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LIFE INTERESTS

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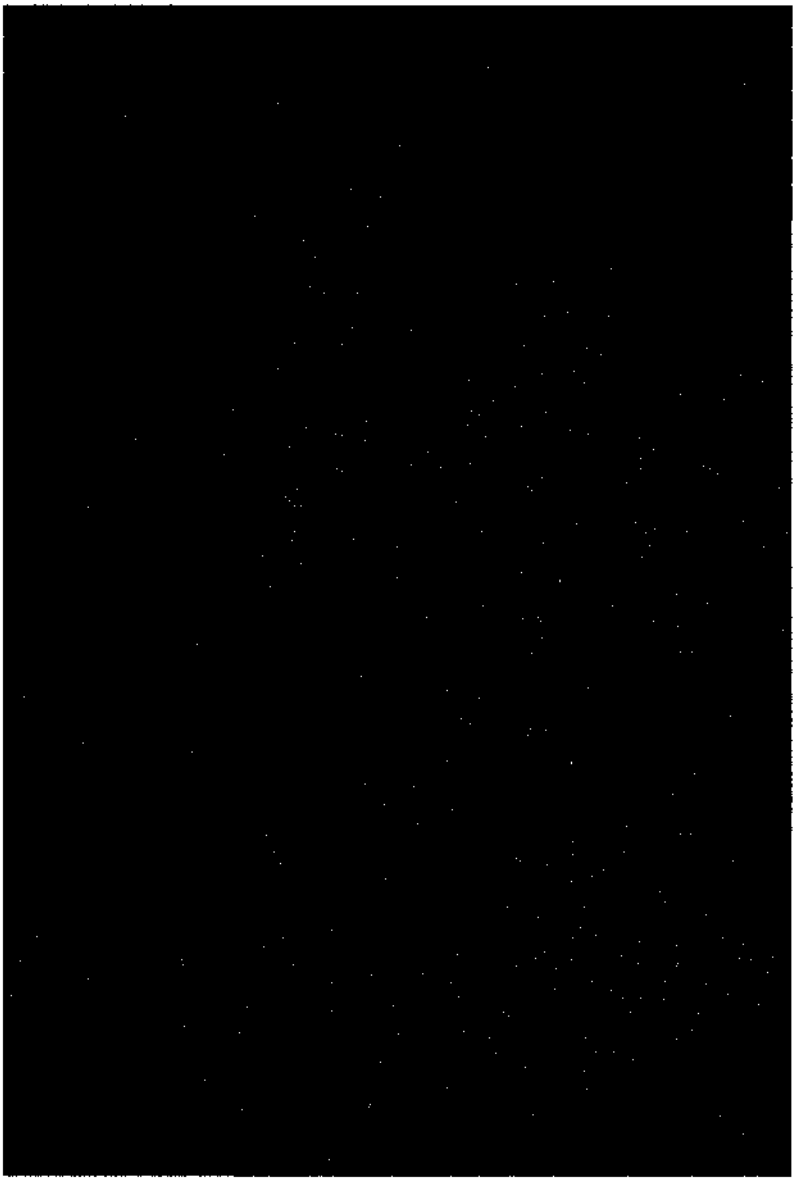

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

From a drawing by Ivan Opflfer

LIFE INTERESTS

by

Douglas Goldring

With a preface by Alec Waugh

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Preface by Alec Waugh

TWICE in the lives of most of us this country has been mobilised for war; customary activities have been superseded; manpower and womanpower have been directed; in camps and factories and ministries men and women have found themselves occupied with tasks for which by taste and training they would, a few months earlier, have considered themselves unfitted. Sometimes they have found their new employment unexpectedly congenial; sometimes they have discovered in themselves aptitudes and capacities they did not know that they possessed, so that they have returned to their former avocations, their names embellished with military rank, with letters indicative of orders, sometimes even with titles of nobility. Flattering, however, though these honours undoubtedly must have been, their recipients can hardly have failed to look on them in a way askance, as something that was out of character, as something that was "done with the left hand".

It is a fate or fortune—to attempt something that was out of character and succeed at it—that has befallen a number of writers during the last thirty years. Certainly it has befallen the author of this book. How astonished Douglas Goldring would have been, could he have been foretold when he came down from Oxford in 1907 to start the adventure of a life of letters, that thirty years later he would be publishing *Odd Man Out* with the subtitle "Autobiography of a propaganda novelist", nor indeed would the reader of this present book, who had no previous acquaintance with Goldring's work, guess from it that its author would have given himself that label. In the pages that follow Douglas Goldring is not a controversialist nor an assailant: he is an appreciator writing with warmth and gratitude of things he has enjoyed—books and pictures and Georgian buildings, good company and wine and travel, the general stir of life.

Life Interests is less striking, less "news" than many of his novels and than his recently published *The Nineteen Twenties:* it is, however, very much more companionable and—which is more important—I think he is more himself here.

I say that with the greater confidence because it was over his most controversial novel, *The Fortune,* that our frienship started. I had read it when it first came out. I was re-reading it the other day, and it wears well. But in 1917 it was more than a good book, it was an important one. It was the first English novel—in France there had already been *Le Feu*—to ridicule the smug Whitehall attitude to the war, to attack the criminal complaisance of those who were doing well out of the war and who advertised and boosted the war as a personal and social panacea for every human ailment. *The Fortune* said, in 1917 when it was difficult and unpopular to say them, most of the thmgs that it was easy and fashionable to say in 1927. There was little talk, during the second war, of "the good the war was doing". In part that was because air raids brought home the realities of war to the civilian population, but in far larger part it was because of the way in which men like Douglas Goldring had written thirty years before. *The Fortune* is a fine book, and when, soon after the war, I became publisher's reader to Chapman & Hall, one of my first acts was to persuade Douglas Goldring to enroll under our imprint. Our association as publisher and author led to one of my most valued friendships. For six years, until travel set us upon separate roads, I saw as much of Goldring as I saw of anyone.

