. The rocks—which came from Cheddar Gorge—are hidden. The gentians are all dead. I grip this opportunity to advise lovers of rock gardens not to plant in them too lusty heaths, junipers and that vagabond, cotoneaster. Valerian, white or red, is a corroder of stone. We were fools to make our rock garden so big. Had we kept it in perfect order, it would have exacted the undivided attention of one able-bodied man. My brother and I loved the cuddle-me-quicks, the pansies. We took immense pains to find them snug harbourage. There are none left; they were smothered by their ruthless neighbours. The more you prune cotoneaster, the ranker it grows. I shall make a sustained effort to (i) root out marauders and to plant (2) inexpensive little flowering plants in gracious curves. The rocks encrust themselves with mosses and lichens. In the woodland garden there are seven pools which must be restocked with troutlets. These pools are too cold for goldfish. An aggressive heron, during these war years, has gorged himself upon them. He was such a splendid bird that I lacked heart to shoot him. We have lost kingfishers and woodpeckers. . . .

I touch my cap to the City Fathers of Bournemouth. The rock gardens below the Pavilion have been kept in perfect order.

I have no salute for certain Bathonians who are eager to turn Bath into another Bournemouth. Middle-aged and elderly residents are horrified, querulously so. However, our Progressives, as they label themselves, are still in their salad days, unable to realize that progress exacts a sense of direction denied as yet to them. I am informed that the Younger Wood is writhing in his grave, because his monument, our superb Royal Crescent, may become Government offices. I am one of the trustees of the Bath Preservation Trust; a meeting has been called to consider the future of Royal Crescent. Long may it remain as it is! Bath is a national and international possession. We depend gratefully upon visitors, especially overseas visitors, to secure our increasing prosperity. These visitors would keep away if drastic changes took place. An American said to me: "Your city, sir, is a museum piece." It is. We cannot compete commercially with Bournemouth, a Mecca for trippers. We can deal delightfully with slum properties sloping to the placid Avon; we can have a Lido **for**

our children; we can build a theatre to the memory of Sarah Siddons; we can rehabilitate the Assembly Rooms. Thus far—and not much farther.

The sweet fall of last year was not sweet to me. In September, at Sherborne, I visited the Almshouses to read a letter written by that bold sea-rover, Sir Walter Raleigh. With a copy of it in my hand, with my mind back in Elizabethan days, I failed to notice that the last step of a stone staircase was inconspicuously shallow, a veritable death-trap. I crashed. All the tendons above my knee-cap were ruptured. That night my right leg was enclosed in plaster of Paris from ankle to hip. An old friend, the Chairman of the Sherborne Hospital, Sir Hubert Medlycott, played Good Samaritan. I was comfortably installed in the hospital. Next day I was under the knife of an orthopaedic surgeon for fifty minutes. I came back to consciousness to find my leg again in the plaster bandage. Ten days later I returned home. The journey was too much for me. A dangerously high temperature was lowered by that miraculous drug, M. and B. I was admonished to make haste to get well very slowly. Within ten days I believed myself to be in the ring again. This tale of woe which I am inflicting on my readers is not finished. Late in November I adventured to Bournemouth. By this time the accursed plaster had been discarded. I was able to walk without crutches. Three days later Nemesis overtook me. I awoke in the middle of the night, not in acute pain, but aware that an iron band was encircling my chest and back and that it was tightening its pressure. A doctor was summoned, who had to give me two shots of morphia. On the morrow a heart specialist took tracings of my heart's action. Not much action. Indisputably a clot, probably from my game leg, had assailed the source of life. *Cardiac thrombosis*——/ For five weeks I was not allowed to budge from my bed; I was forbidden to lift a heavy book. Why do I set this down? Because I wish to dwell briefly upon my rejuvenating convalescence. Indeed, I dare to affirm that at my age life became incomparably sweeter after such bludgeonings. If you want to feel on top of the world, you must get under it. I like to think of my five weeks' durance vile as a rest cure. When I took the air, I could sympathize with our prisoners of **war** released from bondage. I couldn't see the white cliffs of Dover, but I could see the Needles, and never was visibility

so enchantingly good. St. Aldhelm's venerable **head** was encircled with a halo, the merry twinkling smile of **the Channel** was a benediction. War rations and the first tankard of swipes were nectar and ambrosia. I took my first walk. **All the** young girls smiled at me; so I said to my companion: "**Why** do they smile?" My companion laughed. "Don't you **know** that you are smiling at them?" Then I recalled a visit **to the** Bath United Hospital. The expression of cheerful serenity on the faces of the patients had amazed me. But I know **now that** they were rejoicing to find themselves alive. . . .

2

Two things stand like stone.

Kindness in another's trouble, courage in one's own.

If kindness is the king virtue, generosity is not far from **the** throne. During my convalescence humble neighbours sent me pots of jam from cupboards nearly as bare as Mrs. Hubbard's. I was snowed in with letters of congratulation. It took nearly a fortnight to answer them. To my confounding I had no stomach for novel-writing. My imagination was palsied. Speaking as a writer, I have scant patience with the dilettante advice to wait for the inspiration of the pen. If coy Fancy turns from us, she must be wooed. She murmurs: "Whistle to me, my lad." Sailors whistle for favouring gales. Nevertheless, I whistled in vain. What I wrote I cast as rubbish to the wastepaper basket. My pipe, after months of abstention from tobacco, was more complaisant. Barrie told me that Nicotina was an unfailing source of inspiration to him. I was idly smoking my pipe when the temptation to write this **book** assailed me. Of course promise will outstrip performance, as invariably it does. If a long talk with myself is boring to others, it won't bore me. If it does, to the Tiber with it!

Jerome wrote a book entitled *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, No idle man could have written it. Hazlitt never ate the bread (or crusts) of idleness, but he cherished a **rancorous** prejudice against living authors, a chink in his **armour**. Time may have dimmed his lustre as a critic, as an essayist he remains *hors concours*. To-day reviewers are **too kindly**, remiss in their treatment of technique, too eager perhaps **to welcome** the novice, **the** mere **amateur**, fearful of discouragement. Also

it is possible to "arrive" (travelling third-class) without the capacity of taking infinite pains.

Exciting though the war news is, it astounds me that the female of the species seldom listens in to it. She prefers the stuff ladled out to the troops by Ensa! And she cannot understand why such fare is unpalatable to me. I hasten to add that I'm so glad it is enjoyed by our workers. They want to laugh, and how heartily they do, at the old, old jokes even about mothers-in-law. Their laughter makes me laugh, so let's have plenty of it. We are racing to Berlin. White flags are fluttering in the Ruhr. The pretty *m'ddchen* are willing to kiss our Tommies, but this time Tommy is not "having any." And yet he, stout fellow, speaks of the Boche as Fritzzy. Do the goose-steppers speak of our Field-Marshal as Monty? Apropos, one of the best of the B.B.C. announcers fails to pronounce Montgomery as Burns did. Burns rhymes Montgomery with "thrumly." I looked out the honoured name in a pronouncing dictionary. The "gom" in it is pronounced "gum." Baden Powell told me that the mispronunciation of his two names merely amused him. Nearly all Americans say Marlborough, instead of Mawlbrough. Does that worry our Prime Minister? What's in a name, anyhow? Still, I winced the other day, when I was loudly hailed as "Mr. Bitchell." Galsworthy, who was in my house at Harrow, pronounced his name as it is written, not Gawlsworthy. It is, however, significant that famous names are changed by common consent. Montague, less than a hundred years ago, was pronounced Muntague.

Our pessimists are ever with us. Often they appear to be cheerful souls, hail-fellow-well-met. Last Saturday I was hurrying down Widcombe Hill when a neighbour accosted me: "Where are you going in such a hurry?" I replied: "To Berlin." Light died out of his eyes. "You won't get there," he growled, "till about this time next year." Poor fellow! When I reached the Great Western station, I was told that the London train had come in with locked doors, packed beyond capacity. Five hundred Bathonians were left on the platform! This may be exaggeration. But happy optimists must have become pessimists when the train sped on without them. Fancy's sprites, who work for me, suggest that a pessimist is an *agent provocateur*, I must play with this. Yes; he is. He provokes, not deliberately, wrath or laughter, but he

begets, confound him, diabolical misgivings; he taints the ambient breeze. A pessimist, if he reaches heaven, will sow doubts in the minds of angels. The crystal sea will lose its clarity, the golden crowns will become leaden. After leaving my neighbour, I mended my pace. I decided not to hurry to Berlin, where there is no Adlon Hotel to receive me. Instead I visualized myself as a member of my neighbour's household. Is he a wet blanket to his wife and family? I don't know him well enough to answer this. Then a comical thought brightened me. All pessimists are in plaster of Paris, horribly cribb'd. Plaster of Paris on a leg is at best a grievous discomfort. If it is too tight, it may start septic poisoning. It causes constant irritation. You can't scratch yourself, so you scratch others. A pessimist makes this world a purgatory to his family, particularly in wartime. If I were a gynaecologist and a patient came to me with little wrong with her except a jaded, harassed face, I should say after examination: "You are organically sound. I know what ails you; your husband is a pessimist. This disease is incurable, so I advise you to plan the perfect murder and be quit of him. My fee, honourably earned, dear Madam, is five guineas."

I was infected by this gentleman's ill humours. I returned to my easy chair a prey to uneasy thoughts. Presently another neighbour came in to wind the clocks. We have at least twenty clocks in this house, and I pay this neighbour a too-small annual fee to keep the lot in order. Two of these clocks, bought by my grandfather a hundred years ago, keep the best time. My neighbour, like myself, had been seriously ill, laid by the heels for two months. So we congratulated each other. "You look much better than I expected," I said to him. He replied: "Well, sir, I'm bucked because the war will be over before this week is out." This made me chuckle, because I had never labelled him optimist. He was surprised when I thanked him. Unhappily, he is a bachelor; but he has a sister who adores him.

3

I am reading Aldous Huxley's latest novel *Time Must Have a Stop*. This title is taken from Shakespeare:

**But thought's the slave of life and life, time's fool,
And time, that takes survey of all the world
Must have a stop.**

I have never met the Huxley brothers. I knew their father when he was editor of *The Cornhill*, the magazine to which thirty years ago I was a constant contributor. I left the Athenaeum before Aldous became a member. The brilliance of this novel is too dazzling for old eyes; I ought to read it wearing sun-spectacles. It may have been written under California's cloudless skies. The narrative is superb; the dialogue slightly obscure, too deliberately clever and (in spots) unclean. The author seems too eager to *épater le bourgeois*. His presentment of Eustace Barnack is absolutely convincing. I thank whatever gods there be that it is not my duty to review this novel, because to me there is little or no virtue in virtuosity. The study of Sebastian, the little "non Anglus sed angelus" I found enthralling. I have bought the book and shall read it again. But I am concerned here with Shakespeare's lines, which to me do not ring true. Thought surely is the guardian angel of life, not its slave. Sebastian at seventeen was the slave of his wanton thoughts, and so was his uncle Eustace. Was Plato the slave of his thoughts, or any other of the sages? Isaiah enjoined the uprighteous man to forsake his thoughts. To Keats thought came like a full-blown rose. Pope writes: "And what he greatly thought, he nobly dared." In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare tells us that "thought is free." How then can it become a slave? I wouldn't give a penny for slavish thoughts.

It is true that our poets deal with thoughts even as the spirit moves them. I have looked up the passage in *Henry IV*. Hotspur speaks as he lies a-dying. A dying man has no time to consider his last words.

After writing the preceding lines, I was about to tackle an easier theme, but I found my thoughts enslaving me. I wanted to shoo them away from idle conjecture, and perhaps I was pleased with myself because I had found Shakespeare contradicting himself. Why shouldn't he? Life is a series of contradictions. We love and we hate; we are active in the daytime and passive at night (if we sleep soundly). In fine, life is a cocktail: which recalls a story I heard in New York sixty years ago. Have I told it elsewhere? If so, it bears repeating, so I shall snatch the chestnut out of the smouldering embers of memory. A son of Gaul strode into the Hoffman bar and demanded a *Contradiction*.

"Contradiction," said the bartender. "Say, that's a **new** one on me."

The Frenchman protested. "*Mon ami*, it ees the gr-r-rand American drink, your most marvellous aperitif."

"Is that so? If you can tell me how to mix it, I'll be grateful."

"*Eh bien!* You put in wheesky to make it strong and water to make it weak, sugar to make it sweet and lemon to make it sour. You call it hot stuff, but you ice it."

"You're asking for a cocktail."

I wish that Shakespeare had made it plainer that Hotspur had been the lifelong slave of his ambitions. Tear the text from its context and it is a puzzle to the groundlings. We are slaves to some pestering thoughts which can be expelled from our minds if we refuse to entertain them. Our acts are "our fateful angels" (good and bad), "which walk by us" to the end.

Marconi was reputed to have invented a contraption (to be carried in the pocket) which like a dictaphone recorded the thoughts of any person with whom you talked. Gossip had it that a kindly man destroyed the infernal machine. I should enjoy attending an up-to-date revival of W. S. Gilbert's *Palace of Truth*, played first in 1870. I was nine at the time, but I recall my mother speaking of it as rare entertainment. Gilbert did not keep his thoughts to himself. When I joined the Garrick Club youthful members were in awe of him. He was exceptionally kind to me, but I never heard him speak of his work. It was difficult to believe that he wrote the *Bab Ballads*, and his quarrel so late in life with Sullivan was a tragedy.

Josephine has paid me a visit. She tells me that she likes to talk seriously, and she expects me to solve her problems, although I assure her that I cannot solve my own. When—as happened the other day—she wants to know if she can look forward to having a quiverful of babies without being married, I treacherously enjoin her to talk that over with her mother. She owns a large white buck rabbit. We have lately bought a doe. We hope that Lucina will do her duty. Two hutches are on the terrace, side by side. Josephine knows that we expect Nature to take her course, but she asked if Mrs. Bunny could have babies merely by looking at Mr. Bunny. "We must wait and see," said her mother.

Josephine has listened to a sermon dealing with Faith. Faith inspired her to walk across one of the bigger pools in the garden. To her dismay she walked into it instead of over

" I — I got wet," she told me.

Had I laughed or smiled she would have run out of the room. I made the only reply: " You hadn't faith enough."

" Jesus walked on the sea."

" You could stroll up and down the Avon, if—if you had His faith."

" But I have," she persisted. " That's what bothers me. I was alone; I was full of faith. If I'm the child of Jesus, I can do what He did. Ought I to try again ? "

" When you're older," I suggested. Could I tell her that there is no faith greater than that of a child? I could not. To my relief she smiled.

" I know what went wrong——"

" Tell me——"

" Satan tempted me to take off my shoes and stockings, 'cos I knew I'd get scolded if they got wet. But I didn't take 'em off. But Satan was there."

I let it go at that. When bad weather kept our airmen on the ground, the child believed that Satan sent the rain. I make no doubt he did.

Interruptions are the unhappy lot of all writers, but somehow I have in the fullness of time trained myself to accept them philosophically and now and again gratefully. After Josephine left me, I was allowing my thoughts to enslave me, when I was summoned to the telephone which I refuse to have in my room.

" Hello? "

" Hello, Rip van Winkle."

" You've got the wrong number. Who is speaking? "

" Who is speaking? You've been asleep for a hundred years and can't recall my voice."

It was the voice of a friend whom I hadn't seen since pre-war days. I withhold a name honoured in and out of the theatre. He asked if friendship would survive the strain of lunching with him at his hotel in which he declared the food to be filthy. The telephone is a necessity in every house, but I detest it because questions must be answered. And too often the lie is not forthcoming. I had to force myself to speak hospitably. I

asked him to have luncheon with me. What could I offer him? Memories of little fiestas in London overwhelmed me. Then I remembered happily that he preferred good wine to good food. In my sadly depleted cellar I am keeping for Victory Day (and after) a few noble and aged wines. I have one box of Corona de Corona cigars.

To my surprise I found myself speaking with pre-war joviality: "Pot-luck will be your portion, but I can decant a Laffitte of no famous vintage which will precede a Latour of 1920. I can promise you a middlin' cup of coffee, a noble cigar, and a small tot of '78 cognac."

"Bless you! I'll be dar, honey."

It's such fun to set down that, war or no war, we had a memorable meal. My daughter soared to the heights. She and our little cook prepared a golden omelette worthy of Madame Poulard, a braised chicken, and a cherry tart. We finished the claret before we had two helpings of the tart. The adjuncts crowned the little feast. My guest declared himself to be back in the naughty nineties.

"This is a red-letter day," he said, when he took leave of us, "because we are confronted with communal kitchens and communal meals. Then we shall have to subsist on dreams of good wine, good food and good company."

Communal meals!

It is likely that such meals may be cooked by scores of civil servants who will not spoil the broth. I have lunched well and inexpensively in canteens such as may be found in that macrocosm, the Imperial Tobacco Company's huge factory at Bristol, where some eight thousand workers are well fed.

However, in this historic week-end, I refuse to allow myself to be depressed by imaginings that may be vain. Anyway, good company is better than good food, as this war has taught us. I can recall Victorian dinners, served on silver-gilt plates, which were intolerably dull. Society owes an incalculable debt to Edward VII, who limited the time of dinners to one hour.

Class distinctions are slowly vanishing. I would sooner dine with an amusing cook's son than a dull duke's son. But—an immense BUT—good manners can't mix with bad.

4

We are now agog with excitement as this historic Easter draws to a close, accepting the veil of security and suspense, wondering what will be revealed when it is rent in twain. But we have been warned to tighten belts already too tight. The pressure on the gastric region and the solar plexus is relent-

1088 • • •

I wish that Lloyd George could have lived to see the end of the war. He outlived the rancour engendered by his Limehouse Speeches. In 1913 (I think) I received an invitation to spend a week-end in Surrey. My hostess wrote: "I do hope you can come. Winston will be of the party and Lloyd George. If you don't want to meet the latter, come to us later on." I accepted the invitation. So much has been written in the past few days about the Wizard of Wales that I shall curb my wish to write more. I can testify to this: he was a spell-binder, a charmer, and the best of good companions. He disarmed criticism, however hostile, with a smile. He was the greatest Welshman since the Tudors. Being a Taffy he stole affection. Now he lies where he wished to be, in a wood above the stream where, as a boy, he caught tiddlers. . . .

I wonder what he thought of certain Welsh squireens whom I have envied, simple men sufficient unto themselves, self-supporting from the womb to the tomb. They live on tiny domains; they raise their own mutton, probably they brew their own small ale; they "raise" turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens. They have a little rough shooting and, possibly, stew-ponds. They are never without milk, cream and butter. I asked one patriarch if he ever left home. He replied disdainfully: "Never! Why should I?"

Well, well, he knew what a home could be.

If you can talk a little Welsh, you can make yourself understood in Brittany. The two provinces have much in common, including a belief in legend. There are innumerable Breton saints enshrined in a fat tome, entitled *Vie des Saintf*, by Albert Le Grand, which I bought fifty years ago in Vannes. A stout Bretonne beguiled me to buy it. When I said: "I shall never live long enough to read it," she replied: "Ma Doue, if you begin reading it, you will never stop." Out of all the saints there was only one whose name was familiar to me: Saint Yves

de Kcr-Martin, a learned monk who died in **1303**. If you attend *les petits pardons* you will glean surprising **information about these little saints**.

5

When I think of Wales I recall three names: Golden **Grove**, Stepside and the Vale of Red Roses. At Golden Grove Jeremy Taylor wrote some of his still-read works. Not far away **is** Merlin's Chair, where the wizard made his prophecies. Welshmen claim three Merlins, I suggest that Lloyd George is the fourth. I recall vaguely that in one of my books I spoke of an urge to write a novel about the Princess Nesta, fair but frail, another Helen of Troy, who married Gerald of Windsor in the reign of Henry I. The lady brought about very uncivil war in Wales, but we must forgive her because she was the grandmother of Giraldus Cambrensis. Read the cheap reprint of his works. I resisted the urge out of sheer indolence. Any writer of an historical novel worth reading must spend countless hours in Public Libraries sedulously accumulating material. I grant that he might be worse employed. I did it once and quoted Poe's raven: " Never more! "

Recalling my visits to the less well-known parts of the Principality, I find myself chuckling. After this war, tourists will find that much of Europe, particularly Germany, is unvisitable. They will betake themselves to beauty-spots in this inviolate isle. They will not be disappointed with what they can find **in** Pembrokeshire, the Little England beyond **Wales**.

•

CHAPTER THREE

WHATEVER THEIR COMPLEXIONS MAY BE (from azure blue to deepest scarlet) our politicians seem to be agreed that the children of the ordinary Man in the Street must be better educated. It is also agreed that there are not enough schoolmasters to undertake a job of paramount importance. Good teachers are the rarest of birds. I look back upon the masters at my three prep-schools and at Harrow. I think of what my education (if you can call it that) cost in hard cash. More than ^2,000! Out of, say roughly, thirty teachers, I can recall only four at most who did their duty by me and their duty to themselves. However, things have changed for the better since those ancient days. The cut-and-dried curriculum has been tried and found wanting. Great schoolmasters are the salt of the earth. Like poets, they are born not made. Arnold of Rugby was born in 1795 and died in 1842. Dean Stanley wrote of him as "Uniting a high religious standard, a strong imagination, and a living spirit of devotion with unaffected good sense, moral energy and sincerity. . . ."

What a tribute from a sometime pupil!

The son of another great schoolmaster (Henry Montague Butler, Master of Trinity), a son who was his father's pupil at Harrow (and a shining light in both classrooms and playing fields), wrote me a letter paying similar tribute to the "glorious doctor."

Personally speaking, I would sooner be a scavenger than a schoolmaster. It is easy to remove dirt from the street; it is a task for Hercules to cleanse and purify the minds of small boys. First and last it must be a labour of love. My sister Lucy wore herself out giving service to others. How I boiled with indignation when a clever woman said to me: "Oh, yes, she is a ministering angel, but, like all of us, she does what she likes to do; she gets a kick out of her unselfishness." I know this to be confoundingly true. My sister was a happy woman, a living spirit of devotion to others. We are told that schoolmasters in our humbler schools should be better paid. Not a doubt of it! And as much and more could be affirmed about parsons and country doctors.

As children we suffered under a red-headed **governess** whom **we** hated. She was energy incarnate. After her fashion (or fashioning) she was a just beast, brandishing an iron hand with never a velvet glove on it, a man's hand. She licked us into amorphous shape. She had a bluff, boisterous humour, and a jolly laugh. To her we were little animals. I can hear **her** rasping voice: "Come here, you animal." But I owe **her** something. She taught us to visualize ourselves and others as animals. She spoke indiscreetly of a curate in the too "High" church where we were taken each day for Vespers as a bleating lamb; our servants were jackals; most old maids were cats (which they are not); an uncle in the cavalry, whom we adored, was a gay dog; tradesmen (without exception) were beasts of prey; a queer old kinsman who gobbled his food (and ignored the red-haired wench) was one of the Gadarene swine. We called him "Badger," because he asked bothering questions. . . . She spanked my brother Arthur, then a five-year-old, when he asked her innocently if she wore lace drawers. In revenge, the imp crept into her bedroom, found the chest of drawers, and hid the laceless unmentionable garments! He endured another spanking, and we spoke of him as the Jackdaw of Rheims. . . .

I am wandering down another by-path. I return to the dominies. At my two first prep-schools I labelled them—ferrets. Elsewhere I have written of the surprise which awaited me when I found myself under the kindly discipline of a retired parson who prepared me for the entrance examination at Harrow. Thanks to him, I triumphed, taking nearly as high a form as was attainable. Somehow, "Fodge" (a *nom de caresse* for Fawkes) rubbed it into me that I should stultify myself, if I turned from what he ladled out. Call it a dose if you like, but it was sugared by the certainty that it would add cubits to my stature. For the first time in my life I "swotted."

I repeat that progress lacking a sense of direction defeats its own ends. Disappointment awaits us if we set our hearts on securing 30,000 teachers. A brute like Squeers is a corrupter of youth, a man like Thomas Arnold is in a class by himself. Between these two extremes function the good, bad and indifferent, mostly indifferent. I hate to set this down. Without any disloyalty to our Public-School system **I** am of the **not-too-firm opinion** that there are perhaps **better teachers in our**

National Schools, particularly in Scotland, than in our Public Schools, if you regard teaching as a vocation rather than a profession. A Regius Professor once said to me: "If you address me as Professor I shall bite you. Bunyan gibbeted the high-sounding title as odious. If I profess anything, it is my lamentable ignorance of so much I ought to know and don't." Shall we ask potential teachers to pass exams? In our Public Schools any young man who has graduated from a university with first-class honours is reasonably sure of a billet. Again, more than any other man a schoolmaster is branded by his profession. He stands on a rostrum; he has to look down on his pupils, whether they look up to him or not. He is likely to grow increasingly narrow-minded, because he cannot, with rarest exceptions, stray from a too-narrow path. We are holding out the bait of better pay. In the case of the miners better pay when we most needed coal resulted in absence from the pits!

According to Dean Stanley, Arnold had unaffected common sense. A teacher fortified by common sense, so ludicrously uncommon, I rank above a Senior Wrangler without it. The same can be said of parsons and doctors. Arnold was more than a teacher; I think of him as a lamplighter.

2

To-day is Easter Monday, not a joyous holiday for the trippers, but—as one assured me—"I'm away from home. I shall be glad to get back to it." Oscar Wilde advocated yielding to temptation, on the plea that gratified appetites of the flesh ceased to be importunate. This is Tupper standing on his head. John Donne would detect the underlying truth and humour. However, the sun has come out; it is blazing into my room. This afternoon we shall have a children's party, partly, so my daughter says, for my benefit. We may play (if it rains) that thrilling, fearsome game: *Out pounce Piggy** Bath is not pealing its bells, but the peals of children's laughter should be transmitted on the air to our troops exterminating the V2 sites in Holland.

At luncheon, I had to laugh at a joke against myself. In the preceding chapter I had set down that our daffodils were practising birth control of blossoms! My son-in-law caught two imps playing Autolycus, snapping off the few blooms that

are left! They excused themselves by saying that other boys did it. No girls. Why? Because silly girls can't scale our encompassing wall. I apologize to our daffies.

I must get from Smith's Osbert Sitwell's latest book, *Left Hand, Right Hand!* His father was at Eton when I was at Harrow. Each year we met at a kinsman's hospitable house, where we stayed for the summer exeat to witness the match at Lord's. In *Who's Who*, Osbert, under the heading "Education," writes: "During the holidays from Eton." He advocates the closing of the Stock Exchange for five days out of seven. His recreation is pied-piping. I know that I shall enjoy his new book. It is true that the lines on the left hand are, like our profiles, an inheritance, whereas the lines on the right hand are home-made, an indication of character. This sounds ingenious rather than convincing. I have wasted a few minutes of the little time left to me staring at my hands. The lines on both are the same. However, on the palm of my right hand are a few extra lines, and I hope to find out what they reveal. The expression, "I know it as I know the lines on my hand," may have come from a palmist. Somewhere I have a book, entitled *Les Mysteres de la Main*, I bought it when I was five-and-twenty. It was an Aid to Innocent Flirtation. A Victorian Miss would allow me to hold her hand in mine, if I promised (which I did) to tell her fortune. Then, squeezing her hand, I would assure her that she had been created to make some lucky fellow the best of wives.

I listened in at one o'clock. Security's veil has not been lifted. We are assured that 100,000 goose-steppers have been trapped in the Ruhr. Feeding our prisoners of war has cut down our rations. As a sop to the housewife, raisins can be bought for half the number of points, but they are not on sale.

We had a tasteless gammon, masquerading as a ham, for luncheon. *Moutarde de Maille* lent it piquancy. We drank cider, the wine of the West Country.

Beer on zyder be a very pore rider.

Zydcr on beer, you'rn nawthing to fear.

Is this true? I heard it first from an old lad, who drank both. Again (and tiresomely again), it may be rhyme without reason.

Our curate called this morning to wish me a happy Easter. He told me that he was due in Widcombe Old Churchn to hold

a service at high **noon**. It was not yet eleven; we **had** time **for** a talk. Lack-a-day! I had forgotten to put my clock on **an** hour! I found this out barely in time. He must have reached the vestry scant of breath. A tenant, who leases my small home farm and supplies us with milk, fears that his cows may die of impotent rage, or (almost worse) refuse to let down their milk two hours before they are ready to yield it. As a cousin of mine said: Our legislators will be tampering with Bradshaw next!

Children have sent me nosegays. This made me twiddle my thumbs. It is a straw indicating a current whose strength I cannot measure. As a boy it never occurred to me to offer small gifts to anybody outside my family. Later on, as a young man, I accepted gratefully enough a cutlet without returning it. I was a thoughtless taker, not a giver. If any young man or woman reads this book, I entreat him or her to profit by my bad example. Old fogies don't expect oblations, but they are rejuvenated when they receive them. Is it platitudinous to point out that the benediction of giving falls, like dew from heaven, on the giver? On that account I like to entertain guests who cannot entertain me. An uncle of mine gave champagne to all his poor relations. He said to me: "They love it because they so seldom have it." This afternoon every child will have a bar or two of chocolate. Where did it come from? Josephine has been saving up her daily ration for two weeks without any admonishment from nurse or mother——! If this is a sign of the times I anticipate a rosier future. What I have written does not apply to my humbler neighbours. Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch was the most cheerful of givers. I would sooner have written that classic than *Tom Jones*.

3

I have to pinch myself to make sure that I am alive, when less than two months ago I murmured *rien ne va plus*. More, I was so apathetic that (mercifully) I didn't care whether I lived or died. I wonder I didn't drift out on the ebbing waters. My thoughts arc for the moment enslaving life because they refuse to dwell on the seamier side.

Our Easter party is over. The children romped all **over the house after a pre-war tea** in the dining-room. Their **ciders**—

assuredly not their betters—had tea in my room. One mother of two asked me if I could give her information about a **strange** custom, a French custom (she added) dishonoured to-day in **its** breach. When did husbands go to bed when their wives **were** confined? Rather to my surprise I dimly recalled the custom and was able to reply that it went by the intriguing name **of La Couvade**. Details concerning it had been erased from **the** tablets of memory. However, I made too sure that the academic Littre could enlighten us. Confound him! he couldn't. Long ago my mother gave me his big dictionary worthily bound in red morocco. The word *couvade* was not in it. However, I found what I sought in the *Century Dictionary*. Couvade means a sitting, a brooding, a *cowering*. The custom was observed by the Corsicans and the Basques. The father of the child about to be born takes to his bed and receives the delicacies and careful attention usually given among civilized people to the mother——! A somewhat similar custom was observed among the Siamese, the Dyaks of North Borneo, the negroes, and the aboriginal tribes of North and South America. Before I gleaned this information, another mother at our tea-table said unsmilingly: "When my first was born, my husband told me he'd suffered more than I had." I dared not ask if she believed him, but I raised a laugh when I cited a paragraph which appeared in a Californian newspaper fifty years ago: "Mrs. Arza P. Boggs has presented our esteemed fellow-townsmen with triplets. Mother and babies are doing well; and we hope the old man will pull through."

Cowper's lines drifted to me:

**Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the Fall.**

Was it a task to the unhappy poet when he wrote *The Task*, once nearly as popular as *John Gilpin*, but seldom read to-day by our young people. When did he sip domestic happiness? His mother, a charmer, died when he was a child. He was not allowed to marry his cousin Theodora, to whom he was tenderly attached, not, alas! a gift from God to him. At school he was as unhappy as Shelley. He was nearly fifty when he began to write poetry, "encompassed," so he tells us, "by the midnight of absolute despair." He contemplated suicide; **but he shrank—so he wrote to his friend, Lady Hesketh—from**

the crime of self-murder. He died, in 1800, in his seventieth year; and his last years were passed in hopeless depression. Possibly, the domestic happiness denied to him inspired the lines I have set down. He coveted (what we all do) the unattainable, the Promised Land seen from afar, as the great Law-giver saw it from Mount Nebo. When he crept, as he did, into Fame's temple, he may have longed to exchange his solitary niche for a cottage holding "weans and wife."

After dinner, last night, I lit a soothing cigar. During dinner (really at seven not eight) it was still broad daylight. But the electric lights in Church Street were on, although Jacks in office had enjoined me to use my electric lights as sparingly as possible!!!! Protesting notes of exclamation. . . .

This morning the veil of the security black-out was partially lifted. The war news is uplifting. "On, Monty, on!"

I cannot wean my senile mind from this waste of electricity and the merciless rationing of coal. April is here and the baggage is colder than March. Conscience did not prick me when I lighted my fire. Warmth means much to writers. Balzac, in the garden of Touraine, donned an extra pair of trousers sewn up at the feet. Wise man! As my extremities sucked heat from my dog-grate, I recalled a meeting with an ex-Commissioner of Police. I am sure it was the late Sir Edward Bradford, who in India hunted tigers afoot. A man-eater sprang on him after he had wounded it. He lay still as the brute chewed up his arm, his last meal. When I met him at a shooting-party, he had only one arm, but with it he killed the "rocketers" as cleanly as any other "gun." I congratulated him, because I had just read an article in *The Times* (I think) which gave Sir Edward credit for purging some of the streets of London of prostitutes. He said: "My dear fellow, I take no credit for that. Evil loves darkness. It happened that during my tenure of office, gas had to be replaced with electricity."

If our City Fathers, after too long a black-out, have moral justification for saying "Let there be Light," I shall make no protest.

Writing this causeric might be compared with playing chess against oneself. Recently I have taught a small boy this absorbing game which isn't a game, but a battle. I told him to play against himself, which he docs. I put an edge to his interest

by urging him to split himself in two. To study, as X, attack; and then, knowing the tactics and strategy of X, to study, as Y, the best defence.

I am talking to myself and wondering what **another fellow** would reply. . . .

My daughter has just come in to interrupt my talk. **She tells** me that she woke up this morning with an adequate reason **in** her mind for *Ia couvadc*. "I don't believe/' she said, " that **the** man went to bed willingly. To secure peace in the home, **he** obeyed his mother-in-law, who most sensibly wanted him out of the way."

Once more-feminine intuition has triumphed.

After glancing at Cowper, I took Chaucer (both C's) from a bookcase. Campbell stands cheek by jowl with Cowper. The father of English poetry was born in London, in 1338, but I rank him as more modern than either Campbell or Cowper. Coleridge took "increasing delight" in Chaucer. So do I. To me he is the Charles Dickens of the fourteenth century, so human, so abrim with joy in life, such a shrewd observer of his fellow men and women. I haven't a doubt that his buxom wife of Bath is alive in Bath to-day. I have a nodding acquaintance with other pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. With an ounce of goodwill (and a glossary) any intelligent boy can read the archaic diction easily, as easily as he can read Burns. I didn't know till this morning that Chaucer married a maid of honour to the Queen, sister-in-law to John of Gaunt. Able to prove his descent from this Plantagenet, my maternal grandfather became a Gentleman Commoner at St. John's, Cambridge, as Founder's Kin, and enjoyed many privileges. Am I a snob to record this? The fact is of no interest to any reader, but it provokes passing comment. Twigs on an ancient tree are trained not to mention the parent tree out of the family. Pride of birth is becoming a disability. A descendant of **the** Earl Ferrers, who hung from Tyburn's tree, gave a dinner to his tenants, and (not too discreetly) spoke of his lineage **and his** tree rooted in Saxon soil. To his dismay, a stout yeoman **rose up** and said: "I dunno who my gramfer was; but I knows this—he worn't hanged." What is pride of birth compared to robust health? But, in the case of Chaucer, his upbringing **at both Oxford** and Cambridge, his service as an **officer in the army, his experiences as a diplomat and at court, his travels**

(only possible to a man of position) coloured every line he wrote. They exorcized sickly melancholy. I detest our crooners as much as I detest "jazz"; but I winced the other day when a young woman said to me tartly: "You'd croon if you'd been born a nigger, and you'd adore jazz." One up to her! It is, in fine, unmannerly to bring a corpse betwixt the wind and any man's so-called nobility. Family pride is a corpse. Poohbah helped to kill it. It has been crucified and mortified. As for the wind, it will blow where it listeth. If children capable of demonstrating that a stream can rise higher than its source are given opportunities to do so, we shall acclaim an aristocracy of intelligence not of birth.

A Colonel Blimp, with a much-taxed income, said to me: "I've nothing left to offer anybody except advice, which they won't take." The be-whiskered cliché is as lying as most tags. A sage remarked: "I hesitate to give advice because it is too often taken." Anyway, I urge my readers to read and re-read Chaucer. He wrote the *Tales* late in life, when he was out of favour at court. Despair never assailed him as it did Cowper. He is much more than the father of English poetry; he is a chalybeate spring of felicity of expression sweetened by acute observation.

4

Thinking of tags which tag so persistently after me, I recalled:

Evening red and morning grey,
Two sure signs of one fine day.

Lean in his *Collectanea* gives half a dozen similar lines familiar to us. In *The Voice of God in the Garden*, Stephen Bulfinch asks:

Hath not thy heart within thee burned
At evening's calm and holy hour?

I know nothing of Stephen Bulfinch; he is mentioned in my huge *Dictionary of Biography* as an American Unitarian Minister, who published a volume of "Poems" in 1834. I shall look for these in our Public Library. I take exception to "burned." Romeo's heart may have burned, when at night he stood beneath Juliet's balcony. That evening was not calm

to him. I should like to think it was holy. But—*nous autres?* In the evening of life our hearts beat slowly, temperately and without heat. What does a rosy sunset mean to us? So far as I know, but I know so little, no English-speaking poet has told us that if the sunset of life be red, it is a sign of a fine day awaiting us on the Other Side. Keble might have dealt with this. Perhaps he did.

I suppose that what happens to me happens to every man who verifies quotations. I took down Lean, glanced at the index, turned to a wrong page, and found an arresting passage dealing with the Good Sword of Winfarthing, a village in Norfolk. The sword was accounted a relic of such virtue that a solemn pilgrimage was made to it with vow-makings, crouchings and kissings. If you kissed the blade, you might recover things that were lost and horses stolen or run astray. If a wife were weary of her husband, she could shorten his life if she set a candle before the sword every Sunday for the space of a whole year. Lean's caustic comment on this is: "The sword of a thief who fled for sanctuary to Winfarthing and left it behind him, when the parson and the clerk turned it to good account." *O mihi heate Martinet* O my eye and Betty Martin!

Still, I should like to read more about this Good Sword. Lean whets curiosity and fails to gratify it fully.

Sword is Old English for sword.

5

Most of the big shops in Bath have been closed since last Thursday night; they will re-open to-morrow, Wednesday. I was asked a few minutes ago what I thought of this "outrage" on our elderly residents. I replied: "Do you think this will happen next year when the war is over?" In the lady's opinion, the workers will exact a full week. Personally, I don't grudge the workers their holiday; but I'm not a housewife. Another very old lady was unwittingly shocked by me. She had been told that the girls in our factories were underworked and overpaid. I replied: "You have been misinformed. In factories I have visited, the work goes on by day and night. Of course the girls work in shifts." She gasped and blushed. "They work in their shifts? What are we coming to?"

Whether or not this scottr'd isle becomes a home for heroes

and heroines, I hope with all my heart it will be merrier for the millions, who hitherto have taken their pleasures too seriously. The simple gaiety of the Latin races has been denied to us. At holiday resorts like Southend and Blackpool, the crowds are noisier than similar gatherings of Italians. But one seldom sees the smile which St. Michael craved of God to bestow upon the *contadini*.

Josephine has paid a second visit to the Fair. Her mother was deafened by the caterwauling. I believe that England will be merrier. I don't base this belief on wishful thinking. Our children, despite nearly six years of war, are as gay as that unknown animal, the gazeeka. In my childhood, children in every rank of life were seen not heard. Now you can hear them laughing when they are unseen. At the National School in Hursley (where I sent my son) I was distressed by the smug behaviour of the boys. Most of them looked bovinely stupid. In the Infant School at Widcombe the children look alertly intelligent. The children of Hursley sixty years ago were painfully shy when they talked to the quality; the children of Widcombe are delightfully at ease when I talk with them. Because they are merry now, they will be merry when they grow up.

I am thrilled to the marrow over some work undertaken, single-handed, by my son-in-law. At the south end of the terrace is a high yew hedge. Against it is a semicircular stone bench, designed by the late Harold Peto. In front of that is a round pool with a Flying Mercury in the centre of it. My brother and I encompassed this pool with a too-high stone border. And this threw out of proportion the lovely bench, hiding its base. My son-in-law, who served his apprenticeship as an architect, has cut down the height of the border. Also he has replastered the pool. Now he proposes to paint the plaster a pale blue. We shall keep the water in the pool free from spawn and weeds. It will be celestially clear, a joy to behold. All pools in gardens should be kept translucent. Dirty water is an eyesore. We can't procure labour to scythe the lawns. So we hope, if we have a spell of dry weather, to burn the weeds and rank grass, as moors are burnt off north of the Tweed. But I don't know (and must speedily find out) if such treatment will scorch and kill the roots of the grass. It doesn't kill the roots of heather.

We are contemplating another big improvement. Four

marble nymphs, representing the Seasons, stand guard over the Roman Bath. They were placed there by my predecessor. They cannot be seen till one descends the steps leading from the terrace to the Bath. We propose to move them to the sunken garden, where I'm sure they will feel more at home. Lovely nymphs wish to be seen; and it's a joy to see them.

6

Which is more tiring, muscular or mental work?

My daughter insists that her husband and her father are overworking. I retorted: "So are you; so is everybody." I repudiated paternity when she used the cliché: "*Two wrongs don't make a right.*" Nevertheless out of wrong wriggles right. I have set down somewhere that a doctor did not forbid excess smoking to a middle-aged patient because, as he pointed out, "If you smoke too much, you eat less." Overwork, *if you love your work*, never killed the worker. Probably the muscles of the body are "fagged" before the antenna? of the mind. If I overtire my body I am aware of it. If I overtire my mind, I find it out next day when I read what I have written on the previous day, an acid test. Detachment from work reveals the flaws in it. A famous pianist, Hans von Bulow, told us that if he failed to practise diligently, he knew it next day, the critics knew it a day or two later, by the end of a week, the public knew it. Mark Hambourg refused to allow his pupils to overpractise. However, in these matters a man must be a law unto himself. Overcramming for any exam provokes atrabiliary disturbance.

Last night the clock was striking one when I finished Huxley's novel in bed. I had to read it lying down. I lay awake for another hour comparing it with *Point Counterpoint*. Light seems to have come to the author as it came to Saul of Tarsus. I cannot find *Point Counterpoint*. It was in one of the spare rooms. Some guest may have borrowed it and thoughtfully failed to return it. In it nearly all the characters, a buccaneering crew, are manhandled. Their creator plays skittles with them. I felt at the time that Huxley loathed his misbegotten children and hoped that his readers would hate them as virulently as he did. In *Time Must Have a Stop* the author loves Sebastian, Bruno Bontini, Eustace, the disarming

hedonist, and even Mrs. Ockham and the Queen Mother. The book might have been entitled *Hate Must Have a Stop* (a full stop). Sayonara to Alcious Huxley, which means "Please come again."