It is always easy to consider one's own twenties as a halcyon period when more amusement was to be had and for less money than at any time in the world's history. We have that feeling, of course, because our capacity for enjoyment is usually greater then than it is later. And Douglas Goldring is ten or twelve years older than myself. His early twenties had been spent in the London of 1910-14. He was then something of a socialite. I once asked W. L, George if he had known Goldring in those days. "Indeed I did," he said, "He had one of the best-cut tail coats I have ever seen sit on the shoulders of a novelist." Often

in his conversation, and often in his books, Goldring would speak nostalgically of the balls of the last pre-war London season. Perhaps in consequence the London of 1922 was less exciting for him than it was for me. There was not a great deal of fun of that kind going then, or at least there was not in the world we moved in. There was a good deal of fun going, though, of other kinds. Cocktail parties had not started yet. One invited one's friends for half-past eight to nine. There was no food rationing, and good red wine was available at half a crown a bottle. There would be plate-loads of thick-cut sandwiches and rows of sloping-shouldered bottles labelled Beaune *tout court.* There was no wireless then, but carpets were turned back and gramophones turned on. With the *lira* dropping, it was an economy to sub-let one's flat and to go off for six weeks to the Italian lakes. The 1917 Club was companionably full of bobbed-haired girls from Somerville and Newnham who spent their mornings sprawled before gas fires, propped on their elbows over blue-bound copies of *Ulysses.* And on Saturday evenings there was the Cave of Harmony—a large studio hall in Charlotte Street over a negro night-club; it was run by Harold Scott and Elsa Lanchester; one-act plays by Schnitzler and Aldous Huxley were performed there; a cafe was attached but it had no licence; you brought your hip-flask with you; a quarter of the guests there were in fancy dress. Dancing went on till three. And income tax was at five shillings. Altogether it was a very different world, in inessentials.

And it was because Douglas Goldring understood so well the essentials of good living that he adapted himself so well to changed conditions, that in a period that contained possibly less "glamour" for him than it did for me, he was so excellent a companion. As well as any man I have known, Goldring understood cosiness; he knew how to create an intimate, friendly atmosphere. During those six years, as he has told in *Odd Man Out,* he passed through a number of crises, domestic and financial. He possessed the lease through that period of a pleasant ground-floor flat in St. James's Terrace, looking towards Regent's Park, but more often than not, it was, perforce, sub-let. There were no service

flats in those days, in the sense that we understand them now; there were no vast hives of centirally-heated cells that, disfigure though they may the London skyline, solve so many of one's problems. There was instead a succession of experiments in communal living in which the owners of a large house let off their rooms to approved sub-tenants. I can remember Goldring in at least three such establishments, but no matter how minute the premises to which the caprice of chance might momentarily have consigned him, he always gave the impression of being in his own personal surroundings. There were his books upon the shelves, his pictures upon the walls, a bottle of wine upon the table, and then—good talk.

As I said, it was the author of *The Fortune*—the propaganda novelist—that 1 first admired as a writer. But it was with the author of *Reputations* and *Gone Abroad* that I became a friend. I think that the readers of these pages will find him as good company as I did.

Author's Note

THE LIVES of all European men of letters, save the most insensitive and the most conscienceless, have been savagely impinged upon by the wars and revolutionary upheavals of the past forty years. Even in those happy lands which managed to preserve a profitable neutrality, the inhabitants of Ivory Towers frequently had their windows blown in, while for writers in countries directly involved in the world conflict, particularly those subjected to enemy occupation, violent death, imprisonment, the loss of their homes, unemployment and semi-starvation have been commonplace experiences. In England, thanks to our "moat", our intellectual workers have been saved from many of the hardships endured by their European colleagues, though few English authors could pretend that the impact of public events has not profoundly affected their outlook and gravely interfered with what would, in normal times, have been their main interests and preoccupations.

The collection of miscellaneous writings here offered to the public's kind indulgence, may, as the title suggests, serve to illustrate what one author really enjoyed and what really interested him during those few comparatively peaceful intervals in his adult life when his mind was not distracted by the disasters and calamities in which we have all become involved.

In these pages, apart from some lively knockabout literary criticism in which I had the temerity to indulge in my youth, there will be found no controversies, no references to wars or frontiers or ideologies. The carefree vigour with which, in the days when Alec Waugh and I first met, I discussed the works of my contemporaries and said what I really thought about them, may startle younger *confreres* as much as it did myself when I re-read the articles in question. My reason for reprinting some of them here is partly because they help to convey the exuberance of the early 'twenties and partly because they show what

some may regard as a characteristic lack of respect for established reputations.

My feeling for Georgian domestic architecture and resulting efforts to secure its preservation as part of our national heritage have, I suppose, been among the strongest and most enduring of my "life interests". I have not, however, rescued the detailed account of the formation of the Georgian Group which I published in 1940 in a book called *Facing the Odds,* for fear it might embarrass some of the members of that now august body to be reminded of how it originated. All that the general public requires to know is that the work of the Georgian Group continues with increased vigour, that its expert advice and help were never more urgently needed, and that it deserves the financial support of all patriotic citizens who wish to safeguard those of our architectural amenities which have so far survived the combined onslaughts of enemy bombardment and municipal "development".

This volume can thus be considered, by those austere spirits who feel it unbecoming in a "cultural worker" ever to take a holiday, as pure "escapism". I hope for that reason that it may be found to reflect, however imperfectly, some of the happiness the author has derived from faithful friendship, from an appreciation of the arts, from sociability, from a love of people and places and from Life itself.

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

Stonar House, Deal.
November 7, 1947.

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TWO POETS

James Elroy Flecker

D. H. Lawrence

I

James Elroy Flecker

I

A PECULIAR glamour surrounds, in retrospect, the fourteen and a half years which separated the end of the 'nineties from the outbreak of the Great War. Looking back on this period, those of us who are old enough to remember it, can see ourselves playing, all unmindful of our doom, in a world that then seemed almost shadowless. School days, undergraduate days, early manhood—life seemed to grow better and better as the years slipped away which divided us from the great catastrophe. 1913 and the summer of 1914 must always have that historic interest which the human imagination attaches to "last moments".

But if we like to dwell on this queer "pre-war" period, to think about it, to try to get it in perspective and disentangle some of the main threads from its jumble of tendencies and ideas, and to keep green the memory of friends who died before the Great Adventure had been revealed to stricken humanity as the Great Illusion, it is not because we wish it back again or are mere praisers of the past. Let us admit that if the present is a period of short commons, bewilderment, and suffering, there is no time like it—except the future. We have struggled through a series of disasters to man's estate; we are—compared with those of our contemporaries whose lives ended before the war—grown up. We have gained much in the process, changed our sense of values, become politically "responsible", realised, however dimly and imperfectly, the human bonds which unite us with our fellow-men and women the world over.

In these circumstances it is only natural that our ideas of Beauty should have changed also. The artist of to-day—poet,

painter, novelist, sculptor, musician—is dissatisfied with much that might have given him pleasure a decade ago. He seeks more than what is at times contemptuously termed "Beautiful Beauty"; and if he is taunted with accepting ugliness in its place, he can reply that what he seeks is significance—not the pretty Chinese lantern, but the naked light within. So it is that much of the art produced between 1900-14 has become almost unbearable with the passage of years. Reputations have flourished and withered, fashionable figures have had their day and night has covered them: even the war-poets have wilted. If the casualties in regard to reputation are unexpected, the survivors are equally so. Very few can claim to have foretold on the publication of "The Golden Journey to Samarkand" that the status of James Elroy Flecker would be as high as it is to-day.

If it was the visible world which enthralled Flecker, and if the beauty that he sought to create was an obvious, almost a tangible beauty, he had at least the advantage of never being fashionable, and he had that quality of qucerly detached effort which differentiates the "pains" taken by genius from those which are taken by talent. He worked at his poems for his poems' sake; was deliberately ascetic and austere in regard to his art; deliberately objective. He suppressed ephemeral emotion, just as he suppressed the ephemeral "message", fashionable philosophy, or whatnot. And so, with everything of a merely momentary significance expunged, the precious metal of his verse has survived, has held its own and will continue to be treasured perhaps as long as our language lasts.

Having said this much, it must be added that James Elroy Flecker was at the same time peculiarly the product of his age. He was definitely, entirely "pre-war". He died with the pre-war public schoolboy's idea of war undamaged, intact, and the dying embers of his life were waked into their final flame by its fierce breath. But if his work is (as I believe) of a lasting worth, it will be found to epitomise its period and will give the historian of the future some valuable clues as to the nature and character of the age in which he lived.

At present we are still too near the decade in which Flecker grew to manhood, wrote and died, to be able to do more than speculate, very tentatively, as to what may subsequently appear to have been its salient features. It was a strange period. It saw the birth of the *English Review*, under Ford Madox Ford, then Hueffer, the rise to fame of John Masefield and Walter de la Mare, of Granville Barker, Henry James and Joseph Conrad. George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells produced in it a good deal of their finest work; it witnessed a cult of the open air and the open road; of nut cutlets and no hats, and—at all events, at Oxford—a tremendous cult of the eighteen-nineties, of Wilde, of Beardsley, of Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Ernest Dowson. Another dominating influence on English poetry during the period was A. E. Housman. Theatrical interest was divided between the imported musical comedies staged so superbly by the late George Edwardes (who that saw it will forget his production of *Les Merveilleuses* at Daly's?); and the activities on a different plane of Shaw, Granville Barker, the Stage Society, etc. Of the social gaieties of the period, culminating in the Bacchanalian crescendo which ended in July 1914, it is scarcely necessary to speak. Several volumes of memoirs have recently appeared which make a vain attempt to describe what those who never witnessed it will never be able to believe. Those radiant hours of dancing in *travesti*, those unceasing libations of *dry monopole*, that frenzied pursuit of pleasure careless of the morrow, have passed away as even the most brilliant night must yield before a grey and menacing dawn.

For the leisured classes, for people, that is to say, with incomes of about £800 a year and over, we can see now that the period was one of peculiar ease and comfort, eminently conducive to the pursuit of the most diverse, delightful, and completely useless branches of scholarship. Such hoary institutions as the public school, Oxford and Cambridge, the "English gentleman", and so forth, if they bore in them the seeds of decay or the indications of change, had not yet either decayed visibly, or changed in any manner that attracted notice. For public schoolboys and for undergraduates—and James Elroy Flecker was essentially

of the fine fleur of our public school and university system—it was a time of unusual opportunity for intellectual flower-gathering. It provided a little of everything and nothing too long. Perhaps, by giving adolescent boys and girls so many lovely things to think about, it helped to deprive them—in matters of which, after crossing an ocean of blood and tears, we can to-day so depressingly see the importance—of all capacity for thought. The world was so full of a number of things—who can blame them if they were happy?

And, indeed, for the young people of the privileged classes, it was a happy time. In the world of art and letters the absinthe-sodden gloom of the 'nineties had disappeared, with much of the Victorian puntanism which had provoked it. The sun was shining again, the lark, etc., were functioning to perfection. Who can blame those young men and women for not troubling to investigate problems so banausic as those of foreign politics? They had the world full of toys to play with, and for to admire, as Flecker said, they had "the flowers and men and mountains that decorate it so superbly".

Looking back, it is delightful to remember that stern moralists of the Kipling type found much to distress them in the pre-war public school. Bullying had to a large extent disappeared from the unofficial curriculum. The "treat-'em-rough" prefect, who was almost a subaltern and had almost a moustache, was beginning to make way for sixth-form boys with a real interest in the classics and some feeling for literature, who were almost undergraduates. It ceased to be altogether shameful to read the English poets in the school library on a Sunday afternoon. A wave of what our reactionaries would call "softness" and outside observers might have described as "civilisation" broke over our crusted institutions—those institutions in which normal intelligence has still to make such a desperate struggle for existence. The change in the public schools was reflected at Oxford. Instead of the fierce and violent reactions of the 'nineties, when those who could not bear the public school atmosphere signalised their escape from the prison-house by rushing to extremes of morbid decadence, there was a more widely diffused cultivation of the arts

and less persecution of the poseur, with the result that young men became on the whole less closely wedded to their poses. To be a "decadong" was really more of a rag than anything else, and I don't suppose that any of the youths who in slightly intoxicated moments recited the "credo of a despairing decadent" would have gone to the stake for it, though one or two were induced (to their disgust), by a gloomy ass who controlled one of the smaller colleges, to take the train to Cambridge.