My old friend, Clarissa, tells me that my mind is cushioned. Good——! I am glad it is. The uneasy mind makes other minds uneasy. Huxley, at the close of his book, lays a finger on what is glaring at him, the next war, the War of Colour, with the *casus belli*: "torrents of cheap manufactures flooding the white men's markets," and "Victims have long memories." That possibility kept me awake. I was one of the fools who believed that the last war (1914-1918) would end war. Nothing but the second coming of Christ will avert a war of Colour, not the actual reincarnation of the Son of God, but the world-wide recognition that love is mightier than hate. If children, from China to Peru, become convinced of that, they will need teachers other than those at present in authority.

Their wasted oil unprofitably burns
Like hidden lamps in old*sepulchral urns.

The Iron Duke disdained cushions, preferring a camp-bed to a Heal mattress (not procurable in his day). Ladies lay between lavender-scented linen sheets above billowing feathers. Cowper had a shot at "fine puss-gentlemen" all perfume. He was not calling attention to the Regency "Bucks." Ram-and-damn would have been an apter adjective for the Corinthians. I supposed that the puss-gentlemen miawed their way into smart society, when Max Beerbohm drew his caricatures of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. They made it plain that effeminacy in the male must be taken seriously. My mother never allowed her children to loll on cushions. Upright, cane-bottomed chairs were our portion. So, if my mind is cushioned in old age, I shall indict this gentle disciplinarian. She, to the end, practised what she preached. To-day the puss-gentlemen are pilloried as Nancies.

An elderly mind uncushioned grows hard. I recall (not without chuckling) an Englishman who, in his old age, was President of the Olympic Club in San Francisco. (No Californian ever speaks of his city as 'Frisco.) I knew him well. I admired his Spartan qualities, thinking that a good fellow who never spares himself is incapable of sparing others. On

his seventieth birthday he told us that each day he "**ran**" **ten** miles! But, soon afterwards, he ran himself out. At that time Ambrose Bierce was writing outspoken articles in *The Examiner* for naughty Willie, William Randolph Hearst. Would that I had asked Bierce what he thought of these frenzied activities. Cobb, that delightful humorist, was also in San Francisco. Bierce's comments would have been vitriolic; Cobb was the kindest of men. After his death a month or two ago I read a tribute to him which I put forthwith into the pickle-barrel. I cannot cite the exact words. It seems that a young man paid a visit to Cobb when he lay on his death-bed. When he took leave of the veteran he said: "See you again, Mr. Cobb." Cobb smiled. "Not in this world," he murmured. Then he went on: "I have a last word for you. Life is a party. As one of the guests, do your damndest to be as pleasant as possible to the other guests. And, mark this, if—if you like them, they will like You."

If an elderly mind is cushioned, it provides cushions for others.

7

Ye sprites who work when mortals sleep, I prythee speed to your humble servant! Clarissa said to me: "If you find yourself in Heaven, what do you hope to do?" In such an unlikely event, I may be graciously encouraged to inspire writers still on earth whose imaginations are failing them. Sages have acknowledged their debt to familiar spirits. It is one o'clock. I must listen in to the news.

The news over the air on this fourth day of April raises a biting question. Will the Viennese obey orders and fight to the last street? Will the Blue Danube run red? By this time the fellow-townsmen of Johann Strauss know that civilians in the Ruhr cities captured by us have been treated humanely. They adore their capital. I predict that white flags will fly from many windows when Tolbukhin marches in.

The Pride of Widcombe, my grandchild, has told me a secret. On her own initiative, aided and abetted by another little girl, she has collected in glass jars seventy seven newts. She was terrified that they might die when the water in the terrace pool was siphoned out. It will be refilled to-morrow, **and** the newts will be freed. This liberation of the newts is

more exciting to her than the war news. She confided this to me because she does not count me among the grown-ups.

I received a long letter from Australia this morning. My correspondent does not mention the war! He writes leisurely and delightfully about books, old books. He is ten years younger than I am, a ripe (not overripe) seventy-three. He tells me that he has read a novel recently published by me, and adds (innocently), "I shrink from modern books." So do I; so it's fifty-fifty. He browses contentedly on biographies and memoirs and then chews a meditative cud. I am wondering if a lover of poetry, a very young lover, would have a more discriminating palate for poetry if he read first *The Lives of the Poets*? It never occurred to me to read *The Lives of the Poets* till I was past middle age. Had I read them earlier, would I have seen, let us say, Keats, Shelley and Byron with clearer vision? I did read Boswell's *Life of Johnson* long before I waded through *Rassclas*. My grandfather gave me the heavy tome when I was fifteen. I conceived an unreasonable dislike to the prodigious doctor merely because he had begun to earn a meagre living as an usher in some provincial school. But that horrid experience may have draped his shoulders with the mantle of Justice Bolt. I decline to answer my own bothering question. I am glad that I read *The Task*, before I read Cowper's life.

8

Johnson left an annuity of seventy pounds to his faithful servant, Frank Barber, once a Jamaican slave. Somebody said that fifty pounds was more than enough for a nobleman's henchman. Johnson replied: "I shall be nobilissimus." A naughty old lady said to me: "All my servants are well stricken in years, likely to die before I do. If you have young retainers, you are expected to make provision for them."

I asked our family solicitor what he deemed to be adequate provision for a retainer. He answered me so quickly that many clients must have asked the same question: "Ten pounds for every year of service, a lump sum down." This is nothing like enough if, after perhaps long years of service, the servant is in failing health, or too old to find another place. Then a pension is obligatory. The omnipotent State is not generous to old age.

Soon after heavy duties were imposed a friend of ours inherited a Georgian mansion of more than gentility, situate in a well-ordered domain. When she took possession, she "took on" half a dozen old retainers: a butler, a cook, a head groom and two gardeners. No provision whatever had been made for them. That, as our friend pointed out, accounted for their pathetic wish to remain in service when they were long past it. Within a year they had to be handsomely pensioned——! Had income-tax been what it became in 1917, our friend would have been obliged to sell the property.

I shall not live to see the Utopia of our extreme Left-wingers. In that paradise overflowing with milk and honey, there will be no private charities, and a vast quantity of note-paper will be saved. Charity will stay at home. This morning I thrust into the waste-paper basket an impassioned appeal to come to the rescue of Morris Dancers, still dancing, so I gathered, about two hundred miles from Bath. I was tempted to reply on a post card: "I'm saving my spare cash to buy a Morris car."

CHAPTER FOUR

IN MY LAST CHAPTER, after making passing reference to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, I felt it to be my duty to glance at the edition of 1896, with an introduction by Arthur Waugh, the father of Alec and Evelyn. I read happily the first life, Cowley, affirmed by Johnson to be his best. Then I laid eager hands on the poet to whom Hallam denied the adjective metaphysical. But surely all the greater poets are metaphysical as we interpret the word to-day. Johnson ranked Donne below Cowley. Our young literati bow the knee to Donne; they have little to say about Cowley. Nor have I for that matter, which is not Cowley's fault. Johnson declares that he brought to his poetic labours a mind replete with learning and imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode and the gaiety of the less. Born in 1618, he died in 1667, in the prime of life. Maybe he has been neglected because he indulged himself in extravagant and unconvincing hyperbole. I set down some pretty lines entitled "Physick for a Lover."

Gently, ah gently, Madam, touch
The wound which you yourself have made;
That pain must needs he very much,
Which makes me of your hand afraid.
Cordials of pity give me now,
For I too weak for purgings grow.

I should include this stanza in my Chaplet of Pearls, the anthology I shall never edit. It is not given in my fat dictionary of *Familiar Quotations*, but I found this line, which might be commended to our architects:

God the first garden made, and the first city Cain.

I have never thought of Cain as directly responsible for Leeds and Liverpool. Abel may have inspired the Woods to build Bath.

Is it significant that my edition of Cowley's works, published in 1809, show marks (not thumb marks) of constant use? Cowley must have been loved by my great-grandfather. **Under the poet's portrait on the title page, the portrait of a laughing**

cavalier, Dr. Hurd, sometime Bishop of Worcester, has had inscribed two lines from Pope:

Forget his Epic, nay Pindaric art;
But still we love the language of his heart.

This cavalier, who ruffled it at court, was the son of a grocer. Did he sand Abraham's sugar? In 1643, he was ejected from Trinity College as a Malignant. In his *Anacreontiques* we find:

Fill up the bowl then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there; for why
Should every creature drink but I;
Why, man of morals, tell me why?

The Mistress, given pride of place by Johnson, is a series of love plaints too saccharine for my palate, and too plaintive. Methinks I hear the voice of the crooner. But there are scores of arresting lines.

Boswell records that Johnson had no choice in the selection of poets. His booksellers submitted brusquely their list, paid two hundred guineas for what was to be a labour of four years, and left out Goldsmith, Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare! Godwin's *Life of Chaucer* was not published till 1808. We may jump to the conjecture that the glorious Elizabethans were not too popular with the literary gentlemen of the eighteenth century. I am no scholar, no critic, but it surprises me that Arthur Waugh (in his excellent Introduction) omits to tell us what may have escaped his notice. Johnson was sixty-eight when he wrote these *Lives*. I found myself blinking at the difference in style between *Rasselas* and these *Lives*. It is difficult to believe that the same scribe wrote both. In the *Lives* I can detect no rococo, baroque tincture. George Saintsbury might have written them or Henry Fielding. Such easy reading must have exacted hard writing. After skimming through Cowley I dipped into Gay, because I love *The Beggar's Opera*. It was produced by a gloomy pontiff of the name of Rich. The wags—so Johnson records—said that the *Opera* had made Rich gay and Gay rich. In the hunting-field, about the time when Nigel Playfair was knighted, a hard-riding squire said to me: "Why has this fellow been knighted? Because he wrote this *Beggar's Opera*! Why didn't they knight what's-his-name who gave us *Charley's Aunt*?" The Great Lexicographer would have chuckled.

Johnson docs scant justice to Gray. He may have been tired when he dealt with him, or, more probably (with the smell of the Strand in his nostrils), disdained the fragrance of sequestered vales. He accuses Gray of "strutting dignity." He told Boswell that he did not think Gray a great poet; and he goes on: "There are but two good stanzas in Gray's poetry which are in his *Elegy*."

The last Life in this edition has interest for me because George, first Lord Lyttelton (father of the "wicked Tom") was my great-great-great-grandfather. The portrait of Wicked Tom is looking down on me as I write these lines. Cockayne, in his *Complete Peerage*, does not mention his claim (if any) to be a poet. My uncle, Sir Arthur Lyttelton-Anncslcy, believed that my *cacoethes scribendi* came from this sometime historian.

George Lyttelton, when secretary to the Prince of Wales, circa 1737, befriended Thomson. Lyttelton's *Progress of Lovc*, which enjoyed a *succes d'estime*, was published when he was a very young man. He was an undergraduate at Christ Church College when he wrote *Blenheim*. He also wrote a long poem to the memory of his wife, Lucy Fortescue, whom he loved tenderly. In my family, we honour him as a good man, not as a poet. After he took his seat in the Upper House he wrote his *History of Henry II*, which strolled with Pocksniffian placidity into three editions. Of his poems Johnson says magnanimously: "They have nothing to be despised, and little to be admired." As a young man neither my grandfather, a scholar, nor my mother invited me to read them.

A word or two about Waller. Here again I have personal interest in a poet, born in 1605, whose mother was the sister of John Hampden, the patriot. He married a second wife, the widow of Sir Thomas Vachell, Lettice, the daughter of Sir Francis Knollys. She was buried in Hampden Church near her second husband. Lyttelton praised Waller, who began life in easy circumstances—educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. He lived to be an octogenarian. If I were twenty years younger, I should try to write a picaresque novel dealing with this gay adventurer, whose portrait (in the 1896 edition of *The Lives*) bears a strong resemblance to a portrait I have of the Merry Monarch. I could glean much from Clarendon. Waller fell desperately in love with Sacharissa, the eldest

daughter of the Earl of Leicester, who scorned his verses and rejected his hand. Already he was a widower, having married a rich heiress who died in childbed. His second wife filled his quiver with many children, five sons and eight daughters. Waller was a "thruster" to the last. I have nothing to write about his poetry which bubbled out of his head rather than out of his heart. He was more politician than poet, and had a ready wit. When Sacharissa in her old age asked him if he could write more verses to her, he replied: "Yes, Madam, when you are as young and handsome as you were then." Gaily he squandered his patrimony and the moneys which his first wife brought him. He too ruffled it at court, although he had been a friend and kinsman of the Great Protector. I detect more than a tincture in him of the Vicar of Bray. Rafael Sabatini would find him fish to his net. His plots were the talk of the town; in exile he was happy-go-lucky, a man who could play any part. He stood for Parliament and secured his seat when he was eighty! Clarendon speaks of him as a "pleasant discourser in earnest and in jest," and he adds, with his tongue in check, "not the less esteemed for being very rich." In Paris he lived in splendour. He died with a certain dignity. His legs grew tumid. When he consulted the King's Physician, asking him what the swelling meant, Scarborough answered: "Sir, your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, went home and died. Johnson says that he amused himself by writing poetry. He amused others. The most entertaining fact about this roisterer confounds me. Living in that Bacchanalian age, he drank nothing stronger than water.

Herrick, so dear to me, the prince of lyric-writers, was born in 1591. Why is he so conspicuously absent from Johnson's *Lives*? Arthur Waugh does not tell us, nor does Boswell. We owe "tempestuous petticoat" to Herrick, a country parson! I should like to think that Parson Woodforde wrote amorous verses on the sly. Perhaps he did.

Herrick compares a girl's teeth to pearls. To-day the girls display cultured pearls when they smile. About a month ago I passed a dental establishment of the baser sort. On the front door hung a glass case, exhibiting dentures. To my horror, I saw a gold front tooth in the middle of one denture. Coloured gentlemen are proud of their gold teeth. In California a little

bootblack, blacker than his boot-paste, beamed at me. " **How** happy you **look,**" I said. He replied, " Yes, suh, Tse gotten me a gold tooth." But—by all the jumping frogs of Calaveras—is it possible that any English girl covets gold teeth ?

My daughter has read Herrick. I asked her at luncheon if she could recall any poems by Waller.

" Waller? Did he write poems? "

" He thought he did."

" **And** wisely kept it to himself. I saw him in *Monsieur Beaucaire*, and fell passionately in love with him."

Lewis Waller, off the boards, was not too prepossessing. In 1912, he and George Alexander were matinee idols.

Johnson's *Lives* are now back on their shelf. Two large bookcases afford sanctuary to my biographies. I own about five thousand books. The poets, in three bookcases, are in my room; most of the other books line the lobby, where Fielding is reputed to have written part of *Tom Jones*. When I bought my golden house, I satisfied myself that Fielding wrote in a room above the lobby. His sister lived in a small house about two hundred yards distant from my front door. A fox-hunting friend surveyed my books wryly: " Good Lord! What a collection of junk! Have you read any of 'em? " I was able to reply truthfully that I had indeed read nearly all of them. I have five and twenty volumes, bound in ivory vellum, *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de France*, which belonged to my great-uncle, John Moore. About 1910, I signed a contract with a London publisher who commissioned me to write a *Gospel of the Grape*. I began it; I collected much material, and then I abandoned it. There are about two thousand books dealing with wine. I wanted to write a sort of anecdotage. I looked forward to pilfering from any source thirst-provoking passages. I waded through the *Memoires* and found none. I found little worth annexing in Dumas, Hugo, Dickens and Thackeray. I was without straw for my bricks and without clay; so I kissed the gospel good-bye.

2

An old man is wise if he resists temptation to write letters to **the** newspapers upon contentious theme. They provoke replies **inscribed** "*Personal and Immediate*" Some of the replies **re-**

ceived by me are impolite. One began: " You b——y Liar." An urge assailed me this morning to write to the editor of a paper (with an immense circulation) upon that pressing problem, the feeding of starving Europe. On second thoughts I shall set down here what I wish to say. A war correspondent, speaking on the air, affirms that the Germans still have immense quantities of food and wine looted from the countries we have liberated. Are these stocks to be dispatched promptly to France, Belgium, Holland and Greece ? I hope so. On the other hand, one of Bath's City Fathers, probably with Scots blood in his veins, suggests that this food must be kept where it is to feed the people who stole it, a disintegrating suggestion. The too-well-nourished Goering assured his fellow countrymen that they, on *his* honour, would be fed even if the rest of the world starved——! I shall be accused of flippancy, but wouldn't it be fun to make a sanguinary liar of this prophet? The Nazis have all the cunning of jackals. If Hitler makes away with himself, he hopes to wear a martyr's crown. He still believes that the seed sown by him will sprout vigorously in the not too distant future. He is blusteringly confident that the lust for *weltmacht* cannot be expelled from the body politic, that God is still with the military caste.

We can see to it that the Nazis are fed—on bread and water, enough bread—no more—to keep them alive. If they fast for a decade it may purge them of their besetting sin: aggressiveness. They may indeed become " kindly Germans," if we have the sense to ration them drastically. A *Junker* can't fight on an empty stomach.

3

A stone-mason, who can lay Bath stone well and truly, is at work at the end of the terrace. He can do what I cannot: work and talk at the same time. Stone-masons are shrewd. Their work for the most part endures, and " pointing " stone seems to lend point to their observations. He asked me how I was keeping, not unmindful perhaps that warm weather does preserve what is still alive. He is an old man. He said slyly: " Me and you, sir, have two summers ahead of us." I replied optimistically: " More than two, I dare to hope." He chuckled: " You ain't got me. I mean that this spring is a summer with another summer ahead of it

Top marks for him! April at this moment might be mistaken for flaming June. The stone bench near the pool is warm to the touch; so I sat down on it. Josephine has put back into the pool the seventy-seven newts.

I have a new definition of an optimist: a man who can achieve detachment from everything unpleasant. Of course the men who can do this are self-centred, and as a rule aggressively healthy, immune from the ills of the flesh. A friend of mine, good at ball games, refused to play golf. "Too many rubs of the green," said he. He laughed and so did I. He would have made an excellent president of a club for Co-optimists. Is there such a club? And if not, why not? Another note of interrogation: when did the word optimist come into common use? I cannot find it in my two concordances of the Bible and Shakespeare. William Cullen Bryant speaks of a white-haired man as a "genial optimist." The line occurs, I take it, in his poem "The Ages." His "Thanatopsis" brought him fame.

A pessimist said dourly to me: "This war has accomplished one useful purpose: it has put to bed the optimists." I replied: "Don't you believe it," but he did. I wish the war had put to bed our defeatists. Metaphorically they are taking their meals at the side-table. Victory Day will be a *dies irce* for them.

The pessimist who wore a belt in addition to his braces was, I'm sure, a young man suffering from frustration. Joining the nudists might work a miracle on the poor fellow. He would have nothing left to keep up but his pecker.

I have wandered down a lane which is a cul-de-sac. I retrace my steps sustained by the reflection that I am still on the sunny side of ninety.

4

Our happiest thoughts are vagabonds, yes, and rogues, like the jolly mummers in Elizabethan days, when England was merry, especially after the Armada was sunk or scattered. But the grim approach of those high-built galleons put a match to every beacon on our sentinel hills. When a thought beebmes an obsession it wears sable. A happy thought comes and goes, perhaps at its best when it is roguishly elusive. Catch it and cuddle it, or, better still, make a note of it. Josephine laughed when walking in silence beside me. "What makes you

laugh? " I asked. "Oh, I — I had a happy thought, but it's gone. Where do happy thoughts go? " Perhaps they wing their way back to heaven. I should have told the child this, but I never thought of it till some hours later. I tell her to make her mind a trap for sunbeams.

I have been on the terrace, staring at the dirt that has been taken out of the pool. My son-in-law told me why it leaked. During a hard frost years ago my head gardener broke the ice on it. The goldfish in the pool were lacerated by the broken ice; two died; so I told my gardener never to break the ice again. He obeyed orders. Result: the unbroken ice exercised such pressure on the plaster lining the pool that it cracked. *Brea\ the ice on any pool that is artificial.* I have another word to say about happy thoughts. It is humiliating to reflect that happy thoughts about others are too often the first to leave us. When I passed this on to my daughter, she agreed. To cheer me up she told me of an old lady who confided to her that she wished to reward handsomely her only servant, a young girl. " I shall give her ten shillings and send her to the fair." It seems that my daughter met this girl at the fair. The girl said : " Madam has been very kind; she gave me the afternoon off? and sixpence/" In one of Jane Austen's novels we are told of a couple who inherited a big estate. The testator left a scrap of paper enjoining his beneficiaries to provide for a poor relation. The happy thought came to the husband to fork out a substantial annuity. The wife whittled this down. In the end the poor relation received a brace of pheasants. If I've garbled this story, may the kind reader forgive me. I am too indolent to verify it.

5

There is an unverified rumour in the evening paper that Gocring has been assassinated. It is safe to predict that a similar fate awaits Himmler, Goebbels and other gangsters. If this prediction comes true our sedentary sentimentalists will exclaim: " Ah, we were right—there arc kindly Germans; the millions hated the Nazis, but were impotent to rebel against them till we drew their teeth." I refuse to believe this. All Germans inoculated from birth with the conviction that war is *lustige* (merry) will cheerfully commit murder to curry

favour with their temporary conquerors and save their own skins. *Absit omen!*

I have listened in to the six o'clock news. The Germans con* tradict the rumour of Goering's assassination.

Eisenhower has told President Roosevelt that it is his considered opinion that the Nazis will not surrender conditionally or unconditionally. When we hail Victory Day, they will go on waging guerrilla warfare. In that case they, not we, will be responsible for more slaughter.

I must drive these hateful thoughts from me.

The trees on my small domain are at their loveliest. I can **see** the fan-vaulting of the branches through a mist of tenderest green; the oak may be out before the ash; the lindens are very much as they were in mid-winter. The "whiskers" at their bases should be cut off, but the ladies of the family protest, because the robins nest in them.

There was an old lime with a beard
Who sighed: "It is just as I feared;

The robins, goldarn 'em!—

It's hopeless to warn 'em—

Prefer my face-fittings unshcared."

(With apologies to Mr. Lear.)

Impoverished though I am, I would pay a handsome fee to anybody who will tell me how to coax the tits to nest again in the boxes we provide for them. Why did they leave them? Have the kingfishers left us because they have eaten the last of the goldfish? If I restock our pools will they come back?

I commend a new book on Bath, written by the late Lieutenant R. A. Lendon Smith, a sometime Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a medievalist of distinction. He writes of Bath as "a perfect epitome of our national past; an harbinger of an even greater future."

I live outside Bath, but I am an adopted son of Bladud. Long ago I thought I should like to end my days in Bellosguardo, overlooking Florence. I was staying with an uncle who lived in a villa well named: La Colombaia. Fireflies danced each night in the *podcre*. I entertained no wish either then or thereafter to be a citizen of any city however beautiful. I wanted it both ways, being the son of a squire and, like him, addicted **to** country sports and pastimes, but my **mother loved books, porcelain, pictures, congenial society: everything that such a**

city as Florence offers to a fastidious mind. My instincts as I wax older are maternal rather than paternal or, shall we say, ministering rather than administrative.

What the future of Bath will be depends much on the Bathonians. The dwellers in the lordly crescents admit that their innings is drawing to a close. Still, the memory of yesterday may rouse these stone-wallers to bat on for a well-ordered to-morrow. I commend Mr. Lendon Smith's book, because he deals faithfully with the centuries which preceded the eighteenth. Monsieur Barbeau has little to tell us about them. Miss Edith Sitwell's book is a *jeu d'esprit*, Sitwellian from the first page to the last, and (in a few passages) inaccurate. On the occasion of the Conference of the Western Branch of the Associated Booksellers I was presented with a superbly bound copy of *The Book of Bath*, published at Bath in 1925. The frontispiece is a magnificent coloured engraving of the Great Roman Bath, taken from a water-colour by Miss Horton, R.W.S. It is an invaluable book of reference: a compilation of twenty-four essays by experts. I read it from cover to cover. Had I been living here in 1925, I should have craved permission to contribute one chapter.

I pause to chuckle. I am not writing this book; it is writing itself. I wish that I had asked E. V. Lucas if his essays wrote themselves. He was a happy wanderer. Did he carry a note-book? Whenever I talked with him, his memories seemed to woo mine. I should have enjoyed capping verses with him. He would have outcapped me, as George Russell always did. His *Collections and Recollections* have no smell of midnight oil. Lionel Tollemache, another Old Harrovian, wrote as easily and lightly as Russell. Two young ladies have just come in to look at my Derby soft paste figures fashioned by the famous modellers of the eighteenth century. One disagreed, quite charmingly, with nearly everything I said. Why? She gave a sufficing reason: "Talk is so dull if you tamely agree."

Clarissa has asked me if in my opinion people are as grateful to-day as they were when I was a young man. Gratitude is, I like to believe, more common than it appears to be. It finds difficulty in expressing itself. I told my old friend that the Brains Trust (with Professor Joad in the chair) might deal with such a bothering question. Gratitude, in Victorian times, was tangled up with politeness. Good manners constrained us to

express gratitude for even small services whether **we were grateful** or not. Then as now I was sensible that those to whom much had been given were less grateful than those on whom little had been bestowed. I have yet to meet a State beneficiary who has expressed to me his gratitude for free education, free medical services or the hateful dole. Our children accept such gifts as a right. If they give the matter a thought—which I am sure they do not—the more they are given, the more they hope to get. In a small prayer-book given to me when I first went to school was inscribed my name, and beneath it: "Thou who hast given so much to me, give one thing more—a grateful heart." I was puzzled, quite unaware that "much" had been my portion: robust health, joy in life, a happy home, a devoted mother, the best of board and lodging. For all these blessings I was shamelessly ungrateful. Some sage wrote: "Expect not gratitude from children and old persons." He must have been an unobservant sage. Children *are* grateful; so are old persons. In middle age we are too engrossed with our avocations, too harried often by disappointments, to be grateful. Age teaches youth gratitude. An intelligent boy (or girl) will do well to make friends with boys older and wiser than himself. An old man should court diligently the confidence of children; and he will learn more from them than he imparts. Thus extremes meet.

I repeat: the millions, as apart from the few, are as grateful as their grandparents, but lamentably less polite.

Will good manners, the petty cash, the small change of human intercourse, come back to this stricken planet? Another theme for the Brains Trust. In this causerie I am terrified of being didactic with myself. I want to lure Truth from her well. I abhor old age that has degenerated into a "fat weed on Lethe's wharf," smugly satisfied with its own judgements. I refuse to quarrel with anybody who holds opinions opposed to mine; I like to hear the other side. I talk with a neighbour who labels himself Communist. I enjoy our talks. I am perhaps unreasonably sure that I should be "Red" had my upbringing been the same as his. He scoffs at good manners which he condemns as whitewash. However, he grinned when I assured him that nobody could mend his manners except himself. The wastrels, the gamblers, the nitwits who **kotowed to Beau Nash here in Bath, prided themselves on their good**

manners. At heart they were more concerned " with **the** nice conduct of a clouded cane." It's a platitude to set down that the essence of good manners is consideration for the feelings of others, but a platitude may be an eternal verity.

According to Pope, good manners " vindicate the ways of God to man." Milton says much the same. Were Samuel Johnson's manners good or bad? We may be faced in the very near future with a new code. Emerson warns the few who read him that " there is nothing *settled* in manners " (the italics are mine). His injunction " Hitch your wagon to a star " has been taken by all the young women who fall in love with the heroes of the Screen.

Good manners have fled from the House of Commons, once the best club in Europe.

Clarissa agrees with me that the manners of tradespeople before the war were too obsequious. To-day, the young ladies behind most counters are affectionately pert. If you buy any small article, they say brightly, " Ta." To this I reply politely : " Ta-ta," which appears to disconcert them. A frock-coated gentleman in a big emporium in Milsom Street, told me that in his establishment the young ladies were not allowed to say " Ta."

6

I have just posted my letters. On my way to the pillar-box at the Tynning, I was rapturously hailed by a tiny damsel riding her first bicycle. She leapt from it into my outstretched arms to tell me that the bicycle was her Easter egg. I noticed that her knee was bandaged. She had cut it not too badly falling off her egg. Whenever I meet her this eight-year-old pleads for a story. With her " accident " jogging my memory I told her that I, as a boy, had walked to a railway station to welcome a brand-new " penny-farthing " vehicle, which I duly mounted, and crashed descending the first hill. I was bruised, but the bicycle had to be pushed back to the station and sent to Coventry. My listener was enthralled. Then I asked her a question. " Would you sooner hurt your bike or yourself? " The baggage was honest. " I'd much sooner hurt the bike," she replied.

This nymphlet has been in the Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, of which my daughter is President, where her tonsils

and adenoids were taken from her. She made a slow convalescence. I went to see her as she lay, white and limp, upon a sofa. I had given her one of my books, extorting a pledge that she would not read it till she was older. When I asked her if she was feeling better, she whispered: "No, no, but I must get well, mustn't I, 'cos I want to read your book?" *Laus Deo!* she is now a perfect picture of health. And without a doubt her joy in lire is greater because her convalescence was so dull.

At nursery tea, I asked my daughter (who has just bought a new bicycle) if she would sooner smash it or herself. She said briskly: "What a silly question! Any woman would sooner smash her bike to smithereens rather than tear her frock or scrape her face."

The evening paper has depressed me. Lovely Vienna is doomed, Schicklgruber, masquerading as Samson Agonistes, is pulling down the pillars of a temple that once sheltered two million gay and happy people. But he is pulling down more than that. He is destroying what is left of German *Kultur*. His name will stink for evermore. I have one bottle left of the Merry Widow. Shall I put it near the ice in the frigidaire? No. At the last moment a Hand may be uplifted. Somehow, against reason, I believed that Rome and Paris would be spared. But, unhappily, I felt the same about Budapest.

I shall decant for dinner a modest pint of Pauillac. A good cigar may secure a good night's rest.

CHAPTER FIVE

A WAR CORRESPONDENT speaks of non-stop advances on the Western front as "delirious." How is it affecting the High Command at Berchtesgaden? I have just laid down an article dealing with nimble hares not yet caught. Are they to be "Jugged"? It occurs to me (lest we forget) that each of the outstanding gangsters might (if captured alive) be confined in a cage similar to that at Messis-le-Tours which was so happily designed by Cardinal Balue (in which Louis XI confined him). Each would be fed on skilly and exhibited in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. The objection to this act of clemency would be that Hitler, for example, might feel too much at home in congenial company.

The end is in sight, so German civilians admit, but the goose-steppers fight on and on. The mother of a son at the Front said to me yesterday: "The beasts are killin' our boys, but our boys are killin' more an' more Fritzies, which is such a comfort, ain't it?" This Widcombe mother is a kindly, compassionate soul. Other mothers feel as she does. Monty's "Desert Rats" are now close to Emden and Bremen. If public opinion in Hunland acclaimed this war as we know it did, why doesn't public opinion put a stop to it? A stout man once muttered to me: "I daren't run downhill. For why? Because I allers runs away wi' mcself." Every horseman knows that a bolting nag must run himself out. If any hunter of mine took the bit between his teeth when galloping across a field, I could coax him by pressure of a knee to gallop round it till he got sick of vicious circles. I behold the High Commanders clinging desperately to what once they described as a joy-wheel. They must be whirled off it soon, unable to control centrifugal force. I feel delirious as a mere onlooker.

Josephine has come in to kiss me and wish me Good Night, radiating happiness because a great-uncle in New York has sent her a silk dressing-gown. It is soft and shimmering. She whispered: "I do wish Mummie would let me wear it in bed." After she left the room I wondered what soft garment I could slip into instead of my ragged cotton pyjamas? I must

wrap round me the mantle of a tranquil past **and** He down to pleasant dreams of it.

I composed myself for untroubled slumbers by thinking of my maternal uncle. He had led a full life, as I have. He went in to bat, after he left Harrow, on a sticky wicket. He was not eighteen when he was gazetted cornet in the XI Hussars. He joined up in the Crimea before the Charge of Balaclava. He was not in the famous "charge," because ne was stricken with fever. No batting for him. He had to battle with malaria. He was at his last gasp when he was carried in a litter to some small hospital high up in the hills. He told me that repeated **doses** of brandy saved his life on that long upward journey. He added: "I've hated brandy ever since." Just as well. During his service in India he put no "pegs" in his coffin, and throughout his long life he never drank between meals.

When my uncle, once a *beau sabreur*, became an old man, he used to read (after a Victorian breakfast) the "Dispatch" column in *The Times*, sitting alone in his library surrounded by books and family portraits. The "Hatch" and "Match" announcements held little interest for him. In his day, he had been an incomparable host, *hombre de muchos amigos* (man of many friends, as the Spanish say). When he was Commander-in-Chief at Bombay, his house was known as the *Annesley Arms*. He never married. At one time he was spoken of as the best-looking man in the cavalry. I must set clown a story which never passed his lips. I heard it from a contemporary who vowed it was true. My uncle was dining with the greatest Personage in the realm. A lady addressed **her** host:

"Sir, when you were in India, do tell me what **made the** most outstanding impression on you?"

She expected him to reply: "The Taj Mahal."

"M'm—let me think a minute. *Outstanding*——? **Yes**, yes, Arthur Annesley at the head of the Eleventh Hussars."

I happened to be alone with the veteran when he laid down *The Times*, saying: "Horace, I haven't a friend left of my generation."

"You have General X."

He frowned. "True—true. And he's older than I **am**. **Damn** old X."

I laughed, and—to be fair to him—so did **he**. **But—and this**

justifies my telling the anecdote; I am not being disloyal to his memory—I think he had set his heart on outliving his contemporaries, although he never added (as his sister did) years to a great age. My aunt told me that she was older than I knew her to be. On the other hand, in the family Bible (now in my possession) she had scratched out the date of her birth when she was forty!

Eheu fugaces! My oldest and lifelong friend is five years my senior. May he carry out his bat for a century!

My attention has been called to a review by one of Mr. Punch's learned clerks of a biography of Ernest Dowson, written by Mr. Mark Longaker. This passage occurs in it:

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in this book is the account of how Horace Annesley Vacnell tried to lift Ernest Dowson out of the gutter with the assistance of Gertrude Atherton. . . .

Our efforts have been set down in my book *Fellow Travellers*. Mrs. Atherton was a great friend of mine, a brilliant and charming woman. Dowson at the time was a victim of *Ia Reine Verte*. He used to read his verses to us, late at night, in a soft, monotonous voice, at once pathetic and impressive. I told Mrs. Atherton that it sounded like a voice from the dead; and it was she who suggested that we might raise the unhappy poet from the dead. Both his parents had committed suicide. . . ! Ernest made away with himself before he died (of starvation). That great personality, Mademoiselle Julia Guillou, the *patronne* of the sometime Hotel des Voyageurs, at Pontaven in Brittany, dampened our enthusiasm, being of the opinion that an absinthe addict was irreclaimable, but she said : " Allons done, mes chers enfants: operez le sauvctage, *mais* . . . rien ne va plus." We laughed, when she shivered a lance in defence of the henbane: " *Ëa pousse Ia poesie,*" she suggested. We failed ingloriously. What we attempted is too trivial to be repeated. None the less, the spirit moves me to mutter a few words about this unhappy man. I am vouchsafed a vision of Dowson's spirit standing by his dead body and addressing it: " Thank God, I'm quit of you."

His body was *chitif* (" puny " is not a sufficient translation)

Had he been given such a body as Robert Browning's, **he might** be alive to-day. When I met him he admitted that he suffered from the *nostalgic de la boue*. But his spirit soared. We never saw him till about three in the afternoon. He walked through the Bois d'Amour with a friend, whom we called *rhomme perdtiy* once a *massier* in the École des Beaux Arts, a painter of promise, who abandoned his palette for his pipe. Dowson would stare into the Aven for hours at a time. Gauguin, whom I knew and disliked, did the same. Both men were enamoured of water although they refused to drink it. Dowson spoke to me of its elusiveness. "If I could catch one ripple . . ."

The son of my old friend and publisher Sir Newman Flower published, in 1934, *The Poems of Dowson*, which I have re-read. His biography by Mr. Longaker I am not likely to find in Bath. In his Introduction, Desmond Flower says that the first four years of the nineties were the best in the poet's short life; he cites Professor Ifor Evans: "Dowson is in verse what Beardsley was in pictorial art." He is ranked with Francis Thompson and W. B. Yeats. I cannot think of Dowson without thinking of Chatterton, who died in 1770. In 1776 Boswell and Johnson adventured to the City of Ships, where the author of *The Lives of the Poets* read some of Chatterton's verses, exclaiming: "This is the most extraordinary young man who has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things."

Dowson died in 1900.. In '99 he wrote:

And health and hope have gone the way of love
 Into the drear oblivion of lost things.
 Ghosts go along with us until the end;
 This was a mistress; this, perhaps, a friend.
 With pale indifferent eyes, we sit and wait
 For the dropt curtain and the closing gate.

I knew him, when he was at his worst, sunk in apathy. But even then he took immense pains with the little work he did. He recited lines muttering: "I can do better than that."

Who was Cynara? Desmond Flower mentions her, arouscf curiosity and does not satisfy it. The poet may have been faithful to her "after his fashion," but he uses faithful in a sense not accepted by lexicographers.

I shall set down a few more lines which I should put into my never-to-be-written anthology:

Even as a child whose eager fingers snatch
An ocean shell and hold it to his ear,
With wondering, awe-struck eyes is hushed to catch
The murmurous music of its coiled sphere;
Whispers of wind and wave, soul-stirring songs
Of storm-tossed ships and all the mystery
That to the illimitable sea belongs,
Stream to him from its tiny cavity.
As such an one with reverent awe I hold
Thy tender hand, and in those pure grey eyes.
That sweet child face, those tumbled curls of gold.
And in thy smiles and loving, soft replies
I find the whole of love—hear full and low
Its mystic ocean's tremulous ebb and flow.

Fare thee well, Ernest.

3

It is exasperating to reflect on my inability to glean sheaves from great men whom I met in early manhood and middle age. I became a member of three clubs: (i) the Garrick, (2) the Athenaeum, and (3) the Beefsteak. In the presence of the Brobdingnagians I felt Lilliputian. Oddly enough, in New York, Edison (a wizard) talked freely to me and was kind enough to answer the importunate questions of a very young man. Again, in California, when I met the Triumvirate, Colis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Senator Stanford, I felt at ease. Not so, later on, in my own country. In the presence of those who sat in the seats of the Mighty, I was tongue-tied. In the Lounge at the Garrick I met Carson, Sir Edward Clarke, Lord Buckmaster, Lord Reading and other magnates. Nobody has ever indicted me as being shy. But childhood's code prevailed. "Listen to those older than yourself and say—*nothing!*" I felt like a new boy at his first prep-school when I passed the portals of the Athenaeum. The then Primate of England, Dr. Randall Davidson, was an old Harrovian. In the drawing-room, nearly each afternoon, he sat in an armchair and looked unapproachable. He was nothing of the sort. He would graciously beckon, smile and invite me to sit down beside him. He talked leisurely and delightfully, but I was dumb. A Viceroy once said to me, with slight irritation: "Do try to forget that I'm His Ex."

Others may profit by my ineptitudes. Nearly all great **men** **are** sensible or their own splendid isolation. They **want** to

descend from their pedestals. If they frequent clubs, we can assume that they are clubbable. My daughter enjoins me not to worry. Few young men of to-day, so she assures me, suffer as I did. Then she reminded me that I had entertained at luncheon the son of an illustrious father and had invited to meet him a famous dramatist. The dramatist and I could not get a word in edgeways. . . . The young man had adopted his father's slogan : " Let nothing you dismay."

Le deboire de mille evenements jdcheux (the after-taste of a myriad petty vexations) afflicted Chateaubriand. He speaks somewhere of the misery of life. Even the society of Madame Recamier failed to mitigate his chronic despondency. No such ill fortune has been mine. My long life has been happy; I can savour the after-taste of a thousand joy-distilling incidents in almost every walk of life. On these my memory lingers.

4

I take it as a compliment when an intelligent boy or girl asks me questions which are perhaps, well—cheeky. Anyhow, I attempt to answer them. A young lady, fresh from school, but " out" in the old-fashioned sense as soon as she entered her teens, came to tea. We had never met before. Passing through the lobby, she paused to stare at rows of my novels. Then she said gaily : " Did you write these? You did? I've read some of them, but nobody warned me that I was going to meet the author this afternoon." I may have smiled at the word " warned," but I led the way into my room and invited her to sit down. She did so.

" You're the first well-known author I've met."

" Forget it."

" I can't. Didn't you write the play *Quinnncys*?"

" Yes."

" Our Amateurs did it a few months ago. I played Posy. I'm glad you didn't see me wrecking it. Mother saw Henry Ainley play Joe. She loved the comedy. I'm dying to ask you a question . . ."

" Go on. Ask it."

" All right. Is a successful novelist more conceited than a successful dramatist? "

I laughed. She frowned. She went on: "I didn't mean to make it personal..."

" **But** you have. Never mind! Tell me what you **mean** by the word successful? "

She looked happier. " Oh! what most people mean. You've sold heaps of novels; *Quinneys* so my mother told me, was a big winner."

" Then you define success as pleasing the Many, even if the Few are not pleased."

" Yes; I do."

" And you take for granted that a novelist whose novels sell by the ton and a playwright whose plays play to capacity must be conceited."

" I've dropped a brick. I'm sorry."

" I'm in your debt. I shall try to answer your questions in a book I'm writing. I can't answer it off-hand. I can only say this: Somebody has said that nothing fails like success. And as for conceit..."

" Yes? "

" It can assail people who are not successful. Shakespeare testifies that conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.' "

My daughter came in; we went down to tea.

5

An Englishman recently returned from France told me that our next-door neighbours cannot recover pre-war health and prosperity till fifty years have passed. I disagree with him. The backbone of France is the peasant proprietor. I have made friends with scores of them. They, at any rate, will carry on as patiently, contentedly and efficiently as they have always done. Ownership of a few acres means everything to these sons of the soil, the soil which they reverence as their mother. I hope that powers to be will see to it that ownership of land is a paramount necessity to our national welfare. The old slogan " Three Acres and a Cow " is discredited. But three acres of good fertile soil can support a family, if tomatoes, berries **and** vegetables are scientifically " raised ", a transpontine word **dear** to me. Many a small tenant farmer has said: " I could **work** harder and to better purpose if I owned my land." Many a **rich** tenant has muttered: " I was a fool to spend time and money upon property that isn't mine." Even in Soviet Russia, peasants want to own their land. In California, fifty years ago, **huge**

ranches in what is to-day called The Fruit Belt were bought for a few dollars an acre, surveyed, cut up into small holdings, and sold. Before I left the Golden State, these small fruit farms were valued at ten and twenty times the price paid for them. The unintelligent few failed; the intelligent many succeeded. If we send young men back to the land, they must learn how best to cultivate it.

Of industrial towns I know little save this: they have been hotbeds of discontent. I believe that in less than a decade *Ia belle France* will regain her beauty.

One reason assigned for the postponement of what may be the most uncivil war in our political history is the absence of young voters. Nobody disputes their right to the vote, but are these gallant fellows, who know their own job so well, experienced enough to deal with social problems which perplex our most distinguished economists? The young women working in our factories suffer from the same disability. It is reassuring to remember that woman demands sovereignty in the home, and such sovereignty may be taken from her. Our young soldiers, under the iron discipline of sergeants, are likely to reject any policy, however specious, which will deprive them as civilians or individual initiative.

The death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt is an international disaster of the first magnitude. No man, so far as I know, has received such tributes to his service. The enemy raised one solitary cheer which came from a Japanese admiral, Sozuki. The Huns bespattered the dead man with abuse.