The 'nineties were cultivated with rapture in the nineteen-hundreds, and the extravagances and eccentricities of the earlier period were reproduced with painstaking zeal; but, as I have suggested, the point of view was changed, the "ennui" was factitious. Of plutocratic Oxford in the pre-war period Mr. Compton Mackenzie, in the second volume of *Sinister Street* has proved a faithful recorder, endowed with a prodigious memory. Of conventional Oxford—which then as now, comprised such a large proportion of undergraduates—no recorder is or ever will be necessary. "The system" took their money and at the end of three or four years produced them like rabbits from a conjuror's hat and distributed them among Government offices, curacies, assistant-masterships and lawyers' chambers, to continue the work of perpetuating "the system". The proportion of undergraduates, however, whose main interest was in literature, art, and scholarship—the aesthetes, in short—deserve some reminiscent pages. Poetry or, to be exact, shockingly bad verse, was written by the ream, and the fashionable thing was to be "wondrous", more wondrous than anyone had ever been before. One had also to be sensitive and rather frail, to cultivate "ennui", to be gnawed by secret despairs. How much of a camouflage was this frail and lily-like attitude was once agreeably displayed by a friend of Fleckcr's and of my own who, on being debagged at Merton, horrified the aghast rowing men by a boxing display which left quite a number of them prostrate. The outraged poet then resumed his trousers with a dignity which struck awe into all beholders. The despairs were the greatest possible fun. Don't imagine from the following lines that the author of them was not enjoying himself hugely.

There is no new hope to be hoped for,
There is no pew word to he said;
All ends are as shadows of shadows,
Pale ghosts of things dead.

The good and the evil, what are they,
I am weary of ease as of strife:
The days as they drag are made heavy
With loathing of life.

Before composing this work he had, I believe, lunched unwisely. After luncheon, in a mauve silk shirt, he had punted on the Cherwell and sadly and regretfully he had been seasick into it. The tragedies of youth!

Other lines, I think they must be from the same delightful source, have lingered in my memory. I hope their author (if he sees this book) will forgive me for quoting them. After all, the prompting motive is as much sentiment as a sense of humour! Here, then, are the opening stanzas of "My Lilies":

In my soul's garden, 'mid a tangled bed,
A few poor lilies grew.
But now, alas! is their pale glory shed.
They were but few.

Sadly the white leaves severed one by one
And fell upon the bed:
The flowers I had are faded, there are none
That are not dead.

My poor flowers! the garden of my soul
Is empty now and bare;
I have no lilies left, I gave them all:
All that there were.

Besides lilies, we were nearly all of us greatly addicted to "lassitude"; none more so than the friend from whose work I cull these gems. Here is one example of it:

Tired September: and the rain is falling, falling,
With a sound of utter lassitude, outside:
Up the garden I can see the gray mists crawling
Over rose-beds where, alas, the flowers have died.

And here another:

Despair is on us in these autumn days:
The year is tired of flowers; the year is cold—
I am tired, too, of all these weary ways,
For the soul in me is very, very old.

I am tired, so tired, of all that I remember,
So tired of everything that I forget.
With me, as with the year, it is November—
Oh this lassitude, this mist of vague regret!

Oh, this lassitude! I remember how a genuine relic of the 'nineties (grown in the course of years into a very sensible parish priest) once parodied our silliness, in a happy after-dinner moment. Unfortunately the first verse is the only one which I can recall. It went thus:

From the garden of sorrow
Wan blossoms I pick.
My mistresses bore me,
My meals make me sick!

What Flecker's bad verses were like I do not know, as I did not make his acquaintance until his Oxford days were over. But Mr. Frank Savery has recorded that even as a schoolboy he already wrote verses "with appalling facility". "He imitated with enthusiasm and without discrimination and, the taste in those long-gone days being for Oscar Wilde's early verse and Swinburne's complacent swing, he turned out a good deal of decadent stuff, that was, I am convinced, not much better than the rubbish written by the rest of his generation at Oxford. What interested me in Flecker in those days," Mr. Savery continues, "was the strange contrast between the man—or rather,

the boy—and his work. Cultured Oxford in general, I should add, was not very productive at that time: a sonnet a month was about the maximum output of the lights of Balliol. The general style of literature in favour at the time did not lend itself to a generous outpouring. Hence there was a certain piquancy in the exuberant flow of passionate verse which issued from Flecker's ever-ready pen, in spite of his entire innocence of any experience whatever.

" Furthermore, he was a wit—a great wit I used to think, but no humorist—and, like most wits, he was combative. He talked best when someone baited him. At last it got to be quite the fashion in Oxford to ask Flecker to luncheon and dinner-parties—simply in order to talk. The sport he afforded was usually excellent, . . . Looking back on it now, I believe I was right in thinking that in those days he had no humour (there is very little humour in Oxford); nor am I so entirely sure that his wit was bad. I had, at any rate, a growing feeling that, in spite of his immaturity and occasional bad taste, he was the most important of any of us: his immense productiveness was, I vaguely but rightly felt, better and more valuable than our finicky and sterile good taste.

"By 1906 he had developed greatly—largely thanks to the companionship of an Oxford friend whom, in spite of long absence and occasional estrangements, he loved deeply till the end of his life. Even his decadent poems had improved; poor as are most of the poems in *The Bridge of Fire,* they are almost all above the level of Oxford poetry, and there are occasional verses which forecast some of his mature work."

If, as Mr. Savery tells us, Flecker during his Oxford life poured out an almost ceaseless stream of bad and imitative verse, we can, I think, regard this chiefly as the emotional overflow from his intellectual development. I have dwelt at some length on the sillier aspects of pre-war Oxford, but it would be giving a hopelessly wrong impression to represent such asininities as being all that Oxford meant, to those who indulged in them. All Universities are, I suppose, divided into two camps, the first consisting of those who acquire learning for a definite ulterior

motive—money, position, and so forth; the second, those who read for their own delight and intellectual enrichment, those who have the true scholars' instinct, who would not insult any branch of study by taking thought as to its utility or profit. Now, in the pre-war period it was the spirit of this second camp which was in the ascendant at Oxford and was to a most notable degree embodied in James Flecker. It was a time when men read the literature of Greece and Rome, of France and England, much in the spirit in which Keats read Chapman's *Odyssey*. And they are scarcely to be blamed if they combined with some of the aesthetic ardour of the Renaissance not a little of its joyous obscenity and hearty appetite for life.

Flecker's obscenity amounted to a gift, and many of his most famous witticisms and *jeux d'esprit* (written down and illustrated in a MS. volume bound in "art linen", called the *Yellow Book of Japes*, the joint production of Flecker and of his greatest Oxford friend) are scarcely likely to find their way into print. One may be forgiven, perhaps, for regretting this, for they were the outcome of enormous high spirits and of a wholly charming gusto for life—a rapturous enjoyment which so many of us can experience in retrospect, so few, like Flecker, at the moment. "Ever is Now," says the philosopher. But only those whom the gods love know his meaning by instinct and without being taught.

II

Flecker was a tall, dark man, with a swarthy complexion, blue eyes, thick black eyebrows, full lips. The most noticeable things about him to anyone who met him for the first time were his gentle, rather high-pitched voice, his enthusiasm, and the curious mixture of ironic humour and sadness of which his habitual expression was compounded. In general appearance he was decidedly "foreign-looking", and a strain of Jewish blood was apparent. He himself was always aware that he did not look entirely English, and as he had a passionate love for the country of his birth, nothing annoyed him more than to be mistaken for anything but an Englishman. On one occasion, inquiring of a

fellow-passenger whether a bus went in a certain direction, the individual whom he addressed, mistaking him for a foreigner, insisted on pointing out several landmarks, such as the Law Courts, St. Paul's Cathedral, and so on. Flecker's disgust can be imagined. When the vehicle arrived at the Bank, and he prepared to descend, he growled at his informant, who was obviously about to show him the Royal Exchange, "Damn it all, I may have seen it before!"

He had several moustaches during his early manhood, and shaved them off; but he stuck to a moustache in the end, and it certainly suited him. "You can hear it whistle as it grows," he once pathetically remarked about his beard, while he was shaving.

Flecker was born in Lewisham, on November 5, 1884. He was christened Herman Elroy—James was a name which he adopted at Oxford—and was the eldest of the four children of the Rev. William Herman Flecker, D.D., afterwards head-master of Dean Close School, Cheltenham. He was educated at his father's school, at Uppingham, and at Trinity College, Oxford. He was at Oxford from 1902 to 1907. During his last year at the University (or just after he went down) he paid his first visit to Italy with the friend to whose influence and inspiration he owed so much. This first Italian visit was a turning-point in his career, and had a marked reaction upon his poetry. Soon after he went down from Oxford he became for a time a master at the preparatory branch of University College School at Holly Hill, Hampstead, of which the late Mr. Charles Simmons was then principal. Flecker had rooms at the top of Holly Hill, opposite the Mount Vernon Hospital.

He was certainly an original and probably an extremely able teacher. The whole subject of education was one of his deepest intellectual interests until the end of his life, and he was an ardent educational reformer, as his dialogue "The Grecians" indicates clearly enough. What his general attitude was towards learning and towards the conventional education of his time may be guessed in part from the following sentences, taken from the preface to his *Scholar's Italian Book:*

"Finally, I express the hope that some headmasters may find in this book a useful recreation for a sixth form exhausted by successful labours in scholarship-hunting; and that many scholars may be induced by me to spend a holiday fortnight studying a language which all those who know love. . . . No attempt has been made in the ensuing pages to produce a work of commercial or military value. . . . My sole object has been to enable any intelligent student who knows some Latin and French to learn with the minimum of labour to read a great litcrature."

Although Flecker was only at Holly Hill for one term, he made a great and lasting impression on some of his pupils. Many of his translations from the French, which were subsequently printed, after revision, were first drafted in the schoolroom, and written in chalk on the blackboard after the boys had produced their own attempts, as an illustration of how it could be done. Leconte de Lisle's "Hjalmar speaks to the Raven" was translated in this way. Flecker threw himself with characteristic gusto into the school-life, and took an active part in the school games, which he played with immense enthusiasm and no skill. He was popular, but he must have startled everyone in the school, from the boys upwards. He certainly once shocked one of the schoolmistresses by informing her at luncheon that he had been to the Oxford Music Hall the night before!

When he left Hampstead he went for a few months to Mill Hill, but he found its Nonconformist atmosphere antipathetic. After leaving Mill Hill he gave up teaching altogether, and decided to go in for the consular service, the training for which would enable him to spend two years at Cambridge in the study of Oriental languages.

I think the first set of verses which Flecker ever got into print in a London paper was the poem called "Desire", which appeared in the *Idler* in January 1907. It is signed "H. E. Flecker," and is worth quoting, because, though immature and, indeed, of no great value, it is nevertheless characteristic and bears the impress of the writer's personality.

Launch the galley, sailors bold!
Prowed with silver, sharp and cold,
Winged with silk, and oared with gold.

Silver stream in violet night;
Silken clouds in soft moonlight;
Golden stars in shadowy height.

Stars and stream are under cloud;
Sinks the galley, silver-prowed,
Silken sails are like a shroud.

Flecker's fondness for the precious metals is traceable through all his work. In this short poem it will be noticed that silver appears three times and gold or golden twice.

He probably had several little poems in the *Idler,* and other early work was printed in a motor journal of which a friend of his was editor. But he was a sufficiently good self-critic, even at this period, not to re-print all these ephemeral pieces in *The Bridge of Fire,* which Mr. Elkin Mathews published for him in the Vigo Cabinet Series in 1907. *The Bridge of Fire* was originally to have been illustrated, by Mr. Trelawney Dayrell-Reed, who made a set of Bcardsleyesque drawings, in one of which the poet was caricatured, in much the same way that Beardsley caricatured Wilde in one of the *Salome* illustrations. I do not know why the project was abandoned. Expense, most likely.

The friend to whom I am indebted for information about Flecker's schoolmastcring experiences at Holly Hill has given me the following notes about Flecker's London life at this period.

"He had a great liking for Hampton Court, and was never weary of wandering through the picture gallery or around the beautiful gardens. He was one of the very few Englishmen I have ever met who went *often* to the British Museum, Tate and National Galleries. When he was in London he would frequently arrange to meet people opposite such-and-such a picture in the

National Gallery, regardless of the fact that it generally took his friend ten minutes to find out where it was situated. He was fond of going to the Cafe Royal—he called it the only really Parisian cafe in London—and when there he used to draw (very badly) monkeys on the table. He was fond also of the Vienna Cafe in Holborn, where he liked studying the types. . . . Flecker possessed a cynical sort of wit, and was occasionally a practical joker."

In October 1908, Flecker went to Cambridge, and entered at Caius College—not altogether a happy choice. His rooms were in Jesus Lane, near the Sidney Street end. One of his intimate friends at this period has sent me the following account of Flecker's life at Cambridge:

"My most vivid recollections are largely jokes, limericks, rhymes, and fantastic social schemes which were never meant to pass beyond word of mouth, and which I have no intention of helping into print, delightful as they were: he had a genius for such things. There are a few I might mention. . . . One was a limerick about the joint editors of the great French Dictionary of Antiquities: 1 made the first four lines, but was at a loss for the last, which is entirely Flecker's and, as you will see, is worth all the rest put together: he also improved several phrases m the other lines:

If Daremberg bedded with Saglio
And the scene were engraved in intaglio
And worn in a ring
By our popular King
What delight it would give his seraglio!