There are still here in Bath a few so-called Christians who affirm that the Germans at heart are kindly, peace-loving folk, and that the atrocities laid to their charge are exaggerated. I can only suppose that these Bathonians do not read the daily papers.

As I sat in the garden, after breakfast, the sun seemed to fade out of cloudless skies as I read the testimony of five war correspondents who were eyewitnesses of the horrors in the concentration camp of Buchenwald, a few miles from Weimar:

It was first opened in 1937. Since then upwards of 60,000 people have been systematically killed there—slowly or swiftly—by gun, rope, whip or starvation.

At Nordhausen, on the racks were laid hundreds and hundreds of men shrunk with starvation, waiting to die. Most of them were naked, some had typhus, others dysentery and still others had great gaping wounds from S.S. torture.

Many details are unprintable.

Photographs have been taken to corroborate this testimony. Will our sedentary sentimentalists refuse to glance at them?

Another question is asked: "Why does a defeated enemy fight on?" It is answered. The Huns are helots. They obey orders (under penalty of instant death if they do not) till their inhuman nature breaks suddenly down. Then they surrender *en masse*—throw away their arms, and march unescorted into cages. For the majority both faith and hope have gone. I set this down for one reason only. It will be months before this book can be published. By that time, so much will be forgotten if not forgiven. So the above lines may serve, lest again we forget.

6

The gardens are looking more presentable. Soon a fête will take place, with an admission fee of one shilling. I say gardens because we have three: the rock garden, the woodland garden and the flower garden, a trinity in unity, and visitors can wander from one to the other without being disconcerted. A friend of mine owned many acres of rough land. To our amazement, he bought a charming old manor house in another county (at great expense) which he took to bits, transported the bits, and put them together again. About this house, he made three gardens, each separated from the other, intending, so he told me, to connect them later on. But—this is the tragedy—they defied connection; and they do so till this day. It occurs to me—as it may have occurred to others—that some men treat their lives disjointedly. They have their profession, a wife, and children; and the trinity is not in unity. The man may rank his profession first, or he may be so devoted to his wife that profession and children take second and third place. Forty years ago a multi-millionaire built a mansion in San Francisco. He was comically proud of it, because he had bribed three architects to design the monstrosity. He said to me: "Say, I could afford to have a dozen styles, but I set my heart on three."

I mentioned in my first chapter that I had mislaid my copy of Cicero's *De Senectute*. A kind friend in Bath has sent me the once familiar booklet. There is, I find, no mention of the effect of climate on old age, but a few brief lines caught my eye which might have been written to-day. The coming General Election is to be fought on the issue, Controls v. Individual Enterprise. Already some of the Progressives have unsheathed their favourite weapon—invective. Those opposing them, so I hope, will use a deadlier rapier—ridicule. If the State is to become omnipotent, we have fought this war in vain. Ultimately the fate of Germany will be ours.

"Tell me," said one of the personages in that dramatic piece of Naevius called *The School*, "tell me whence it happened that so considerable a state as yours has thus fallen into decay?" The person assigned several reasons, but the principal was that a swarm of rash, unpractised young orators had unhappily broken forth and taken the lead amongst them. Temerity, indeed, is the usual characteristic of youth, as prudence is of old

In a magazine of recent date I have read an article entitled "The British Nanny," by Margaret Kennedy. It might have been named "The Passing of the Nanny." She will vanish if we have creches and nursery schools. Miss Kennedy has a soft corner in her heart for Nannies; and so have I. But they were strict disciplinarians, feared, for the most part, rather than loved. As children we loved the nursemaids. There must be discipline in the nursery. Mothers who could afford to have Nannies invested them with audiority. Our tartar of a head nurse did the scolding. After my sister and I were grown up, my mother admitted this with a faintly ironical smile. I recall an observation made by that American humorist, my father-in-law. I had spoken of a kinsman of his as a "son of a gun." He chuckled as he said: "Yes, and there ought to be a son of a gun in every family who likes doing the dirty work." Rarely did my mother scold or punish us, thereby securing our love and devotion. If the Nannie passes, it will be difficult to replace her. Let it be borne in mind that she could be displaced easily, if she abused her authority. If the nation's children **are under**

the thumb of civilians, *quis custodiet custodes?* An awkward and insistent question! To sack a teacher is as difficult a task as to unfrock a parson.

Vienna has been spared by die grace of God.

The Russians arc on the outskirts of Berlin.

Meanwhile April is masquerading as flaming June. June, in reprisal, may be a rainy month.

9

I have re-read Frederic Harrison's *Novissima Verba*, published in 1920. The great Positivist was born in 1831; so he must have been a very old man when he wrote this book. His " words," the words of a seer, repay reading. I found these lines: " Socialism cannot wriggle itself out of bureaucratic despotism; they regard the general public as mere ' fodder ' for their fads." My Communist friend in the Tynning would retort: " The same could be said of Tories." At heart he is a dyed-in-the-wool autocrat. Like the rest of us, the shortage of coal has inconvenienced him. In an unguarded moment, speaking of absentee miners, he gave himself away: " If I were boss of that mine," he declared, " I'd sack the blinkin' lot . . . ! "

Harrison was a stout believer in Collective Security, but in 1920 he had no faith in the League of Nations, from which one great nation had withdrawn.

I was interested in what he wrote about Thomas Hardy's lyrics, some five hundred or more. A lyric with no joy in it is but a tinkling cymbal. Harrison speaks of these lyrics as " pitched in a very minor key. Sorrow, regret, disappointment, pessimism, despair, the grave, the dead, ghosts and the after-world, was the burden of all." And yet " full of power and tragic poetry." Hardy sums up his attitude towards life in two lines:

O Life, with the sad, scared face,
I weary of seeing thee.

To my regret, I only met Hardy twice. On the second occasion his wife fussed about him, inviting me to regard my host as a guarded flame. However, the little I saw of him charmed me. His modesty, common sense, humour and courtesy were racy of the West Country. He appeared to be a true lover of life with no taint of the pessimist in his talk or on his face. In his old age he looked happy and serene.

CHAPTER SIX

IT IS THE FIFTH DAY of the fifth month of the year 1945. According to my daughter, news of the armistice came to us on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918! She has faith in numbers, not shared by me. Nevertheless—although Victory Day is not yet announced—the war is practically over. Hitler and Goebbels are reported dead by the Hun press. Doenitz is now the leader of a Reich that has ceased to be; Mr. de Valera, wearing cap and bells, has extinguished himself (in English eyes) by presenting his condolences to the representative in Dublin of the greatest criminal in the world's history, a fact which appears to have provoked more comment in the United States than here. Had this Anglophobe presented his congratulations the world would have laughed: another missed opportunity!

Perhaps the great lesson of this war has been our philosophical acceptance of things as they are. We accepted our bludgeonings with Spartan fortitude. When victory crowned with success our Russian Allies, salvos were fired in Moscow, not in this country. No bells were pealed when a million enemy soldiers surrendered unconditionally to Alexander; no bells are pealed to-day when another million men have surrendered to Montgomery! Passing strange . . . Here, in Bath (so I am told) the City Fathers wished to ban the presentment of the atrocities' film. A negligible minority still maintain that the tale of the atrocities has been exaggerated. Further comment would be tiresome.

Everybody I meet is hazarding conjectures upon small matters which concern us individually. The women want new frocks; the men clamour for better food. I am wondering when I shall be able to replenish my cellar and be allowed enough petrol to mow my lawns. At the moment Hun prisoners of war are better fed than any English civilian. And we have, so we are told, about four millions of them——! When will Utopia replace Upsidonia?

In Bath wishful thinking has become vocal about Japan. My attention was called to a sentence in an article entitled "The Last Enemy," written by Kevin Ozzard: "The death throes

of the Third Reich are the first spasms of Japan's death agony; Japan without Germany is in much the same unenviable position as the tortoise without its shell." On the other hand, the little yellow apes are as subject to the domination of authority as the sometime youth of Germany. They, too, may fight on and on till unconditional surrender is forced on them. Clarissa hopes that Russia will declare war against Japan within a few days. But Russia, like the rest of us, has to put her own vast house in order.

2

I have been greatly disappointed over a Hollywood film, featuring Deanna Durbin and entitled *Can't Help Singing*. A better caption would have been *Frocks and Frills*. Deanna in her 'teens became a world's darling. I was one of her "fans," so I set down regretfully my conviction that she and the Hollywood dictators have mishandled a colossal opportunity. The film is in technicolour: a triumph so far as the settings are concerned, although too much care has been taken to eliminate what might offend the eye: the dreary sage-brush deserts which the pioneers of 1849 had to traverse. The story, even if we accept it as farce, is unconvincing. Deanna plays the part of a young daughter of a senator who runs away from a luxurious home in Washington to join her fiancé in California, braving the perils of a journey across the plains in a "prairie schooner"! She takes with her a large trunk full of party frocks and appears in these most unsuitable garments wearing the never-fading picture-postcard smile and—singing. The smile never forsakes the little wench. The grandchildren of the pioneers are alive to-day. They know, none better, what their forebears endured. The story was told to me at least a hundred times and never failed to thrill. The women suffered more than the men during this never-to-be-forgotten Odyssey. It is, I submit, the most exciting chapter in the history of California. It affected profoundly the characters of every man, woman or child who took part in it. We take leave of Deanna, at the end "dolled up," still smiling, and unchanged. Her fiancé is knocked out by a "hick," and Deanna, wearing her prettiest frock, falls into the arms of her future husband, about as fit to play the part of wife and mother as Alice was when she stepped into Wonderland!

Glamour vincit omnia!

My companion, a young Englishwoman, supplied the right adjective—*piffling*.

3

I believe men to be vainer than women and with less excuse. The *Century Dictionary* elucidates the state of vanity. "Worthlessness, futility, falsity, want of substance to satisfy desire, the desire of indiscriminate admiration, inflation of mind on slight ground and making its possessor anxious for the applause and notice of others • . ."

A formidable indictment.

We have to admit that vanity tyrannizes over us from earliest childhood, and is rampant in second childhood. Nevertheless, it may be, if restrained, a disarming form of self-respect. I recall with a chuckle an incident of fifty years ago. I was staying with a Californian magnate. Coming downstairs, I beheld my host's eldest son, who had just left college, alone in the hall, gesturing in front of a big mirror. I overheard him say: "So pleased to see you. . . . What can I do for you?" I exclaimed: "What are you doing?" He replied unblushingly: "I'm practising. You see, I'm going into the old man's office." Within a year he was Vice-President of a big corporation. His vanity, if you can call it vanity, soaped his ways as a "receptionist." It is good to cherish a good conceit of oneself if it be not too good.

There's fun in Vanity Fair.

I recall two comedians in a Drury Lane pantomime: one fat, and lean. The fat fellow announced his engagement to a young lady; his thin friend was incredulous. "'Ave yer looked at yerself lately?" he asked. This raised a laugh all over the house. But can we see ourselves as others see us? Petty tyrannies exercised by vanity were camouflaged fifty years ago. In my mother's day, no young girl would have dared to powder her nose in public. There were no vanity "compacts." During a recent railway journey it amused me to notice that a youthful fellow traveller sitting opposite to me beguiled a long journey by looking at herself in a small mirror. There was nothing to be done to a pretty face which accounted no doubt for her self-satisfaction. Another girl in the carriage glared at her.

I read the other day a definition of politics: "The Science of Power." Vanity, in its cruder manifestations, might be indicted as the nescience of power, because it is only powerful with its victim, male or female. It is omnipotent, a merciless autocrat, with the ignorant and misinformed. A famous doctor, the least conceited of men, told me recently that in a campaign against the malnutrition of children, his bitterest enemies were the young mothers convinced that infant welfare is their intimate concern (which it is) and that they, not the doctors, were the final arbiters on diet. The ordinary school-master, "talking down" to his pupils, is nearly as conceited as the young mothers; and so are many well-meaning parsons, which accounts for empty pews. Probably the ignoble army of bureaucrats reveals "conceit in weakest bodies" even more tyrannically. After the war, we shall have to deal faithfully with these Jacks and Jills in office.

Has this war made us less conceited ?

I think so. We are beginning once more to accept collective security as our Excalibur against another war, when, if it comes, swords and rifles will be replaced by incredibly destructive bombs supplied by scientists not by soldiers. Our insularity has preserved us from invasion. Pen-insularity, as a wag observed last week, is a menace. Too many of our writers clip their own wings. Over-education is nearly as bad as under-education. The meetings of the Big Three broke down international barriers. Perhaps the lasting peace of the world will be established when flying liners bring all peoples into intimate contact. "What do they know of England, who only England know."

4

Victory Day.

It has dawned at last after nearly six years of blood and sweat and tears; and as I write these lines the glorious orb of day is struggling (not too successfully) to shine through the heavy mists obscuring the landscape. My son-in-law is hanging out the bunting. We secured with difficulty a too-big Union Jack, making sure that we could improvise a flag-staff. That forlorn hope had to be jettisoned; the big flag is now hanging from a rope stretched across the facade of the house. The smaller flags **ire** hanging disconsolate, **for** there is no passing **breeze to flutter**

them. However, Josephine has a Victory frock of red, white and blue, and on Thursday we shall have a children's party. To-night, I would, if I could, floodlight the courtyard and our fountain. Wild dreams of a barbecue in the woodland garden must remain dreams. When I suggested to my daughter the broaching of a cask of ale, she smiled sadly: " I have bought," she said, " three bottles of cider, six bottles of ale and some ginger beer. I have also bought two ducks and a rabbit. Not a word to any neighbour! Our larder may be burgled." On Saturday night, we hope to have our Victory dinner. Our one remaining magnum or 1928 champagne will be opened. If it should be corked, I might die, self-slain, as Vatel did, when no fish came to Chantilly. . . . I wonder if it is generally known that this great chef died in vain. According to Madame de Sevigne (who records his passing), the fish arrived about half an hour after he had impaled himself on his sword. . . !

The Russians have found the bodies of Goebbels, his wife and five children. Hitler and Goering—so it is hinted—may have escaped. King Leopold is safe; Laval is reported to be gormandizing on the eve of his extradition. . . .

When this book is printed, what I have just set down will be forgotten. Lord Vansittart hopes that some English poet will write a new Magnificat—if he can. I echo that hope. The outstanding cause for international thanksgiving is the Unity of the vast majority of the English-speaking peoples. This has been a victory or " endurance born." Endurance is indeed the " crowning quality," to which Lowell links patience. The patient endurance of our women has done as much to win this war as the valour of our men. Women, all over the world, may win the peace.

At dinner, after decanting a noble and aged burgundy, I proposed the toast to our Prime Minister. Then we settled down to listen in to the King's broadcast. At ten, we drove through Bath to stare at the crowds and the floodlit Abbey and Weir. Progress was slow. Joyous young people crowded round our car when we had to halt, opened the doors, and insisted on shaking hands. A minute later we exchanged greetings with our Chief Constable, who assured us that Bathonians were behaving themselves admirably. Above our heads, golden against a purple sky, soared the noble tower of the Abbey. A Doughboy passed, singing " My Bonnie lies over the Ocean."

However, two West-Country "bonnies" were cuddling up to him; and when he grinned at me, I was tempted to whisper:

"How happy you could be with cither,
Were t'other dear charmer away."

Still, it was a trinity in unity; their bare arms encircled **his** neck; his arms were round their waists.

I am writing this on the morning of the second Victory Day. It was rubbed into me when I was a boy that there was nothing new under the sun or stars. I should have laughed to scorn any prophet who predicted that seventy years on I should hear in Bath the cheering of London crowds. Soon, we shall not only hear the crowds but see them telcvisionally. I had listened, not unmoved, to the King and to the Prime Minister, but the supreme thrill came when these two men appeared on their balconies. The cheering must have brought tears to their eyes.

"God bless you all," said Mr. Churchill.

"God bless you, Winnie," roared the crowd.

A wonderful moment for Him and Them.

The decorations in Milsom Street were not worthy of the Queen City; but a happy thought sustained me. We arc still, thank God! a nation of individualists. Milsom Street, under pressure from the City Fathers, might have approved a carefully-thought-out scheme of collective embellishment: such as garlanded pylons forming an avenue of arc-lights. Beau Nash, if he were still with us, might have organized something of the sort. To-day no pageant master was forthcoming. The individuals triumphed: a significant sign of the times.

I am sensible this morning of a mental "hang-over," although I slept last night like a dormouse and awoke physically fit. We have had a surfeit of excitements. We arc confronted with drab to-morrows: sermons and soda-water after wine and laughter! It is rejuvenating to mingle with roistering crowds, but the tranquillity of my room is not a disagreeable change.

Echoes of the "Cease Fire" bugle are in my ears. The cannons arc silent, but our politicians arc fishing out their pop-guns. Mr. de Valera appeared yesterday in the streets of Dublin wearing mourning. Has he sent a wreath of shamrock to be placed upon the tomb of Corporal Schicklgruber when that tomb is found?

May 10th.

A cuckoo is calling in the woodland garden. When the word was first used as a term of reproach (shortened into gowk) I do not know. Cuckoo is to-day a synonym for "nuts". Josephine speaks of "going cuckoo/" Are we justified in applying the word to our extreme Left-wingers who will soon be busy laying eggs in the nests of others? Shakespeare tells us that the cuckoo "builds not for himself," and our younger Progressives would affirm that their activities are wholly altruistic, with self hurled into the melting-pot. I have listened to many tub-thumpers. I cannot recall one who was not concerned with the welfare of others, which accounts, perhaps, for the applause of the groundlings. That is why in a former chapter I suggested that these gentlemen (or should I speak of them as gents?) have no sense of direction, because they are on the low road to serfdom.

The Road to Serfdom is the title of a book recently published. The author, Friedrich Hayek, is an Austrian by birth, now a British citizen, and since 1931 has been a Professor of Economic Science at the University of London. I commend this book to voters at the next election. There is no rancour in it. The author sees clearly (and appreciates) the idealism which fortifies honest Socialists. But he makes it plain that the State which is omnipotent is impotent to restrain its autocracy. Unhappily, this book costs half a guinea, a prohibitive price for the millions.

The cuckoo is calling attention to itself. The two notes are a love call throughout the mating season, but to me they are a menace to collective security: I detect the voice of the late Doctor Goebbels. Might, so the aggressive bird repeats with tiresome iteration, is mightier than Right. How gladly the parent leaves the care of its young to others, knowing that its offspring will push the other fledglings from the nest and leave them to perish.

Yes; our idealists are "going cuckoo."

6

I have been dipping into Hazlitt's *Table Talk* Born in 1778, he died in 1830, still dear to lovers of the essay, although we

may quarrel with his dicta as a critic. Last night, **at** dinner, we wandered into Utopia, a pleasant pilgrimage. Before dinner, trying to escape from celebrations which were becoming prosaic, I had read Shelley's tragedy, *The Cenci*. Not, I admit, the right aperitif. My little granddaughter says that childhood would be happier if children were not constrained to "do things we don't want to do." I wanted to read the "Ode to the Skylark." Instead my attention, opening the book at random, was arrested by the poet's preface to *The Cenci*. Throughout my life I have skipped prefaces. Having read the preface, I read the tragedy. The story is macabre, revolting; the treatment is restrained and the climax inevitable. Beatrice is the avenging daughter of the Furies. Had she been Francesco's step-child, would she have been what her famous portrait by Guido suggests: a lovely creature sanctified by sorrow?

This thought was subconsciously in my mind when we sat down to dinner. My son-in-law had provided a surprise: a bottle of champagne: and we duly toasted him, determined to have a merry-making. Suddenly, a question presented itself; it did not come from me. It was apposite. What, I was asked, would I do with a clever boy, if—// the Socialists triumphed at the polls? Would I send him, for instance, to Harrow; and, later on, to Oxford or Cambridge? I pointed out the disconcerting possibility that all our public schools might be abolished. Also I evaded a "poser" by saying that an omnipotent State would deal with all boys, whether clever or stupid, "according to plan"; a parent would be allowed no voice in the selection of a vocation.

Vocation . . .

Accordingly, I took to my bed with Hazlitt beside my pillow, wishing to re-read his essay on *The Pleasure of Painting*.

As a young man, after I left Sandhurst, I believed that painting was my vocation. I worked in Paris, at Barbizon, Concarneau and elsewhere. Finally, as I have recorded, the great Bastien Lepage told me that painting was not my *mttier*. Later on, in California, I worked nearly as hard at music. Finally, I took to the quill. This is of no interest to anybody except myself, but it explains my going to bed with Hazlitt. This particular essay happens to be the first in his book. Would that his gift of felicitous and fastidious expression **were mine. . . !** In this essay, the author regrets, modestly and

disarmingly, the decision (made early in life) to abandon painting. He testifies that writing has never been to him so dear as painting. Apparently he was able to satisfy himself with a brush rather than with a pen. And that is why I write these lines, recalling our talk at dinner. Be a man soldier, sailor, tinker or tailor, he is likely to please and satisfy others, if he pleases and satisfies himself. It is impossible for me to visualize a paternal state handing out vocations to Tom, Dick and Harry and satisfying each. If I were to-day the father of a clever son, I should not dare to interfere with his choice of a profession. Personally speaking, I would sooner see him a contented tinker than a disappointed and disgruntled field-marshal. Smelfungus might retort that in this essay William Hazlitt was subsisting on the smell of a lamp which he put out. But, on the other hand, we can thank Goa that the promise of youth does outstrip the performance of middle and old age. Hazlitt touches on this: "Indolence is a delightful but distressing state; we must be doing something to be happy. Action is no less necessary than thought to the instinctive tendencies of the human frame; and painting combines them both incessantly. The hand furnishes a practical test of the correctness of the eye; and the eye thus admonished imposes fresh tasks of skill and industry upon the hand . . ."

That is what I felt when I was twenty-one, working hard with other young men. One only, a canny Scot, had commercial instincts which we damned. To-day I know that I was as green as the trees in the lovely forest of Fontainebleau. The day dawns—too soon, alas!—when any artist (be he painter, musician or writer) suffers agonies of disappointment and frustration, if his work fails to bring grist to the mill. Hazlitt, when he wrote this essay, was in love with youthful memories. Once, he had lived in Arcadia. He says so, refraining from further comment.

I should do well to emulate his example, but the urge to say more is irresistible. I pity the man, woman or child who has never lived in Arcadia. I know that the happy years which passed too swiftly in the New Forest exercised a spell upon me and my work. A friend and neighbour, the last man to be accused of sentimentality, expressed a wish on his death-bed that his body should be cremated and the ashes scattered in a glade not far from his house. Like Robert Louis Stevenson, he

wanted what was left of him to lie where, during his lifetime, he had been alone with the Great Mother,

Hazlitt speaks of the absorption of a painter trying to delineate Nature; but a writer is (or ought to be) more interested in human nature, which makes his task easier, the more so if he indulges himself in slight exaggeration of merits and demerits. A painter of landscape is well advised to use (metaphorically) a Claude Lorraine glass which blurs too sharp vision. Realism in brush-work defeats its ends: the parts loom up more important than the whole. At Barbizon, in 1881, the younger men, gathered together at Siron's, were under the influence of Jean-françois Millet. We preferred an ugly model to a pretty one; we aped sedulously the great man's technique, bought the pigments used by him, and prattled incessantly of VALUES. We were concerned with the permutations and combinations of light and shade. One of us, oui senior by ten years, worked each day upon three canvases. His model, a scraggy girl—whom he called Bichette—tagged after him, carrying paint-box, easel and umbrella. We beheld Bichette at dawn, high noon, and in late afternoon, faithfully portrayed. She was never "out of value." We perceived that the varying conditions of light and shade altered her even as they altered the glade in which she stood. The Master worked on each canvas for one hour only. Assuredly he earned the success that he achieved later on. Could such realism be practised by novelists? A Best Seller told me that he could spend a busy day working on three novels. But he was not concerned with values. He wrote to a formula. Quantity to him outpaced quality. He pleased himself; and he pleased millions of readers . . .

7

Last night, our children's party, with three "grown-ups" to every child, was an uproarious success. I took the floor five times. . . ! An Admiral of the Fleet was the life and soul of the Kitchen Lancers. Our parson capered nearly as gaily as he did. My daughter, so everybody (including Josephine) assured me, was the belle of the ball. She wore a pre-war, pink frock, which became her admirably; she looked a young woman. My dinner jacket might have smelt of moth-balls, but happily it didn't. Our Admiral was wearing a resplendent uniform. Our

dancing mistress was mistress of the ceremonies and "called" the steps of the Lancers. One guest—not an ex-Colonel of the Tenth Hussars—said that he never danced... *He did*. Nobody was allowed to "sit out." Two of the children arrived with their Nannie. She displayed a light fantastic toe.

In the dining-room the elderly children sat down to supper. In the hall was a "stand-up" buffet for the guests between eleven and forty. One lady whispered: "Do tell me, how and where did you get these good creatures?" I replied, in another whisper: "Shush-h-h! We stole them." She replied: "Stolen fruit is sweetest." I prepared claret and cider cups, with soft drinks for the toddlers. Our three maids had worked from morn till eve. We owed much to them.

At the last moment, five minutes before the first guests arrived, the gramophone refused to function. Was it made in Germany? My son-in-law threatened to cut his throat. My daughter said hearteningly: "If we can't dance, we'll play Kiss in the Ring." However, the machine mended its manners. We began with a waltz, succeeded by a polka, the Valeta, and a quick step which I found disconcertingly slow.

It was a Victory Party, a victory over age! I had kept misgivings to myself; I believed that a children's party would be a "flop" if we invited the "old 'uns." My daughter was wiser. She predicted that it would be a children's party, even if Methuselah rose from the dead to join us. I am sure that E. V. Lucas and Elia would have been as reassuring. I should have remembered that two nights previously, when we drove into Bath to stare at the crowds, I wanted to join them. As a mere onlooker I felt out of the fun of the fair. Our Chief Constable, albeit not on duty, may have experienced the same qualms.

We went to bed at one after dancing Sir Roger de Coverley. I am writing these lines at eleven. Josephine is still asleep.

8

The unconditional surrender of the enemy in Europe may have disappointed the defeatists who predicted a long-drawn-out guerrilla warfare. The high light to me is the liberation of the Channel Islands. Long ago I spent three jolly weeks on the island of Sark. I was tempted to buy the Seigncurie for ten

thousand pounds. **Compton** Mackenzie was **then living in Jethou**, monarch of all he surveyed. I remember two laid-in-lavender old maids who gave me tea in a charming **cottage**. Indiscreedly, I asked them if they were ever tempted **to leave the island**. "Oh, no," they replied. "You see, if we **need** a change we can go to Petit Sark." Petit Sark, where I **was** staying at the time, is a tiny annexe of the larger island, joined to it by a narrow causeway. The Vicar of Sark urged me **not** to buy the Seigneurie. He spoke with a strong French accent. "I am Vicar here," he said. "But, *entre nous*, I would sooner be a waiter in a third-class restaurant in Paris." In rough weather the island is cut off from the mainland. The elder of the two spinsters dangled a bait. "If you become our Seigneur," she said, "you will take precedence of everybody who comes to the island except the Sovereign." I turned from this handful of hay.

No cats or dogs, I have just read, are left in Jersey and Guernsey. They have been eaten. However, a *civet de chat* is nearly as toothsome as jugged hare. In the old days, cigars and wine were exempt from custom duties; and income-tax was negligible.

Old age has its stupidities. When I am at work the minutes speed by. I look up to a chiming clock. An hour has passed; and I murmur: "Good." But I have lost a precious sixty minutes. Many old gentlemen gobble good food and swig wine instead of sipping it! This is homicidal mania in a mild form. They would not hasten to catch a train, but, unconsciously, they are speeding out of life.

The papers, I note, are congratulating the VE crowds on their good behaviour. A spirit of kindness animated the whole nation. A common danger has for the moment obliterated hateful class distinctions. Union, indeed, is a paramount force strong enough to cope with all disturbers of the peace,

9

Four charred corpses have been identified as the remains of **the** sometime paper-hanger! To give him due credit, he was a quadruple personality. He may be identified, we are told, by his dentist. The hunt is up for Himmler. **He is likely to be run to ground by his** victims, who may **see to it that this**

arch-fiend is not captured alive. Ribbentrop's vanity must be piqued, because interest in him and his whereabouts has flickered out. But he, too, is so well known that his capture is certain.

To-morrow is Thanksgiving Sunday throughout this realm. Even in Germany, the middle-aged and elderly must be rejoicing that the war is over in Europe *and*—what a conjunction!—they have regained freedom of speech. Have they achieved freedom of thought? Meekly they are accepting our authority.

10

Thanksgiving Sunday.

We attended the service in the small church of St. Thomas \ Bcket which overlooks our courtyard. It was a service also of dedication and invocation, as we prayed that God's Spirit might strengthen us in the days to come.

At three, alone in my room, I listened in to the service held in St. Paul's Cathedral, an uplifting experience, as millions can testify. It is likely that many of us achieved a detachment of mind denied, perhaps, to those who sat under the vast dome. My eyes, I know, would have distracted my attention. Never, during the past two decades, has there been such an assemblage of high and mighty persons. I should have stared at the small Duke of Kent. Did he protest when he was taken from his mother to walk beside the King of Norway?

I am glad that I was alone.

I had a sustaining conviction that the dead, our own dead, were with the living. This morning, our Vicar when he spoke of them, enjoined a minute's silence. His address was sincere, simple and brief. He dwelt upon the unity that had made victory possible, and forbore to touch upon the disunity that again might set nation against nation. He gave us figures which I accept as roughly correct: the losses in killed and wounded sustained by the Allied Nations. Russia has suffered most. Within a few yards of the churchward gate is a memorial cross; on it are inscribed the names of Widcombe parishioners who died during the 1914-1918 war; inside the tiny church are too many mural tablets. The thought came to me on this day of national thanksgiving, that the gratitude of millions might **find** enduring expression if memorials in this **country took the**

form of service to all who have been crippled (and impoverished) in this war: wards in hospitals, endowments for research work, and additional playing-fields in our larger towns. This would exact unity of endeavour difficult to bring about. Still, public opinion should be consulted and the wishes of the many should prevail over the idiosyncrasies of the few.

n

At luncheon yesterday—something of a fast after the Saturday Victory feast—my daughter rebuked me when I said that appetite for another feast was clawing at me. I was not serious, but, as luck would have it, we had another most unexpected celebration. The kind friend who had sent me the magnum of champagne rang me up after tea from Bristol. He was on week-end leave from Cornwall. Would the three of us dine with him that night at the Mauretania Restaurant? The answer, you may be sure, was a glad affirmative. My daughter couldn't go with us. My son-in-law and I took the long road at seven-thirty, speeded through the Avon Vale, and reached the City of Ships a few minutes before eight. So far as food was concerned, we were told that pot-luck would be our portion, but we could drink another magnum from the same bin. As I entered the mahogany panelled dining-room, the chef beamed at me.

It was a memorable meal. "The little more and how much it is!" Our host, his wife and we two sat down at a square table which became at once a "circle." The exultation of the past five days had been subtly transmuted into exaltation. . . . At nine, we were to listen in to the Prime Minister. . . . We were offered three courses; hors d'oeuvre, a braised tongue and a sweet. More than enough. The "bubbly" was the right tippie, as good as it could be: not too ebullient, not over-cooled, bottled sunshine. I silently blessed Dom Perignon, that great high priest, who (so it is affirmed) was so skilled a gourmet that he could tell by the taste of a grape the vineyard in which it had been grown! This cellarer or the Abbey of Hautvillers, a Benedictine monk, put sparkle into what had been a still wine. Then we ascended some stairs and sat down to sip a noble Sandeman port with an astonishing bouquet. We sipped it as we listened in to the Prime Minister. What a master of the

right word! What a sage! A lesser man would have made the blunder of introducing party politics. He did allow himself one bantering allusion to de Valera, whom he presented "frolicking" with Huns and Japanese. . . .

I repeat—a memorable feast, better for body, mind and soul than a banquet at the Guildhall. We were in bed before midnight. Mr. Warner Allen, in his *Wines of France*, begins his first chapter, entitled "The Gentle Art of Wine-drinking," with these words:

"Great wine is a work of art. It produces a harmony of pleasant sensations, which appeal directly to the aesthetic sense, and at the same time sharpens the wit, gladdens the heart, and stimulates all that is most generous in human nature."

CHAPTER SEVEN

CLARISSA, WITH HER ACTIVE MIND, often makes suggestions on which I pounce. Yesterday, she blamed the war, and the shortage of paper, for the abuse of initials, up-to-date abbreviations not to be found in Chambers' *Twentieth Century Dictionary*.

"In this new book," she said, "you are out to shoot folly as it flies. Have a shot at indolence. Some people are too lazy to sign their own names."

She spoke with slight acidity, but I conjured up a smile when I told her that a Bathonian had received a typewritten letter with an illegible signature. He could make out the initials—A.S.S. Accordingly, he addressed his reply to Blank Donkey, Esquire; and was threatened with legal proceedings for defamation of character. The defendant admitted that a correspondent whose signature was illegible wrote himself down an ass. And so, for the most part, say all of us.

Framers of Crossword puzzles set down initials; would-be solvers use unparliamentary language. Our newspaper men take for granted that initials familiar to them are familiar to their readers. Business men, who should know better, adopt grandiose names to advertise their activities, such as: *The Greater Puddle ton Dyeing & Cleaning Company, Ltd.*, which I have invented, not daring to cite authentic headlines which sprawl along six inches of an envelope. Sinclair Lewis, tongue in cheek, might claim that such verbosity began in Zenith. It is indisputably transpontine. A famous hospital in Bath has been internationally known for a couple of centuries as the *Royal Mineral Hospital*. It calls itself to-day *The Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases*. Possibly Becky Sharp refused to accept the "dixonary" of the Great Lexicographer, because a Chiswick Girls' School was labelled pretentiously: *Miss ?in\ertons Academy for Young Ladies*. The august seminary, we may be sure, was never presented as P.A.Y.L. When Thackeray began to write, proprietary banks were known as Hoare's, Child's, Baring's and so forth. Brewers have been conservative and preservative. **Would**

Guinness's Stout be so popular if it were advertised as **N.B.L.**? *Nectar from the Ban's of the Liffey*? I hold in reverence certain names: Fry, Cadbury, Bass and even Rowland, whose Macassar Oil was in our nursery. Antimacassars were invented to protect brocaded backs of chairs against this expensive ointment. They may still be seen in old-fashioned mansions of gentility.

Are initials featured to provoke curiosity? Romance attaches itself to them. When I lived in the New Forest many beeches were embellished with hearts enclosing initials, and now and again the heart was transfixed with Cupid's arrow. A middle-aged man returned after many wander-years to Arcadia; he betook himself to a glade, where he found on a beech trunk his initials and those of a youthful sweetheart. A few hours later he was drinking tea with her, a still comely widow. He spoke of happy days gone by, even as my Uncle Toby may have tickled the cars of the Widow Wadman. She had not forgotten them. Before he left her cottage, the pair were engaged to be married for the second time. . . .

In the transept of a cathedral I found the recumbent alabaster figure of a bishop defaced with innumerable initials scribbled upon it by trippers——! To-day, vergers are enjoined not to permit such sacrilege. In the Utopia ahead of us, let us hope that such misuse of initials will be a criminal offence.

Last week a friend said to me: "God bless A.P." I racked my memory. Seeing that I was puzzled, my friend went on: "I mean, of course, A. P. Herbert." It was consoling to find out that I knew that A.P. stood for Alan Patrick. He did **not**.

There are, thank God! no initials in the Bible or in Shakespearean plays. Are initials used in Hansard? *Fame and Fashion in Literature* has been delightfully treated by my neighbour, Laurence Housman. He points out that fashion may imperil fame. Fashion uses initials which debase the currency of honest words. I was amused not long ago when a very young man said to a grey-haired senior: "You are wearing, I see, an O.K. tie." Age protested: "I am wearing an Old Etonian tic. I don't say F.E., I say Floreat Etona."

I am not an Old Etonian, but I touch my cap to him.

2

On the glorious First of June we shall be permitted to use more petrol; and the ban—confining us to a ten-mile limit—will be lifted. This means a renewal of pre-war social intercourse. When Plancus was Consul, it was generally admitted **that** men, far more easily than women, could pick up **the** severed threads of friendship. That may not be true to-day; I don't think it is; the magnificent work done by women in this war has brought about a freedom of movement which must have affected their minds even as it affected their bodies. As a young man I deplored the splendid isolation of the owners of stately homes, but it never occurred to me that **the** ignominious isolation of the women in country cottages was a social sore. I believe home to be a word dearer to women than men, but they appreciate the hearth the more if they have to leave it. It is thinkable that the arch-rebel, Lucifer, belittled the joys of heaven till he was hurled headlong from it.

The dismal Jimmies predict that no host can look forward to exercising pre-war hospitality. What is true hospitality? Lowell speaks of "The open-handed spirit, frank and blythe of ancient hospitality." Oliver Wendell Holmes said something enlightening, but I can't recall his words. Longfellow speaks of hospitality "sitting with gladness/" What did Eve do when she entertained her angel guest? Adam had no cellar; Eve, presumably, was without a store cupboard. She says:

But I will haste, and from each bough and hrakc,
 Each plant and juiciest gourd, will pluck such choice
 To entertain our angel guest, as he
 Beholding shall confess, that here on earth
 God hath dispensed his bounties as in heav'n.
 So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
 She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
 What choice to choose for delicacy best,
 What order, so contrived as not to mix
 Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
 Taste after taste upheld with kindest change . . .

Milton must have been a gourmet.

The guest, accustomed to celestial nectar and ambrosia, sat down to eat the fruits of the garden. I like to think that he thoroughly enjoyed himself. I look forward, **with ever-**

increasing gusto, to simple meals shared with old friends whom I have not seen for five years. I remind myself that pre-war hospitality was often too lavish. Good company is better than good food and drink; we can at a pinch do without perfect service, wax candles, and exquisitely polished silver. If the spirits of the guests are blithe, all is well. There may be more entertainment because simplicity is still enforced.

3

We are moving the four lovely nymphs, the quartet of seasons, from the Roman bath to the sunk garden. Josephine is of opinion that the darlings will be happier where all visitors can see them. The Roman bath is sequestered. The beauties were likely to die of their own dear loneliness. It must have been a grief to them when we put gravel into the bath. In the hall of this house hangs the portrait of a little boy, John Thynne, painted by Kerfseboom. The child is sitting by a fountain in which he was found drowned. Warned by his untimely fate, my daughter urged me to fill the bath with gravel when Josephine was a toddler. We did so. The nymphs were unable to gaze at their own reflections——!

We shall now refill the bath with water.

Garden ornaments are often misplaced. This happens partly through ignorance, partly through indolence. A life-size marble statue needs machinery to move it; so as a rule it stays where it is first put. My predecessor bought many statues in Rome and Venice. His widow told me that they were "dumped down," anywhere and everywhere. This has taken place all over the kingdom.

4

I have enjoyed an agreeable surprise. My smoking tobacco has been doled out ounce by ounce. This afternoon my tobacconist delivered two pounds! Has this significance? Are the years of plenty about to begin again? My daughter said, almost pathetically: "You're lucky. I wish our grocer could send up a dozen bottles of olive-oil, but he tells me that **the** best oil is fetching about two pounds a quart in Rome."

If this be true, I offer no apology for presenting **our ersatz** recipe for a French salad dressing:

Take the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs. Use cream, or even milk, instead of olive-oil, mixing it slowly with the yolks. Add salt, pepper and one teaspoonful of Worcestershire Sauce. Chop up, as finely as possible, a few chives, a little parsley and four leaves of tarragon. Stir in these. Add one dessertspoonful of vinegar or lemon juice. Be careful to dry your lettuce before you pour upon it, at the last moment, the dressing. This is enough for four persons.

How did we get the cream ?

We skimmed our not ungenerous ration of milk; and our milk comes from a Jersey cow.

I append another recipe for ersatz clear soup which will please discriminating palates.

Put into a saucepan two shredded goodish-sized spring onions, three medium-sized carrots, a small turnip, two pepper corns, two cloves, a little chopped parsley and thyme. Add one quart of water. Let this simmer gently for forty minutes. Then add three teaspoons of white sugar, a dash of pepper, but no salt. Strain through several folds of muslin. If not perfectly clear put in the crushed shells and whites of two eggs, whisk up and strain again. Add before serving five teaspoons of Bovril. This is enough for five persons. At the last moment, if you have it, add half a glass of sherry or port.

We served this ersatz soup at our Victory Dinner. The lady who sat next me said: " Is this bottled clear soup, pre-war, from Fortnum and Mason? " I replied : " No; our little cook made it." As a matter of fact we had tried, quite in vain, to buy clear turtle soup.

5

The news from the Far East is heartening. Aggressors appear to be unable to wean their minds from their objectives when they discover—as they are bound to do sooner or later—that they cannot cope with the powers arrayed against them. We are told that the German High Command, when Italy was successfully invaded, warned Hitler that he (not they) had lost the war. He refused to believe it. He must have been a prey to

Those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings,
 Blank misgivings of a creature
 Moving about in worlds not realized,
 High instincts before which our mortal nature
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised . . .

I hold cruelty to be the greatest vice. Obstinacy is obliquity, not iniquity. In *The Duenna*, Sheridan writes: "I'm an obstinate old fellow when I'm in the wrong; but you shall now find me as steady in the right." What a text for a parochial sermon! It is likely that Sheridan put into the mouth of a character in a play what he felt about himself. Fear, we have been informed, is a major cause of wars; bolstered by obstinacy fear may well engender "blank misgivings." Most of us move restlessly in "worlds not realized."

Sitting alone, I have repeated Wordsworth's lines applying them to myself. It took me ten minutes to find the word obliquity, indicating defective vision. The mind, with increasing years, should be clearer as old eyes grow dimmer. Would that it were so. Children are unreasonably obdurate, misgoverned by their personal likes and dislikes. Middle age, in a frenzied world or competition, is too busy with action to indulge in quiet thought. If I were younger, I should be tempted to write a comedy of manners dealing with obstinacy as a wrecker of common sense. The Japanese are more obstinate than the Huns, so they may fight on suicidally for another year.

6

Leopold of the Belgians is still an exile from his own country; so is George of the Hellenes, the former an Old Etonian. I am assured that he is the antithesis of the old King Leopold who accumulated a vast fortune in the Congo and elsewhere. I recall a story about him which was told to me when I was at Ostend in the eighties. He was not a *bon p'tit Joseph*. Scandal about himself amused him. A dignitary of the Church craved private audience.

"I grieve to inform Your Majesty that dreadful stories are current about you."

"Indeed? May I ask if *you* believe them?"

"Sir——! I merely deem it to be my duty to state a fact."

The King smiled, lowering his voice to a **confidential** whisper: " You must know, my dear friend, that **I—I have heard** similar stories about *you*, but I do not believe them."

Bluff King Hal might have said much the same to Cardinal Wolsey, Monarchs have lost their thrones, because, **perhaps, they** too fondly believe that a king can do no wrong.

The tribute paid to our King by the Prime Minister was no lip service. It was received by the Commons with thunderous applause. The sly suggestion, after the House had been told of His Majesty's skill with a tommy-gun, that—if it had come to a last stand in London—the King would have departed from his usual constitutional rectitude by disregarding the advice of his Ministers was the happiest of Hits. Even the ranks of Tuscany raised a cheer. . . .