(The King at the time was, of course, Edward the Seventh). He had also a great scheme for the compulsory *deniaisement* of the women's colleges at Cambridge by a strictly professional staff kept for the purpose, 'to get rid of all this nonsense about virginity'. In a general way, though I think he was fairly happy at Cambridge, he was not altogether so. I don't think he ever felt quite at home: he knew a good many individual interesting people, but he never quite established himself in any set or group.

This was, no doubt, chiefly due to his age and his special course of work, which brought him into contact only with other students of Oriental languages, chiefly student-interpreters. He saw a good deal of one of them in particular, and went to the South of France with him at the time of the great wine troubles: his companion had lived in Paris, and talked French like a native, and they were very nearly lynched by the mob, which took them for a pair of Clemenceau's spies. They asked for trouble by getting out of the train outside the station (I forget what town it was) on their arrival. According to Flecker they were only saved from the mob through the Mayor's belief that they *were* spies: he rescued them, and smuggled them away from the station by holding up an express, in order (as Flecker believed) to put the Government under an obligation (the revolt was then already near collapse). His companion was J. J. Knox, who afterwards went (I think) to Teheran. But very likely you have had this story already from someone else.

"Flecker told it very vividly—they were sitting in a cafe when a mob rushed up, crying, 'A la lanterne!' No one could believe they were both English, because of the excellence of Knox's accent. 'On peut passer vingt ans a Paris—on nc perd jamais l'accent anglais.'

"Flecker was much amused at what he regarded as a certain childishness and affected *naivete* in Cambridge men, particularly King's men. He typified this by an imaginary King's man's dream: 'Do you know I had such a wonderful dream last night. I dreamt that I was walking in a beautiful garden, all by myself!'

"He always had a great desire to herd his friends round him, to establish a sort of society of them—calling them all 'Brother'–, and so on. I think the people who impressed him most at Cambridge were A. W. Verrall and Prof. E. G. Browne: none of his contemporaries at Cambridge had an influence on him in any way comparable to that of J. D. Beazley at Oxford.

"He was very enthusiastic about Apuleius, and once started an admirable translation of the Golden Ass. He read me part of the Xlth Book, but he never finished it: I'm afraid my criticism of detailed points discouraged him, which was the last thing I meant.

"Of particular visual recollections of him, one of the vividest is on a river picnic above Byron's Pool, when we all bathed,

and Flecker marched about up to his waist in the river, holding a canoe upside down over his head, entirely hiding it. He was an expert both at punting and canoeing, and had a justifiable contempt for Cambridge standards in these arts.

"He translated Arabic stories delightfully: I recollect very clearly hearing him read the story on which he based the Ballad of Iskander. His version was entrancing, and I thought he spoiled it in the poem by the metaphysical colouring he there gave it.

"I remember how furious he was at being called, in some review of *The Last Generation,* a grim disciple of H. G. Wells at his grimmest. . . . He was at Caius, but I don't think he had many friends there or took much part in the life of the College. His friends were chiefly, I think, King's and Trinity men. . . ."

That Caius was not altogether a happy choice for a man of Flecker's temperament is confirmed by another Cambridge contemporary, from whose letter (to a third party) I am permitted to quote some passages:

"I remember, of course, that lunch in Rupert's (Rupert Brooke's) rooms in May 1908, when you and Flecker also were there. . . . Flecker, I remember, was not very happy there. The men of Caius were not sympathetic to him. Almost any other college would have been more congenial, and either King's or Trinity obviously the best. The Caius people tried to be kind to him, but I don't think he found much enjoyment in breakfast at 8 a.m. with Rugby blues and students of law and medicine. He saw a good deal of Rupert and of other members of the Carbonari circle in King's. Arthur Schloss, now Waley, was I think, his greatest friend in King's. They were both lovers of the East. I think he joined the Fabian Society of those days, as nearly everyone did who was in or on the fringes of these King's circles. But he wasn't much interested in politics. He was inclined to dislike the poor and to be bored with them and to regard the large projects of our young hopes as waste of time.

"At Oxford Flecker had been the (then) conventional high Tory in politics. He liked the idea of Emperors and Kings, and of magnificent courts, because he associated them with a lavish

patronage of the arts. His view was that the best art was produced under an autocracy, e.g. Velasquez and the Russian Ballet under the late Czar—and that nothing else much mattered. The plebs, he felt, in their own best interests, should be governed firmly, from above. By the time he reached Cambridge, however, his ideas on political matters were rather more 'serious*. Cambridge made him a Liberal, even an enthusiastic Liberal. At one time he seems to have played with the project of throwing up his career in the consular service and standing for Parliament."

For several reasons, I venture to disagree with the statement of the Cambridge contemporary whose letter I have just quoted, that Flecker wasn't much interested in politics. No doubt the minutiae of party politics bored him, as did the arid intellectual wrangles of the Fabians. But he was certainly interested in the general progress of political thought, in revolutions, in the politics of the human race. He had an ardent sympathy with the political idealism of Shelley and of Keats, and deplored—from his standpoint as poet—the apparent absence of any movement capable at once of absorbing and inspiring him. In a review of the sixth volume of Professor W. J. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* he writes: "Yet we often agree with Mr. Courthope when he is not employed in criticism, and especially when he deplores the absence of political interest in modern poetry. He is rather apt to blame the poets: he should blame history. The dearth of proud and eagle-winged forces in this modern age is a calamity for art. Whether these century-old poets preached an idea as Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth, ran counter to it as Crabbe, or neglected it, as Keats, they had the inestimable advantage of living in a society rent by the enthusiasm and hatreds of the French Revolution. In those good days Shelley was not an ineffectual angel whose pretty lyrics might be read by simpering girls, but a most effectual Devil, like a socialist of to-day, attacking the very foundations of society. Only during the last year has there arisen in England a political crisis worthy of the pen, and in this revived bitterness of strife lies at least some hope for the future of English Poetry."

In regard to his life at Cambridge, although his attempt to

recover the old rapture of University life may not have been entirely successful (any more than amorous *rechauffage* can be entirely successful), he certainly did not regret the years he spent there. He played strenuous tennis; punted a good deal; wore his beloved blazers whenever he got a chance; at times sported a corduroy coat; talked, made many friends; contributed to various Cambridge papers such as *The Cambridge Review* and *The Gownsman,* and—more important to him than anything else—made progress in the art to which his life was devoted. To me he often referred with great satisfaction to the fact that he had had "the peculiarly delightful experience" of life at both Universities.

After leaving Cambridge, Flecker was sent *to* Constantinople in June 1910; was taken ill there in August of the same year, returned to England in September and went to a sanatorium in the Cotswolds. In March 1911 he returned to his post, apparently quite recovered, and was transferred to Smyrna in April. In May 1911, he went on leave to Athens, where he married a Greek lady, Miss Helle Skiadaressi, whom he had met the year before. He spent three months' holiday mostly in Corfu (where the poem called "Phacacia" was written), and was sent to Beirut, Syria, in September 1911. Flecker did not really like the East, or the Easterns, when he got to know them well, although he had an instinctive understanding of them. His first impressions of Constantinople were, however, happy enough. Writing to a friend about it, he says: "It is very beautiful, and, as I tell everybody, not a bit like our Earl's Court Exhibition, as I feared it might be. I am going to stay here for two months more, at least, so I hope I shall enjoy myself: indeed, I do. I ride a horse and take photographs and swim in the Bosphorus and play tennis and talk to Turks in the loveliest country in the world. But I am lonely at times. . . ." He undoubtedly missed bis wide circle of friends in London and at the Universities. At Beirut he seems to have been particularly homesick, and he admitted afterwards that he spent most of his time there dreaming of Oxford. But it was not so bad to start with. " Not a bad life here," he says in one of his letters, "riding, bathing (bathed Nov. 22, sea quite warm), decent rooms, piano . . . people mostly fools".

In December 1912, he came back on leave for a few weeks to England, and visited Paris, returning to Beirut in January 1913. In March 1913 he was again taken ill, and after a few weeks on the Lebanon (Brumana) he went to Switzerland, where he remained for the last eighteen months of his life. He went first to Leysin, but moved on to Montreux, then to Montana, to Locarno, and finally, in May 1914, to Davos. He died at Davos on January 3, 1915, and was buried at Cheltenham at the foot of the Cotswold Hills.

III

My personal memories of James Flecker start from an evening in the summer of 1907, when, in response to an invitation, I called upon him after dinner at his lodgings in a Bloomsbury square. The details of that evening call remain clear and vivid in my mind, but where we first encountered one another and how many times we had previously met I cannot remember. It was, no doubt, Trelawney Dayrell-Reed, a friend whom we had in common, who introduced us; and 1 have a vague recollection of a crowded tea-party in a flat in Chelsea (given by the mother of the lady who later on was so often to be our hostess) at which Flecker must have been present. But, in any case, we could only have known one another very slightly on the evening when I walked over from my Bloomsbury lodgings to his. I remember very well telling myself, as I crossed Russell Square, not to be impressed by the Flecker "legend". Already, after a few months of journalism in London, I had begun to be rather contemptuous both of Oxford wit and Oxford reputations.

Flecker was the great man among my circle of friends in those days, and his name—and jokes—were upon everybody's lips. I had got rather sick of hearing it.

The house in which he was staying was the usual slightly dingy Bloomsbury boarding-house, differing hardly at all from the one which I was temporarily inhabiting myself. I well remember its gloomy hall, lit by a meagre speck of gas, the landlady's folded arms and suspicious eye, the dark stairs leading up to the "second-floor back", and the bright line of light gleaming under Flecker's

door. When I opened the door I found the poet striding about under the baleful glare of unshaded incandescent gas, amid an indescribable confusion of books and pictures and belongings. He was "packing up", he said, in preparation for a journey to France with a friend of his called Knox. They were going to investigate the rising among the *vignerons* of the Bordeaux district, where Catholicism was in conflict with the Republic—a romantic adventure, with revolvers in it! Flecker had bought his, and its barrel glittered in the gaslight as he showed it to me.

If he really were "packing up", there was certainly nothing to indicate that the enterprise had got very far. The tables and all the chairs were piled with books—beautifully bound classical texts, French and Italian novels in paper covers, copies of *L'Assiette an Bcurrc* and of *Jugend,* dictionaries, volumes of the poets—and, half-buried among the piles, were such things as a typewriter, a bottle of Maraschino and another of Chianti, tumblers, pictures, manuscripts. Pictures were piled up against the skirting-boards, or lay on their faces on the floor in imminent danger of being crushed under their owner's feet as he paced up and down the room.

My disinclination to be impressed vanished in a very few minutes. I was immensely impressed. Flecker was precisely what I thought a poet ought to be. We were most of us sentimental francophilcs in those far-off days, and I was full of yearnings and illusions about the Latin Quarter and Montmartrc and the Moulin de la Galette and the Bal Bullier and the Bal des Quatz' Arts, and so on—knowing nothing at all about them at first-hand. But Flecker had already tasted and explored these long-dreamcd-of delights, and his account of his visits to Pans thrilled me with excitement. He talked of Paul Marinier and Lucien Boyer, of Stcinlcn and Aristide Bruant, of the "Chat Noir" and of the "Noctambules", of the Cafe d'Harcourt and the Boul' Mich', of poets and painters and their mistresses. He was an admirable talker, even before an audience of one speechless and ecstatic acquaintance, and he had a pleasant knack of giving a vivid and amusing description of incidents and events in which he had played a part. He had a gentle, high-pitched, enthusiastic

voice, singularly attractive to listen to. He turned life always and all the time into a tremendous adventure. Like most creative artists, he was egoistic, and used to talk in a strain which would have seemed like megalomania if it had not been lightened by wit. On this occasion he read me two "magnificent" poems which he had recently finished—"Ideal" and "The Town without a Market". I shall never forget the gusto with which he read the line (from "Ideal"), "Friend, we will go to hell with thee". "Hell," I remember thinking slyly, was just the sort of big, vague, decisive spot to which anyone of Flecker's enthusiastic nature *would* think of accompanying a friend. But his enthusiasm, if it carried him at times off his feet, carried him also—throughout his life and throughout his work—away from all meanness.

Said I: "The World was made for kings:
To him who works and working sings
Come joy and majesty and power
And steadfast love with royal wings".

The poet and the painter were to him the real "kings" of this world—this world given them to enjoy to the utmost as a reward for their work.