It seems certain that Hitler is dead, not frolicking as de Valcra's guest in Dublin. Laval and Goering are swilling champagne. Bombadier Hadley, a sometime Durham miner, has snubbed Field-Marshal von Milch. I record this in case I might forget it. The arrogance of the military caste in Germany is becoming comical. Some are looking forward to the next war, but they won't take part in it. Not one has expressed regret for the slaughter and suffering which they have caused. They blame Churchill and Roosevelt. Before execution they ought to be beaten with their own batons. The punishment would fit the crime.

7

A clever Frenchwoman came to tea yesterday; and the talk dealt briefly with countries who label themselves democracies. No country, she declared, could be democratic if the many were governed or misgoverned by the few. I cited Uruguay, Switzerland and Holland as more democratic than Britain or the United States. She spoke of Denmark, of a personal experience. A Danish friend had built a large house. When it was finished, a house-warming took place to which were invited the friends of the family and every man who had helped to build the house with their wives. There were no class distinctions. Such a gathering might assemble in France or England, but there would be, I fear, restraint on both sides. The unkind would exclaim: "Yes, a very mixed grill, if you ask me." If my informant is right, there is nothing rotten **in the**

State of Denmark, if we exclude the Huns who are still poisoning the ambient air. . . .

I cannot resist setting down a story concerning Generals Eisenhower and Patton. I am told that they are old friends, on terms of frankest intimacy. General Patton disdained formality when making official reports to his superior officer. Indeed, he had to be advised that state documents exact a stately style. Accordingly, his next report was a model of propriety, beginning "Sir " and ending " Your obedient servant." But a postscript was appended:

Ike, yesterday for the first time I spat on German soil.

8

I have read (and re-read) an article by J. L. Garvin in the *Daily Telegraphy* entitled " Germany Now Pays the Price of Aggression." Our veteran journalist wields a pen as mighty as any in Fleet Street. " The Allies," he writes, " find themselves unexpectedly confronted by conditions never seen before in history and never imagined by the conquering nations until these last ten days of apocalyptic judgement." Gibbon might have written this sentence. Garvin goes on to describe, without any taint of exaggeration, what the Germans have done to themselves and the tornado, which has wrecked the once holy fatherland. I have been through what the Doughboys call too mildly a blizzard. The merciless force is terrifying. It can obliterate a smiling landscape; it can uproot oaks; it can pluck houses from solid foundations and dash them to the ground; it can pick up a man, whirl him away, and set him down—unhurt! I have talked to a Texan to whom this happened.

What is so astounding, so incredible, is the statement from many reliable correspondents in Germany that as yet the Germans are unable to realize that they sowed the wind and have reaped the whirlwind. More, much more; such realization must come from within, if peace is to follow. I can well believe that the arrogant *Junkers* are still as obstinately proud of themselves as *Herrenvol* as they were a year ago; and the millions of underlings have been trained to curb their tongues. Probably their hearts are too full of self-pity for speech till it dawns upon their fogged understandings that speech has ceased to be *per bo ten*.

Once a *Junker* always a *Junker*.

One of them came to California sixty years ago. He married a daughter of the Golden West, a great heiress. I knew him and his wife. She became an expectant mother. Naturally enough, she dreaded the long journey to Germany and leaving her own people and country. Her lord was inexorable. "My son," he said, "must be born in his own fatherland. I wish it; my Emperor wishes it." Against much remonstrance he had his own way.

Garvin makes it plain that Germany is a vast cemetery of dead men, dead industries and dead hopes. Four Great Powers will deal with it. I used to tell my daughter that a vitamin, curiosity, might keep me alive till the war was over; the same vitamin, I hope, will preserve me till peace is assured. There can be no enduring peace without goodwill. And it must soar "above all earthly dignities."

9

Dignities.

Wordsworth wrote some lovely lines about a woman.

**True dignity abides with her alone
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
Can still respect, can still revere herself
In lowliness of heart.**

Dignities lend stateliness to some of us. It is difficult, I suppose, for the Primate of England to unbend even when His Grace is alone with his family or taking his bath. The office is greater than the man. I have found true dignity in elderly stone-masons, woodmen, nurses and shepherds. It shines out like a candle set in a window on a dark night; a beacon light. *Noblesse oblige* is, of course, an obligation more honoured to-day in the breach than in the observance; moribund in that once most exclusive of quarters: the Faubourg St. Germain. I recall an engraving of Marie Antoinette sitting erect in a tumbrel on her last earthly pilgrimage. Her dignity was poignantly manifest. Who was it who said of the victims of the Reign of Terror: "They may not have known how to live, they did know how to die"?

I am wondering if a judge deprived of trappings would **lose** authority? The Speaker of the House of Commons is

expected to carry a cool head. How can **he do this in warm** weather wearing his huge wig? Still, for my part, I should be sorry if the monarch abandoned Cinderella's coach, if public opinion "scrapped" ancient rituals. I cannot visualize Garter king-of-arms stripped of his tabard. In Utopia, if **we** all dress alike, in reach-me-down utilitarian garments, shall **we** all think alike? *Hamlet*, in modern costumes, casts **no spell on me.**

However, women will never consent to dress alike outside a nunnery. On the top of a wardrobe in my bathroom, **all of a** row, stand five white bandboxes. Josephine pointed a finger at them.

"What do you keep in them?" she asked.

"Toppers, black and grey."

"What are toppers?"

"Head-gear—hats. Would you like to see one?"

"Yes, please."

I mounted a chair, opened a bandbox, fished out a grey topper as good as new, put it on my head, and smiled at her. The little wretch laughed.

"You do look funny."

Admittedly, a topper should not surmount a suit of shabby grey flannels, but I nearly fell off the chair. I removed the hat and handed it to her. I am glad to record that the white silk lining impressed her. The revered name, Lock, escaped notice.

"It is a real curio," she murmured. "Have you five of them?"

I explained that two had belonged to my brother; two **had** been worn in the hunting-field; the one in her hand had **been** worn last at Ascot. She listened attentively.

^{1A} Will you wear it again?" she asked.

"I hope so. Possibly at the Eton and Harrow Match at Lords next summer."

I had to supply more information. She was astounded **when** I told her that small Etonians wore toppers.

"What do Harrow boys wear?"

"Straw hats."

"Not in winter . . ."

"All the year round."

She gaped at me.

I put the topper back in the bandbox. Evidently my granddaughter regards it as a relic of a remote past.

Perhaps it is.

10

May has turned cold.

A further cut in our meagre food rations has not warmed us; and we are told that the year's strawberry crop will be small. The culture of the strawberry began about the beginning of the sixteenth century. From the small wild *Fragaria Vesica*, gardeners have slowly cultivated innumerable varieties. I have sought in vain to find one legend which might amuse my readers. It has no *nom de caresse*, like the pansy's "Cuddle-me-quick." The flowers are hermaphrodites, which conjures up a vision of a flying Mercury carrying a bottle of delicious fruit to Venus . . .

Despite too short commons, the housewives of Bath are of a more cheerful countenance. I commented on this to my barber when he was cutting my hair. He gave a reason which provoked a chuckle: "They're on the grin, sir, because the Huns are on iron rations. All of 'em were mad as wet hens when they learned that prisoners of war had better grub than they had."

I was surprised to read this morning that Eire had surplus food to send to others.

Colonel Llewellyn has imposed a disagreeable task on me. I must tell my gardener to plant more cabbages in the herbaceous border. Inspissated gloom has settled on him, because the late frosts have nipped our early potatoes. To our dismay six newly-born rabbits perished. Josephine said tearfully: "It's too hateful, but if the pets had lived, I—I couldn't have eaten em."

In answer to a questionnaire from the Army Education Corps to our Forces, asking them on what subjects they would like to take courses, one million and a half men requested a course on Music . . . ! This puzzles me. I have listened in to the (so-called) music given to the troops and madly applauded by them. I dare not throw a pebble at Ensa or the B.B.C. If a guest of mine prefers ginger pop to the first growths of Bordeaux and Burgundy, I give it to him or her. Personally, I loathe jazz; I feel homicidal when sickly, sentimental ditties are

crooned by singers who have never learned to sing, but if **the** troops want such fare, let it be ladled out to them. Jazz seems to me to have become more and more aboriginal: crooners have degenerated into whiners. The Whispering Baritone, Jack Smith, entranced me; I lift my cap to Bing Crosby. Artists were succeeded by apes. We are a musical nation, as Handel found out, and it is uplifting to be told that a million and a half soldiers are eager to study music.

Let the people sing.

A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy Fame is proud to win them;
Alas for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them.

Verifying the above quotation, I chanced upon another, which was written nearly ninety years ago.

You think they are crusaders sent
From some infernal clime,
To pluck the eyes of sentiment
And dock the tail of rhyme,
To crack the voice of Melody
And break the legs of Time.

A Bathonian told his friends that soon after he married he kept the wolf from his door by singing. His wife corroborated this. "He did," she said.

I get queer letters from strangers. A few of them are disconcertingly confidential. For example, a married woman, whom I have never met, writes to make excuses for herself, because she is about to separate from her husband. She needs, so she says, a word of encouragement from ME . . . ! It will not be forthcoming, for the good reason that I do not know all the facts. I should like to read a similar letter from her husband, who is overseas. He had to leave her, but he is in no hurry to return. Details would be boring. What astonished and amused me was the writer's cleverness in making excuses for herself, although I am sure she is a stupid creature, a nagger and a whiner. Her husband is other than what she deemed him to be; union has become disunion. It looks as if stupid people can find clever excuses for themselves when, incontestably, they are in the wrong. I write "incontestably" because her excuses were too clever to ring true. I wonder she did not sign herself: "Pink of Perfection." I replied briefly.

After posting my letter it occurred to me that I might have suggested a submission of her case to Anne Temple of the *Daily Mail*. She, I hope, is handsomely paid for her services. At the beginning of this century, a counsellor known as "Auntie" played the part of guide, philosopher and friend to love-lorn damsels. One grateful beneficiary called upon Auntie to thank her. She was shown into a small room where a big, black-bearded man was at work in his shirt-sleeves. He was smoking a pipe.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I am here to see Auntie," she replied.

"Is Auntie a friend of yours?"

"My greatest friend. She—she saved me from myself. I am a happy wife and mother, thanks to her. I love her."

"I'm delighted to hear this. Sit on my knee . . . Give me a kiss, darling. I'm Auntie."

If my memory does not fail me, this story was told me by my old friend, Thomas Marlowe, editor of the *Daily Mail* at the time.

JI

Alexander has warned Tito that we have been fighting to prevent claims by force. Cheers for such plain speech! In my bedroom hang two school photographs of House Cricket Elevens. My son was at Harrow with Alexander in the same house. Each morning I rejuvenate myself by looking at the faces of these two boys. Alexander presents himself as a thoughtful fellow who takes himself and others seriously. My boy is smiling. I mutter to myself: "the child is father to the man." Our Prime Minister went to Harrow in 1888, ten years after I left the Hill. He distinguished himself, in 1892, as the Winner of the Inter-Public Schools Fencing Competition; and I have often wondered whether fencing taught him more than cricket or football, games which made little appeal to him.

Marshal Tito is an outstanding personality, a gallant soldier, **something**, no doubt, of a bold adventurer, with a buccaneering spirit, a rebel against authority. At the moment the spotlight is on him. Actors tell me that when the spotlight is on them, they cannot see the audience.

Another glance at Alexander's compressed lips and firm chin is reassuring.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I BELIEVE HITLER TO BE ALIVE, because the Huns are insistent that he is dead. One by one the Thugs are being captured. Ribbentrop may have escaped from Europe and be ruffling it in the Argentine with pockets as well lined as Laval's.

Meanwhile, as an offset to much heartening news, we are admonished to tighten our belts. With the best wish in the world to believe that Authority has dealt fairly with us, individual hard-luck cases obtrude themselves. For example, my tenant of what we too pretentiously term the Home Farm has an authentic grievance. I know him to be a hard-working man who works (at manual labour) harder than his cowman. But the cowman is entitled to more generous rations because he is listed as a farm labourer, whereas the farmer—overworking mind as well as body—moves no bowels of compassion. And yet he needs the extra ration more than his cowman. I submit another hard case. The husband of a neighbour owns a little one-man business. He has two sons serving with the Forces; his wife is working in some hospital; the husband has to cook his own meals and keep his cottage in order. One of the sons is on his way home. The mother, nearly fifty, wants to leave her hospital and make ready a welcome. Nevertheless, when she asked to be released, she was enjoined to "stay put." I am wondering what punishment, if any, would be meted out to her if she took French leave?

It is exasperating to be asked for advice which one is unable to give through ignorance of the Law. This woman, if she exercises her vote at the coming election, will be against controls. Some of these are inescapable. Gladly would I help the victims of red tape to cut it. Josephine asked me for a definition of the two words. So I told her the story of Gulliver bound by the Lilliputians with countless threads.

"Why," she asked, "is the tape red?"

She was not enlightened when I replied: "Because those tied up by it see red." But, maybe, they won't vote "red."

2

Now that the European war is over, my "fan-mail" is heavier; and I have no secretary to deal with it. Strangers ask me where they can buy books of mine which the shortage of paper has put out of print. But, again and again, they take the opportunity of citing personal grievances. It would be churlish not to try to deal with them, but I feel as impotent as Gulliver. One lady writes: "I have just read your *This Was England*. I like it so much, because you bring back an England that we shall never see again. I wish you would tell me why I have to eat my poor hens, because I can't feed corn to them, but race-horses are given their corn! !! !! It seems so unfair, but you, I'm sure, can explain . . ." I suggested that she should write to the Chief Steward of the Jockey Club. An uncle of mine was a member; he happens to be dead; he was very popular with the poorer tenants on a big estate, often remitting overdue rents. What he would have said to my correspondent I cannot guess. Racing is a national institution, sacrosanct. The Turf must be as carefully tended as a public bowling green. If I were a Food Minister I should give extra rations to our famous cricketers and football players. But I was dismayed to learn from another correspondent that in 1944 a fox-hunting squire "wangled" a ration of corn for two hunters out at grass. He, lucky fellow, fed the corn to his chickens. Red tape, now and again, is elastic.

This auto-causcrie might be entitled "Flotsam and Jetsam." Flotsam is derived from flotation; jetsam from jettison. I am attempting to set down what drifts into my mind; much of it, I fear, should be jettisoned by a happy-go-lucky beach-comber. However, the jetsam can be skipped by my readers. The only excuse for such a rambling narrative is hypothetical. I am taking for granted, perhaps wrongly, that what interests me, during this intermission between war and peace, will interest others. Ten years hence it may interest Josephine. It interested me immensely to read a diary written during the last war, a record of everyday events, as ingenuous as Parson Woodforde's journal. I had forgotten all the pin-pricks; I had forgotten **little** things "so great to little man," little deeds of kindness, and **the** dependence of one upon another. I submit too that failing eyesight constrains age to look at life through **the youthful eyes**

of others, especially children. It is a devastating thought that war unites us, whereas peace whirls us asunder. . . .

In peace-time

The world is too much with us, late and soon;
 Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away—a sordid boon!
 This sea that bares her bosom to the moon . . .
 For this, for everything, we're out of tune,
 It moves us not.

I find myself moved by tranquil sunsets. Only a poet could deal with my feelings when the sun goes down in wrath, pre-saging disaster on the morrow. When the sea bares her bosom to the moon, she presents a surface of unruffled silk. I love the sea when it is calm. In Brittany, in Finistere, the brave Bretonnes used to speak scornfully of the sardine fishermen, *les pecheurs du beau temps*. They smiled upon the stalwarts who caught cod in the North Atlantic; they laid wreaths in church-yards to the memory of those who were lost at sea. But the fair-weather fishermen were dear to me, the more so, perhaps, because in bad weather they worked in the fields. That gay troubadour, Theodore Botrel, wrote some lilting verses to *les filets bleus*, the azure nets. I talked much and often with the Concarneau fishermen, who had minds like sun-dials. Indeed, I could shiver a lance as a champion of fair-weather friends who bring back sunny days. An acquaintance said to me after he had spent dreary weeks in a hospital: "I ought to hunt up my little day-nurse, who behaved like an angel, but I funk it. The mere sight of her face will bring back all I'm trying to forget." I urged him to lie like a gentleman: "Tell her you'll remember gratefully everything she did for you as long as you live." He took my advice.

3

Horace Walpole spoke of us as a comical nation. But he spoke, we may be sure, with his tongue in its usual place—his enek. Macaulay said of him: "Serious business was a trifle to him, and trifles were his serious business." He was a most amusing fellow, the son of the mighty Sir Robert, who was not amusing. When Horace became the Earl of Orford, he never

took his seat in the Upper House. His *Letters* **arc much more** sprightly than his *Castle of Otranto*.

Arc we a comical nation?

It is comical to a Frenchman that an Englishman can **spend** three days looking on at a Test Match. I am sure that Washington Irving, a shrewd observer of English life and character, never spoke of us as comical. Many foreigners think we arc eccentric. Clarissa suggests that I should say something about the English character alter nearly six years of patient endurance of thwackings. Chastening is often brought about by chastisement. To-day the English character has burgeoned; we have regained what we lost after the 1914 war—the respect of other nations. We are not likely to lose that respect in the few years, if any, that are left to me; so I can speak with detachment from self. We are of the bulldog breed. We clench our teeth and hang on tenaciously to our convictions whatever they may be, *tenax in arduis*. Britons never shall be slaves. Nevertheless we are slaves to time-honoured conventions: we cock a dubious eye at "shrines to no code or creed confined." Greater changes have come to pass during the last hundred years than in five hundred preceding them. Although England has ceased to be an island, we remain insular. And we still distrust foreigners. In this enchanting West Country, we are slow to accept as fellow creatures men and women from Lancashire or the Midlands. As I wrote in a previous chapter, cheap transport is establishing closer contacts. Air-liners may—it is quite conceivable—unite into one family the two thousand millions on this planet. Then Upsidonia will become Utopia.

Whitsuntide is the Feast of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal gift was bestowed on the Apostles fifty days after the Passover; Whit-Sunday used to be called White Sunday. To-day is Whit-Monday; and Shakespeare's line is so apposite.

All in arms . . .

As full of spirit as the Month of May.

This is the twenty-first of May. It had never occurred to me that Spring's gay spirit was quintessentially holy. **The** promise or Spring is a divine assurance of immortality. I puzzled Josephine when I told her that May came of **age this** morning.

" Came of age . . . ? "

" She is twenty-one."

" How glad I am Tm not as old as that."

She laughed and ran away.

I refilled my pipe, thanking God that the spirit of May is flaming in my grandchild. It is alive in me after six winters of discontent. As a child I learned by heart " The Voice of Spring " by Mrs. Hemans.

I come, I come— Yc have called me long . . .

Lord Jeffrey spoke of her poetry as " infinitely sweet, elegant and tender," too sugary for modern palates. She died in 1835, only forty-one years old. I own her works in seven beautifully bound volumes bought by my grandfather. I set down the last stanza, because it holds a message for all of us.

The Summer is coming, on soft winds borne . . .
Yc may press the grape, yc may bind the corn!
For me, I depart to a brighter shore—
Yc arc marked hy care, ye are mine no more;
I go where the loved who have left you dwell,
And the flowers are not Death's. Fare ye well, farewell.

Felicia was the right name for her.

Care has marked us mercilessly. But this Spring has been kind and tender. March and April withheld cutting winds and drenching rains; May has been lavish of flowers and favours.

Kcblc's Whit-Sunday verses might have been written for this Whitsuntide. The *Christian Year* was first published in 1827, when England was at peace. But the poet, alluding to the " fires that rush'd on Sinai down," may have had in mind the Napoleonic wars.

Like arrows went those lightnings forth
Wing'd with the sinner's doom,
But these, like tongues, o'er all the earth
Proclaiming life to come.

I feel uneasy when I read the promises of our politicians. Conservatives, Liberals and Labour appear to be outbidding each other. I mutter to myself: " Man never is but always to be blessed." In one of yesterday's papers an article was entitled " The Fruits of Victory." The writer pints out that die first Christian soldiers had no plan; they had—faith. We have a thousand plans and too little faith. May the faith in Right which sustained our forces in the field be with them and remain with

diem, even if the fruits of die greatest victory in history are less luscious than we anticipate.

4

Last night I went to bed with Coleridge's *Table Talk*. I wandered back into the past not too surprised to find that yesterday is the father of to-day. The talk is recorded by no Boswell; there is much erudition, brightened by common sense. Evidently the poet disdained politicians. He was against the passage of the Reform Bill, although as a young man he had pleaded for a pantisocracy. "Passion and party," he exclaims, "blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us." Towards the close of his life a once youthful rebel against authority became a strict disciplinarian. He was an opium addict, and could take a pint of laudanum a day, but he overcame this habit after it had undermined his health. I picked up the book hoping to find in it some mention of Sheridan. There was none. Dealing with the importance of happy relations between us and the Americans, I was struck by this passage written in 1830: "I, for one, do not call the sod under my feet my country. But language, religion, laws, government, blood—identity in these makes men of one country." If the English-speaking nations stand together through thick and thin, post-war peace may be secured. On the same page, he affirms what is as true to-day as it was a hundred years ago: "The Americans are excessively pleased with any kind or favourable expressions, and never forgive any slight or abuse."

When I laid the book aside and switched off the light, I remained awake for at least an hour. The faith that never failed us on the long road to Berlin has saved civilization. Will our progress continue onward and upward? We cannot stand still to rest and refresh ourselves. The words I have just read discomposed me: "If a man is not rising upwards to be an angel, depend upon it, he is sinking downward to be a devil. He cannot stop at the beast. The most savage of men are not beasts: they are worse, a great deal worse."

It is incredible that the nation who revered Goethe **should** bow the **knee** before Himmler.

5

A July poll seems to be confronting us. The sooner it's over, the better. It is impossible to predict with any certainty which way the cat will jump. Labour's slogan is: "Down with private enterprise!" Private enterprise will never be downed, because it is human nature. Even in Russia, private enterprise and peasant ownership of land are being re-establishca. Big business denounced as a big menace to national prosperity is a big bogey. It has been and will be controlled, ooth here and in the United States. I had to talk politics to two small boys this afternoon. In a high wall on the north side of Church Street are many holes in which sand martins hope to remain undisturbed during the nesting season. The holes are high up. Out of one protruded a thin stick. The boys were watching it; so I stopped to question them.

"You stuck that stick in? "

" Yas."

" **Why?** "

" If there's a bird a-scttin' on eggs, she'll fly out."

" Has she flown out? "

" Not yet."

" If she does fly out, will you try to get the eggs? "

" Yas."

" But, look here, you can't get them. The hole is too deep and the entrance to it so small that a baby couldn't get his **hand in.** "

They looked disconcerted. I continued : " Isn't it a waste of time trying to get eggs which are hopelessly out of reach ? " They nodded, grinning. " If I give you sixpence, thrippence apiece, will you leave those holes alone? When you two are men, you'll want to get a lot of things difficult to get, but, unless you're fools, don't bother about things you can't get."

They withdrew the stick, accepted the sixpence, thanked me politely and scuttled off. Then I moved a few steps away. The bird flew out of the hole——! I hope her eggs were not broken. Drinking my tea, alone in my room, I reflected that a Conservative candidate would not be wasting his time on the platform, if he dwelt good-temperedly with the futility of trying to grab the moon.

Whit-Monday is nearly over. No rain has **fallen**. The holiday-makers have had a jolly time.

6

A lady, a stranger, stopped me, when I was taking my constitutional, to assure me that she had read all my books. I looked, perhaps, incredulous, so she added "every one." When I told her that I had written sixty, it was her turn to look incredulous. She said deprecatingly: "I—I've only read eleven or twelve."

Bless her!

I have been writing for nearly sixty years. One book a year is not an excessive output, but the adjective "prolific" (once bestowed on wives of impoverished curates) has been tacked on to me. My novels average about eighty thousand words. Grant me three hundred working days in each year; and my daily "stunt" would be, roughly, three hundred words, some thirty lines. If I worked for three hours each day, I should write at the rate of ten lines an hour——! So none can accuse me of overworking. Anyway, I have loved my work. It may bore my readers; it has never bored me.

After skimming through Coleridge's *Table Talk* I picked up *What Maisie Knew*, by Henry James, an old favourite. This distinguished writer has been indicted for his lavish use of adverbs and adjectives. But he uses them so happily. And, almost invariably, they are arresting, and convincing. I cannot believe that Diana of the Crossways, even if she is a portrait of the brilliant Mrs. Norton, could talk as Meredith makes her talk, but Maisie talks as young ladies talked in Victorian days. James is careful to avoid tiresome repetition.

My daughter has challenged me to set down what Miss 1880 would say and what Miss 1945 would say, if one met the other at a smart garden-party. So here goes:

Miss 1880: Oh, I say, this is really just too awfully jolly, you know, really and truly. I never expected to sec *you*. It really is, yes, it's just *exactly* right. I'd just like to hug you, but I'd crumple vour too awfully pretty frock. And, I say, your hat is most awfully fetching. . . .

Miss 1945: Hello, old thing——! *You* here? Congrats. I ought to hop it. My frock looks lousy compared **to yours**.

no

NOW CAME STILL EVENING ON

I wish we were in pyjams. Then we could meet again on equal terms. That hat must have put you back three auid. Damn it! It's bloody coming to a show like this in filthy rags. . . .

James might have made Maisie talk as Miss 1880 talked, which would have affronted his readers. He was too consummate an artist, too fastidious. What I have put into the mouth of Miss 1945 is what I overheard one girl of sweet seventeen say to another.

In fine, realism must be handled by novelists and dramatists with censorious vigilance, a counsel of perfection, perhaps, flouted by that genius, D. H. Lawrence, and by Aldous Huxley.

7

The hard work ahead of us may be our salvation, if we rank reconstruction higher than wholesale destruction. Omniscience dropped bombs upon our worst slums. They defied rehabilitation. But all plans for better educational, medical and social services are written on foolscap if we lack the cash to pay for them. Disappointment awaits our idealists. . . .

I wrote a few lines about the magnum of "bubbly" which we drank on the night of our Victory Dinner. I descended to the cellar in fear and trembling. The great bottle might be *corked* \ There was no other to replace it. To-day I have listened to a harrowing tale. A friend and neighbour bought at a great price one bottle of 1928 Bollinger, which he handed to his wife about a month before the Huns surrendered. He had no cellar. On the night of his Victory Dinner, he and his wife dined alone. The wife placed the bottle on the side-board; the husband drew the cork. He filled two glasses. The wine was—flat, flat as Berlin. Enlightenment came to **the** man.

" My fault," he groaned.

" Your fault?"

"1—I entrusted the bottle to you."

" Yes; and I put it in the store-cupboard."

" Standing up?"

" Yes."

" Champagne loses its fizz if it is so mishandled."

The Victory Dinner was wrecked.

The moral attached to this tragedy is obvious. During the decade between 1920 and 1930, the fizz went out of all of us because we took "things" lying down. It's preposterous to lay this charge on the Tories. The nation needed a rest and took it. What is termed the *vis incrtiac*, if there is such a force, oozed into us. Labour, I can swear, was keener about disarmament than the squires.

8

Stories drift to story-tellers. Some are true; some are not. I cannot vouch for the truth of what was told me to-day. It sounds credible. When I demanded corroborative details my informant shook his head:

"I can't give names of persons or places. You can take it from me that it happened not a hundred miles from here."

It seems that a parson, in a small parish, had chosen for his text the clause in the Lord's Prayer dealing with trespasses. He enjoined the congregation to forgive the trespasses of the Germans. A tall man stood up, a greybeard. He held up a hand. The preacher paused. For him it must have been a dramatic moment. The tall man spoke quietly:

"I have lost two sons in this war. This is not the time nor the place to preach forgiveness of bestialities."

He walked out of the church; many followed him.

I can understand that an editor of a provincial paper might withhold publication of such an incident.

**Alas for the rarity
Of Christian charity.**

I have sympathy for the parson and more sympathy for the other fellow, because I happen to feel as he does. We have to deal with Thugs, and grimly would I shoot them on sight. Qualms have assailed me when I drew bead on a noble red deer; but I killed rattlesnakes on our cattle ranch with gusto. Thirty years ago my old friend, Morley Roberts, told me a macabre story which the magazine editors of that day declined to print. I present it in tablet form: A Baptist Minister, returning to his home in the United States, to a small parish south of the Mason-Dixon line, where he had laboured abundantly, was horrified to learn that Judge Lynch **was about to**

burn alive a negro who had outraged and killed a little girl. He protested vehemently—and in vain. A match was about to be applied to the pyre. Public opinion sustained Lynch law. The Minister decided to address the crowd. But he changed his mind when he learned that the victim was his own child. He went to the small chapel where so often he had preached forgiveness of sins. He locked himself in, and set it alight. Almost simultaneously the pyre in the village square burst into flames. The negro died at the stake; God's minister perished, self-slain, in the chapel. . . .

My sympathy for the local parson would be deeper, if I were told that he had lost two sons in this war.

9

What a lovely word is iridescence! It holds the promise of the rainbow, and all the tender tints of mother-of-pearl. It is a shimmering word; it radiates the charm of shot-silk. A cobweb, drenched with dew, has iridescence. So has wet sand reflecting the opaline colours of the skies above. In Horatian days, when "none was for a party and all were for the state," civic life must have gleamed with iridescence. There is no iridescence in our politics even if it may be discerned faintly in our policies. The promise of a better England thrills all of us. It is indeed the rainbow after the storm. One thing only can transmute promise into fulfilment: selflessness. After long years of blood and tears and sweat, we survey distressfully what is left. We are facing a drab to-morrow. A sage once said to me: "Comfort is dear to old people. If you want material comfort, see to it that you are under-housed and over-staffed." I am over-housed and under-staffed, yet I cling like a limpet to my Golden House. Becky Sharp observed that it was so easy to be virtuous with ten thousand a year, not—not if the Chancellor of the Exchequer subtracts more than three-fourths of it. This, we are told, is the Age of the Common Man. So be it. But the common man will be the most uncommon of men, if he concentrates all energies of mind and body upon others. The apostles of Labour urge him to paddle his own canoe as vigorously as he can, subject to the control of the State. Will he do it? Can he do it?

I have meandered far from *What Maisie Knew*. The author

speaks of his theme as "a tree that spreads beyond any provision its small germ might on a first handling have appeared likely to make for it." Rather an involved sentence. Henry James, probably, took a puckish delight in writing long unpunctuated sentences which any interested reader is forced to read twice. He can dress his own window provocatively. If I were the owner of an emporium, I should subject my window-dresser to an acid test. I should watch the passers-by. If the majority merely glanced at my wares and hastened on, I should sack my window-dresser and engage the services of another. What Maisie knew she had to discover by the light of a young girl's quickening sense and sensibility. Her parents, after divorce, re-marry, so Maisie has to deal with a stepfather and a stepmother. This novel interests me immensely, because the betterment of this kingdom depends so much on the knowledge—apart from a little learning—which the rising generation can acquire. For the first time in our history young people are "on their own," and they rejoice in their freedom of speech and action. So I admit that I am using Maisie as a peg on which to hang my conjectures. Maisie is convincing to me; if she could use her wits, so can other boys and girls. Girls of sixteen I find more intelligent than boys of the same age; to them games are not of paramount importance. A girl of thirteen went to her mother a few weeks ago and said: "Can't you find another governess for me? Miss So-and-so is a darling, but she's taught me all she knows and I want to know more." Her mother has sent her to a good school in Bath. In my youth no girl or boy could have exercised such startling initiative. It is richly significant of a new Pilgrim's Progress away from Weary-all conditions. I felt uplifted when my daughter cited another similar case. If I live long enough, I may see a woman on the Woolsack. Bath's Labour candidate is a woman.

10

Colonel Llewellyn has proclaimed the "cuts" in our rations. "Surfeit is the father of much fast." Conditions may be better after Christmas. I look forward to the feasts of 1946. These cuts off the Sunday joint will "boom" the black market. If we took, on weekdays, luncheon and dinner at the British Restaurant, we should save money and "points." We could

gormandize on Sunday. During the 1914 war, a customer at any restaurant had to surrender a coupon. Why have we been exempt from this throughout this war? A Colonel Blimp of my acquaintance is positive that the excess profits tax will be handsomely swollen. The proprietor of the best restaurant in Bath tells me that this tax has eaten away his profits. I am conscious of giddiness after being whirled round and round in vicious circles. Householders, living alone, are on the ragged edge of starvation.

It may be the result of Nazi propaganda, as active underground as ever, but here in Bath the Man in the Street shakes his head when I speak of Russia. He thinks, rightly or wrongly, that Joe Stalin is not playing cricket. I attempt to reassure him. Russia has suffered colossal losses not as yet made public; Russia has a huge house to put in order. It will take years to do it. I am more apprehensive of the smaller states clustered about the Balkans. A small cloud can be discerned in Syria.

Decidedly the outlook abroad and at home is not iridescent.

I have listened in to the nine o'clock news. Miss Ellen Wilkinson (*place aux dames*), Mr. Attlec, Mr. Herbert Morrison and Sir Stafford Cripps predict a sweeping victory for Labour. Methinks they do protest too much. But subtlety underlies this braggadocio. The masses like to be on the winning side. The Tories are less vocal. But they are at work. I am looking forward to reading what Uncle Sam has to say. A victory for Labour will not be acclaimed in the Land of the Free.

CHAPTER NINE

I BEGAN THE RE-PERUSAL OF *What Maisie Knew* because a friend wrote that he was re-reading it. Sages have told us that chance does not function in a world miraculously designed. This makes for quiet thinking. Eliminate chance and logically you must banish coincidence, so dear to novelists. I was befogged when I picked up *Maisie*; age was attempting to stand in the shoes of youth, the eternal youth that is immortal. If the day of the Common Man has dawned, if our future as a Nation is about to be entrusted to the Many, it is important to find out how much the Many know of things as they are, not of things as they would like them to be, the only knowledge worm having. During the last election in Bath I spoke on many platforms and I made house-to-house visitations, not, I hope, unduly obtruding myself. I asked for permission to come in and have a talk. I enjoyed the talks immensely. A neighbour had told me that he, a poor man, a worker, could not possibly vote for the Conservative candidate, the son of a very rich man. I knew his wife, and I wondered if she saw eye to eye with her husband. No; she proposed to vote for Mr. Loel Guinness.

"Why?" I asked.

"'Cos I *do* like his face; he's so good-looking."

A woman's reason. I am sure that many women voted for our candidate because he owns a frank, prepossessing countenance. But the men and women, in humbler walks of life, to whom I talked knew next to nothing of the issues at stake; they were swayed to right or left by party promises. Some said ingenuously: "I knows what I knows; I'm a-going to vote for the feller who can do something for ME." In this coming election, in which I am too old to take an active part, these same voters may know more than they did ten years ago; I think they do; but what they know is hard to get at. Henry James, genial student of human nature, found out what Maisie knew. Well, what did this young girl know? Her parents, after their divorce, lived apart, loathing each other. They befouled the poor child's mind. Maisie spent six months with Mummie and six months with Daddy. Henry James, you may be sure, was

not content with this situation; he had to give **another turn to the screw**. Maisie—as I said in the previous chapter—is invited to love, even if she can't honour, **a stepfather and a step-mother** who compete for her affection. And then we suffer the last turn of the screw. Stepfather and stepmother, with Maisie as **a link** between them, fall in love with each other. The child looks on. The knowledge she acquires is evil, lamentably so, **and** yet we take leave of her on the last page reasonably **sure that** she is uncontaminated. . . .

A triumph for youth.

Somehow Maisie has solved the problem bothering me; **she** has cleared my vision, such as it is. Henry James, let it be recalled, was the brother of William, a distinguished philosopher, who in all his writings is swift to perceive the enduring good underlying transient evil. Most happily we are agreed that youth must be better served, that the future of our nation lies in little hands outstretched to receive what we shall offer. At the same time, most unhappily, only the Few, the elect, are competent to deal selflessly with this higher education. Matthew Arnold pilloried two bishops who wished to "do something" for the Third Person of the Trinity. Labour is the third person of the trinity at Westminster. The children of the sons of toil are more intelligent than they were ten years ago. But, apart from the pleasures of the passing hour, they don't know what they want. *Do we know?* It's not a question of paying the piper; we have to find the piper. Then the children will dance gaily to the right tunes.

To return to Maisie, before we bid her adieu. The little girl was disillusioned. Disillusionment awaits all of us sooner or later. Should it come sooner or later? The word is not **a** synonym for either disenchantment or disappointment. Maisie learnt that her father and mother were selfish, amoral, unabashed hedonists and—attractive. The child wanted love; she captured it. The one slightly unconvincing fact in this long-short story is that such a child (we leave her in her 'teens) could have been born to Mr. and Mrs. Farange.

2

What does money mean to a child? After posting my **letters** this afternoon in the Tynning pillar-box, I met my nine-year-old **friend, Margaret, who hugged me.**

⁴⁴ "You don't love me," I said.

"You know I do, more than all the money in all the world."

She has nintpence in her money-box.

At Hursley, in the eighties, a village mother said to my sister: "I gives my lil Garge one penny to keep in his pocket. He dassn't spend it. I told Garge I wanted 'un to have a command o' money."

One more yarn with a Doric tang to it: in the bar-parlour of a roadside tavern, an aged froth-blower and I were drinking ale with no stingo in it. We spoke sadly of the humming October of long ago. This talk took place only a few weeks before Doenitz surrendered.

"I sez this, zur; it be gawspcll truth. Times bain't what they useter be."

"I agree."

"'Course you does."

"We're drinking war-time swipes."

"I wasn't a-thinkin' o' tha-a-at. I minds me o' happier days, when clay pipes was handed out, brand new, free, gratis and fur nawtlien. Tarr'ble changes fur the wuss."

Moral: What we have had, when we lose it, we value more highly than anything we have not had. Many a man has repined more over the loss of a pipe than over the loss of a great public servant whom he has never met.

The Prime Minister has had audience with the King, resigning his high office. Amid the tumults and excitements of a General Election, will the voters remember the incomparable services of our Leader? I cannot visualize any man who can drape himself in Winston Churchill's mantle, or any pilot to whom we can give control of the ship that has not yet entered harbour with greater confidence in his supreme ability. I am proud to think that when Fortune seemed to have turned her back on her own son, I predicted (in print and out of it) that he would live to be the First Minister of the Crown.

The Clerk of the Weather, after his own fashion, has celebrated our victory. During the past two months he has bestowed on us a succession of sunny days, a record, I believe. I made sure we were in June, when I found strawberries on the tea-table, a big basketful. My daughter refused to tell me **where** they came from. I turned to a guest, a Frenchwoman, saying: "Le marche noir." She riposted happily: "Mais non, le

marché rouge." Two minutes later she asked me if I had ever met General de Gaulle. When I said that the honour had not been mine, she sang his praises, after telling us that he was the most popular man in France. She smiled at me when I suggested that he might be singing "Partant pour la Syrie"; but I divined from a gesture that the less I said about Syria the better. So I shifted the talk to Bordeaux and Burgundy, whose wines are dear to her. I am afraid—a fear confirmed by my own wine-merchant—that the famous growths of the Medoc and the Côte d'Or will not be obtainable in England for many years, except at prohibitive prices. So I must cherish the few ootles of sunshine still left in an almost empty cellar. We shall have port and sherry when shipping is available. Some readers of my vintage may bless me as a benefactor if I whisper a secret. Algerian burgundy can be bought at a not-too-exorbitant price in groceries. Take one bottle, decant it, and add one gill of luke-warm water and one wineglassful of vintage port. This Algerian burgundy is full of vinosity, almost brutally so. The water softens and tempers it. The port gives it mellowness and "breed/" The wine-lovers to whom I have offered this mixed drink failed to detect what I had done. They enjoyed an agreeable beverage and believed that I had given them an excellent table wine from the golden coast.

3

I have just listened in to the six o'clock news. Mr. Ernest Bcvin, at Blackpool, has submitted his party's programme. The stoutest plank is cordial agreement between the United States, Britain and Soviet Russia. But that plank is the Conservative plank.

Some say, compar'd to Bononcini,
That Mynheer Handel's but a ninny;
Others aver that he to Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle.
Strange all this difference should be
Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedleccc.

Strange, passing strange, that an election should be thrust on us whtn the *difference* is hardly perceptible to the voters. Mr. Bcvin seems to have spoken temperately and with sincerity, but I cannot doubt that he has cards up his sleeve. Lord

Strabolgi is "out" for confiscation of land. Lines **written** by Ambrose Bierce fifty years ago have suddenly welled up **out** of the subconscious zone of memory.

He fiddled his fiddle-de-dec,
Till die bow and the strings
Were invisible things,
And a vibrant blur was he.

My daughter has chaffed me. "You swore a swear to keep politics out of this book. Now—what about it?" I replied: "I've changed my mind, as you on occasion have been known to do. But I promise you to restrain myself from rancour."

By the second post came a book by Peter Howard, *Ideas Have Legs*, an arresting title. My ideas have wings and soar into the blue, leaving me in my armchair. "Ideas," says Howard, "took legs, and the legs began to march." I think I shall enjoy this book, and get a clearer view of the future through the eyes of a man fifty years my junior. Ideas ought to have stout underpinning, but Mr. Howard, an International Football Player, racing to goals when he was twenty-one, might punch the head of any reviewer who spoke of this book as pedestrian. A very young lady, a Claude Duval in a camisole, held a pistol to my head. "Tell us," she said, "what's wrong with Us?"

She drives a car; I had known her mother in the hunting field; so I replied: "You young people arc breakers of the Law——"

"What law?"

"Man's Law and God's Law. I can make allowances for you, because I knew your mother. She rode too fast at her fences. You travel at excess speed."

She considered this, not being a fool. After a pause she **went** on: "Perhaps I am in too great a rush to get there."

"Get—where?"

She laughed gaily.

"Where?" she repeated. "Why—here, there and everywhere. I never believed the old tortoise crawled home ahead of the hare; just a goody-goody yarn for kiddies. Also I'm glad I'm like Mum. Daddy is such a slow coach."

Her father is a judge. It flatters me, tickles my vanity, **when** young people talk to me; but **I'm terrified of boring them; also**

I know that any chatter between age and youth should be personal, intimately so.

" But he got there, Pamela/'

" To the Bench, you mean? "

" Oh, no, I didn't mean that. Why did your mother give up hunting?"

" You know ... because she took an appalling toss and nearly broke her back, poor darling."

" Yes. Figuratively speaking, your father has never taken a bad toss. He got where he is without quickening a leisurely progress."

" I've got it," she hastened to say. " It's rather upsettingly true. Maybe the tortoise did get there. But—but is it really God's Law to go slow? "

" It's the Law of Providence, the Father of His children."

She had the last word. " Maybe Providence wants some of His children to crash, because tney disappoint Him."

I recalled this prattle with Miss Go-as-you-please, when I was reading the morning paper. The King has been " pleased " to command Mr. Churchill to form a " caretaker " government. The word has its humours. It evokes a vision of a stately home full of treasures, with the owner and his staff on holiday bent. As a rule, the caretaker left in charge is an old servant of the family, pensioned off, a responsible person not likely to leave the premises. I have seen our Prime Minister play many parts. He left Sandhurst to become a bold hussar; he was no chocolate soldier; he has fought with distinction in many campaigns; he has been President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Rector of Aberdeen University; he can lay bricks, paint pictures, and is one of the greatest living writers. Sir Stafford Cripps, the lost sheep now welcomed back into the fold, might well warn his party that they are not up against one man, but a crowd. Now, for a few weeks, he is to function as a CARETAKER——! What an excuse for a bottle of the best. Yes, yes, I shall decant a noble port after luncheon. At dinner, I shall stand up and propose a toast:

" To a King of Caretakers."

Throughout his life he has laughed at care, dull care, which has never paled his cheeks. But care, not for self but others, has made him the man he is. He is at this moment probably surveying the forces embattled against him with a line from

Beaumont and Fletcher on his lips: "Have a care of me in what thou dost."

4

Colonel Llewellyn has cut our ration of soap. Soft soap, so I am assured, is not to be snatched by housewives from the mouths of our orators. Some of them, taking them Right and Left, as they come and go, will escape the punishment meted out to me when as a child I used naughty words. Our head nurse, a Boadicca of a woman, cleansed my mouth with soap and water. "Your mouth is now clean," she would say, "Keep it clean, Master 'Orrors, I've plenty of soap."

My daughter has told Josephine to use less soap. My grandchild asked me a few minutes ago, if I could shave without it?

"It's possible to do it," I replied, "if you have, which I haven't, a new sort of shaving cream."

"Anyway, I shan't have to wash my hands so often, shall I?"

"With our hard water, I find it takes a lot of soap to keep my nails clean."

"It's easy as easy if you do what I do. I put my hands into the basin and let 'em soak in the hot water. That softens the dirt. Then it comes away with about three rubs of the nail-brush."

Why didn't my Nannie teach me this? Another offering from youth to age. I've wasted tons of soap. An old gentleman with dirty nails ought to be thrust into a lethal chamber. My ablutions are too hasty. Never have I found time to soak my hands in hot water. When the gong sounds, I hurry to my room, turn on the hot-water tap, hold my nail-brush under it, rub soap on it and scrub nails which refuse to give up their dirt. That is why my daughter, in the presence of Josephine, told me that I must use less soap.

5

We are docked of our fats. Mrs. Jack Spratt will no longer enjoy her meals. The loin of pork we had for dinner last night was disappointingly lean. I was dismayed to learn that our butcher had removed the fat. No crackling!

I have trained myself to suffer fools as gladly as I can, **but**

this shortage of provvaunt gives **me mental acidity, I could** "stick it" when we were at war. Colonel Blimp is right. We must hurry up and end the war in the Far East, if we crave for more food and—drink. I asked the old warrior if shortage of fats would affect the voting at the polls on the 5th of July. He growled out: "The ordinary blighter will vote for the cove who hangs in front of his nose the biggest bait, but good grub doesn't appeal to Tom, Dick and Harry as it does to us. The promise or bigger pay and less work is their trump card. All the same," he smiled frostily, "if the promise is not kept, they'll be soon outed."

Uncle Sam is disgruntled. He wants to know "if Winnie has run out on us." Headlines in our papers have misled him. "Churchill Resigns" is what Churchill would term an "inexactitude." Churchill was forced to resign. How could he carry on with bickerings from his own ministers? Surely Americans know that he wished the Coalition Government to remain in office till the Japs surrendered unconditionally . . .

I have returned to my room after taking the air, as my mother phrased it. One of our prettiest and youngest mothers was wheeling a gorgeous perambulator with the One and Only Baby in the world sitting erect in it. He would take first prize in a Baby Show, if I were the judge. He was grabbing his mother's handbag.

"How old is he?" I asked.

"Eighteen months."

The urchin held out the bag, inviting me with a gesture (and a smile) to open it.

"He's ever so curious, sir; gets it from me. He doesn't know what's in the bag. He stays quiet and good staring at it."

She has a vote. I was tempted to ask her to which of our three candidates she would give it. Indirectly my curiosity was satisfied.

"You wouldn't let anybody else take care of him?"

"Anybody else?"

"I mean the State."

"Never——!"

"Thanks."

"Whatever for?"

"I'm sure most mothers feel as you do."

"They do, sir. All this silly talk about our **kiddies being**

cared for by the State just makes me laugh. And I wouldn't vote for a woman anyhow.*'

6

The nymphs representing the four seasons are now in the sunk garden, one at each corner. They appear to be very pleased with the change from shadow to sunshine. Ilex trees overhang the Roman Bath. The darlings had acquired a grecnery-yallery tint. This has been scrubbed off by my son-in-law. The "unyielding" marble of their snowy breasts is now white again. I told Josephine they were dreaming that they "dwelt in marble halls."

Have we allocated to them the right positions? We have placed Winter at the N.E. corner; Spring stands S.E.; Summer has pride of place S.W.; Autumn, carrying her sheaves, is in the N.W. corner. The sun shines impartially upon all of them. Four other marble statues, not so well modelled as the Seasons, were sold by me. They are now in America. Do they wish that they were back in my garden? I love California; I have a warm affection for Americans; and that is why I feel depressed after reading acid comments about the sudden end of the Coalition coming from people who should know better. However, I cheer myself with this reflection. Americans are great readers of newspapers; they demand "pep" and get it. Pep is short, of course, for pepper. Salt and pepper are twins. Columnists (a word I have on the Index) supply the pepper, their readers add salt, plenty of it. Also, Churchill is even more popular in the Land of the Free than he is here. Again, Americans are not familiar with parliamentary procedure. **What do we know about the nice customs of Congress and the Senate?** Nothing.

The Scripps-Howard newspapers condemn the poll, asserting that the Conservative and Labour parties are jockeying **for** partisan advantage. Sairey Gamp might say to Mrs. Prig: "Who deniges of it, Betsy?" Was there no jockeying in **the** Washington lobbies when Roosevelt approached the end **of his** third term? One of the Big Three had to leave the White **House** and seek **re-election**. Churchill has been **constrained by long established usage to—how shall we put it?— to reculer pour mieux sauter.**

7

The Civil Servants whom we speak of as **Permanent Officials** are entitled to our respect and gratitude. **But we see and hear** little of them. The ignorance and ineptitude of some **who** have been given brief authority during the past five years, **would** make angels weep. They have shown little interest **in their** work; they forget what is told to them; but they never **forget** to draw their salaries when they fall due. If they lose their billets, other snug billets will be found for them. Colonel Blimp is of opinion that they would work as cheerfully and inefficiently for Hitler if he were alive and in power, but a German would sack them within a week. The professional Heads of the great departments have been overworked, because the blooming amateurs have slacked. Some call themselves clerks; and they pronounce clerk—clurk. They like to have a bet **on** the Durby.

I am getting too warm. I recall one of George Robey's wise-cracks: "Never put a warm baby on a cold mantelpiece." I have been talking with a sometime Civil Servant, now retired. The happy prospect of drinking a good glass of port had warmed the cockles of my aged heart. Suddenly I was dumped on the frozen fact set down above.

8

Himmler is dead, self-slain. Did he repent of his sins against humanity when he realized that God was not with the Nazis? If God revealed Himself to Saul of Tarsus, dare we say that all Nazis are irreclaimable? In the Bible are two Gods: the God of Wrath in the Old Testament, the God of Love in the New. Himmler may have believed in the God who smote, hip and thigh, the enemies of His Chosen People. Hitler, to the last, proclaimed the *Hcrrawolk* to be the Chosen People.

I may be a doddering old fool, but age has its moments as the curtain begins to fall. The Great Dimness on the other **side** seems to clear; the mists lift; the lost faith of childhood **creeps back**. I have recorded the effect that *Maisie* exercised **on** myself. Maisie enlightened me. Knowledge of evil failed to contaminate her. How can we fight an enemy unless **we see him clearly**. **We do not** see him clearly; the **Powers of Darkness**

obscure our vision. And then, so often, a word, an action, a book gives us a glimpse of the Light. I was nearing middle age when a friend said to me angrily: " You look happy, damn you, but how can you be happy with so much coagulated misery in this accursed world?" All I could reply was: "I'm a sinner, old fellow, but I have met a few saints, and they were happy." I might have added : " Was the beloved Apostle unhappy? " Sisters of Mercy look happy; and I believe they are happy.

Peter Howard's book, *Ideas Have Legs*, has interested me. It lends itself to acrimonious criticism, but I have read no reviews of it. It is written by an honest idealist; it sets forth in terse English the gospel of the Oxford Group; and of them and their activities I know little. Cheerful submission to the Will of God has been preached for two thousand years. Mr. Howard, an accomplished, up-to-date journalist, might have entitled his book *Ego*, a title used by Mr. James Agate. From the first page to the last I knew that I was reading a very human document, a frank confession of a man who was lucky enough to marry the right woman. These two and their three children appear to be living joyously because God is with them. They practise what Christ preached. There is no Great Dimness obscuring their vision. Peace came to this family when the whole world was at war. May it abide with them.

Mr. Howard tells us that his sometime chief, Lord Beaverbrook, accepted Kipling as his Gamaliel. I am not surprised. Kipling was a dominating personality who seldom spoke of himself and his own achievements. I recall him, marching up and down this room—he hated to sit still—talking about *my* work, hurling himself into *my* difficulties and perplexities. This was his God-given mission; he could race out of himself and become the man to whom he was talking. I have met many famous writers; none as exasperatingly indifferent to his own success. If the lamp of his youth had been " utterly out," he would not have subsisted " on the smell of it." To the end youth glowed and flamed in him. If a monarch of Fleet Street recognized the Teacher, the teacher was not aware of it. I am glad we have here in Bath a Kipling Avenue.

9

Josephine has returned from a swimming lesson. Last week she was frightened out of her wits. She had told me that she could swim three strokes. Unhappily, she tried to swim four and went under! She emerged full of water and bereft of courage. She declared, tearfully, that water was not her element. To-day she is sure it is. The swimming-master dealt with his pupil kindly. What had happened to her happened to everybody; it had Happened to H I M ! Using her own words she has repeated what he said:

" I — I lost faith in myself. It just had to happen. It was really and truly all for the best. Yes; my faith has come back. I swam *five* strokes this morning."

Another ordeal awaits her. She has never taken a " header," what her French governess calls "*un beau plongeon*" She eyed me with slight resentment, when I pointed out that little girls were not as brave as boys, more fearful of hurting themselves. The header could wait till she was as brave as a boy, years and years, if necessary.

" Will it hurt much, if I flop? "

" That depends upon how far you are from the water. If you stand on the edge of the bath, tuck in your head, and do your best to make your head hit the water first, you may make a rotten bad shot, a flop, as you say. You're honest; you'll tell me the truth. If you make a flop and it hurts, I'll give you half a crown."

She smiled at me. " I do wish I were as brave as a boy."

" If you really wish it, you will be."

10

A letter from London amused me. A friend, with a house in Kensington, writes: " Dull and drab here. No more excitements. We miss the doodlebugs." They missed him.

11

Women ask men, especially writers, questions which they can answer themselves. Clarissa asks me if a writer is at his best in town or country? An excellent theme for the Brains Trust.

Let the B.B.C. summon from the tomb Dr. Johnson **and Gilbert** White of Selborne. I knew well Miss Ellen Thornycroft Fowler, a best-seller in her day. She could and did write novels in the back drawing-room, when, in the big front drawing-room, a party was in full blast. Being country-bred, **I am unable to** write in London, Leonard Courtney, when editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, expressed surprise when I confessed that my imagination was palsied in any town. Surely I must miss the contacts and impacts of one mind or another? He appeared to take for granted that country folk were mindless. I reassured him when I admitted that I did find in his society and at my clubs plenty of material for plays and novels. His ironical smile was a benediction. "Yes, yes, in the country you have leisure to deal with what is in your store-cupboard." One novelist, Ernest Hamilton, who was at Harrow with me, told me that inspiration came to him when he sat in a train, an express travelling at sixty miles an hour! Mrs. Atherton testified that she found herself at the top of her form, alone in the bed-sitting-room of some country inn. War correspondents can write when a battle is raging round them.

12

The little daughter of a neighbour, a five-year-old, knows that I post my letters immediately after luncheon. She pops out of her mother's house in Church Street as soon as she espies me. I lift my hat; she takes my hand; and we fare on together.

She said to-day: "I do wish I could write letters——"

"Why?"

"'Cos it's such fun posting 'em."

When we reach the Tynning, she takes the letters, stands on tiptoe, and drops them one by one into the pillar-box, saying, "Bye-bye." To her it is a ritual. By God's grace, age also finds pleasure in little things and little people.

C H A P T E R T E N

I HAVE JUST HAD A DISCONCERTING TALK with a tenant. He gave a reason for Labour's potential triumph in July which had not occurred to me. Being a son of toil, he knows his brethren better than I do. I had said that Labour might win, because its chiefs were so lavish with promises difficult to keep.

"That's right, so far as it goes. But a lot of 'em don't read the papers. I know chaps who voted for Mr. Guinness last time; and Churchill is popular with them; but they think that t'other side should have a go, turn and turn about, they say. More of them than you'd suppose."

However, the Prime Minister is about to take the road. Turn-and-turn-about voters will want to see him and hear him. I shall be of their number. Some of the solemn pledges will be torn to tatters. Will they shout "God save Winnie," when he tells them that these pledges are promissory notes which the nation will have to meet with prompt payment?

The war has enriched millions. Here is one case that came under my nose to-day. I know a woman with a husband and three or four children. The husband is a sergeant-major serving with the Forces and at the moment in Germany. The wife is earning £y 10s. od. a week. Cheers for her! Her eldest child is old enough to look after the other children. The wife receives an allowance for herself and the children from the Government; and her husband, stout fellow, sends her part of his pay. She is rich beyond dreams of pre-war avarice. This, perhaps, is an exceptional case. If I were going to stump the country, I should lay stress on the savings or Labour. All savings are imperilled by wild-cat public expenditure. My savings have gone, so I am not thinking of self. Whate'er betide, if I am left with my pipe, my books and my family and friends, I shall sing a benedicite. Many orators will suffer from inflammation of the lungs.

The Nazi leaders still alive are looking forward to underground work; so it would be Christian charity to bury them as

soon as possible. It is well that their followers should **learn** what they did under cover of secrecy. I hold no brief for cows who follow their leader through open gates into a lovely garden and destroy it. That might have happened to me yesterday. I was in this room, writing, when I heard shouts. I hurried to the window. Some twenty cows had wandered into the courtyard and thence—down a flight of shallow stone steps—on to the terrace, where half a dozen were "mafficking" in the rose garden. We expelled them after damage had been done. The terrace has been put into order. Why couldn't the cows nibble the grass on the lawns? Josephine affirms that they *ate* roses; and she hopes that thorns will teach them to behave themselves better next time. The leader came from Jersey; so I hazarded the conjecture that kith and kin in the Channel Islands had written to tell her what the Germans had done in her fatherland. I was informed that cows don't write letters. Returning to my room, I visualized the Germans whom I had known in the eighties as kine trained to follow their leader and to do what he or she did. I hope it is true that they did not know of the horrors done in the secret camps of the Gestapo. Now that they do know, what are they saying among themselves? Apropos, I had a letter this morning in which the writer says that she has seen the pictures of the camp which was shown to our M.P.s. As she came out, she passed two women who were going in. She overheard one say to the other: "We can't get anything to eat, so if we go in here, we shan't want anything."

I have a riddle for Josephine: "When is a gent not a gent? When he's a gentleman." In Upsidonia "gentleman" is a term of contempt. Ladies will remain ladies, even if they speak of themselves as "ladies." At Barbizon in 1881 we nicknamed a young painter "Marquis," because he carried a gold watch with a coronet on it, which (so he informed us) had belonged to his grandfather; a French peer. *Pair de France* sounded well; and an Englishman asked him if there was still a House of Lords in Paris. I can't translate his reply:

"Mais non, Monsieur. Dans le temps—*Pair de France*, aujourd'hui, malheureusement, *impair de France*."

3

I commend a recently published novel *Lieutenant Commander*, by George A. Birmingham, the pen-name of the **Rev.**

James Hannay, son of a parson who married the daughter of a bishop. This accomplished humorist is four years my junior, so I might speak of him as an old friend, but—lack-a-day!—I have only met him some three times. Nevertheless, he might say that a writer's best friends are readers whom he has never met in the flesh. He is at his best when he deals with wild Irish life and character. There is enough Irish in me to appreciate his work. For many years he worked in Ireland; he is a Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral. His clerical work in Wicklow and Mayo must have sustained and embellished his sense of humour as it did to Sydney Smith. A parson without humour is a dull dog. Canon Hannay has left Ireland, but he is still in the Emerald Isle and of it. The Lieutenant-Commander lives in Ballymoy, a small town facing the Atlantic on the coast of Connaught. Ballymoy is full of endearing liars. Before I had finished the first chapter I fell in love with Bridie-Anne, a colleen who could give Sapphira fourteen pounds over any course and romp home. But I'm not concerned with the story. I am interested in the spirit which inspired it. The author has "gone back," as I am trying to do. He has revisited happy hunting-grounds which, most astonishingly, have changed but little since he was a curate. If I attempted to write an up-to-date novel about California, portraying faithfully the cow-county in which I lived for seventeen years, it would be (commercially speaking) a loser, because the California of to-day is totally (for a period teetotally) different from the California of fifty years ago. The Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden State would damn the book as an *un* faithful presentment. I could, of course, put the clock back, but the charm of Canon Hannay's novel (to me) is fragrant of to-day. Did the writing of it rejuvenate him? I am sure it did. A Martian, who had never heard of him, might say: "Only a young man could have written *Lieutenant-Commander*. . . ."

4

The Prime Minister, an ex-champion fencer, took the button off his foil when he said, chucklingly, of Himmler: "We may leave him to the local authorities of the place where he has gone." Before he poisoned himself, this arch-fiend expressed

a wish to talk to his seniors, I am wondering what he will say to Satan, the friend who seldom failed him when he was alive

Ribbentrop has been flattered by the gentlemen who write for the Press. They rank him, I note, with Hitler, Goebbels and Ley. He is, was, and always will be—a bagman. Von Papen soars above him. Ribbentrop made his mark (too many marks) as a purveyor of second-rate champagne. I think of him as the Baron von Bubbly.

Within forty-eight hours Churchill has nominated his Ministry of Caretakers. What energy! If I were in London, and still a member of the Beefsteak Club, I should be lunching there. It is, perhaps, the only club in the kingdom where those who sit in the seats of the mighty talk with frankness. Seals of office are left in the cloak-room. Members regard the dining-room as a mess-room. I asked a personage, soon after I joined the club, to explain this open speech. "The best food and drink/' he said, "loosens our tongues, but it is the unwritten law here that nothing said inside the club will be repeated outside."

I think we have a good fighting team. The new brooms will get to work at the crossings, sweeping away the slush. It was Sheridan, possibly Fox, who affirmed that the people liked to be humbugged. Casanova never told a pretty woman that she was pretty; tongue in cheek, he complimented her on her intelligence. Being unintelligent, she believed him. Ministers of the Crown have told me that politics is a game and that politicians are gamblers. Good! If they don't degenerate into gangsters I am content to leave it at that. The stakes arc—office.

Walking round my small domain with Josephine, we paused to stare at one of the ponds. There used to be coarse fish in it. But my brother and I drained it to kill the pike, intending to restock the pond with trout. The troutlets we put in were eaten by a greedy heron. Josephine laid a hand on my arm. I had told her that every child ought to learn to swim, not altogether to save itself from drowning, but hoping to save others.

"If," she asked, "we fell into the pond where it's so deep, and if one of us had to drown, would you sooner it was you than me?"

I'm not a politician, but I replied evasively: "You must

give me time **to** consider that question. **Look! Under that tree** a kingfisher built a nest in an old rat-hole."

" I've never seen a kingfisher. Did you kill him because he ate your fish? "

" You ought to be spanked for thinking I could. The kingfishers left us because there were no fish in the pond."

" Oh-h-h ! We must put some fish in."

" We will. Run and ask Betty for a box of sardines."

I was enjoined not to try to be funny, and we walked on. I shall put some troutlets into the pond. That Hun of a heron is now dead. Why docs one happy thought banish another? I was so keen on getting rid of the pike, that the solicitude I felt for the halcyons ceased till they abandoned us. When I cut down three rotting trees, we lost the woodpeckers.

5

Churchill has chosen two young men as major ministers: a significant sign of the times. Anthony said of Octavius, the adopted son of Julius Cxsar, " He bears the rose of youth," a lovely line. Young men are, or ought to be, lusty fighters. I anticipate the biggest political fight in English history. At a Harrow dinner, on the eve of the match at Lord's, the head master of the school, who was not an old Harrovian, expressed a pious wish that the better side would win. Jacker (Sir Stanley Jackson) stood up. " I want our side to win whether it's the better or not." How we cheered him! Perhaps I have a sneaking wish that Churchill should win because he is Herga's son, but—apart from that—I believe him to be a giant among pygmies, the saviour of the Empire. Macaulay selected three giants of old as superlatively outstanding: Caesar, Cromwell and Bonaparte. He awarded first place to Carsar. Here are his reasons:

" He united the talents of Bonaparte to those of Cromwell; and he possessed also what neither Cromwell nor Bonaparte possessed — learning, wit, eloquence, the sentiments and manners of an accomplished gentleman."

The manners and sentiments of an accomplished gentleman **are**, I fear, a disability in Upsidonia, **but** " our Winnie " has learning, wit, eloquence and a dogged tenacity **of purpose which justifies the drawing of a parallel between him and " the**

world's great master and his own/' Pope would bestow that accolade on him.

6

America's comments on **the** fall of the Coalition **arc** still acidulous and unfair. On the Stock Exchange election **bets** have been banned. Banned——! What nonsense! As a member observed: " Betting goes on secretly and no one **can** stop it." The banning of the black market has quickened its activities. Prohibition, in the United States, made boys and girls carry flasks to " dry " parties. Nine times out of ten a ban is a bane. Admittedly, the Stock Exchange functions as barometer and thermometer. At the moment, it is stagnant. Kaffirs are in demand; gilt-edged securities are "easier." If Labour triumphs there may be an all-round slump. Labour is ardent to cripple or destroy Big Business, apparently unaware that Small Business is its jackal. The Stock Exchange would close its doors, if the small investors lost their money. The State may control private enterprise, it will never control gambling.

We have not yet recovered from the effects of the black-out. What has the black-out to do with the Stock Exchange? It has affected our mental vision. I find myself blinking at amorphous thoughts. The past I can recall with sharpness of definition; present and future arc dimmed. When the curtains were drawn in this house, we were as sparing as possible of electric light and gas. I found myself groping along passages and down stairs no longer familiar, as if I had lost the sense of direction, as if I were in a strange house. It was little comfort to find that my friends, gentle and simple, experienced the same *fumbling* uncertainties. Josephine, however, skipped gaily along where I crawled. The black-out to her became a game of hide-and-seek. Now and again I glance at my list of securities, Industrials for the most part. I submitted it to **the** manager of my bank. He shrugged his shoulders. He became Asquithian. My London brokers had served me tolerably well, he said; he deprecated chops and changes. It would be folly to sell " Rubbers," for example. " Oils " were holding **their** own. In fine, foresight had to curtsy to hindsight. . . .

On **the** 26th—so excitingly near—we shall know **where we arc and where we are not**. I may **be forced to sell the home so**

dear to me. I recall a daughter of a ducal house, one of **the** London palaces, who said philosophically: "Yes, we shall have to live in a cottage in Grosvenor Square." I remember a visit I paid to a friend who had sold a "castle" in Ireland and was living contentedly enough in an English bungalow. In his small sitting-room hung four full-length family portraits. They occupied every inch of space between the floor and the ceiling. He shook a finger at them, saying: "They feel miserably out of place, but I *don't*" That is the right cut-and-come-again spirit. An accomplished card-player, if dealt a bad hand, has to make the best of it. Thomas Marlowe, editor of the *Daily Mail*, who loved his Bridge as Fox loved a dice-box, said to me: "It's more fun playing a bad hand."

Let us rest in peace before we find ourselves in our coffins.

7

Whitsuntide is over. Some Bath housewives were indignant because a few tradesmen took a full week's holiday. Two VE days whetted appetite for a longer celebration. If they can afford a week's holiday, why the deuce shouldn't they take it? But—as my daughter observes—I don't have to do the shopping.

The Ramblers have encarmined the walls of the courtyard, a blooming display. Lady Gay Spanker is prolific, but her babies are short-lived. We refuse to snatch them from their mother's breast. Ophelia, dear maiden, is not "out" yet. Her children, if taken from her, smile on us for at least a week if given plenty of water. I love Ophelia because she "keeps" so well in a garden that is inimical to azaleas and rhododendrons. We planted Pink Pearl in tubs filled with soil free from what disagrees with the beauty. But, alas, she languished and died. The rock-garden, where no rocks can be seen, may once more gladden our eyes, if I can find hands to tend it. All the paving stones are dislocated in the sunk garden. Six men could evoke order out of chaos in six weeks. It would take our one gardener six years. How many men will it take to restore the pre-war glories of Chatsworth?

Yesterday I listened in to a choral service. Distance lent the voices enchantment. The chief treble had a celestial clarity of tone. Devoid of surplice he may be a naughty boy, but he sang

like an angel. I have scoffed at the "blue-domers," but some of them may be honest folk, who can worship God out of His house more sincerely than in it. If so, we can understand the fervour manifest at camp-meetings. Our maids are church-goers. I doubt if one of them could repeat the text of the sermon, but they never fail to take note of a new hat.

Josephine was rebuked by my daughter because she wanted to carry her ugliest doll to church. So the little baggage appealed to me.

"Why shouldn't I?" she asked, careful not to mention her mother's veto. "Do you mind?"

I said indiscreetly: "No."

She kissed me and skedaddled. When my daughter came in I was placed on the mat.

"Why didn't you tell her that toys can't be taken into church?"

"Because I'm in my second childhood. That doll isn't a toy to her; it's her best beloved child; and she thinks it's old enough to go to church and it is—six years old at least."

She frowned. "You're impossible. You have a down on all controls."

"I believe in one control even if I don't practise it: control of temper."

She laughed.

8

If Smelfungus reviews these babblings, he'll exclaim:

"Bah! Puerilia—...!"

Unconsciously, he will pay me a compliment. I prepared another riddle for Josephine.

"Jodie, what is the name of the highest hill in the whole world?"

"I know, Gramfer, Mount Everest."

"No—Church Hill."

La belle France has welcomed M. Leon Blum rapturously, kissing him warmly on both cheeks, as General de Gaulle kissed our Monty. The *Front Populaire* appears to be as popular as ever, although the peasants, the silent sons of the soil, refuse to applaud it. The motto of every peasant is: "I'm here; and here I stay." With him, I take it, de Gaulle is more popular than Blum. Blum, a rich man, styles himself the friend of the poor. Does he belong to what used to be called *la haute*

Juiveric? I don't know. In France *he gospel of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality, the dauntless Three, has been preached ever since the Reign of Terror; it has not been practised. Class distinctions are rampant. State officials treat their underlings with contempt. Comically enough, a Pioupiou regards his superior officer as *his*. He murmurs obsequiously : " Yes, my officer," and does what he is ordered to do. Petty tradesmen are too obsequious to customers. At one time I thought I knew France better than I knew England, partly, perhaps, because I learned French as a child before I learned English. But the *Entente* so dear to Edward VII has never really been *cordial*. A few years hence Frenchmen will deny that the Allies liberated them; they will affirm that they liberated themselves. A week or two before the ignominious surrender, Reynaud, in a frenzy of patriotism, shouted himself hoarse: " My dear friends, France will fight to the last ditch; France has never been defeated. " After Sedan, probably after Crecy and Agincourt, the French had been—betrayed. A friend who had been French Chancellor of Legation in London and Berlin and was then Minister to Persia, said to me: " You will never understand us; and we shall never understand you." Senor Merry del Val, who spoke English perfectly, said much the same; he knew, none better, the racial differences between Anglo-Saxons and Latins.

Prosperity awaits us if we can reconcile differences.

9

At the tea-table, a few minutes ago, my daughter noticed a rose which I was wearing in the lapel of my coat.

"That," she said, "isn't the rose you wore yesterday?"

"Yes, it is."

" It looks as if you'd just picked it. If I wear a rose, it wilts.

Why?"

Her husband chipped in. " She can keep her old frocks fresh longer than any woman I know. She can't wear flowers. Some people can't wear a wrist-watch. It stops, if they do."

This was news to me. He went on to assign a reason. Any man or woman overcharged with electricity paralyses delicate machinery; wheels refuse to revolve. This also was news to me. Is it true? It may be true. But is there a somewhat

similar reason to account for the premature decease of a flower pinned to a lady's gown? In Hawaii, the girls wear flowers in their hair. Do some have to replace them more often than others?

10

A cousin of ours had tea with us. She is working in an Admiralty hostel, Second in Command. She thinks that her co-workers will vote for the Labour candidate. Labour, so they fondly believe, will see to it that well-paid jobs are their portion after demobilization. All these young ladies cherish adoration for Winston Churchill. At the last moment they may vote for him.

The King and Queen are going to the Channel Islands: a right royal gesture. Within a few days the great port of Hamburg will be open to our shipping. When will Russia grant unrestricted right of way to English travellers? Sooner, perhaps, than we think. I have an urge to go to Paris. So has my daughter. I entertain a forlorn hope that I might revisit the garden of France, Tourainc, beloved by Balzac and Rabelais, the province where one can laugh and do nothing. There is a *p'tit vin de Cltinon* I should like to drink that doesn't suffer transportation. It has a slight taste of a raspberry; *le gout de framboise*. Thirty years ago, in my prosperous days, I was tempted to buy the loveliest of all the chateaux, Azy le Ridcau, for sale at a modest price, but empty of furniture. To re-furnish it would have beggared me. So I paused—as Poor Richard advises—at a big pennorth. Also, if I bought it (so I was told), I should have to open it to the public once a week. I coveted another chateau in Morbihan. My old friend, Julia Guillou, said trenchantly: "Look you, I speak frankly. A man who lives out of his own country, unless he is obliged to do so, is a fool/" She was right. But God help the man who has never dwelt in Spanish castles. He returns to them, and lives happily in them, when he is half asleep in an easy chair.

Our great Exemplar insists on his forty winks after luncheon. So do I. I hope that he puts his feet up whenever he can. Every man over fifty ought to acquire this energy-preserving habit. Few who do it suffer from backache. A good laugh is rejuvenating. An old faithful retainer has just left me. **Let** me call her Mrs. Motherwell. She was once my lady of **the**

larder and Chief of the Staff-room. She married when she **left** us; her husband's gain was my grievous loss. I had lost a good cook blessed with a good temper; her kitchenmaid and the other servants were devoted to her. I know she would make a *good* wife and a *good* mother, emphasizing an adjective too often a synonym for *middling*. Middling is an equivalent for *not so bad*, especially when applied to cooks. Perhaps the highest praise one can bestow on man or woman is: "What an all-round good fellow!" Mrs. Motherwell settled down in a part of Bath which was badly blitzed. Her house and what was in it (including three children) escaped destruction by a miracle. During the war I saw little of her. As my daughter observed: "We only see the people we don't want to see." Mrs. M. and I enjoyed a cosy chat, talking over old days. I congratulated her on her looks.

"Oh, well, as Mother always told me, I was behind the door when looks were handed out."

She was not. She has a clear skin, clear grey eyes and a reassuringly plump person and personality. Her sensible mind is well-nourished. A thin cook is as a rule cross and crotchety. Mrs. M. is not fat, but I'm sure she sleeps sound o' nights.

"You're keeping uncommonly well," I assured her.

"Maybe because I keep myself to myself, as you know, sir. Always did and always will."

"Come off it, old dear. You love a gossip as much as I do. Now tell me, this election——"

"Drat it! So upsetting. . . . We were nearly blitzed as no matter. Now we're having bomb-talk. It just blows me into the middle of next week."

"Same here. Will the women in the Dolmeads vote for Mrs. Archibald?"

"Search me! Their hubbies will, no doubt of it. But we women have had enough of controls. We can help clear away rubble; but we can't cut red tape."

Those were her words. She looked so solemn that I laughed. I found myself laughing after she had left my room. *You can't cut red tape*. It defied the scissors of Charles Dickens. In his day the Circumlocution Office was in London. Now it has its tentacles in every town and village in the kingdom. George Meredith's Imps of Comedy must be laughing uproariously.

II

If the next Government is a Coalition, I shall shed no tears. The curse of party politics is the enforced exclusion from power of supermen. If Labour triumphs, who will be the Minister of Foreign Affairs? I can discern none who can take Mr. Eden's place. Obsession in Home Affairs cannot secure possession of peace abroad. If Mr. Churchill exchanges a portfolio for a palette, we shall lose the man who is hailed as a friend by Marshal Stalin and President Truman. Dropping a pilot, before the vessel enters port, is of no great importance if another pilot can be picked up to replace him.

Our Colonel Blimp assures me that we shall muddle through somehow whatever happens. He is not, oddly enough, a reactionary, although born and bred a Tory. Josephine calls him Colonel Blink (behind his back). The old fellow blinks when he talks politics with me. And he wears blinkers.

"I refuse to look back," he declared. "And I don't look to Right or Left. I look ahead. Visibility, if I may say so, is rotten."

He thinks that a Coalition could deal more faithfully with the smaller States than any Party Government.

At luncheon I expressed a wish to see one of our county magnates, a sometime Lord-in-Waiting to George V. Lords-in-waiting acquire a tincture of the divinity that hedges a king; an urbane courtesy, an interest in others whatever their degree, a bearing which is forbearing and agreeably punctilious. To my dismay, my daughter told me that his death had been announced in to-day's *Times*. When we last met he said: "We're two old 'uns; but I'm younger than you by a full year." He was a man who never flaunted his immense experience. A lively lady said to me, when I was about to spend a week-end with him: "If you want to get anything out of him, put a corkscrew into your kit-bag." A noble wine needs careful decanting. I recall a talk I had with him more than two years ago in this room.

"I deplore," he said, "the high wages we are paying to young men who are not fighting. They will overvalue themselves after the war. They won't come back to the land. They will think themselves a cut above Tommies and their own parents. I have tenants, fathers of these boys, who feel as I do."

" You know more or less intimately the men who are responsible for these too high wages. What do they say? "

" It's the dead-sea fruit of party politics; bribery and corruption."

" We have to have munitions."

" Just so. When we've paid in full for this war, there won't be much cash left in the till for anybody."

And yet all politicians are advocating greater expenditure.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SLOWLY THE CONVICTION CAME TO ME that the wisest advice which age could offer to age is: "Never allow a younger person to do for you any service which you are still able to do for yourself/" If you have a manservant, don't let him lace up your boots or post your letters. Stooping keeps stiffness at bay, a stroll to the pillar-box is a rconstitutional. Certainly the more others do for you, the more you will expect them to do, and you may become prematurely helpless. Indeed, you may fall into a sort of twilight sleep with no hope of a safe delivery. . . .

We are now '* listening in " to the orators of the three parties. For the first time the general public will hear the arguments of advocates who profess views other than those dear to it. As a rule a Conservative, for instance, at the ordinary public meetings, addresses other Conservatives. A big majority of those present see eye to eye with the speaker. Conservatives rarely read the *Daily Herald*. They are not interested, as they should be, in what t'other fellow has to say. Also, which raises a smile, they are too sure that they do their own thinking; and it flatters vanity when they are assured from the rostrum that their thoughts are the right thoughts. The obvious jest: "How can the Left be right?" is on every lip. After listening to the broadcasts, I have no doubt that we are a nation of individualists. Our idealogucs will never turn us into robots, or become robots themselves. Dame Nature will be too much for them. I am told that there are Russians who are proud of coming out of the bottom drawer. Is this the pride that apes humility? Californians used to say that shirt-sleeves returned to shirt-sleeves in three generations. My daughter wants to know why Socialists for the most part speak of Conservatives as Tories. I enlightened her. Tory, from the Irish word *toiridhe*, is a term of abuse, a synonym for plunderer. Whig, reputed to be derived from sour whey, was applied first to Scotch presbyterians in the seventeenth century. Bishop Burnet derives the word from *Whiggamor*, a label tacked on to horse-drivers. In the Regency days, Sheridan (a **Whig**)

records somewhere that at Almacks the great Whig ladies, including the Duchess of Devonshire, hissed the Tory ladies when they entered the ballroom. . . .

2

June, behaving like April, is crying her eyes out, deploring the coming election, but to-day we have cheering news from San Francisco to counter-balance the set-back in Syria. The latest *entente cordiale* is imperilled. We have not as yet been told what Uncle Sam is saying about this friction. He is not holding his tongue, we may be sure. Nevertheless, he can't help cnuclking when the lion's tail is tweaked. In a certain very exclusive Paris club, situate not far from the Hotel Crillon, are the members linking the adjective *perfidious* to Albion? Does France reckon herself to be once more betrayed? The misunderstandings, so rife on both sides of the Channel, are explained by one word—ignorance. Despite the *Front Populaire*, the millions in France are, like ourselves and the Americans, impassioned individualists. Of foreign affairs they know nothing, absorbed as they have to be in parochial business. The peasants and the petty tradesmen talk interminably about themselves. And, like us, they believe what they wish to believe. They have endured heartbreaking humiliations. We must give them time to recover. We must remember, too, that France is feminine, *la belle France*. John Bull and Uncle Sam are masculine. Long ago that shrewd observer, Max O'Rell, contrasted Jacques Bonhomme with Johnny Bull. I cannot quote his exact words, but he wrote something to this effect: "There is not much difference between these two good fellows; your Johnny believes that the kingdoms of this earth and the Kingdom of Heaven belong to him. Jacques believes the same, but, mark you, *he is not quite so cockjure about it.*" **This** was testimony from a Frenchman who for many years was a schoolmaster in England. I recall a talk I enjoyed with this son of Gaul after he had lectured at length to a not-too-appreciative audience. His quips failed to amuse stiff and starched listeners. But his last sentence got a laugh from me:

"I have been speaking to you," he said blandly, "in a tongue which is not my own; so you will forgive me if my last words

are in French: *Quand je vois VAnglcterrc, je suis fier d'ttre Francais*"

Then he smiled, bestowed a wink upon a stout dowager in the front row and withdrew. I assured him that his audience would laugh later on; and I know that some present did. He admitted that English people had a latent sense of humour which enabled them to appreciate a joke against themselves, after the joker was dead. The *esprit Gaulois* is witty rather than humorous. O'Rell laughed at life. . . .

3

Our philosophers affirm that war purges self out of the individual; our Internationalists—who were called Little Engenders during and after the 1914 slaughter—affirm that self cannot be expelled from a nation in the piping times of peace. I have talked with some of our soldiers now on leave, attempting to stand in their shoes. All of them demand rest and refreshment; many admit that they intend to vote for the Socialists, because they hope to get both in unstinted measure. The talk took place in a third-class carriage; I was the only civilian present. Not one of these heroes had heard that ancient tag: "Every man for himself and God for us all, as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens." When I repeated it, they roared with laughter. . . ! The comment was: "That's right." The innocents took for granted that any change in the body politic must be for the better. I lacked heart to disillusion them, sensible that hope springs eternal in every youthful breast. Two good-looking boys spoke of the German friendliness, the smiling fraulcins and the attractive "kiddies." I gathered from what they said that orders had been obeyed reluctantly. This morning, after breakfast, I read Montgomery's message to the troops insisting on non-fraternization. This great warrior is said to have a soft spot in his heart for children. Could he have made an exception of them? An injunction to make friends with the toddlers might exercise repercussions and throw into salient contrast the aversion meted out to their elders. When Christ scourged from the Temple the money-changers, did He forbid their children to approach Him? If the children of Germany arc to be trained to become

peace-loving and kindly, harsh treatment will not soften their little hearts; we shall become their hereditary enemy.

Yesterday I lunched with a shipping magnate. He spoke of specialized information concerning "tonnage." *Expertise* in tonnage is vouchsafed to few; it walks hand in hand with high finance. When I said that I felt like a child listening to a Senior Wrangler attempting to explain the Differential Calculus, he laughed. Then he told me this story. Certain experts on tonnage were summoned to Whitehall to enlighten ignorance in high places. A window was wide open. According to my host, Cabinet Ministers had to admit that they were floundering and foundering in a sea of figures. The great Personage in the chair rose and closed the window, provoking protest from his overheated henchmen. "I have shut the window/' he said, "because the birds outside might understand what I don't and repeat it."

It sounds a true story.

From a subject far beyond my ken we wandered back to earth. My hostess admitted that she was worried about the future of the leisured class. Was it doomed to extinction? Was it a fat weed on Lethe's wharf? Plutarch records the case of Dionysius the Elder who was asked whether he was at leisure? He replied: "God forbid that it should ever befall me." Dionysius was the Tyrant of Syracuse. To the extremists of the Left the leisured class is as abhorrent as the old school-tie. Certainly a nation of robots would make leisure impossible. As a worker, I can understand the feelings of other workers when they speak with rancour of the idle rich. The rich who make pleasure their quest arc busy as bees, eternally on the move, "going places," and (as a bored by their self-imposed activities. They excite pity in me. Again, they are an almost negligible minority. But my hostess, I think, had in mind the many hitherto tolerably prosperous whose incomes arc sufficient unto their needs, honest folk who shrink from taking bread out of the mouths of wage-earners. Taxation has impoverished them, and most of the more elderly are physically incapable of hard work. If the State pitchforks them into almshouses they will be wretchedly unhappy.

4

An amusing headline has caught my eye: "With Morrison in Wonderland," a land of collective insecurity, a land of promise with little cash in hand to pay for performance. The wonderland, such as it is, is obscured by a smoke-screen of verbosity. After what we have endured, talk is so cheap.

**They never taste who always drink;
They always talk who never think.**

All politicians are anglers. According to the supreme authority, Izaak Walton, "Angling may be said to be so like mathematics that it can never be fully learnt." The sage also finds in true anglers the virtue of humility which is absent in too many of our orators, constrained, poor fellows, to pose as know-it-alls, fortified by the conviction that they are speaking to listeners (and hecklers) who know even less than they do. That explains the presence, behind the arras, of our permanent officials, veiled prophets of Khorassan. These gentlemen are experts; unhappily they—for reasons best known to themselves—are satisfied to play the role of "prompters" and seldom appear in the open. A quaint phrase arrested attention a few days ago, but where I read it escapes my memory: "Fishing for fish not in the pond." Nearly all of us do this. Last year I visited a tea-garden near Christchurch, a garden of roses sloping to an estuary. After tea I strolled to the water's edge where a small boy was fishing (with primitive tackle) for tiddlers. He had caught one. He accepted my congratulations. We fell into talk.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Nine. I — I mean nearly nine."

"Do you live in Christchurch?"

"Yes, sir, but I have been to Bournemouth and—and Southampton."

"You like fishing?"

"I just love it, 'cos why? As my Dad says, you never know your **luck**. I might, I — I *might* catch a salmon."

Christchurch salmon are famous.

"If you **do**, I'll buy it."

"Well, I wouldn't sell it, not me. I'd have it stuffed and put in a glass case."

" That's the spirit."

I refrained from telling him that an eel might be hooked on a juicy lobworm. At his age I loathed eels. I recall fishing for mackerel in a stagnant pond. I had seen my uncle with three mackerel hanging from a string. He did not tell me that he had bought them from a peddler. There were three ponds in my mother's garden. The gleaming beauties must have come out of one of them. Accordingly I angled diligently for three hours hoping to catch fish that were not there.

This afternoon our Conservative candidate is coming to drink tea with me. Shall I tell him this story ?

5

Marshal Zhukov is known in Russia as Spasitel, the Saviour. It seems that he is not too approachable. Rarely does he talk with the gentlemen of the Press. On that account, it is likely that words are put into his mouth which he has never said. However, in one rare interview, he gave a reason which rings true: " The Germans were used to easy victories. The stubborn resistance they offer in towns and villages has a simple explanation. They are afraid to give up warm houses for frozen fields." From my knowledge of them, they are as fond of comfort as we are. When will comfort come back to this stricken world ?

**From ignorance our comfort flows
The only wretched are the wise.**

Matthew Prior was an ambassador. Johnson damns him with faint praise, but the poet lived in an age when splendour drove comfort into a corner. I have known many wise men; I cannot recall one who was wretched. Comfort may come from without or from within. Diogenes, with a mind at peace, may have been comfortable in his tub. I am writing, or course, of creature comforts. After a good dinner I can murmur with Sydney Smith: " Fate cannot harm me." Nevertheless I am aware that our national love of bodily comfort, quite apart from politics, cozened us in 1913 and again in 1938. One can conceive Omniscience bringing about a rude awakening of dozing millions, not to mention millionaires.

The comfort that springs from within may smile ironically at creature comforts.

6

The public is heartily sick of party bickerings about responsibility for this premature election. When the House became disunited, the sooner it closed its doors, the better. That—so far as I can gather—is the opinion of the Man in the Street. Our Colonel Blimp predicts that "back-chat" in the next Parliament will interfere with national business if there are many lady-members. Recrimination begins in the nursery. Children squabble over trifles till they are told to hold their tongues. Small minds love small talk. Men gossip. I never pass a certain bow-window in St. James's Street without thinking: "What a tale you could tell! "

Yesterday I gleaned a scrap of interesting information from the mother of a boy at one of our famous public schools. She had asked him if the "bloods" dealt kindly with school-fellows reckoned (socially) to be of inferior clay? He replied frankly: "I think that things are made too easy for 'em." Glad tidings. It was not so at Harrow in the seventies, but even then it was bad form to rag a new boy whose name was absent from the Englishman's bible. It was not bad form to kick the son of a duke if he gave himself airs. Apparently -this is conjecture on my part—our great public schools are ceasing to be hot-beds of class distinction. It is certain that to-day there are happier relations between masters and boys. It is likely that the masters are soaping the ways in anticipation of launching, so to speak, trawlers amongst yachts. If carried out, it will be a great experiment. Probably the trawlers will be keen to fly the school bunting. At breakfast this morning I read an article dealing with a White Paper issued by the Ministry of Labour, a sort of kite. It flies gallantly. The authors, two ladies, wish to supply domestic workers to all needing them and to raise their status, not to mention their wages. It can be done; and it will be done. As an individualist I am wondering if dinner in the middle of the day will be accepted philosophically by the Wine and Food Society, or the Saintsbury Club? Let my old friend, Monsieur Andre Simon answer that question. Some of the educational luncheons *are* dinners! A man with any sense of humour is tempted to scoff at all encrusted habits. Andre Simon declares that champagne is at its best at high

noon. After a hard day's hunting it's rejuvenating **tipple when** taking a hot bath, as tonic as the Essence of Tokay.

Will Bond Street vote "solid" for the Preservative Party? Socialism must play havoc with the luxury trades. Savile Row will be blitzed. The stately homes in Grosvenor Square will become boarding-houses; May fair will be derelict. Well, well, if change and decay are around the corner, one inalienable possession will abide with us—a sense of humour.

At last we have an almost perfect June day. The leaves on the trees surrounding my small domain are thicker than I have ever known them, screening from view the cemetery on the rising ground to the south. The widow of my predecessor told me that she was so grateful to summer on that account, but she forgot to mention the tiny churchyard next to the courtyard, where her husband is buried. Clarissa has affection for churchyards and a detestation of cemeteries. Another quaint distinction 'twixt Tweedledum and Twcedledec. As a novelist I have pilfered many names from these gardens of sleep. What's in a name? More than the general reader supposes. An odd name arrests attention and lingers in the memory. But—this to the novice—beware, young sir, of using too many odd names in one book. The most uncritical reader will murmur: "How did so many quccrly named people get together?" Christian names appeal to me, if I know what they mean, Aaron, in Hebrew, presents a mountaineer; Baldwin is a prince-friend; Camilla belongs to an attendant at a sacrifice; and so on bang through the alphabet. The Bible has as many names in it as Debrett . . .

Children like or dislike Christian names not without reason. As a child I loathed Priscilla, because it had belonged to a great-aunt who died before I was born. According to my grandmother (her sister), she was a "truly good and virtuous woman," but she had a most forbidding countenance, unless her photograph in the family album was a libel. I thought fane a lovely name because we had a pretty dear of a nursemaid, who buttered underneath the dry bread which too often was my portion. Had our Nannie found this out, Jane would have been ignominiously expelled!

Josephine is at Weston-super-Mare. I had a postcard from her this morning:

We are enjoying the rain and the wind and sitting indoors. We were going to bathe but it is too cold.

From JODIE.

May God forgive me! I believed that the little baggage was pulling my venerable leg: but a letter from her mother confirms the fact that the child is very well, thanks to the bracing air from Wales. So I scribbled a few lines of doggerel and posted them.

*Dear Rain, please stay;
Don't you dare to run away !
With my dollies I can play
Happily the live-long day.
Do I want to bathe? Nay, nay;
It's horrid cold in Weston's Bay.
I'm okay—Hip—hip—hooray!*

The rain has gone away. It is warmer outside this house than in.

8

A stranger has sent me what he calls *Wisdom from a Negro's Pickle Barrel*. "It ain't the things you don't know what gets you into trouble; it's the things you know for sure what ain't so."

If I were speaking for our candidate, I should take this for my text. Possibly the man who said it was an unconscious humorist. The Socialists assure us that State-owned railways, banks, hospitals and schools would be better managed. Rousing cheers from the groundlings who know less of such high matters than a baby knows of the non-ferrous stars. Till I was forty I accepted the tag: "Spoil a ship for a ha'porth of tar." But Lean, in his *Collectanea*, gives the correct version: "Spoil a sheep . . ." Nobody ever spoiled a ship for a dab of tar, but many a sheep has died for the want of it when cut by the shearer.

Last night, thirty veterans of the Old Guard, irrespective of party, met at dinner on **the** terrace at Westminster. They **sat** down—so it is reported in the *Daily Mail*—to roast **turkey**, strawberries, mushrooms on toast and (**I** hope) noble **and** **aged** wines. **Their** years totted up to fifteen centuries. They talked

" amiably but sadly " of the " Past filed away in Hansard." I am reasonably certain that these old gentlemen had a rollicking time, but possibly only soft drinks were provided.

Mr. Clynes mentioned that it was sixty years since he took out his first trade-union card, fifty-five years since he joined his party, thirty-nine since he became an M.P. It was said of Papa Lansbury that he never gloated over his gains and regarded losses as stepping-stones. I lift my hat to the gentleman who organized this memorable re-union. I hope that I shall read a fuller account of it—under the heading " Memorable Meals"—in the next issue of *The Wine and Food Quarterly*.

Had I been asked to suggest the right bill of fare, I should have summoned Fancy to my side. Law-givers, on occasion, may be excused for breaking the Law. Three courses were not enough. A pre-war banquet was in order. Turtle soup, with lashings of calipash and calipee, would have reminded the guests that General Eisenhower is now a Freeman of the City of London. A *sole a la Normande* would commemorate D Day. A saddle of four-year-old Welsh mutton would be a tribute to Lloyd George and Colonel Llcwellin. Not a turkey, I submit, because Turkey remained neutral. The sweet surely should be a Coalition Cabinet Pudding, with strawberries to follow as dessert. With the turtle soup Mansion House Punch could be served; with the sole I should proffer a brimming goblet of the Merry Widow; with the saddle a fragrant 1923 Burgundy could be slowly sipped in honour of *Ia belle France*; with the Cabinet Pudding, as an oblation to the Tories present, ethers of an 1896 port would recall the sometime backbone of the kingdom: the squirearchy. Coffee, cigars and the oldest brandy procurable would crown the feast.

9

I have just re-read a pencil scribbling on the back of an envelope. Josephine asks me why I carry old letters in my pocket. I assured her that they were my note-books. Very stupidly, I jot down a sentence that interests me and forget to record whence it came. Here is one:

Dear God, give us strength to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed. Give us courage to change the things that can and should be changed. And give us wisdom to distinguish one **from the other.**

Such a prayer must have come from the heart and head of a sage. Wisdom indeed is necessary, and the firm faith that God's Ways are not so inscrutable as they seem to be. The great Lord Shaftesbury might have said it, but it came, I'm sure, from a speaker alive to-day, an up-to-date Abraham Lincoln. Its common sense should commend it to ideologists and reactionaries. The eternal verities cannot be changed, but can we set them down on paper? Any attempt to do so would be platitudinous. Emerson wrote about them, but I cannot find the passage. In the lines I have cited one word, *courage*, is outstanding. If we could only change our minds as easily as we change our underlinen, the underlinen of our minds, the clinging, warming rags and tatters, which should be sent to the wash, the fixed idea, the habit, using habit as a garment, of a lifetime.

Intelligence and stupidity are eternal verities. Courage can be absent from both. The most ardent Progressive is as stupid as the dyed-in-the-wool Reactionary if he believes that this is the right moment for colossal changes. I refuse to indict his sincerity or his faith in Utopia. I challenge his courage, his moral courage, his inability to resist temptation. It must be an immense temptation to take a short cut to the land of his dreams, but he knows, none better, that the road to Utopia is longer than the road to Tipperary. Unity saved us from annihilation. Now we are racked by disunity.

10

A fifteen-year-old schoolboy has shot himself with his father's revolver, depressed (so it is affirmed) by his conviction that he would fail to pass an approaching examination. This is harrowing. I know for a fact that many boys at preparatory schools are overworked. After work in form they are given prep-work; the little more that is too much. This extra work keeps them awake at night. Day-boarders, puzzled by difficulties, suffer more than other schoolfellows, biting off what they cannot chew. One victim told me that it would break his heart if he failed to win a scholarship, an alluring bait to him and, alas to his parents. He is breaking down in health. In a prospectus of a well-known public school, stress was laid upon the number of scholarships won by the boys. Obviously, the head master,

proud of these achievements, could not accept **with serenity** **the** things that cannot be changed. Cramming can never **turn** a dullard into a scholar, but it is likely to undermine a robust constitution. My daughter tells me that girls in the National Schools work harder than boys. She is President of a local hospital where there are many child-patients. Result: she is terrified of overworking Josephine. A schoolmaster once said to me: "I can't work miracles on little dunces; I give my attention to the bright boys." What Mr. Butler would say about it, I don't know. The demand for thirty thousand new teachers has now been doubled. They will have to pass examinations. Will they have a care for the bodies of their pupils? It sounds paradoxical, but over-stimulation of minds at the expense of bodies may end in the survival of the unfit. I have a nightmare vision of a nation with hideously swelled heads and puny bodies. Already we have the swollen heads.

After smoking a pipe that did not draw too well, I have amused myself by glancing through half a dozen family photograph albums. I wanted to blink at my great-aunt Priscilla and other Victorians. I found myself scowling at their self-satisfied, smug faces.

None of them deemed great changes to be possible; all were content with the station in life assigned to them by Omniscience. Amazing and confounding to reflect that I am bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh. Incontestably, their great qualities of loyalty, piety and politeness obscured their defects. As a child I said to my mother, speaking of her mother, "Grannie couldn't be a miserable sinner, not if she tried ever so." Mum was amused, but she did not show it. What was the name of the wag who first labelled them—Olympians? I recall that Olympia to me meant an establishment run on oiled wheels, presided over by a butler with perfect manners and diction, and a housekeeper who wore black silk. They were the permanent officials. A great house was in perfect order before the mistress of it came down to breakfast. I cannot remember one relation who had breakfast in bed unless he or she happened to be ill. Family prayers preceded the stately gormandizing. The side-board displayed at least half a dozen silver dishes, flanked by a ham, a tongue and (in season) a game pie. As Sir Osbert Sitwell observes: "Those were the days." The odd thing is that none, so far as I know, suffered from indigestion. **If they did it was**

euphemistically termed indisposition. When I went to California in 1881, I blushed when my hostess said : " I didn't sleep too well last night. I had stomach trouble." The only ailment that could be mentioned at table was a cold in the head. None the less the talk was not dull. There was so little to be said that it had to be well said. Politics were tabu. Malicious gossip was bad form. No young man dared to whisper a story "off colour " to a young lady. . . .

I am glad that I lived in those faraway days; I am glad that I am alive fifty years on having witnessed great changes for the better.

We have been told over the air that fraternization between English and American soldiers and German children is to be permitted and encouraged, so what I hoped at the beginning of this chapter has come to pass.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RIBBENTROP HAS BEEN CAPTURED IN GERMANY, identified by a wine-merchant to whom, probably, he sold champagne. In his pocket he carried poison, but he did not take it. His shrift will be short. Had the events of the last three months happened twenty years ago I might have attempted a picaresque novel; the crashing fall from heights to depths of half a dozen men drunk with power. "Not," so my daughter says, "your line of country." I have no doubt she is right. I have ridden my Rosinante across pleasant fields, skirting the big fences and offences. Clarissa has urged me to set down in this chapter a few lines that might help youthful would-be novelists and dramatists. Did Quiller-Couch attempt anything of the sort at Cambridge? Any young person with aptitudes for music, painting or sculpture can be "taught" the technique of these arts. But a master of the English language may be incapable of telling a story. Matthew Arnold could not do it, which provoked irritability in that great apostle of sweetness and light. George Saintsbury could write admirable essays on French novelists, but (so far as I know) he never published a novel. Again, a master of the short story may write a bad novel and vice versa. It is as easy to write a first novel as it is difficult to get it published. It is a heartening fact that a bad novel—slated by competent critics—may be a big seller. Why? Because it holds some appeal to the general reader. Indifferent treatment cannot invalidate a good story. The supreme gift, never to be imparted, is—imagination. Close on its heels comes self-detachment, the faculty of standing in the shoes of others. How did Alice Hegan Rice, a Doctor of Literature, create Mrs. Wiggs? Mrs. Rice happened to be one of **the** organizers of The Cabbage Patch Settlement near Louisville. An authentic Mrs. Wiggs served as a model, but Mrs. Rice had to become Mrs. Wiggs. When I was President of the Dickens Fellowship, Dickensians asked me again and again to explain, if I could, the Master's multiplication of so many quaint characters. I believe that he had met all of them in real life or in his dreams. Sympathy and imagination made **them alive**.

A character in a novel or play must be approached (1) objectively, taking careful note of his outward appearance and (2) subjectively getting inside him. With these heavenly twins, a novelist may soar to the zenith; without them he is asking—if he goes on writing—for disappointment. He must have a story to tell, and it should be told with ever-increasing interest and tension.

Every would-be story-teller should carry a note-book. Nobody can say with authority whether or not a mere idea is book-worthy. Jot it down and give it time to burgeon. A biologist can take one bone and reconstruct an entire body. Leslie Stuart told me that a motif came to him at odd times and in queer places. I was with him, walking down Oxford Street in the rain, when he stopped to scribble a few bars under a lamp-post. "If I don't do this," he said, "inspiration goes as quickly as it came." Verify quotations. If you give your characters titles make sure that they are entitled to them. The daughter of a commoner who marries Sir Bognor Regis, Bart., is Lady Regis, not Lady Mary Regis. Nine times out of ten, a youthful writer comes to grief, if he writes about people whom he has never met in real life, or puts them in a setting with which he is not familiar. The acid test of any book is: does the author know what he is writing about?

A few words about the craft of the playwright. No irrelevancies are permitted. The plot, whatever it is, must be cumulative in tension working up and up to a convincing climax. I have said elsewhere that *subtlety is wasted in the theatre*. It exasperates the ordinary playgoer. Cudgelling what brains are his, he may miss important lines that follow. Some of our highbrows disdain Sardou and Pinero, affirming that their plays are machine-made. Each, however, was an incomparable craftsman. In a comedy humour raises a louder laugh than wit. Stage business, as every actor and actress knows, however trivial in itself, is left too often to the producer. Pinero worked with a mimic stage and tiny puppets. Even as a deaf musician can hear his symphonies (as Beethoven did), so a playwright should be able to see his plays with the mind's eye. A dramatist to whom such visibility is denied has little chance of success. The novice must beware of introducing subsidiary characters unless they are absolutely necessary. Comic relief, for example, permissible in a novel, must not be "lugged in"

if it imperils a dramatic situation. A laugh in **the wrong place, or a titter** from the gallery, is terribly disconcerting. **Our** greatest living dramatist has never shirked long **and** enlightening stage directions. . . .

Would that I had pounds in the bank, golden sovereigns, **one** for each time when I have heard men and women say: " You know, I'm sure I could write a play if I tried. . . ."

Never have I known a June so fickle. Each day we have rain and sunshine. Evidently April and she agreed to swap months. The family has returned from Weston, delighted to be at home again. Our one and only housemaid, still in her 'teens, appeared yesterday after a week's holiday in the Midlands. She has enjoyed, so she assures me, a " perfectly lovely " time.

" Fine ! " I exclaimed.

" Pardon ! It wasn't fine, far from it."

" I should have said ' Cheerio ! ' I hope your people thought you looked well? "

" That they did. . . . Dad said I looked much more of a lady than I did."

I refrained from comment. She's a good, willing little worker and sings when she works; her smile entitles her to a raise in wages. Her wish to look like a lady is pathetic. Her young man may vote for our Labour candidate. I should like to ask her if he wishes to look like a gentleman; but my daughter says that she hasn't as yet a " follower." Follower is now shortened into " feller." One maid of ours, now married, had five boys! Well, the more the merrier. Out of the five she picked a worker who is earning about eight pounds a week. She has three children, no advocate of Controls. Fifty years ago it used to bother me whenever I tried to probe beneath smiling surfaces. I was on the friendliest terms with villagers, but they were trained to hide their thoughts and feelings. Even the children cherished reserves of speech. I am glad that my fellow creatures are now more outspoken.

The word " priorities " has come into use and abuse. " **First things first**" is a slogan. I asked a small boy **what came first**

with him, and he replied: "I do." "I and my king," said Cardinal Wolsey. The *ego* had pride of place.

All three parties put houses first. According to Miss Ellen Wilkinson, women voters will consider housing to be the acid test of party sincerity. I have not read her *Peeps at Politicians*. I have no faith in peeping. It suggests peering through a key-hole. Sincerity is a king virtue. Can any politician preen himself on being sincere, if he ranks party loyalty as a priority? The Member for Jarrow speaks of landlords holding the nation to ransom. She says nothing of bricklayers who refuse to lay more than the pre-war tale. She speaks of a comprehensive plan. But I fear me she would frown on any plan which was drawn up by an expert who happened to be a Liberal or a Conservative. Nor does she discriminate between the many-acred landlords and the petty owners of small properties. The smaller the landlord the more close-fisted he is in his business dealings.

3

Tea is the only meal in this house which scoffs at Colonel Llewellyn. The other meals are spectres of the past. At luncheon to-day we had a rabbit, excellently cooked. I append the recipe.

Rabbit à la Marengo. Cut into pieces a young rabbit. Fry in butter till the pieces are a golden brown. Season with pepper and salt and add chopped onion. Cook gently for five more minutes. Take out and keep hot the pieces of rabbit. Add three tablespoonfuls of cream to frying-pan and stir well. Pour the sauce over the rabbit, and sprinkle the dish with chopped parsley before serving.

The cream must be skimmed from the milk ration.

4

Professor Laski has done yeoman's service to the Tories. The same tribute can be paid to Sir Stafford Cripps, who as politician appears to have forgotten his immense knowledge of the Common Law. I have never met these gentlemen; but each illustrates a Yankee wise-crack: "A man may be mighty wise in Wisconsin and a damned fool on the seashore." At Black-pool, for example, dazed no doubt by the swings and roundabouts, Socialists who voted to embrace Communists appear to

have stultified themselves by splitting their party in twain. Professor Laski—so I learn from *Whos Who*—is a man of great distinction, but, like Homer, he has been caught nodding. As Chairman of the Socialist Party, he has assumed the god; he has attempted the Jovian nod, and has shaken not the spheres, but the sides of millions. Mr. Attlee has refused to come to heel, flouting the Prince of Pacifists. It is said that the Professor declared himself to be a conscientious objector in 1914. If this be true, we must credit him with a conscience and courage. But the still, small voice can be disconcertingly indiscreet. This is not the moment to tell our nation that we can do without a monarchy or to insist on Caucus rule. What the Professor deems to be trump cards have fallen from too loose a sleeve. These trumps should have been kept hidden till the final show-down. Our Colonel Blimp hails Harold Laski as a tower of strength to all Conservatives.

Count Bernadotte assures us that the arch Thug is dead. We are told that he was done to death. Imagination reels at the thought that he may be alive. The worst punishment that could be inflicted on such a man would be what was so mercilessly imposed on the Wandering Jew.

I submit that the deadliest sin against peace on earth and goodwill is—arrogance. This war has rolled it in the dust, but it may rise from the ashes of Berlin. However, I am thinking of arrogance elsewhere. The too proud child becomes the arrogant man. Yesterday some public speaker spoke of our landed gentry as arrogant. They happen to be the people I know best, but no arrogance is left in them. Indeed, I find it most rampant in the groundlings:

**I know you proud to bear your name,
Your *pride* is yet no mate for mine
Too proud to care from whence I came.**

Thus Tennyson. Burke speaks of discontented men of quality, puffed up with personal pride and arrogance, who despise their own order. They have almost ceased to be. Youth to-day is more arrogant than age. I can recall only one great man of my time who was arrogant; an outstanding disability. Some of my cowboys in California were arrogant. They knew all that was to be known about cow-punching; their ignorance of everything else was immeasurable. Gangsters are arrogant.

5

The spirit is said to move us in sundry places. A visitor has complained to me that the air of Batn is relaxing, on that account perhaps the dearer to Americans to whom "relax" is a panacea. As a rule, men take their environment as they find it. Doctors prescribe change of air to tired mothers of fretful children. I am a staunch advocate of change of food. The wind can blow where it listeth provided it blows from any quarter except the east. Possibly Professor Joad could tell us with authority whether or not Malvern, for example, breeds robust children than Torquay. A rich man with an ailing wife told me that he had bought one place after another, at least half a dozen, because his wife couldn't feel well in any of them. She is now, I hope, in Heaven; and I wonder if the air agrees with her. I find it difficult to write when I'm away from home? Why? Because my books of reference are in this room. Soil affects health; a martyr to rheumatic affections is well advised to keep away from clay. My less well-to-do friends here never speak of bracing air. They are, I believe, healthier because they have learnt to open their windows at the top instead of the bottom. Apparently their mothers were only concerned in ventilating the calves of their legs. A doctor once said to me: "When my lady patients crave a change of air, I encourage them to take it, not on their account, but on my own. I am spared bothering importunity for a fortnight or so."

6

I must buy Sacheverell Sitwell's latest book: *British Architects and Craftsmen*. It will "set me back" a guinea, but it will whirl me "on" in an uplifting flight. Mr. H. J. Massingham has reviewed it under the caption "Home and Beauty." It is superbly illustrated, provoking the reviewer to write: "What a *decor* has the publisher given to this most decorative of writers." I anticipate a feast for eyes and heart. But our stately homes are doomed if the Chairman of the Socialist Party becomes President of the British Republic. They may degenerate into Homes for the mentally unfit. My grandfather's castle is now a Seminary for young Ladies. It was built by his uncle, Byron's "vain Valcmtia," and is a sham

castle. It took the place of a charming old manor house. Many of these, I hope, will be spared, if the domestic-servant problem is solved. Houses with a hundred bedrooms may be turned into hotels or country clubs, if—confound these "ifs"—they are accessible. A plane has just travelled to India and back in forty-two hours. . . ! A Londoner could fly to Dunrobin for a week-end. Our Extremists in Bath are eager to turn Royal Crescent into Government offices. The once sacrosanct Circus is now spoken of as The Pill-box. What will interest me most in Mr. Sitwell's book is his dealing with the craftsmen whose services to the architects are often forgotten. Not long ago, at dinner, I sat opposite to a full-length portrait of a sometime Knight of the Garter clad in the splendid robes. The clothes had made the man. Who, I asked myself, was his snip? Probably the great Poole who cut his best cloth for Disraeli and never pestered him for payment.

7

I was wondering if I could write a few more lines about the passing of palaces when Elizabeth, our parlourmaid, came in.

"A gentleman wishes to speak to you on the 'phone . . ."

"What name? "

"Poodle . . ."

"**Poodle?**"

"That's what it sounded like to me."

Poodle conveyed nothing. I went downstairs, because I refuse to have the telephonic inconvenience in my room.

"Vachell speaking . . ."

"My dear old cow, how are you? "

"Who is speaking at your end? "

"Arthur Boodle. Of course you've forgotten Poodle, but I haven't forgotten Cow."

Seventy years ago we were at a prep-school together. I was nicknamed "Cow"; he, of course, was addressed as "Poodle". I recalled dimly a cocky small boy, with bright beady eyes, a rabbit at work and play. He went on to say that he was passing through Bath, and looked forward to a yarn with me. He ended up: "Rotten dull life I've had, but I want to listen in to your adventures."

Within a quarter of an hour we were shaking hands. He stayed with me for two hours. I did the listening in. My

adventures were untold; his misadventures filled me with compassion. He had indeed, as he said, led the dullest of lives; clerk in some bank, then manager of it, retiring after fifty years of drudgery to twiddle his thumbs in Surbiton. He spoke cockily, although I gathered that his now-dead wife, Ethel, had failed to keep the home fires burning. Two sons were doing tolerably well in Canada. He lived alone, giving divided energies to his tiny garden and the solution of crossword puzzles; he is a Churchwarden. . . !

When he took leave of me gratefully, he assured me that he had greatly enjoyed his visit. We used to call him The Poodley One. There is no verb "to poodle," but poodling suggests canine tricks, balancing a bit of biscuit on the end of a moist nose, tossing it into the air, and snapping it down. Arthur Boodle does not really believe that he has lived a dull dog's life. *And he hasn't.* He has wagged his tail. I touch my cap to him. He has been spared what our Socialist friends term "divine discontent." He will hand round the offertory bag with a smile till he dies. He spoke hopefully of carrying out his bat for a century. He is not a reader; ne admitted, disarmingly, that he had not read any of my books, saying with a chuckle: "In a bank, you know, one can study human nature at first hand." If I put him into a novel as I see him, he would not recognize himself. There was a boy at Harrow whom we called "Smiler." He could take a "wopping" from a fag-master with a smile worth £500 a year to him later on. During his visit the Poodle never mentioned the war or the General Election; he drank with indifference the port I offered him; he refused a cigar and smoked his pipe which went out half a dozen times. I did begrudge him my precious matches. This house and what is in it provoked no comment. He spoke at length of a summer-house which he had built himself; of a small lawn which he rolled and mowed, of his early potatoes nipped by the recent frosts. His is the peace which passes understanding. I am glad he came to see me.

8

Professor Laski protests too much. He would be rebuked by Macaulay's schoolboy. He is telling us that Socialists refuse to follow meekly behind the Tories. Is that news? Meekness and humility are anathema to our bold Progressives.

We but teach

Bloody instructions, which being taught return
 To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice
 Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips.

The Professor must be plagued by his own inventions. Mr. Attlee must be muttering: "Save me from my friends."

Here in Bath, Food not Houses has become the first of Priorities. We have Colonel Llewellyn's word that there will be no shortage of oils and fats. We have a good crop of early potatoes. Demand does not create supply, but demand, if it be sufficiently vocal, stimulates supply. For certain reasons—partly political—the Ministry of Food are playing the hush-hush game. It may be wise to withhold information from an enemy, candour is best among friends. Housewives with a vote are being told that the true friends of the people, if in power, would wipe out the black market. They are careful not to say how this could be done.

Sir Stafford Cripps accuses the Tories of being blind to Europe's steady drift to the Left. They might reply that they were less concerned with the Old World and giving more attention to the New. The Americans have a different sense of direction.

9

I have been saddened by the death of Sir Albert Whitaker, a good friend, good in every sense of the word : good-looking, a devoted husband and father, a good soldier, a good sportsman and an incomparable host. Throughout his long, active life Dame Fortune was his fairy godmother, almost too prodigal of her favours. He was my senior by a year or two. I shall not look upon his like again. Although acclaimed by all of us as an Admirable Crichton, he remained to the end the humblest of Aliens in regard to his own achievements. My son went into his regiment, the Fighting Fifth; his son is to-day a veteran Coldstreamer.

Men like him stand out as does the Peak of Teneriffe. Why have they been so conspicuously blessed? Why does one out of a million escape bludgeonings: To those who believe in God, is it possible that He sees fit to place before us Man as He intended him to be and as he might be, as—dare we say?—he

would be if **we** obeyed God's laws? **I refuse to believe that** Omnipotence *deliberately* (as Tom Paine puts it) created **man** in His own image to make of him later on a miserable wretch. St. Paul, in one of his epistles, speaks of Jesus as " lovely " or " loveliest." And so the Early Masters portrayed him physically. It is certain that children would never have come to an ugly man.

We all hope for a tranquil exit, such as was vouchsafed to the pilgrim in Bryant's *Thanatopsis*, who lay down to pleasant dreams. Bryant, the friend of Washington Irving, lived to be an octogenarian. But he was only twenty-two when he published his finest poem. Last November, after an attack of cardiac thrombosis, I had reason to believe that the curtain might drop at any moment. I lay in bed not allowed to lift a heavy book. A portable " wireless " was brought to my room. On a Sunday night pleasant dreams came to me over the air, a potpourri of Victorian melodies. The weight of years was lifted; I became a boy again. At my wish these long-forgotten strains were barely audible; they floated to me as if from an immense distance, sublimated harmonies. *Oft in the Stilly Night* was sung exquisitely. I was entranced. A glee that came later might have been sung by a celestial choir. Fear of death left me. I was ready to go. I closed my eyes, fell asleep, and slept for several hours. When I woke up, I was refreshingly eager to stay.

Thackeray dealt mercifully with that great gentleman, Colonel Newcome. Evening came on as he lay dying, bereft of all his material possessions. A chapel bell was heard. As its solemn note died on a silence, the old man became again a Grey Friars' boy; he lifted his head from the pillow, said " Adsum " and fell back. Had he been an old Harrovian, he would have said, " Here, sir."

If I were compiling a prose anthology, I should enshrine this passage as the best lines written by a genius.

Both Thackeray and Dickens died from what is loosely described as " effusion of the brain." The last words of Dickens were " On the ground." He had fallen to the carpet. His sister-in-law, Miss Hogarth, attempted to put him on the sofa, too great an effort as he must have realized. Thackeray died in his bed. His biographer says: " He had passed away in the night to **the** better country, where there is no night."

For my part I cannot visualize a nightless heaven, unless (as is probable) the adjective was used figuratively. I should **have** substituted "darkness." When our intelligentzia talk (slightly over our heads) of a new earth, they—quite properly—say nothing of a new heaven. Heaven, as the Victorians describe it, was not alluring to me when I was eight years old. My mother, recently widowed, had a house in Park Street, May fair. I owned three toy cutters which, weather permitting, I sailed on the nearby Serpentine. Once—so my mother told me years afterwards—I asked her if angels sailed boats on the crystal sea? Casting down golden crowns must have seemed to a too-curious urchin rather dull. How she dealt with the question I don't know. My friend, Conan Doyle, speaking as a Spiritualist, believed in a heaven that is a new earth where, free from shackles, we "carry on" much as we do here, but selflessly. To the poor Indian the farther shore is a happy hunting-ground, where his faithful dog will bear him company. The cynical Pope did not write the lines with his tongue in his cheek. The seer in him guided his pen.

What are the thoughts of the war criminals now awaiting trial? It is significant that William Joyce presented himself before the Bow Street magistrate wearing no collar. As a proof of repentance has he discarded all collars? I hold him to be arch-fool rather than arch-traitor. Two hundred years ago little negro pages wore round their neck silver—now and again golden—collars on which was inscribed the name of the poor townsman's master or mistress. *They could not be discarded.* The punishment would fit the crime, if Lord Haw-Haw was condemned to wear for life an iron collar with "Heil Hitler" inscribed on it. I recall a street orator in California who spoke of his sockless brother men. He looked as if he had never worn socks. "Sockless," for a season was incorporated into the current slang-usage. It came to mean mentally undressed. The Silverites advocated making silver—regarded by us as a base metal—legal tender instead of gold. We accused them of having sockless minds. Also they disdained coats, appearing on public platforms in sheet sleeves and unshaven! Ridicule was their portion.

10

In Bath my fellow citizens are giving undivided attention to the General Election. It is overwhelmingly—Particular. My doctor forbids me taking an active part in it, because (so he affirms) any form of excitement might be lethal. Accordingly, I, for one, can attempt to transport myself to Japan. When I read Loti's *Madame Chrysanthhme*, I contemplated for a few joyous moments hari-kari as a European. But I felt much the same when I read his *Manage de Loti*, dealing with the lotus life in Tahiti. Many white men have gone "native," Gauguin was one. He came back to Europe and died! I might have perished from inanition had I exchanged my breeches and boots for a kimono. Label Loti wizard and have done with it. Nevertheless it became for many years a fixed idea with me that the Japanese were the salt of the earth, industrious, simple in their tastes and habits, wise, philosophical, and kindly. In 1881 I cherished similar views about the Germans I met in and about Dresden. To-day I see the Japanese as aggressors, fanatics, "little yellow apes," aping all that is most detestable in our so-called civilization. Are they last-ditchers or are they not? There are one hundred millions. They believe, as the Germans did, that God is with them. A Divinity reigns over them. If a bomb fell on him, it might disconcert his worshippers. The Japanese *Junkers* will not surrender. But human nature cannot be disembowelled *en masse*. The war may last for another eighteen months, although I refuse to predict such a calamity. Nearly all the Blimps are conjurers. They can pull rabbits out of ancient "boaters." Our Colonel produced a bunny yesterday, which frisked about on the lawn for a minute or two and then vanished from sight. According to this veteran, the occupation of foreign countries will keep millions in employment, solving the outstanding peace problem. Let the younger men be demobilized forthwith, so he urges. Let the older men do "sentry-go." I pointed out that the older men had wives and families. "They must do their duty," he replied stiffly. I repeat, his rabbit frisked away. Forthwith another took its place.

"What will you do," he asked, "if the wild men come into power?"

"Nothing_____"

" Nothing. . . ? Good God. . . ! "

" I shall hope that their tenure of power will be short."

" Don't you clutch at such a straw. Once bit, twice shy, what? But, mark you, capital will leave the country, and so shall I. "

"Where will you go?"

" British Columbia. Salmon don't take the fly, but it's God's own country."

" It is. But if we have a dictator, he will see to it that capital does not leave this island."

" M ' m . . . m ' m . . . "

" And our capital may be expropriated."

He wiped his honest forehead, glaring at me. Articulate speech left him.

" Then I say . . . er . . . I say . . . er . . . "

" Yes? "

" Our only refuge will be the gas-oven."

" I—I suggest a whisky and soda as—as a stirrup cup."

" I've no whisky. I'm damned if I'll drink your whisky. No, no. . . . You've put the wind up me."

" I was only joking. You and I, old chap, will have to stay put and do sentry-go over what the Chancellor of the Exchequer does out to us."

He replied dubiously : " I suppose that is the right spirit."

11

For the first time in the history of Germany a woman has been appointed mayor of a town near Weimar. Another straw at which I clutch. Women, with rarest exceptions, are all Preservatives. Very few mothers are war-mongers. Our feminine Members of the House of Commons cling to everything which comes under the head of—property. The three K's—Kinder, Kirche, Kuche—are dearer to every *hausfrau* than all the other letters of the alphabet. A burgomistress in every town in the fatherland would turn it into a motherland.

English girls are writing to the papers admitting that they do not know on which party to bestow their first vote. I am not surprised. The bills of fare are much alike. The big difference lies not on the better food to be provided, but in the cooks. To pursue the metaphor, docs a girl prefer her mother's

cooking to what may be provided by communal kitchens or not? If she can't make up her mind, she would be well advised not to vote at all.

So far, here in Bath there has been less rancour on the platforms than I anticipated. Let us give credit to the *genius loci*, not, I hasten to add, the wraith of Beau Nash. Manners have made Batil what she is, still a queen's city, radiating a word dear to me—*urbanity*.

So will they keep their measures true
Till all become one harmony,
Of honour and of courtesy,
True valour and urbanity.

Courtesy in Bath is not the hall-mark of the few: I find it in the shops of petty tradesmen and in the schools. Suburbanity is veneer, ersatz. The Simon-pure stuff, so I like to think, is a sort of patine, such as you find on old furniture, a *soft* polish which only Time can give. I should expect to find it in Boston, not in Chicago. I found urbanity in San Francisco in the eighties. Rightly or wrongly I supposed that the Hispano-Californians and the Southern families had supplied the elbow-grease.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I AM CHUCKLING over a possible short story which I shall never write. Conceivably, a writer absorbed in delineating characters other than his own might lose individuality. The conte might be entitled "Smith in Search of His Lost Self."

Two letters reached me this morning quaintly alike. In each I am entreated to pull strings which Time has severed: to do something, nay, anything, for a stranger of whom I know nothing. I am urged to write to theatrical managers, who no longer know Joseph, asking them to engage the services of a demobbed officer seeking employment. Of his aptitudes as an actor I am ignorant. I shall ask one old friend to grant the applicant a brief interview. The other letter bespeaks my help to find a billet for another stranger in a publishing house. . . ! My imagination bolted with me. I became for the nonce—what is a "nonce"?—an employment agent. I was richly "intrigued" because I have never introduced such a man into a novel or play. If successful in his chosen avocation he must be a man of parts, a plausible talker, an ingratiating fibber. Thirty years ago the editor of a popular magazine told me that a literary agent had submitted the script of a short story, delivering it in person.

"I've a corker for you. I want you to read it at once."

"A corker, is it? Have you read it?"

"Teh! Of course I've read it."

"What's it about?"

"Damn you! I—I haven't read it. It only reached me this morning. I tell you the author is one of our coming men. You can have it for a tenner. A year from now I shall be selling his yarns at a hundred quid apiece."

The editor read the story; he didn't print it.

I return to my lost self. For an hour at least, I had found remunerative employment for a score of clients; I had established myself as an Ace of Agents. Rollicking fun whilst it lasted. Then I betook myself to my stool. *I couldn't write a line.* Losing my identity was a fresh experience. Yesterday, I read in the papers that a young wife had shot her husband

with his service revolver. Charged with the murder, the unhappy creature faltered: " I — I wasn't myself." I couldn't serve on the jury who will try the case. I believe that it is possible to become, temporarily, another person.

a

The law dealing with libel actions has come to the rescue of Transport House, divided against itself. Professor Laski, we are told, is issuing writs against certain papers who have published a statement that he is alleged to have made, to wit: " The Labour Party would use violence, if necessary, to obtain political objects/" But—a solacing thought for the Professor—the matter must be left *sub judicc* till the courts decide whether such a statement was made or not. By the time a decision is reached the General Election will be over. If I, for instance, commented on this alleged libel, I should be charged with contempt of court.

The local humours reach my ears. House-to-house visitations are taking place. At one house, the front door was opened by a maid-servant old enough to vote for the first time.

Visitor: May I ask how you are going to vote?

Maid: (*gaily*) I'm going to vote for Labour.

Visitor: For Mrs. Archibald?

Maid: For Mr. Churchill.

Visitor: Mr. Churchill is not our candidate.

Maid: Well I never . . . ! I thought he was.

Visitor: (*severely*) Mr. Churchill doesn't belong to the Labour Party.

Maid: Goodness! I thought he'd worked harder to win the **war** than any of 'em.

Visitor: Mrs. Archibald is the Bath Labour candidate.

Maid: Cheerio . . . ! I'm a worker; I'll vote for 'er.

3

Lord Crewe has died, full of years and honours, a man of letters and the son of a poet. He had in perfection that natural urbanity of which I spoke in the last chapter; not the polish that can be acquired, but the bloom that Nature gives to a peach or to the cheeks of a child. When others raised their voices, he lowered his. He married a daughter of the late Lord Roseberry who had the same velvety tones. At a dinner, as I have

recorded elsewhere, he had to deal with an angry guest in whose honour the dinner was given. He did this with such incomparable tact and kindness that the guest left the room in tears! When Lord Crewe, last year, retired from the leadership of the Upper House, he went back to his oldest friends—his books, good companions of youth and age.

L. A. G. Strong has written a novel, entitled *The Director*. I have enjoyed reading it, because he traverses country undiscovered by me, the Never, Never Land of Hollywood in a South Ireland setting. I have never been to Hollywood; I have never (stupidly) taken any part in the production of films of my plays and novels. The technique, so I felt at the time, was beyond me. In this novel, the novelist is with the technicians and subject to their authority. The characterization of the men in this book is superb. Again, I have never met their like during my long pilgrimage. All of them are, I am sure, authentic portraits. The Director, a dictator, sticks at nothing to achieve his ends; he is loyal throughout to the magnates who employ him. We meet a Russian who is the cameraman, and a poet who indulges in no flowers of speech, a charming bishop, a conscientious objector (to all films) in the stark presentment of a parish priest, an illiterate, avaricious landlord of the local hotel, and—like mites in a ripe cheese—the people in the place who are bribed to play the parts in the film. A mixed grill, as the Director would admit, an *olla podrida*, the Russian would say. He can talk fluently in eight languages. This convincing novel is not everybody's meat; tragedy underlies the comedy and is paramount at the last. There is the usual notice on the dedicatory page:

This story is entirely fictitious. It does not refer to any actual persons, or to any actual attempt to make any film anywhere at any time.

So much for Buckingham!

More humours. Under certain circumstances conscience does make us cowards and slaves. A rich man of my acquaintance owns many hot-houses holding in due season the fruits of the earth: grapes, peaches, apricots and nectarines. He refuses to

eat them himself or to give them to his guests. Conscience forbids. Does he send these luxuries to the hospitals? No. The Chancellor of the Exchequer raises a minatory finger. A tax-impoveryished Dives sells them . . .

He is not one of the execrated Tories.

I recall a parson who owned a small vineyard in California. He happened to be a total abstainer at a time when Prohibition was advocated. From the pulpit, I heard this minister denounce the Gospel of the Grape. " I , " he said, " practise what I preach. I, my dear brethren, have ploughed up a vineyard not blessed by the Lord." The congregation was visibly impressed and so was I. Some months afterwards, the truth leaked from the same lips. We were alone together, talking business. I told him I had planted out a small prune orchard on the wrong soil. He said sympathetically: " Yes, yes, we all make such mistakes. I planted out table grapes upon too thin a soil. As soon as I realized what I had done, I ploughed up the vines."

He appeared to be surprised when I laughed.

George Washington, when a schoolboy, wrote in his copy-book : " Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire—conscience."

Because it is celestial, it is perhaps indestructible. It flickers on to the end.

A warped conscience is a social menace. Soldiers from Eire who have fought against Germany are afraid to go back to Erin, because some of them on landing have been arrested as deserters. What a welcome home! Incidentally, these heroes have been supporting the families they left behind them. We are told that corporations have no conscience. Can the same be said of Civil Servants, Mr. de Valera's henchmen? One victim pleaded that he had read newspaper cuttings stating that the Eire Government would take no action against " deserters." I take it that they deserted from the Eire Army. I also take for granted that the officers presiding over these courts martial have to do their duty. But their consciences must be warped.

It is a perfect June day,, with enough breeze to **ruffle the** surface of Test, Itchen or Kennet. An ardent sportsman might exclaim: " Come, let us go out and kill something." **I have**

no wish to kill anything, not even Time, who must be sharpening his scythe when he looks at me. I have just lunched wisely if not too well, and shall take my thirty-minute siesta. If a trout stream flowed through my fields, I might be tempted to put my rod together. Smoking a pipe, after a cup of coffee, it occurred to me that old people ought to be more grateful than they are for the pleasant passivities imposed on them, the more so if they have led strenuous lives. Appetite comes with eating, despite the testimony of the Frenchmen who ate for two hours without any appetite whatever. Appetite—zest is the happier word—for our pastimes and field sports generally vanishes as we become more feeble of limb. Such zest is no longer mine. But the amenities of age grow dearer each day. Too often in the past I did "things" because I was assured that they were the real right thing to do. Now, without giving offence, I can refuse importunate invitations. My friends come to see me; I am not obliged to return the call. I go to bed when I please and leave it for no better reason. In fine, nothing comes betwixt me and my immobility. Each day is a bookman's holiday. For these and other mercies I am duly grateful. . . .

I have had my siesta.

From the window where I am writing I can see my son-in-law, preparing what he intended to be a surprise for me. Flanking the stone staircase which leads to the mid-terrace arc two of Flaxman's vases. There arc other smaller vases placed at intervals along the containing wall. During the war, we had no plants in them. Before luncheon, in the courtyard, I espied several pots of red geraniums. The plants are now in the two vases, all glorious to behold. The nymphs taken from the Roman Bath to the sunk garden look as pleased as I am.

Josephine is with her father, playing with a kitten of pedigree. We may christen it Chin-chin, because its fur has the softness and colour of chinchilla. It only arrived yesterday (another surprise), but already it follows its mistress and then sits still purring at her. Our Siamese cat has no welcome for the tiny stranger. Her Imperial Majesty eyes Chin-chin with Oriental hauteur. Josephine says: "I hate to think that the kitty must grow into a cat."

6

I set down my vain imaginings as they flit in and out of my

head-piece. A visitor expressed surprise when I told **her that I** browsed on the poets. Many old people find food in them. There is a reason for this. Poetry lends sustenance to all who indulge in reverie. I read poetry, and committed hundreds of lines to memory, when I was a boy, my mother's companion. After my father's death, alone with me, she would lie back in her chair, closing her eyes. She told me that reverie—a new word to me—was dear to her. I noticed that on such occasions some slim book of verse lay on her lap. Being a little ape I liked to do what she did. Later on, at my first school, I was rebuked by a master for inattention.

"Sir, I wasn't inattentive, I was in a reverie."

"Indeed. In a reverie? How dare you babble of reveries? Fifty Greek, accents and stops."

No more reveries.

By the time I passed into Sandhurst, I had abandoned the poets. I returned to them when I began to write novels. Not till I was more or less laid by the heels did courtship become worship. Cowper fails to link up poetry with reverie.

Defend me therefore, common sense, **say I**
 From reveries so airy, from the toil
 Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old **in** drawing nothing **up**.

If a writer is careful to verify quotations from the poets, he must be a dull dog if he is content to do no more. Let him wander on and on. He will not be wasting his time.

7

The hours speed by when I am at work, a valid reason for not working to any man with his eye on Time's hour-glass.

Chatterton (I think) has a word to say:

Thou workest; well, can that a trouble be?
Sloth more would jade thee than the roughest day.

I thank Providence for my memory, considerate friend who spares me dismal recollections. When I was a guest of Dr. Butler, revered Head Master of Harrow, and Master of Trinity when he entertained me so delightfully, his memory confounded me. Alone with him late at night I begged him to satisfy my curiosity about a disagreeable incident which **was**

said to have occurred before I climbed the **Hill**. **He smiled at me.**

" Vachell . . "

" **Master** . . ."

"I have made it a habit to forget such unhappy affairs."

I believed him at the time, forty years ago, and I have better reason to believe him to-day, because—subconsciously perhaps—I adopted his exemplary habit. Still, as I have recorded, I belong to the generation that wore blinkers. It would puzzle a B.B.C. Brains Trust to decide whether or not soiled linen should taint memory? We are admonished not to borrow trouble which may never assail us. Surely common sense would enjoin us to forget the trouble which has lacerated us in the remote past? There are mental and physical wounds which must be kept open till Nature heals them. A scar remains. Well, we need not look at the disfigurement. There are, in the humbler ranks of life, a few persons who appear to *enjoy* bad health, who think that they give pleasure to others when they display a septic leg . . . ! A little girl said to me not long ago: " I have a whitlow on my linger, mister, I'd love to show it you." She did. . . .

As President of a local hospital my daughter has to listen sympathetically to tales of woe; she spares me their recital. Gray speaks of "dumb forgetfulness." In extreme old age, when all faculties are failing, memory too often is the first to go. In my experience persons thus afflicted are not unhappy, although their friends are hard put to it to supply missing words. To an inarticulate old woodman, I heard his daughter say: "Now, gramfer, don't 'ce bother the genelman. Get on wi' your dyin'." She spoke kindly.

Nicotine is not helping me. Watching smoke from my pipe fade away, I am wondering if it is a blessing to forget the rubs of the green ?

8

A headline in to-day's paper is arresting:

ATTLEE MAY DEMAND LABOUR " SHOWDOWN."

A "show-up " exacts a " showdown." Seldom does **it get it**. If a bluff is called at poker, the bluffer has to expose his **hand**. Politics is a game of poker. I am glad that **I am not a player**.

As a looker-on, I repeat one scrap of advice to youthful voters who tell me that they know nothing of the issues at stake: "If you know nothing, or even very little, dont vote at all."

Br'er Laski should have laid low and said nuffin. Not one Bathonian out of every hundred had heard of him, a fortnight ago. The biggest laugh of the campaign was raised by a speaker at a Conservative meeting. At the end of his speech he stood still. Then, unexpectedly, one note of interrogation rang through the room:

"Archibald . . . ?"

The crowd roared back:

"Certainly not."

I dare not predict under which king or queen Bathonians will live or die. They cannot see Harold Laski as President of Great Britain. Colonel Blimp informs me that business here is brisk; and he assigns a reason: "They're buying—*buying*, because they're scared stiff of inflation with their savings cut in half." The Colonel has his moments. . . . As a rule he is more than half right.

This causerie is desultory. I was not aware that the adjective (as defined in a dictionary) is "Pertaining to a vaulter or circus-rider." An old gentleman may be pardoned if he entertains vaulting ambitions when he sits still in an armchair. I have an affection for circus-riders, the ladies in spangles who crash so smilingly through paper hoops, who appear to canter through life undismayed by obstacles. Bless them. . . !

Had I been born in a circus, I should have loved perambulations and the applause of the children. Once I talked with Lord George Sanger. He spoke of his arch-enemy—the weather. I gathered that a circus was a microcosm like the theatre. The people in it were his people, his chosen people. I have talked with them. If I were seeking "copy," I failed to find it. I asked Zazel if she had a thrill when she was fired out of a cannon? She nodded, what she apprehended was the breakage of the net. Performers on the high trapeze, so I understand, can never habituate themselves to the risks they confront. The world's fattest woman said to me: "It tickles me that you pay cash to look at me. Gracious! I'd pay a tizzy not to look at meself." More benedictions.

9

Josephine is worried, because her doe rabbit, after bringing six babies into the hutch, is now, only three weeks later, not merely neglecting them, but eating food provided for them. "If Mummie did that to me," she said, "I should be miserable and I'm eleven." Enid Blyton could have dealt with this. What I ought to have said occurred to me afterwards. Doe rabbits are too frequently "in kindle." I should have kept that fact to myself. But baby rabbits can fend for themselves when they are three weeks old. If they can't do this, they are eaten by their mother; so they—strange though it may appear—earn and enjoy freedom. I refuse to play the heavy grandfather, but I might have suggested to an intelligent child that she is old enough to brush her own hair. I did murmur: "What would you do, if your mother took no notice of you?" She replied promptly: "I should do just what I wanted to do. Would that be bad for me?"

I used to think that the brains of nurses and nursery-governesses were bound to atrophy from disuse. To-day I am wiser. Children are inspired teachers. My father said to my mother: "Every child we have costs me a hunter; but it's worth it." The outstanding gospel taught by children is to make the most of the passing minute.

**Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight!
Make me a child again, just for to-night.**

In our dreams some of us wander back to childhood. Anstey's lively fancy transformed a father into a schoolboy, but the schoolboy went on talking like a father. Mr. Bultitude remained Mr. Bultitude. Alice remained Alice when she passed through the looking-glass. It would be amusing to present a child turned into a man, accepted as a man, but talking with the innocence and wisdom of a child. Anstey could have done it. He could have made the boy leader of the House of Commons. It is, I believe, the Peter Pan in Winston Churchill which has won the affection of all who know him. His honest brusqueness is characteristic of a jolly boy. Sir Edward Marsh tells a story which is worth repeating: "In 1905, I was named Winston Churchill's private secretary. I was not too pleased. I had met him only twice and thought

him truculent and overbearing. When I told Lady **Lytton**, his friend as well as mine, of my misgivings, her answer **was** one of the nicest things that can ever have been said about anybody. * The first time you meet Winston you sec **all** his faults, and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues."

I return to my dreams. In *Peter Ibbetson*, readers arc told how "to dream true." You lie on your back and cross your hands; you bespeak from Morpheus a first-class return ticket to any place you wish to visit and you hint, perhaps, that you would like to meet some dear friend. Obeying these instructions, I laid me down to sleep, but, lack-a-day! I did not dream true. I asked Gerald du Maurier if he could dream true. Regretfully he said that he could not, adding, puckishly: "Nor could my father."

10

The Prime Minister is planning a whirlwind tour of the country. He will take the road next Monday, starting from Chequers. Mrs. Astley, who lived there long ago, was a friend of my mother's, one of the great ladies who never gave herself airs, being abundantly blessed with graces. She looked the chatelaine. When Lord Lee gave this stately home to our Prime Ministers he may have wondered what the tenants would look like a hundred years hence; if he allowed his fancy full play, he might also have considered the effect of environment on character. A noble house is the right habitation for a noble man, not necessarily a belted carl. On the other hand, I believe (or would like to believe) that a child of the slums, transported in infancy to a palace, brought up as a prince of the blood, would become princely.

Our elderly residents are afraid that Mr. Churchill is overstraining himself. He would be the first to laugh such a possibility out of court. The portraits in the papers are reassuring; he looks a—winner. A doctor told me that a boy, attempting to lift heavy weights, did not overstrain muscles as supple as silk. Mr. Churchill's mental sinews arc as supple as on the day when he left Harrow, supple because he has kept them so. He has buffeted good and ill fortune with lustiness, with superhuman energy. Colonel Oliver **Stanley, at Peter-**

borough, acquitted the Prime Minister of suggesting that "poor" Mr. Attlee would set up as a Gestapo. It was almost as ridiculous, he went on to say, to think of the Labour leader in the role of Himmler as to think of him in the role of Winston Churchill.

I am missing a lot of fun, unable to attend the meetings. At one, yesterday, held in the open beneath cloudless skies, a stout gentleman spoke in stentorian tones.

"I'm red, I tell you, red . . . red . . . red."

A voice from the back replied: "You are, Alf. In this weather you did ought to stay indoors."

11

If Josephine, ten years hence, reads this book, she may accuse me of exaggeration. In Paris, two managers of famous restaurants in the Champs-Élysées have been arrested and punished for either (1) dealing in the black market or (2) criminal profiteering. They had sold lobsters at £15 apiece; they had charged £3 10s. for one spoonful of caviare. Our Mademoiselle tells me that *patrons* who cater for the rich must buy in the black market or put up the shutters. If I were Chef de la Sûreté, I should arrest and punish the clients who paid these exorbitant prices. Paris must be the squander-bug's paradise.

However, last week in London, some feckless body paid seventeen hundred shillings for one dozen of 1928 champagne!

What is reckoned to be extravagance by most of us is expenditure which has no personal appeal. How gently Elia would manipulate this thorny theme, handling it with fingers incapable of wounding the feelings of others, smiling as he set about a congenial task. He might—were he still with us (and indeed he is)—present a lover of Birkbeck Foster eager to buy a small water-colour drawing at a price which his own brother, a horse-and-hound man, condemns as a wicked waste of money; and the proud owner of the drawing, in his turn, would be aghast when the brother paid two hundred guineas for a hunter. An impassioned (and *bad*) bridge-player rebuked me when I told him that I had spent £2,000 on my garden; but he had admitted that his "bridge" cost him about £600 a year! He happened to be a rich man (and a most genial loser), but he begrudged money expended on gardens. Another friend

of mine, of moderate means, bought a Rolls-Royce **car** to "balance"—so he told me—his wife's extravagance over clothes. "She says," he confided, "that she has to keep her end up; I have to keep my end comfortably down." Once I was shooting in Hampshire when my host shot a woodcock which I had missed. He chuckled as he put the bird—a rare bird in those parts—into his pocket. At dinner that night he announced his intention of going to London on the morrow.

"Whatever for?" his wife asked.

"I shot a woodcock to-day. That female whom you call a cook would overcook it; so I'm taking it to my club, where it will fly through the kitchen and come to roost on my plate."

This indiscreet response, in the presence of servants and guests, provoked a quarrel. His wife, to our dismay, nearly burst into tears, jumped up and left the room. At the door she turned.

"You—you are the greediest and most extravagant man in the world."

Nevertheless, half an hour later, we found her smiling in the drawing-room. She travelled to London within the week; and she bought a sealskin coat. The woodcock, I hope, justified what it had cost.

Age, I submit, ought to be tolerant of extravagance. I sympathize with the duke who resented the loss of his still-room, because he liked to nibble a biscuit with his glass of sherry. Our Colonel Blimp *sees* the Savings Campaign with cynical eyes.

"What," he asked me, "has made it such a colossal success? Patriotism? No, no, my good man, self-interest quickened by fasting and abstinence. The nation is saving every bob to buy the goods we can't buy to-day and which we fondly hope to buy to-morrow."

Thrift can hide beneath the domino of extravagance. In 1938 my daughter bought a reach-me-down coat for Josephine. It looked shabby within a month or two. In 1939 she bought another coat, tailor-made, paying four guineas for it. She dared not tell her husband. The tailor saw to it that the garment, *built* for a child of seven, could be enlarged. After five years it is still presentable. My daughter has given it to a neighbour, delighted to have it, who affirms that it will last for two years more. In fine, a purchase that looked **to** be a **criminal extrava-**

gance has cost less than ten shillings a year! My daughter has never bought a party frock for a tiny tot overpriced at five guineas not fit to be seen after six months' wear.

A woman who complains that she hasn't a rag to her back, may have twenty inexpensive frocks in her wardrobe. She ranks quantity above quality. Who am I to throw a pebble at her? Many men would sooner have a hundred acquaintances than two staunch friends.

12

I wrote a few pages back that we should turn our eyes from scars. Rather let us laugh at them after the wounds have healed. I speak of the red wale above my right knee as a keepsake, a souvenir of a misadventure, a reminder that I slipped and crashed on a stone staircase because I neglected to mind my step. A scar "nobly got" is a decoration; a scar ignobly got can serve as a danger signal. Wale is not used by Shakespeare as signifying a scar. It is, properly speaking, the red stripe raised by rod or birch. At Harrow such ignominious stigmata were only seen by others when the bearer swam naked in Ducker, our bathing-pool, but any misdemeanant who could collect in the Fourth Form Room a twig or two of the birch that raised such stripes was accorded—kudos.

If our Socialists come into power there will be no flogging and probably no capital punishment. Life may become a sort of perpetual Sunday school. We shall eat the same food, wear utilitarian clothes, drink soft drinks, and play Follow my Leader.

I pay a sincere compliment to the late Minister of Labour, when I predict that a revival of Wilde's farce, *The Importance of Being Earnest* will play to capacity.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHY DID TRUTH HIDE HERSELF IN A WELL? Not, Surely, because she was ashamed of her lovely nudity, but for a kindlier reason: her nakedness shocked too many worthy people when she walked among them. It is untrue, as the poet declares, that she "dressed herself in fictions."

If I were a politician, I should try not to humbug myself and others with half-truths, or the semi-demi quavers of facts known to the public. A few nights ago I listened in to the broadcast by Lady Violet Bonham-Carter. She spoke as anyone who had known her father would expect her to speak, with well-bred ease and distinction, dwelling upon the transgressions, the sins of commission and omission, of the Tories; it was plain that she could detect no virtue in them whatever. This is the party spirit which I so distrust. Lady Violet indicts the Conservatives of standing still. I submit that the Conservative of 1945 is more advanced in his views than any Liberal of fifty years ago, more progressive than Mr. Gladstone. My opinion would not weigh a grain with the President of the Liberal Party, but a full head of ripe corn comes from Boston. A paper with an immense circulation says:

"From the point of view of Americans endeavouring to understand the British election issues, the term 'National' is perhaps better than Conservative. For the programme which the present dominantly Conservative Government is placing before the people of Britain would hardly be considered Conservative in the United States.

"On the contrary, it would be probably slightly to the Left of President Roosevelt's New Deal in its heyday."

How would Lady Violet reply?

Professor Joad declares that the heckling of yore was the better because it was so acrimonious. He cites the Great O'Connell:

"He (Disraeli) is a liar in action and in words . . . he is a disgrace to his species . . . he is the most degraded of his species and kind; and England is degraded in tolerating or having upon the face of her society a miscreant of his abominable, foul, and atrocious nature. He possesses just the qualities of the im-

pudent thief who died upon the Cross, whose name I verily believe must have been Disraeli."

Bravely crowed! Can Mr. Aneurin Bevan go one better? The Professor goes on to describe his friend, Harold Laski, as the kindest and gentlest of men. The same could be said of the Sea-green Incorruptible, Robespierre. He was a person of small stature, studious, with nothing attractive or imposing in his aspect; his disposition was reserved and timid; his moral habits were temperate and regular. Nevertheless, he advocated the murder of Louis XVI; and he aspired to dictatorship.

I have hitherto regarded the author of *The Book of Joad* as a genial philosopher who maintained that hard words are impotent to soften indurated hearts. Have they ever done so? In the courts to-day the truculence of a Sergeant Buzfuz would be rebuked by the judge. The venomous mouthings dear to O'Connell are now practised only by tub-thumpers. Rancour defeats its own ends.

2

Being an old fool I lost my temper yesterday. A visitor left this house without taking leave of me although I accompanied her to the front door. After dinner a glass of port soothed my sensibilities. Sights that are oversights should be overlooked. Any person, old or young, who resents incivility, is to be pitied if it upsets him or her. Little flouts distress little minds and petty vanities.

**Sad fancies do we then affect
In luxury of disrespect.**

Slight indicates a triviality. Still, my visitor was guilty of bad manners. Her mother would have been shocked. Servility, thank God! has nearly gone; incivility has taken its place. Not as yet in our more remote rural districts. The good manners of woodmen, stone-masons and nearly all who work in the fields are a benediction. Cornishmen are said to be dour, dour as the wind-warped trees near Land's End; but in Devon and Somerset the cream of the country spreads itself over the countrymen and countrywomen. Bad manners are rampant in industrial towns and now and again in the House of Commons.

Michael, Seigneur de Montaigne must have had good manners, not fine manners. He was forty-seven when he published his weighty volume of essays. Hallam speaks of them as an

epoch in literature. Style reveals the man of wit, wisdom and generosity, I picked up my shabby copy, hoping to find an essay on manners. I was disappointed. But his manners present themselves on every page. Every theme is treated temperately, sincerely and sympathetically.

3

Bath believes that the war is over. It will be over when the dislocations caused by it have been readjusted. What a jig-saw puzzle confronts us!

Thinking of the ampler to-morrows, we have to survey the yesterdays. Stefan Zwicg, whose autobiography, *The World of Yesterday*, was published posthumously, came here to see me. He was an impassioned *laudator temporis acti*. Nobody has written so charmingly of the pre-war Vienna. He wrote with the music of Beethoven, Gliick, Schubert and Johann Strauss in his ears. To him a great actor or actress was a personage as well as a personality. He writes of himself as becoming a "gentleman," when a play of his was accepted by the manager of the Burghcatcr! I am wondering what he would have written about Bathonian Worthies had he read nothing about them except what is inscribed upon the mural tablets in the Abbey? Would he have seen them with the eyes of Chatterton?

Around the monuments I cast my eyes,
And see absurdities and nonsense rise.
Here rueful-visag'd angels seem to tell
With weeping eyes, a soul has gone to hell;
Here a child's head supported by duck's wings
With toothless mouth a hallelujah sings.

I have set this down because Chatterton and Zwicg were antithetical. The Austrian cannot write anything unpleasant about the Vienna of his childhood. The unhappy Chatterton had a wretched childhood. One loved, the other loathed the past. Both died self-slain.

Conservatives should admit that they have strolled with Pecksniffian placidity in the past. Better too slow than too fast. Long before this book is printed the election will be over, but interest in it may remain because the issues at stake affect so profoundly all classes. And at the moment when we ought to

stand shoulder to shoulder to win the peace, we are divided by damnable party politics.

Mr. Henry Ford, with transpontine love of exaggeration, declared all history to be—bunk. Those who share this conviction will do well to debunk themselves. To a cowboy everything outside the corral is bunk. Mr. Ford, if history holds no significance for him, is "corralled." Nearly all the big business men whom I have met have been successful because they refuse to look back; their shrewd eyes peer ahead. I lack the impudence to claim to be a student of history. I read it to be entertained rather than enlightened. I seek characterization, vivid descriptions of great events, amusing gossip, in a word—craftsmanship. Possibly, Dame Christabel Pankhurst studied the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes rather than Grote's *History of Greece* if she sought information about the wrongs of women who lived more than two thousand years ago. Memoirs tell one more than history; diaries, reflecting private and public opinion, are histories of the times.

4

One of the loveliest children I have ever seen drank tea with us on the terrace yesterday. Camilla is ten years old, with a twinkle in her eye, a dimple in her cheek and a celestial smile on her lips. Her manners were perfect, no self-consciousness, no shyness, delightfully at her ease. As soon as she had gone, I asked my daughter a question: "Has she been educated at home or at school?" She has never left home; she is not going to any school. At dinner, my daughter had to combat as best she could frontal attack from her husband and me. We contended that nine girls out of ten might reproach their parents later on if they were kept at home. Josephine, for example, might do so. My daughter was too much for us; and she dealt faithfully with herself:

"I know I'm in a minority. *But it all depends on the girl.* If she wants to go to school, let her go. Hunt up the best school you can find. But Camilla and Josephine don't want to go to school. And, luckily for them, their parents give them individual attention. Humanly speaking, neither will have to earn her own living. A happy child grows up, as a rule, into a happy woman. Camilla's mother and I provide play-mates.

That, of course, is so important. I'm glad I never went to school. I can tell you that many mothers are glad to be rid of responsibility. They send their girls to boarding-school, not thinking, although they say so, of little darlings but of little nuisances."

Two men saluted feminine instinct and intuition.

But the last word on this thorny theme will never be said, unless Professor Laski, reigning at Buckingham Palace, ordains that all children must go to school.

5

I have been picking roses to send to a patient in a nursing-home. If the sender wishes them to arrive fresh, let a stout cardboard box be lined with damp ferns. Pick no flowers in full bloom. Ramblers wilt in a few hours. Ophelia is a good traveller. On arrival the roses should be placed up to their necks in water.

The small champignon which grows in what Josephine calls "fairy rings" can be gathered in our pastures. Pilferers of the common mushroom pass it by. In the current *Wine and Food Quarterly*, Mr. Ambrose Heath tells us how to cook it.

Dust lightly with flour seasoned with pepper and salt, then dip them in dried egg moistened with milk and then in fine bread-crumbs. Fry them in deep fat, drain them well, pile them up in a golden heap and serve with them a mock mayonnaise sauce.

Mr. Heath takes for granted that his readers know how to prepare a mock mayonnaise sauce. Our little cook makes this ersatz adjunct without olive oil or fresh eggs. She uses, instead of oil, what cream she can skim from our ration of milk, dried eggs, tarragon vinegar, a pinch of sugar, pepper, salt and a dash of French mustard.

6

Clarissa urges me to season this causerie with grandfatherly advice. "Everybody," she said slyly, "would like to know if the wishing-well in your woodland garden has been a fountain of youth for you?" The well holds good limpid water, but every drop trickles into the seven pools below. It has ceased to function as a wishing-well. A legend runs that ladies who

yearned to please their lords sipped its waters and—wished. Catherine or Braganza paid a pilgrimage to the fountain at St. Catherine's Court, near Batheaston, hoping to provide an heir to the throne. Next day, if we can believe the old wives' tale, she was seized with a colic! My maternal grandfather brought a frown to my grandmother's face when he declared that water was given to man to wash in and to woman to drink. I have achieved a compromise: I drink water, plenty of it, between meals and wine at them. Obeying my doctor's orders, I drink water that has been boiled. The chalky sediment I find at the bottom of the carafe beside my desk is kept out of my bones.

I proffer what I know to be sound counsel to all whose physical energies are flagging; keep your mind active; satisfy curiosities; make friends with books of reference and concordances. I label myself stay-at-home hiker. I travel along many roads, but I avoid the dreary stretches. I knew a cowboy whom we called "Short-cut Charlie." It is easy to lose oneself in a sage-bush desert; and when night comes on even a child of the plains had better take the beaten track. Charlie galloped to the ranch-house, as a bee flies to the hive. Was this sense of direction a fairy gift? Not a bit of it! He trusted his horse...

I trust my books. Aladdin's magical carpet may have been a map. A book of travel without maps is like a sailor without a compass.

**In a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.**

"Windings" suggests the gracious curves of thought, the meanderings of the mind. We are whirled away by train from some beloved spot. We may return to it, as Cowper says, in a few moments, after the too long lapse of years, but seldom do we fly straight. To all dreamers it is a common experience to wake up and glance at the time. A moment later one is asleep and dreaming. You awake with a start and again glance at your watch. You are amazed to find that only a few minutes have passed; and yet, during so brief a period, you may have swooped from China to Peru, twisting and turning like a swallow.

My brother Arthur spent some forty years in California. He had the wanderlust, but it had to be repressed; so he bought many books describing the places he could not visit. I never read them till after his death. I found them enthralling, but

my pilgrimage to Papua—shall we say—was the more enjoyable because I was spared the flies and the heat, not **to mention** the expense of such a long journey.

7

Last night we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of my daughter's wedding, dining wisely and well. I asked her, not seriously, if she had learnt during these two decades anything of importance which I could include in this book.

"Oh, yes. Never spend money on property which isn't your own."

Perhaps a Scot could deal with this more cannily than an Englishman. I took what she said to bed and lay awake for half an hour reflecting happily that I could plead "Not Guilty" to such unwise expenditure. Many young couples cannot afford to buy a small house and garden. Instead, they take (on a seven-year lease) what they too optimistically declare to be a dream cottage with no bathroom and no electric light. Who can blame them if they "put in" these necessary adjuncts? Probably the garden has to be made presentable. If fortune smiles on them and they can afford larger premises, they carry on as before. When they celebrate their silver wedding, the good gold which they have too cheerfully given to their landlords robs the silver of its lustre. After my daughter had offered her contribution to these pages, she cited an individual case.

"Look at the Pococks ..."

It would strain my eyes to look at our friends, because they live in another county. Indeed, they have lived in half a dozen counties.

"Yes, yes, of course . . . the Pococks."

"They have spent thousands on at least four properties not their own. Why?"

"They are so rich it doesn't much matter."

"I tell you it's a thorn in their sides. Cynthia Pocock admitted to me that it was. But they go on doing it."

Incontestably, they do. If a challenging glove is hurled at me, I pick it up, but my son-in-law answered his wife.

"Bumps of caution overdeveloped on both of 'em."

He was right. Really there was nothing more to be said. I can hear Mrs. Pocock, a very intelligent woman, saying:

" Ronald, if we buy this big place, we may hate it when we live in it, eh? "

To this a man as cautious as his wife would reply:

" True. At a big bargain pause a while. Yes, my dear, we'll wait and see. I can get a five-year lease."

In all honesty I have to admit that the Pococks act wisely according to their lights. Mrs. Pocock has admitted to me that she gets an immense " kick " putting other people's houses into order. Comb the kingdom, and you will find no better tenants than these two. Having groped my way to this conviction I fell asleep.

8

In Bath, so I glean from my hairdresser, Conservatives are laying three to two that their candidate will be elected. Nobody mentions San Francisco and the signing of the Great Charter. Amid this suspense I possess my soul in patience and read the reports of all speeches. Our elderly residents in the squares and crescents are making use of that aggravating word " perhaps." In California, sixty years ago, Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, scorned " perhaps." " Yes, sir-r," or " No, siree," was on every lip, positivists all of them. Figuratively speaking, every American packs his grip, as he puts it, and freezes on to it. *Perhaps* (in Victorian days) saved many an awkward situation for the Tories, although to-day it is a disability. We have a leader who knows his own mind, a far-sighted mind. Does he resurrect from the eighties the catch-word ^{<4} Why, certainly? " His charming mother must have often used it. General Smuts has broadcasted " Peace with Teeth." Jorrocks would exclaim : " There's a bite of the gob to that." Peace in the stomach cannot be achieved without teeth; peace in the body politic must have talons too. . . .

Hazlitt wrote an inspired essay on " Effeminacy of Character," which I read when eating breakfast. He affirms that it arises from a prevalence of the sensibility over the will.

" We meet with instances of people who cannot lift up a little finger to save themselves from ruin, nor give up the smallest indulgence for the sake of another person. No one makes a greater outcry when the day of reckoning comes, or

affects greater compassion for the mischiefs they have occasioned; but till the time comes, they feel nothing, they care for nothing."

The essayist disturbed my peace. The marmalade tasted bitter; the tea seemed to be weak. Hazlitt was indicting the leisure-loving many, who have suffered such a rude awakening. *The time has come!* Later on he cites "The pelting of the pitiless storm." Was he a seer? Did he catch a glimpse of the whole world at war? The Napoleonic wars provoked little or no comment from Jane Austen. They did not affect the characters in her novels, but those characters are still with us. I am aware that sensibility too often prevails over my will, a corroding thought. What we have endured doggedly, what we have done, has restored the prestige of Britain, especially in the Americas. It may be tarnished again, if we relapse into apathetic indifference after we have won the war against Japan. The Liberals and Socialists predict that the Conservatives, if they return to power, will stand easy. I refuse to believe this. I submit humbly that the sensibilities to so much that makes life worth living will fortify the will to win an enduring peace even if years of endeavour lie ahead.

9

Our enemies in the Far East are hoping (and praying) that the Socialists will come into power. They are of opinion that lack of discipline and coherence in Labour's ranks will benefit them immensely. Meanwhile the suicide-squads, manning their aircraft, have provoked such a barrage from our ships that the plane has great difficulty in reaching its target. The fanaticism of the Japanese may hasten the inevitable end, if—which is still questionable—the civilians do not share it. I have employed Japanese coolies, sensible hard-working little fellows, whom I could never trust as I trusted the Chinese. At San Francisco, in the shipbuilding yards of an American friend, I met several naval officers scrutinizing every rivet that was put into the splendid cruiser which my friend was building for Japan. Rarely indeed did they leave the yards. "They don't trust us," said Mr. Henry Scott to me, "and," he laughed, "we don't trust them." Few Occidentals can understand the Oriental mind, so secretive, so suspicious, so fortified by a self-

conceit never allowed to display itself. We shall have to deal with the survivors of a colossal slaughter as we are dealing with the Huns. They may fool us.

Stefan Zweig told me that the tyranny of silence imposed upon all Austrians who refused to come to Hitler's heel was a dreadful punishment. The mind found itself in a concentration camp, although the body might escape it. Paradoxically, the ampler the mind, the more vivid the imagination, the more the prisoner would suffer. Zweig had escaped from Germany; he was unable to escape from thoughts which may have hounded him to his death. He took a house not far from here; he had the sympathy of all who knew him; but he shunned our companionship. He regarded himself as branded. His books had been burnt or placed on the Index. He had lost touch with his many friends.

This isolation might so easily be self-inflicted by old people. They drift away from human intercourse till they find themselves marooned in one room. Better dead, as Barrie suggested. My mother's sister—whom as children we adored—lived to a great age. During the last ten years of her life, she immobilized herself in a bed-sitting-room in a hotel although she owned one of the loveliest villas in Florence and had ample means! She retained her faculties to the end; she was free from the ailments of old age. She had a few books and a faithful maid. Nobody deserted her, least of all her children. She wanted to be alone. Smelfungus might exclaim: "Teh! a selfish, self-centred old hag!" But I can recall her as quixotically unselfish, a giver, not a taker. My daughter says: "A gentlewoman with a kink." "Kink" is a kindly word. We bestow it on everybody who fails to see eye to eye with us. Scots speak of a kink o' laughing, signifying a convulsion or fit. To-day it means simply a twist. What twisted my aunt's mind? I shall never know.

10

Conservatives are chaffing Socialists about listening in to the Master's (Professor Laski's) Voice. That voice is now hardly audible. The Prime Minister's robust tones are in all ears. According to the *Daily Herald*, it is deafening democracy. Two candidates at Chippenham are backing their chances to the hunc

of **one** hundred pounds. The loser will hand it **over to the** District Hospital. Even the rigidly righteous are pleased.

It annoys me that I am out of the ring. When I stood in it I liked being heckled. I am told that excitement is bad for me. Is it? A little heckling would be rejuvenating. I made it a rule never to answer any heckler who spoke from the back of the hall. Politely, I would ask him to come nearer to me, which he did slowly and reluctantly. I had heard his question, but when he approached I invited him to repeat it. This gave me time to think out an answer. I learnt these tactics in America. I pass them on to my juniors. You may raise a laugh or a smile if you ask the heckler if he can answer the question he has put; and if he docs so, compliment him. Keep cool and smile. If the heckler—as has happened to me—climbs on to the platform, shake hands with him. Hie soft answer disarms rancour.

Of the speeches broadcast, the one by Mr. Eden pleased me most, not because I am a Conservative, but because he spoke sincerely, simply, and used such admirable English. I can think of none who can take his place as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. His illness has been a calamity to his Party. A Voice has indeed breathed o'er Eden, the voice of conscience. Never would such a man turn deaf cars to that voice, it must have surprised many listeners to be told that he had not spoken over the air since the nightmare days of 1941. . . ! At a moment when words, everlasting repetitions of the same half-truths are hailing down, it is heartening to think of him as a man of action. He made hay of the suggestion by Sir Stafford Cripps that a Socialist Government in this country would establish friendlier relations with the Soviet Republics with the counter-argument that if Sir Stafford is right, a Conservative or Liberal Government here, pledged to free enterprise, would be on happier terms with the United States. If Sir Stafford admits this, he might be asked if he, personally, would advocate friendship with Russia at the expense of losing the sympathy and co-operation of our own kindred in America? Is he optimist enough to believe that he can have it both ways?

June is taking leave of us in tears. Nevertheless, rain or shine, what a month of epochal excitements it has **been**.

Josephine, at any rate, when she is old enough to think for herself, may read these pages with uplifted brows. . . .

The World's Charter, if it is endorsed by the world, will be a mightier document than Magna Charta. Collective Insecurity lies at the bottom of Geneva's lake. A Martian, indifferent to party politics, with a wider knowledge (according to H. G. Wells) than that vouchsafed to us, might affirm that Unity ensures continuity of progress. J. R. Green, the historian, writing of the England of 1829, appears to have foreseen what has come to pass:

"England had hardly as yet realized the need of national unity, and outside the King's Council Chamber there can have been few who understood the need of union between the nations of Christendom."

Christendom.

Green was a parish priest who became librarian of Lambeth Palace. He died in 1883, when anything approximating to a world war was inconceivable. What would he write to-day? Did he believe in the second coming of Christ, not the actual Presence in bodily form of the Son of God, but the advent of the Christ Spirit? Apart from all confusing dogmas, the figure of the Light of the World shines radiantly out. The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the Only Way to unity.

12

COME AND SEE SOME BEAUTIFUL GARDENS.

This is the headline of a poster on my gates. In aid of the District Nurses' Association, we are inviting the public to pay a shilling to look at gardens no longer beautiful. Still, our Temple of the Sun and the bronze fountain in the courtyard, not to mention other garden ornaments, may prevent my arrest on the charge of obtaining money under false pretences. The fountain, the work of Sansovino, is more than four hundred years old. It was made for a doge of Venice, a Medici, and bears the Medici arms and emblems. Around the wide basin into which the water tinkles, little fauns are seated, obviously chaffing each other. High above them is the exquisitely modelled figure of an urchin riding a hippo-campus. If I didn't own this masterpiece gladly would I pay a shilling to look at it. As a rule, visitors merely glance at it, which enrages my

daughter. I was schooled not to call attention to my own possessions. Long ago I asked a great lady why she had said nothing to me about a lovely Gainsborough portrait hanging in her drawing-room. "Why should I?" she replied. "She speaks for herself." I feel the same about the fountain. My son-in-law has an edge to his tongue. A visitor passed through the courtyard after lunching with us and we accompanied him to the gate. He stared at the fountain.

"Got it in the wrong place," he growled.

My son-in-law said curtly that it had stood for centuries in a Venetian courtyard. Our visitor insisted that it should embellish the bowling-green on which bowls are not played. As soon as he had passed through the gates, my daughter said:

"That man has no taste, none."

"On the contrary," replied her husband. "Taste oozes out of every pore in his skin."

"Taste?"

"Yes—taste, bad taste."

My daughter beamed at him.

Can a person cursed with bad taste acquire good taste?

Another theme for the Brains Trust.

Inordinate pride in our own possessions may dim our vision of the possessions of others. We know a fond mother who believes her rather plain children to be "adorably" (her word) beautiful. Her taste may be vitiated, but I wouldn't tell her so for the world. Indeed I admire her. Touchstone loved Audrey, an ill-favoured thing, but his own. For my part, I hold my tongue till a visitor expresses interest in my belongings. Then I discuss their merits *con amorc*. Talking "shop" is permissible unless a third person happens to be present who is bored.

The few must confront, philosophically, a drab fact. The many are more vocal over cabbages than kings. It is a sad waste of time to talk to a lover of cabbages about avocado pears. A small boy wrote on a postcard to his mother: "Hoping to see you to-morrow. Ham and eggs will be all I want for lunch." He was known, affectionately, for the rest of his life as "Ham-and-eggs." Another question obtrudes itself. Is it better to want little here below and to be satisfied with that little? Is it an asset or a liability to have a discriminating palate? A sage would reply that our senses are given us to be cultivated. If we fail to exercise them, they atrophy.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A SOCIALIST CANDIDATE has submitted to voters a reason why he should be elected as their parliamentary representative. He spoke in a voice with no taint of the Oxford accent:

" My friends . . . I am proud to tell you that I am a home-grown article " (he may have meant particle), " yes, I—like so many present—was born in a poor man's cottage, little better than a hovel."

When the applause died down, a Voice—which might have come from the vocal chords of Stentor—boomed out:

" Ain't you scared stiff of dyin' in one? "

This provoked ribald laughter.

After sober reflection I doubt if the candidate's personal appeal was vote-catching. Would a Communist raise a cheer, if he stated that he had first seen the light of day in a gutter? No Tory of ancient lineage would be applauded if he declared, however modestly, that he had been brought to birth on a Vi-spring mattress beneath a lavender scented sheet in a lordly four-post bed. Had I been the heckler, I should have asked if the speaker hoped to die in a rich man's house. That might have disconcerted him. In the land of the Free, when Tammany was such a source of strength to Democrats, it is common knowledge that Irish would-be Congressmen trained supporters, masquerading as Republicans, to pose awkward questions which the candidate could answer triumphantly. Politics then were so dirty that many honest citizens refused to touch them. Even here the application of a little Persil might have cleansing effect.

The floating vote, we are told, may turn the scales. " Give t'other fellow a chance," they say. Nobody can predict what an unknown quantity will do. These " floaters," as the word suggests, are leaves on the stream of public opinion, drifting on its current, caught up by eddies and tiny whirlpools, subject to " back-wash " and under-tow. Probably Mr. Churchill's overwhelming personality will prevail. I find myself clutching straws. Ten days ago, men with whom I talked pleasantly enough declared their intention of voting for our Socialist candidate. Now, they are wavering. One said to me, with a

grin: "It's a secret ballot any way." These doubting Thomases cannot distinguish between climax and anticlimax. For that matter nor can a novelist. To many readers of fiction bathos and pathos are synonyms. De la Rochefoucauld maintained that self-interest governs human actions; it may not govern reactions. What he said so cynically about the misfortunes of others not being displeasing to us is a heartening thought for the Tories when they chuckle over splits in the Labour and Liberal Parties . . .

I must go to bed.

2

It is difficult to buy notepaper in Bath. But the wastage of foolscap in Government offices is unchecked. Three communications from the same office reached me this morning in three envelopes. One would have sufficed. How much paper has been allotted to the Publicity Departments of the Political Parties? Too much.

There is also a shortage of lobsters, although this is the lobster season. According to my daughter black-market profiteers have established a "corner" in shell-fish! At luncheon, overhearing our talk, Josephine asked her father a question:

"If Mummie can't buy lobsters, who eats them?"

Her father replied: "They are cannibals; they eat themselves."

"Oh, Daddy, how terribly sad! And now there are none left."

Answering questions is, I suppose, an aged novelist's daily task. A stranger writes to me: "Didn't you once do a book about Brittany? Please tell me when the Bretons abandoned pagan rites and adopted Christian precepts and practices." I answered this as best I could, adding a postscript: "Christians have never abandoned pagan rites." To the curious, Hone, in his *Everyday Book*, gives interesting information justifying my postscript. Missionaries in darkest Africa, and elsewhere, have cleverly transmuted pagan abuses to Christian uses. If there is a book dealing with this white magic, I should like to have the title of it.

The Corps Diplomatique, which I was so eager to join after I left Harrow, is now discredited by our Left-Wingcrs. An attache, in those ancient days, was expected to be tactful. I

recall an incident at a Viceregal ball in Dublin. A youthful attache was standing next to a Personage. On the other side **of the** room sat an enormously stout woman with a deplorably unattractive face.

" My God! " exclaimed the young man. " Can you tell me **the** name of the lady opposite wearing a tiara and a rope of pearls? "

The Personage replied coldly: " I can. She is my wife, sir."

Nothing daunted, a potential ambassador said with enthusiasm: " May I ask you to present me to her? I should esteem it such an honour, such a privilege."

The Personage smiled.

" Certainly, my dear fellow, with great pleasure."

Thus we soar into the firmament.

I can hear an acid comment from a Progressive.

" That is the whitewash we want to scrape from the walls."

Well, is it? A sincere wish not to hurt the feelings of others inspired the budding diplomatist. His wits, abetted by kindness, served him well.

I have been sent a pamphlet entitled *The Miracle of Britain's Survival*. The author, Mr. Evan Hopkins, might have added a sub-title *Lest We Forget*. I have read the booklet, and hope to read it again, if I am still alive, a year hence. I commend its perusal to those who have no faith in the supernatural.

Soon after our Victory Day, I met a neighbour's child. She is seven. I said to her: " Well, we've won the war."

" We haven't," she said. " God won it. Mummie says so."

Out of the mouths of babes . . . !

Mr. Hopkins speaks of the Hand that wrought the miracle. He cites, simply, the colossal power confronting us before and after Dunkirk. Why, he asks, did Hitler refrain from invading us when we were almost without arms? Why did Italy keep **her** fingers off Malta? Beginning with our king, going on to the great commanders and from them to others, he sets down their conviction that the Hand was omnipotent. I value **the** book because it includes in some thirty pages the cumulative menaces which hung like the blackest of clouds over us. At **the** time the many were unaware of the terrific odds against **our** survival. A year hence, we shall find our memories dim **and blurred**. It will be another miracle if we remember **that a miracle did save us**.

We shall not forget our makeshifts and **inconveniences**. Colonel Blimp will speak of the prohibitive prices **of** wine; I shall mention the shortage of paper, petrol and lobsters; my daughter will tell her smart friends that one "rag" **served** as an evening frock for five years. Josephine will never forget 1945, an *annus mirabilis* for her. She has learnt to swim.

Was James Russell Lowell thinking of the American Civil War when he wrote:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah offering each the bloom
or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the
right;
And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness and that
light.

At the moment, politics are as distant from my mind as Uranus. We fought, in unity, for Right opposed by the Devil's legions. By God's grace we saw the Light that prevailed over the powers of darkness. It shone steadily through the national black-out. Also we had to set a match to that candle men call patience. I shall never forget the patience of our housewives or their inimitable resource. The English-speaking people have amazing recuperative qualities. Facing valiantly present and future we too lightly turn our backs on the past. We did this in 1918; we may do it again.

Throughout the war our poets have given us nothing comparable with Kipling's "Recessional." Fugitive verses of merit have appeared now and again. I have read them asking **for** more. Perhaps a novel of distinction may soon be published, written, I hope, by an airman. If he happened to be a young friend of mine, I should entreat him to delete professional terminology. I enjoyed a long talk, recently, with a squadron commander, but he used words unintelligible to me.

3

Re-reading Cowper, I find myself wondering if the immense popularity of *John Gilpin* was a thorn in his side? The **liquid** cadences of Southey's *How does the Water come down at Lodore* are unforgettable, but I have been to Lodore. **Southey**

wrote them for a boy, his son. He would have been indignant if critics had acclaimed the jingles. Conan Doyle ranked *The White Company* and *Micah Clarke* high above *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. But John Gilpin and Holmes are among the immortals.

An artist builds better than he knows. Nine times out of ten he is no sound critic of his best work. John Sargent may have been an exception. I was told that he awarded the palm to his portrait of Miss Evans. Old Etonians raved over it. She was The Great Dame! Out of her sensible face radiated character which the painter loved to delineate. Romney, on the other hand, was captivated (and at his best) when he portrayed the fleshly charms of Emma Hamilton.

Had I been endowed with the critical faculty, I might never have written a line; and my work has been more to me than my play. I have lived in two worlds, the planets of fact and fancy. I can swoop from one to the other. Clarissa invites me to set down, definitely, what I consider to be my best novel. Possibly *The Procession of Life*, a good but not a best seller. It passed through several impressions in England and in the United States; it was handsomely reviewed. But... I had not served my full apprenticeship when it was published. Like the curate's egg, it is tolerably good in parts. It deals with life on a Californian ranch, my own experiences. I was tempted to re-write it after the success of *Brothers* and *The Hill*. Wise friends persuaded me not to do so. . . .

4

There is a lull preceding the storm of polling day, next Thursday. We shall have to endure itching suspense till the end of the month; a sort of nettle rash, a mental eczema. In Utopia, no doubt of it, rest-houses will be filled to capacity, comfortable dormitories. Those unable to endure suspense will enter a cubicle, undress, lie down and swallow a tablet or two. They will awake from long refreshing sleep after the period of tension is over. They will be fortified against a disagreeable surprise and ready to welcome good tidings. Distressing to think that I shall be elsewhere. My daughter asserts that Fancy has been my lifelong companion and best friend, a sublimated dream-wife. Why not? Unlike too many wives she has never

been jealous of the good companions to whom **she has** introduced me. If she feels indisposed, she keeps away and exercises the same forbearance when I, in my turn, am under the weather. If she forsook me in my old age, I should be wretchedly unhappy. Had Josephine reached the years of indiscretion she might ask: " Did you have to woo Fancy? " I can reply honestly that my wooing, if it took the form of assiduous courtship, served me ill. She came when she pleased at all hours; disdainfully she refused to be commandeered. *Semper femina*, eternally feminine. When she came, she was invariably kind. Her favours might be likened to the showers of April after the winds and droughts of March, or to dews of the sweet fall of the year. She was at her best, a ministering angel, when I was most urgently in need of her services. We have had sixty children. . . .

5

Mr. Herbert Morrison, in his broadcast, spoke well. But he assumes that Conservatives are incapable of patriotism. When Edward VII ascended the throne, a gate-crashing snob assured me that in his opinion one peer of the realm was worth twenty commoners. I salted this statement because, on his own admission, he had little more than a nodding acquaintance with half a dozen members of the Upper House, although he spoke of them (behind their backs) by their Christian names. Mr. Morrison, apparently, believes that one Socialist is a greater asset to the nation than a battalion of Conservatives. Also, he ridicules the suggestion that our soldiers would not submit to totalitarian government, because they fought magnificently, but so did the Russian soldiers, who acclaim Marshal Stalin as the Autocrat, mightier than any Tsar.

General Smuts has used a happy phrase. He advocates *regional groups in Europe*—Slav—Latin—Nordic. My ignorance of the Slav is disconcerting, but I know the Latin race nearly as well as I know my own. Cosmopolitans are much the same everywhere; but the Latin who has never left his own country is so different from the stay-at-home Briton that neither can understand the other. If we leave Frenchmen, Italians and Spaniards free to govern themselves order may come out of the present chaos. If, on the other hand, there is misgovernment, imperilling the future peace of Europe, the trustees of the

world's Great Charter will have, very regretfully, to exercise force, the Might which is incontestably Right.

An inherited fear of the northern bear, *Ursus Major*, lingers in some British hearts. The gigantic size of the Soviet Republic is a menace, I submit, to itself rather than to others. Its natural resources are so immeasurable, its hidden wealth so inexhaustible, that it will take generations to bring both to full fruition. Russia may be our best customer. Let us do nothing to antagonize millions who need our help and our friendship. Colonel Blimp says: "Live and let live." The veteran loves a cliché. He would be tongue-tied without one.

6

The Venus de Milo has returned to the Louvre. I cannot accept her as Aphrodite. To me (and to many others) she is the embodiment of Justice. The statue was discovered at Melus in 1820, supposed to be the work of Alexandrus, who lived in the times of Alexander the Great. I was amused when a young painter, who had never seen the statue, informed me that Milo, the strong man of Crotona, was the sculptor. A lady presented me with a superb photograph, inscribed beneath it: "So stands the statue that enchants the world." I refrained from telling her that Thomson wrote these lines about the Venus in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence. A lovely bust of the so-called Capuan Venus is in this room. "I believe it to be a presentation of Clytie, who died of grief because Apollo was unfaithful to her. The god changed her into a heliotrope. . . !

During the Franco-Prussian war the Milo Venus was hidden in a coffin in a dungeon under the Louvre.

Our greatest pictures are back in the National Galleries. Shall we prize them the more, because we have saved them from the Goths? Some ten years ago I was a guest in a country house, I noticed a middle-aged couple who appeared to be devoted to each other. When I spoke of this to my hostess, she laughed.

' This is their second honeymoon."

"Second?"

" They have been married twice. I forget whether she divorced him or the other way about. Anyway, they met again. They were remarried about a fortnight ago. He admitted to me that he had never loved his wife till he lost her."

I suppose I value my life the **more** because **I** so **nearly lost it** last November.

Josephine hopes that bananas will come back. Many grown-ups would sooner eat bananas than look at Turner's *Frosty Morning*.

7

My musings are merely amusing to me; but I am richly interested in the thoughts of others. I would give more than a penny for them. "Give thy thoughts no tongue" is the advice of Polonius, who kept his tongue in his check. I have no wish to pry into the mind of one whose dioughts are evil, aldiough I own up to a curiosity, morbid perhaps, in the case of a notorious criminal, but if I meet a woman such as Shakespeare portrayed when he wrote: " Truth shall nurse her, holy and heavenly thoughts shall counsel her," why then I am eager to draw from her trunk speech. The thoughts that have counselled her might help a sinner to mend his ways. There are legends about St. Elizabeth of Hungary which attribute to her an aura. Her husband, Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia, resented her piety and charity, forbidding her to give broken meats to the poor. She disobeyed him. One day she was carrying bread to some humble neighbour when he met her and asked what she had in her basket? She fibbed. " Roses," she murmured. Louis lifted the lid of the basket. Our Lady had turned the bread into roses! But, conceivably, her aura may have affected his eyesight.

A happy thought ought to be (and generally is) put into words. We are enjoined to give words to sorrow; we are wise if we do so. Is it a happy thought to define aura as a subtle emanation from all living things and characteristic of them? I can swear that a rattlesnake has it. If it has a colour, red or blue, I fail to detect it, but I am sensitive to it and sensible of it. It may be potently attractive or repulsive. Dr. Fell had it. So had Una with her milk-white lamb. It comes, I am sure, from our thoughts. So, perhaps the best counsel which age can proffer to youth is: " Take good care of your thoughts and your actions will take care of themselves."

8

How distance paralyses sympathy! I pore over a map of

the Far East and it remains a blur. The **war in Europe** was intimately personal, because I have traversed **the** terrain. On D Day I felt that I was landing on the Normandy coast. When I listened in to the war news I could transport myself to Cologne, Dresden, Nuremberg and Berlin. Would that I had visited Burma. Wordsworth used the expression "frozen by distance." I am frost-bitten. I realize how difficult it is to think internationally unless you have acquaintance with all nationalities. A neighbour, an old soldier, is more interested in Burma than Berlin because his military service during thirty years was in the East. I try to thaw myself out at his fires. But I get an unpleasant tingling of the tissues, not unlike what I experienced when my frozen feet were vigorously rubbed with snow when they were frost-bitten. It is so irritating to be conscious of benumbed sympathies. . . .

Our Prime Minister can annihilate distance. Mr. Gladstone was in his seventy-first year (I think) when he undertook the Midlothian campaign. He delivered one speech a day; Mr. Churchill made ten. . . ! Britain hailed the former as the Grand Old Man; the whole world beholds the latter as the Grand Young Man. After a labour worthy of Hercules, Mr. Churchill gave his final broadcast. He spoke superbly with the intermittent hesitations which are not the least of his parts of speech. To me—and probably to nearly all who listened to him—he appears to pause in quest of the right word. Invariably he finds it. At the close, he hammered home a Jovian, an Olympian assurance that he could not serve two masters. The "floaters/" who have deluded themselves that whatever king may reign "our Winnie" will be "Vicar of Bray, sir," know that the nation will lose his services if the Socialists come into power. It is conceivable that the acclamation in Yorkshire, Lancashire and north of Tweed was a deserved and mighty tribute to the Man, not to the leader of his Party, a sop—dare we say?—to the conscience of those who will vote against him. Be that as it may, he enjoyed the greatest triumph of his long life.

Mr. William Hearst hails Mr. Churchill as a Defender of the Faith, as a champion of the American and British way of life in a world gone totalitarian mad; a remarkable tribute from a man who cherishes no affection for Englishmen. His father, Senator Hearst, owned a vast ranch in California not far from

mine; his mother was my personal friend. She was the first to speak compassionately of her son as "naughty Willie." Before he inherited the Hearst millions, he bought the San Francisco *Examiner* whose editor invited me to review, now and again, English novels which I did gladly and badly. I mention this because I had at the time a fleeting glimpse of the Anglophobia which grew more virulent as the years sped by. I wrote a long review of a novel by Hall Cain, praising it exuberantly. I was handsomely paid for it; it was not printed. The editor, when I protested, said with a laugh: "We expected you to give Hall hell." Nobody has deplored Mr. Hearst's animosity to us more than myself, but I forgive him to-day, because he has done justice to the greatest Englishman of this century.

I have mislaid a clipping from the *Daily Telegraph* which I wished to insert in these pages; so I must give the gist of it. A correspondent, in a few lines, expressed his astonishment at the Socialist assumption that we, as a nation, must travel the Left road, merely because the peoples on the Continent of Europe are doing so, which is a reason why we should lead rather than meekly follow them. It is up to Britain, as the writer put it, "to stop the rot."

9

Sir Archibald Sinclair and the Liberals who accept him as their leader and spokesman have shown no generosity to the Conservatives. Sir Archibald, long ago, was a friend of my son when they were fellow-cadets at Sandhurst. Later on I met him under the hospitable roof of the late Lord Melchett, where he impressed me by his sincerity and quick intelligence: so much so that I predicted he would travel far on his appointed road. Many Liberals have been my friends; George Russell, a sometime Under Secretary of State for India, was one. I am a Conservative because my Party has learned so much from the Liberals. Russell accused the Tories of stealing Whig thunder. True enough; a Conservative of to-day might be mistaken for a Liberal of yesterday. What of it? If we are now moving less leisurely and complacently upon the upward and onward path, is that to our discredit? I believe that Cobden and Bright would clap us on the back. Liberals and Conservatives have this in common; a conviction that individual enterprise has made our

Empire what it is, that the nationalization of industry would be a wild-cat experiment. But Sir Archibald and Lady Violet Bonham-Carter speak of us as still laggards, class-conscious, selfish to the core, irreclaimable reactionaries. At heart they must know better. Did Gamaliel withhold commendation of a pupil's assimilation of lessons?

To teach his grandson draughts his leisure he'd employ;
Until at last the old man was beaten by the boy.

10

Josephine is interested to hear that July, although so named by Julius Caesar, who was born in this month, has affiliation with the French word *joli*. The child is pleased that her mother was born in a pretty month; and she is coming down to late dinner to drink my daughter's health. Difficult to believe that Mrs. Arthur Vachell is fifty years old. Happily, she still looks, with the light behind her, little more than thirty. A man is as old as he feels; a woman is no older than she looks, a verity which has enriched Miss Elizabeth Arden and many others. Last Saturday it rained pitilessly when we opened our gates to all-comers. Josephine had a brain-wave.

"Gramfer . . ."

"Yes."

"May I show my bunnies to the visitors and charge thrip-pence a look? "

"Of course. Good for you."

She collected nine shillings and ninepence. She is a budding Conservative, but she has initiative.

Five months ago I had a pleasant surprise. I had posted my letters. On my return home I met a pretty girl who bestowed on me a beaming smile. I lifted my hat. Giving away the prizes at a girls' school in Bath, I had said at the close of the proceedings: "I have shaken hands with more than twenty of you girls. I am short-sighted. I may not recognize you if we pass each other in the street. But please smile; and I promise to raise my hat." Accordingly it occurred to me that this girl had once shaken my hand; so I stopped to speak to her. She is the daughter of a neighbour, who sat on my lap when she was a child, an old friend grown out of recognition. She reminded me that her father, a chef, had worked for me. When I engaged

him, he consented to come to us on the condition **that** he brought his own kitchen-maid. "Who is your kitchen-maid?" I asked. "My wife," he replied. She is still his kitchen-maid. The surprise was the delightful improvement in her looks. The bud had bloomed into a rose. She told me that she was working in a smart millinery establishment and loved her work. I think she was pleased that I had failed, for a moment, to recognize her. I dared not ask her if she had a sweetheart.

Louis Stevenson, in *Virgin J bus puerisque*, labels himself *advocatus jiwentutis*, but in the dedication to Henley he goes on to say that it is good to have been young in *youth* and, as years go on, to grow older. Would it not be better to grow younger? I met him twice; on each occasion I was impressed by the youthful fire in his eyes and a bold buccaneering expression on his face. "You," I thought, "will never grow old." It is difficult to believe that *Virginibus* was written in 1881, when Mother Shipton predicted that the world would come to an end. The author deprecates the hesitation to marry on the part of young people, affirming that it was much less in Shakespeare's day. But this hesitation obtruded itself soon after the 1914 war. Mars (in conjunction with Venus) is the greatest of match-makers. The readjustments after war make marriage more of an adventure. The girls may want to marry; the boys suffer from cold feet. Now, confronted by the shortage of houses, marriage becomes increasingly a postponement. Stevenson speaks of acidulous vestals. To-day, it is the tired housewife who is acidulous, which puts the fear of marriage into the heads of bachelors. A line in this essay likens the marriage of young people to two children entering a dark room. The room, however, is much less dark than it was in the days when intimate contact between boy and girl was almost negligible before either holy or unholy matrimony. Also, the author was a bachelor in 1881 and a Scot. Delightful though it is, written by a man who took infinite pains in selecting the right word, I should not commend *Virginibus* to a young man contemplating marriage.

I am too often asked, even by strangers, to commend **books** when I know nothing of their tastes. Women do this; **but** no

woman would invite me to choose her headgear. How can I know what is *in* her head? I feel the same reluctance to commend places. Long ago I extolled Pontaven, in Brittany, to a lady who reviled me afterwards. I should have urged her, had I known her better, to go to Le Touquet. She wrote to me: "Why did you encourage me to spend three dreary weeks in a God-forsaken inland village where there is no casino?"

I apologized abjectly.

A lover of Blackpool would loathe Bath.

Each year I spent a month at Pontaven because I sought the companionship of painters, as a rule happy-go-lucky fellows full of mirth and jollity. At Pontaven they worked out of doors, as they did at Barbizon. Writers are more temperamental than painters; so are musicians, always excepting my friend Mark Hambourg. He is the Peter Pan of virtuosi. I prefer the company of a skilled craftsman to that of a great artist. Painting is a craft rather than an art. The right manipulation of a brush is so satisfying. Titian went on painting till he was ninety-eight years old, retaining to the end mastery of his tools. I should have been happy watching him at work. I heard Sims Reeves sing when he was a very old man, but his voice was a faint sweet echo of what it had been. I listened to him with tears in my eyes. The exquisite quality of Dame Melba's voice remained till she died. The painters at Pontaven never spoke of themselves as artists. The one man who was *hôte concourant* at the Salon would say: "Moi, je suis tout simplement—peintre." But all of us were under the spell of *la patronne*, Mademoiselle Julia Guillou, our *bona dea*. Only once in her busy life did she adventure to Paris. When she came back, she had discarded her coiffe, the prettiest coiffe in Brittany. I was one of her "anciens." Often I helped her to shell peas, and then we "colloqued." As a reward for my services, she would offer me some aged liqueur. Then together we would descend to her cellar to select a *vin de cachet* for dinner. She had some flavoured Bourgueil, which came from Touraine. She owned no first growths, saying: "In a little world, look you, the little wines are best." Romance, so we believed, had touched her and passed on. She spoke of a painter, whose masterpiece hangs in the Luxembourg Gallery. She gave me the charcoal sketch of it. He came back to Pontaven to die, a comparatively young man. She nursed him. Theodore Botrel, that gay troubadour,

told me that these two were lovers, wishful thinking, because Julia was a woman of impenetrable reserves. During the twenty years when I knew her, she was the *fern me d'affaires*, business not love-affairs. She befriended many impoverished painters, refusing to present her bills. She displayed a quaint disdain of the bourgeoisie, *le p'tit commerce*. She regarded Botrel as something of a *cabotin*. Renoir had been her friend. She detested Gauguin. Looking back Pontaven stands out as an oasis to which I betook myself to laugh and do nothing. I wrote one novel under Julia's roof: *The Face of Clay*, which I dedicated to her. She framed "ma dedicace" and hung it below a plaster cast of La Femme Inconnue, the mask which had inspired the book, in the small dining-room of the old Hotel des Voyageurs. Is it there still?

A Mademoiselle Julia Guillou.

J'ai e'prouve* un plaisir tres grand, quoiqu'un peu triste, en lcrivant ce petit ouvrage d'apres nature, que je dedic a vous, ma chore amie. Loin, tres loin de votre joli coin de terre, jc mc suis senti mille fois saisi d'une vraie nostalgic pour Ia Bretagne. En California, par exemple, dans un beau pays de soleil, j'ai revc de votre ciel gracieux et grisatre, de vos landes pleincs de mystere, de vos chemins creux, de vos Pardons, de je ne sais quel charme penetrant qui remplit Pontaven. Avec le brave Islandais de Theodore Botrel, je *repetah*: " On m'attend au pays Breton." Enfin, aprcs de longucs annexes, me voici aupres de vous. Je vois bien que nous avons vieilli un petit pen, l'un et l'autre, mais nos coeurs, n'est il pas vrai, rcstent jeunes encore? Comme autrefois le votre est plein de bonte, de sympathie, et d'encouragement pour vos artistes, surtout pour vos chcrs " anciens," le mien toujours plein de reconnaissance pour tant de services rendus et pour une amitie si constante.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I APPROACH THE END OF THIS CAUSERIE REGRETFULLY. It has served its purpose. It has given a rosy tint to many quiet hours during the past five months when the world outside this room was tormented and almost demented. When I began it I vowed not to alter any trivial predictions which might be falsified long before the book will be published. Let the written word remain to raise peradventure a smile on the lips of my little granddaughter if she skims through it ten years hence. Musing may be rejuvenating to the muser and an amusement to others. In our dreams, even in our nightmares, are we conscious of age? When I dream, as often I do, that I am back at Harrow, I find myself *running* up the hill! Troublous dreams, caused by indigestion, bring an exasperating sense of futility, a paralysis of action. I am about to drive a golf ball, for example; I raise my club; I find it suspended in mid-air. I am, perhaps, in the hunting-field; hounds are in full cry; my horse refuses to move. Out shooting, with rocketers over my head, I am unable to lift my gun to the shoulder. But never am I sensible of powers failing me on account of age. If this is an experience common to others, it would be less hard to bear.

To-morrow is Polling Day.

What, I wonder, are the thoughts of some candidates? I have buzzing in my mind a composite presentment of a good citizen who, hitherto, has given undivided energies and attention to his own business. If he is elected, somebody must take his place; he may have to leave his home in a provincial town and live in London; he may have to alter his whole mode of life. If he does his duty, O.M. might be inscribed after his name instead of M.P. Twice in my life I have been invited to stand for Parliament. I declined the honour, clinging like a limpet to my work. Alfred Mason took his seat in the House of Commons and was glad to get out of it. I cannot visualize Thackeray at Westminster. He loved the Silence Room in the Athenaeum. Most people know that he began life as a painter; it is not so generally known that he wished to enter the Diplo-

matic **Service** when he was forty. He applied for the post of Secretary of Legation at Washington. Lord Clarendon **politely** refused to give it to him. Once I asked a kinsman how **he liked** the House. He replied dryly: "M'm . . . it's a sedentary job which is also pedestrian." So far as I know this kinsman **never** addressed his fellow members. Another kinsman, Lord Margesson, became Chief Whip to the Conservative Party, **and** for a brief season Secretary of War. He was at Harrow with my son, the jolliest boy, but I lost touch with him. Any radical change of habit or habitat must be, temporarily, a dislocation: a wrenching of oneself out of oneself. Again, service may degenerate into servitude. I should loathe the party whip **as** sailors loathe the "cat." If our candidate here heads the poll, would it be in order to send him my congratulations and benedictions written upon black-edged notepaper?

2

The pre-war exodus from inland to sea has begun. **Indeed**, trippers are pouring into Bath, which is full to capacity. I received a letter this morning. After correcting spelling **and** punctuation, I can't resist the temptation to print it.

"DEAR SIR,—Please excuse this letter from a stranger. I have little time for reading, but I have just read your latest (it **was** published in 1937, H.A.V.) novel, *The Golden House*. I got it from our Public Library. It made me want to see Bath. I am sure you are a kind gentleman. I am a widow with three kiddies, ages from seven to three. They need a change *terribly*, and so do I. I haven't been out of Croydon for three years. I can't get accommodation at Southbourne where we used to be so happy before the war. Sir, please find us board and lodging in your beautiful city, I hate to ask this great favour, but I do hope you can help me. Thanking you in anticipation, believe me, Yours truly, SUSAN X. (Mrs.) PS. My husband was killed in the war. PPS. **The** kiddies are as good as gold."

My daughter and I may find anchorage for hope. **A miracle** might happen. But the females in command of **small hotels** and guest-houses refuse to give lodging to children. They **arc** truculent to all-comers. A visitor glared at my blameless **face**.

"What has happened to you people?" she asked. "Why have you not opened the Pulteney Hotel?"

"Believe me, I would if I could."

" I expected to find manners in Bath. I did find one wretched room. I asked for a bath. I can have one a week. I asked to be called at seven; I was told that I couldn't be called before eight. I asked for one egg at breakfast. Did I get it? I did not."

" Did you ask for a pin? "

"A pin? A—a pin?"

"Yes; ahat-pin."

" I don't use hat-pins. You must be, all you Bathonians, mad—quite mad."

" You could have stuck the hat-pin into your landlady."

" Dear me! I wish I'd thought of that. Never will I come to Bath again, never! I'd much sooner risk my life in Gomorrah."

" Can I give you another cup of tea? "

She smiled bleakly.

When I am pestered by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue do I speak crossly to the innocent members of my family? Well, if I do, I am not aware of it,

3

Experts have told Mr. Churchill that his victory is sure, unless the Service vote goes heavily against him. Strange that men who have been fighting to annihilate totalitarian government should not realize that Socialism, if it nationalizes Industry, must become totalitarian. How else can it exercise omnipotent authority? Probably not one soldier out of a hundred, however capable he may be at his own job, has made any study of political economy, a less dismal science than it is held to be. Probably, also, the strict discipline to which they submit so cheerfully has constrained them to hope and believe that when they return to civil life the State will be kinder, more generous to them than a private employer. Wishful thinking again; but, if I were Tommy Atkins, I should indulge in it. I am wondering if it has been made plain that they are being invited by the leaders of the Labour Party to give their backing to a tremendous experiment which may fail disastrously? At the moment, it is better to "bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of." Even if it were true—which is most questionable—that Socialism has turned out to be a

success in New Zealand and parts of Australia, no man **can dare** to assert that it would be as successful in a highly industrialized country like Britain. The United States, more democratic than we are, will have no "truck" with it.

A glimmer of light has come to me. I am crawling to **the** conclusion that love of a gamble is innate in Britons. It brightens the drab lives of parsons and middle-aged spinsters who buy speculative counters on the Stock Exchange; it gives a thrill to the humblest worker who puts his shilling on the ⁴⁴"dogs" or "horses"; it permeates all ranks of society. Yes, yes, the boys in the Services are out for a gamble, and most of them regard it as a heads I win, tails you lose proposition.

4

Twenty Conservative Members of Parliament have lost their lives in this war, one Liberal, and no Socialists. Colonel Blimp accounts for this: "Ah—ha! The Devil takes care of his own." This pukka sahib is of the opinion that Jacks and Jills in office will vote for the Party which will keep them in their billets. "They cheer Churchill," he said, "but they jolly well know he'll out 'em. And, mind you, the wild men have told 'em that they're going to help boss the show. Arrant bribery."

"Shush-h-h!"

"Eh, what?"

"Don't shout this in the market-place. I hate to think of you, old fellow, in a concentration camp."

"By all living and dead Jingoese, you're right."

"All the same, I'll bet you a fiver that common sense will triumph."

"Make it a quid, and if I lose I shall stump up gladly."

We made it a quid.

I have sincere affection for the old warrior, who can wear many medals. If one of his exploits (never told to me by him) had been exploited, he might have received the supreme decoration. A thumb-nail sketch of him, if it were drawn by Sargent, would suggest to my contemporaries a triple personality: Thackeray's Colonel Newcome, Major Pendennis and Amelia Sedley. The Old Carthusian reveals himself when the veteran is least aware of it, when he speaks modestly and deprecatingly of himself; and then, all of a sudden, he becomes the Major,

cocking his head at a defiant angle, raising his voice, shouting allegiance to birth and position, positive that what comes out of the top drawer is and must be—tiptop! He is no snob as Thackeray defined the word; he is incapable of meanly admiring mean things; but he is staunch in his conviction that the Prime Minister of the Conservative Party can do no wrong. The Amelia Sedley in him radiates out of the distaff side, probably from his mother. As a young man I cursed Thackeray for begetting the anaemic, shy, timid "yes, dear Mamma" creature. None the less Amelia is still with us, walking hand in hand with the child-wife beloved by Charles Dickens. If our Colonel Blimp cherishes the conviction that the female of the species was created by Omniscience to reform the male by her purity, unselfishness and innocence, who am I to shake a finger at him? Thackeray, of course, is the Colonel's favourite author, but he admits that he cannot read him when the world is in chaos. . . .

If I take up die cudgels on behalf of Victorians, my readers can skip the passage at arms. I refuse to call young people fools; I charge them with lack of imagination and a warped sense of historical perspective. They are so eager to look ahead that they never look back. The Promised Land, to which they are travelling at excess speed, may or may not be a paradise, but they think it so. After forty years in the wilderness, did the Israelites recall now and again the amenities of Egypt and its ordered civilization? To our young people the Victorian Age is not unlike what the Age of the Pharaohs must have been to the younger pilgrims who had never lived in it—a prison house. I was a rebel against discipline. But my warders were indeed guardians aquiver with a sense of their responsibilities. *Security*, according to them, was a synonym of freedom from carking care; they could not conceive it as "mortals' chiefest enemy." Were my mother alive to-day, she would admit that she had overvalued security. In Hursley, Keble's village, where she lived so tranquilly, squire and parson pulled together. Hursley was known in Hampshire as THE HAPPY VILLAGE. I submit that the defects of all outstanding Victorians were negligible when we take into consideration their shining qualities of integrity, patriotism, piety and good manners. . . .

5

I hope that George Saintsbury, ardent lover of good wine, replenished his cellar when still evening came creeping, velvet-footed, to him. There are noble cellars in our Royal Crescent, sanctuaries, cloisters where in other days ports were binned and bricked up. What an uplifting experience it must be when a man buys an old house, stares at the empty bins in the cellar, looking forward to filling them, and suddenly espies a brick wall where no wall should be. Behind it, in bottles, lies a pipe of port! Such good fortune befell a man I knew, but—what an anticlimax!—he preferred port from the wood! Happily, when war began, my bins were heartening to behold; now they are bleakly empty. I am hoping that clarets from California will be procurable at a not too prohibitive price. When I lived there I served for a year or two on a Viticultural Commission. Drinkable claret came fifty years ago from Napa and Sonoma. Louis Stevenson gives a comical reason why California claret was not popular in the United States. The middlemen sold it under a French label. A wine merchant opened a cupboard. "He proceeded," Stevenson writes, "to shower me all over with a great variety of gorgeously tinted labels, blue, red and yellow, stamped with a crown or coronet, and hailing from such a profusion of clos and chateaux that a single department could scarce have furnished forth the names.

"Chateau X——? " said I. "I never heard of it."

"I dare say not," said he. "I had been reading one of X's novels."

"They were all castles in Spain! But that sure enough is the reason why Californian wine is not drunk in the States."

I can confirm this story. In New York, in 1899, at a famous restaurant, the wine waiter commended a claret which I sipped and thought delicious. It was labelled Chateau Baudoin; it came from a Californian vineyard owned by a friend of mine, Charles Baldwin. The Sonoma vineyards are to-day at least eighty years old. It is not generally known that soil, however suitable it may be for such a grape as the Caberhct-Sauvignon, cannot be expected to produce a claret of breed and elegance until the soil is purged by time of deleterious particles which—this is the miracle—the vine itself eliminates! **On the other**

hand, a rich valley loam can be relied on to supply, within a few years, excellent table-grapes.

My days, without the sunshine of the grape, would be dreary. With a decanter holding a First Growth beside me, I am not too happy, unless a congenial companion is there to share the nectar. What heavenly twins are good wine and good talk!

I offer advice to any would-be collector of wines when he buys his first cellar-book. When you enter the wines, leave space to set down the names of friends who will drink them and their passing comments on them. I regret to add that I have not done this. Would that I had. The late Francis Berry once said to me that a cellar might turn out to be a Cave of Disappointments. He cited a tragedy. His famous firm had taken the greatest pains to supply magnificent wines to one of the Vanderbilts. The wines when drunk were a disappointment. What—in the name of the Sphinx—had happened? Francis Berry had inspected the cellars, at the time as good as cellars can be. He inspected them again. They lay deep down beneath Fifth Avenue. But, after the precious wines were binned, this famous highway had been relaid with asphalt. The ever-increasing traffic had disturbed the ether-provoking slumbers of clarets and burgundies, an unforeseen calamity.

In the company of Francis Berry, under his hospitable roof, I have been privileged to drink two bottles of the greatest claret in the world: the Chateau-Lafitte, 1864. If he were here I am sure he would say with a laugh: "I'd sooner leave behind me an empty cellar than a full one."

6

Clarissa enjoins me to touch lightly, if I can, upon the supremacies of youth over age. Age, no doubt, sets too great store on experience which, when in action, moves slowly. In any emergency youth reacts to it swiftly. For example, take the case of a car skidding upon a slippery road. If I were at the wheel, I should be "ditched" before I had decided what to do. Hand and brain would not function together instantly. I was past sixty when I played in my last cricket match. I realized that the right nick of the wrist came a second too late. And yet my eyesight was better than when I was at school; I knew what to do and could not do it. I can still play one

leisurely round of golf. Once my handicap was scratch; to-day it is about eighteen. Any regrets? Not one. Knowing how badly I play, I snatch satisfaction if a stroke is better than I dared expect it to be. Often I lost my temper when I was "off" my game; now I can enjoy the joke against myself when I fluff an easy approach to the green. I apologize for making this personal, but elderly golfers will nod their heads and smile. An ex-champion of golf, J. H. Taylor, a past master of the mashie, was my first teacher. To him "timing" a stroke was everything. Alas! Time, the greatest teacher of all, makes "timing" too difficult of accomplishment to the aged. I was talking a few days ago with a chief of aviation. It is his disagreeable duty to comb out aviators of experience and gallantry who are nearing middle age. He named a limit. There are exceptions (few and far between), but after thirty-five even an "Ace" is better employed on the ground than in the air. A Commander selects a young officer to lead a Forlorn Hope. Perhaps the supreme asset or youth is its resilience after a great strain has been imposed. The young man who boasts that he takes things lying down is preparing himself for the last resting-place.

Clarissa, who is couch-ridden, would like me to write something about young women; then she would make hay of masculine conjectures. Blooming youth, I suggest, is a disability if a girl sets an inordinate value on it. Many reckon a schoolgirl complexion to be a greater possession than a cultivated mind, gleefully aware that the former is more easily made up. I admit that the mind of Miss 1945 entitles her to respect: she knows what she wants and I hope she will get it.

7

I have enjoyed a visit from a well-known novelist, journalist and dramatist who is an impassioned Left-Wingcr. A few weeks ago he was in Germany and in touch with the three Services. We spoke of the floating vote. He was not too sure that it would be cast for the Labour Party, but he proffered one reason why it should.

^M So many of our boys can't forget that their fathers were on the dole. So they believe that any change of government must be for the better."

I resisted the temptation to tell him that the numbers of the unemployed reached their peak when Ramsay Macdonald was Prime Minister. He was my guest; he spoke well and temperately; I was eager to hear what a man half my age had to say. He cited a case which had come under his notice. The City Fathers in an East Anglian town wished to build a bridge across the Humber. It could have been built without any subsidy from a Conservative Government and the City Fathers were Conservative. Three thousand unemployed men could have earned good wages for a couple of years. But Authority decreed that the bridge should not be built. My visitor said quietly: "That made a Left-Winger of ME."

I am not too surprised that it did.

The editor of a weekly paper with a wide circulation was present, a Conservative. He, to my dismay, affirmed that the young men in the three Services read eagerly the Left papers supplied to them by active propagandists and that we had administered no antidote. In his opinion the Floating Vote might deprive the nation of Mr. Churchill's services.

8

This is the Fourth of July. From Maine to California "Old Glory" is displaying its stars and stripes. Independence Day is a red-letter day for undertakers—I crave pardon—morticians; and fire-crackers will mutilate many little fingers. Never did I dare to fly the Union Jack from my flagpole in the ranch-house garden. My cowboys nearly lynched me when I told them that the Star-spangled banner was designed from the coat of arms of an English family, George Washington's family to wit—argent, two bars gules, in chief three mullets of the second. My father-in-law used to say that he forgot the stripes when he looked at the stars. Fifty years ago, every Fourth-of-July orator amused himself and others by tweaking the tail of the British lion. In the foothills of our county the "Pikers" regarded us as the hereditary enemy. To-day, what Owen Wister foresaw has come to pass; and we can give much of the credit to Mr. Churchill: hands have joined across the sea. But Uncle Sam says: "Don't forget, John, that I own an undivided half-interest in him."

Would that I could visit California and spend one spring

there, when the sun-parched foothills put on their green livery, when every tiny creek winding through them sings a Benedicite; when, borne on the breeze from the Pacific, floats the familiar "tang" of tarweed; when the yellow poppies are out After branding the calves, after rounding-up the cattle with the unpaid help of neighbouring vaqueros, we held each year a barbecue, followed by kissing games and a dance. Our chef was a grizzled Spaniard, Don Clodomiro Procopio, who spoke of himself as a *caballero* (a cavalier). He took twenty-four hours to prepare the pits which were knec-deep in glowing embers. Across the pits he placed peeled willow wands on which were impaled chunks of calf, alternately fat and lean, peppered and salted and then slowly roasted. He, too, compounded the *salsa*, a sauce made with tomatoes, onions, green chillies and a clove of garlic. My brother Arthur used to say: "With this sauce I could cat my boots." It exceeded in flavour and pungency "Granma's Pin-money Pickles." A good trencherman demanded a spit to himself. We drank lager beer cooled in the creek, and described a feast of gormandizing as—Homeric.

I should make a pilgrimage to the ancient Missions where the pioneers, who sailed round the Horn or traversed the plains in prairie schooners, were received into Mother Church before they married—as so many did—the well-dowered senioritas, the guitar-playing daughters of the Hispano-Californians who owned uncharted leagues of land and uncounted herds of cattle. A sailor, who had served before the mast, sat down to enjoy peace and plenty, wiser than the gold-seekers. It was said of him that he left his conscience at Cape Horn or in the Rocky Mountains. Before the Gringo came, life in Southern California was idyllic, pastoral and patriarchal. I had one fleeting glimpse of it in the early eighties. Then it melted away like a lovely mirage.

9

What should I like to see before my eyes close? Two scourges of humanity confront us; tuberculosis and cancer. These dragons may be slain sooner than we dare to hope. If tuberculosis is treated as soon as the first symptoms reveal themselves, a cure may be wrought; the miracle-drug, penicillin—so it is predicted—may triumph over cancer. Within a year or two,

so I am told, we shall know whether or not this is only a possibility. I should like to live long enough to see a merrier England. Merriment has little to do with increased wages and material prosperity; I have known many dismal millionaires. Joy bubbles out of a contented heart. Am I in my second childhood when I attempt to foresee for rich and poor a simpler life, with feverish activities restrained by common sense and public opinion. Age has taught me that the get-rich-quick spirit is a mocking devil.

Gay—the right name for him—who wrote *The Beggar's Opera*, was described by his friend Pope as "in wit a man, simplicity a child." The same could be said of Goldsmith, who began his career as a gambler! When he made the tour of Europe, with one clean shirt and no money in his pocket, he played his merriest tune when approaching a peasant's house, thereby securing a night's lodging. He wrote something like this in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and a biographer affirms that he set down a personal experience.

0 Saintly Simplicity. . . !

It was a halo to Marcus Aurelius and Abraham Lincoln. The still small voice of conscience is divinely simple. Landor said that simplicity could never be decorated. It can thrive in a palace or in a log-cabin. Marie Antoinette hastened from Versailles to the Petit Trianon seeking it, but how could the daughter of Maria Theresa hope to find it?

I cannot find simple words to express simplicity. My own life has been alternately simple and complex. As a young man I wanted to play hazard with Fortune; I rattled the dice-box eager to throw sixes. If I won, I hoped to buy back estates lost at other games of chance. Luck at first stood at my elbow and then turned her back on me. This was before I began to write. None the less, in California I lived in Arcadia, in the open air, very simply. I was happy; I should have been happier had I purged myself of the ambition to make money. Unexpectedly, my wife was wrenched from me; three dry years in succession made me bankrupt; I returned to England to support with my pen two children and myself. . . .

If you want to appreciate the simple life, you must live in it and be driven out of it.

Did Gray practise what he preached in the *Elegy*? He was **only fifty-five when he died.** The **tenor of his life, I would**

fain think, was "noiseless" not "even." The noise of endless wars distressed Milton. This is the Age of Noise. Let the people sing. . . ! Nay, they shout.

10

We have returned from the polling place, the Baptist Chapel in Widcombe. Driving down we passed two middle-aged men at work on the road. As we drew abreast of them, they yelled : "Vote for the Woman! "

My son-in-law, who was driving the car, said: "Hop out and have a word with them."

"No time/" said I.

"We're in no hurry; I'll pull up and wait."

"Very good of you; but my hours are numbered. If I spent the rest of my life talking to them, they would be of the same opinion still. I did have a word with them yesterday. They want to see women in the House, because women loathe war."

My son-in-law shrugged his shoulders.

"They must be happily married/" he growled.

These two fellows told me that a vote for Churchill was a vote for war with Russia. Apparently the Socialists in Bath believe this. Anyway, our candidate has made a clean fight of it, dealing good-temperedly with all hecklers.

11

I wish I were about to begin this book instead of ending it. I feel as if I were taking leave of an old friend after travelling round the world with him. Now we must each go our ways. What made me sharpen my quill some five months ago was the re-perusal of a diary which I had written in 1914 and 1916, never published. In that I had recorded what I thought and felt at the time. It was laid aside and forgotten. I re-read it with cold detachment. It interested me because it held everyday incidents. Certainly, it carried me back. If a new world lies ahead of us, a better world, its inhabitants may read the memoirs of yesterday with livelier attention than they bestow on cut-and-dried histories. Hazlitt, Lamb, Greville and Walpole have taught me more than Lecky or Macaulay. I do not include myself amongst these Brobdingnagians, but I am en-

thralled by the simple annals of Parson **Woodforde** because **they** are simple.

I wrote, I see, the last lines of *This Was England* on November the 12th, 1932. I shall re-write them here. They are taken from a modest booklet, entitled *Harrow Songs*, which the author, Edward Bowen, gave to me:

Good night! Sleep, and so may ever
Lights half-seen across a murky lea,
Child of hope, and courage, and endeavour,
Gleam a voiceless benison on thee!
Youth be bearer
Soon of hardihood!
Life be fairer,
Loyaller to good;
Till the far lamps vanish into light,
Rest in the dream-time. Good night!

March-July, 1945.

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