The first two chapters of one of the many versions of Flecker's novel, *The King of Alsander,* fell off the table during the evening, and at my request he read them to me. I was sufficiently under the spell of his personality to think them marvellous. (Alas, when nearly seven years later the completed manuscript came to me in my capacity as adviser to Flecker's publishers, it was a disappointment to find that time had robbed the poor old "King" of much of his glamour!)

When the chapters of *The King of Alsander* had been read and discussed, our talk reverted to poetry and to Flecker's own poems. His arrangements regarding *The Bridge of Fire* had just been concluded with Mr. Elkin Mathews, and he was looking forward with tremendous excitement to its appearance. He read me a few more of the poems which the book was to contain, including "Riouperoux"—a poem for which I have retained a particular affection ever since.

As I walked home that night, filled with excitement and warmed, no doubt, with Chianti and Maraschino, I felt that to be a poet was the most wonderful, the most romantic adventure in a world full of the maddest and most delicious possibilities. I had never before encountered anybody with anything like Flccker's rapturous joy of living. Most of us, at that time, cultivated a mask of artificial gloom ("There is no new hope to be hoped for, there is no new word to be said!") which ineffectively concealed our high spirits. Flecker, I think, to some extent reversed this process. His eyes were always sad eyes, and there was a certain sadness latent in his smile which added much to its charm. It has been asserted, particularly by critics who never knew him, that the occasional undernote of melancholy in some of his poems was purely factitious. This, to my mind, is a very superficial view, based not only on ignorance of Flecker but on ignorance of the human heart as well. To me it seems impossible not to connect Flecker's extraordinary *joie de vivre,* his capacity for living each moment to the full and the rapture with which he looked upon the visible world, with a belief that he had an early premonition that his allotted span was too short to allow him a moment to waste. When he described himself as "the lean and swarthy poet of despair", it was probably a joke, but like all jokes worth making there was a substratum of truth in it. Throughout his work is to be traced that natural horror at the idea of death which a man of his temperament may well be excused for admitting. It would be absurd to dismiss such a poem as "No Coward's Song", or the poem called "Prayer" (which was written, I believe, as early as 1907), as being insincere or artificial. Indeed, the opposite is probably the truth—that they came straight from the poet's heart and are among the most intimate and subjective utterances which he ever entrusted to print.

After the evening I have described, Flecker and I met very frequently in a queer flat in Brixton, the home of a lady of many accomplishments, not the least of which was a capacity for appreciating young poets and their verses. The atmosphere of the flat was ultra-Parisian. French novels (not always of a very

prudish kind) and volumes of French verse lay about everywhere, and the walls of the sittmg-room were decorated with Steinlens, principally Steinlen cats. Here we used to gather and read one another's verses and sing the songs from Paris *cabarets* of which Flecker and our hostess between them seemed to have an almost inexhaustible repertoire. Paul Marinier's long-forgotten "Ninon" was a great favourite. I fancy the chorus went like this:

Allans, Nitron! Ninon, ne dis pas non!
L' Amour est bon, d'est un peche mignon.
Pour y goutter descends vite en cachetic,
Ninon, Ninette!

Flecker was very fond of "Navaho" and "La Branche de Lilas", and I can see him now, sitting at the piano, dressed in a scanty Japanese kimono, smiling his pleasant, sardonic smile, and picking out the tunes, while the rest of us shouted the choruses.

Both Flecker and his friend, J. D. Beazley, had a habit of writing out their poems very neatly in tiny little manuscript books and presenting them to the lady of the flat. Several such volumes were in circulation among our group and are still, I hope, in existence, though it is hardly likely that in Flecker's case there is much unpublished work of any real value which has yet to find its way into print.

At these far-off parties, "literary" as, indeed, they were, I do not remember that there was much flow of conversation as (for example) the Dublin intellectuals understand the word, or as the modern undergraduate understands it. The hours were devoted to singing and to laughter; the problems of the world were let go hang; taste, Shakespeare and the musical glasses were neglected utterly. Flecker nearly always kept the room in a roar when he was present, by his constant flow of wit and his almost unvarying high spirits. I remember, however, one amusing occasion on which the tables were turned against him and his repartee extinguished. I had taken to dinner at the Brixton flat a friend of mine who was anxious to meet Flecker, but who had a rooted objection to "Bohemia". Our hostess—

it was in the days when Society was beginning to be badly bitten with stage-mania—had recently been touring the suburban music-halls in a sketch written by one of her friends, and in the course of her wanderings had made the acquaintance of a little Cockney dancer named Gertie. It was Gertie whom, out of sheer naughtiness, she invited to make the fourth at this particular dinner. From the beginning nothing went well for Flecker. Whenever he caught the ball of conversation Gertie snatched it ruthlessly. She was exceedingly plain, the blameless wife of a Brixton dentist, and by no means in her first youth. But in her own strange world—that of the smaller music-halls—Gertie was as outstanding a character as Flecker was in his. Her humour was the humour of the New Cut, her back-chat surpassed that of a South London bus conductor at his best. Never before have I listened to such a torrent of "lip" as this true descendant of Mrs. Peachum and of Diana Trapes poured out on the poet's (for once) defenceless head. Whenever poor Flecker got in a rapier-thrust, he was promptly bludgeoned by devastating references to "Jerusalem" and wholly libellous innuendoes connecting his swarthiness with a neglect of baths! I think this was the only occasion on which I ever knew him to be verbally at a disadvantage.

The incident which really formed the beginning of my more intimate acquaintance with Flecker was connected with his first volume *of* poems, *The Bridge of Fire.* We were ail of us in a great state of excitement about the book before its appearance, and I had arranged with the editor to review it in *The Academy.* When I received my copy, I found that, alas! it did not come up to my exaggerated expectations, and in my disappointment I proceeded to administer a perfectly sincere if rather jejune "slating". My notice, when it came out, caused surprise and wrath among our little circle. All my friends were, indeed, extremely angry with me—except Flecker. 1 think Flecker must have been amused and interested to hear one note of honest criticism, however amateurish, amid a chorus of rather fatuous praise. In any case he contented himself with sending a rejoinder to *The Academy,* which was published the week

after my notice—a rejoinder which showed great skill and the most exemplary good manners. And when, a year or two later, I gathered up my own stray verses from the periodicals which had printed them and issued my first book, he took the trouble to review it in a Cambridge paper in characteristically generous terms.

Our connection of author and publisher, which was to last until his death, began when, in 1910,I started a monthly magazine of earnest literary aspirations. In the first number of this periodical, J. D. Beazley, of Christchurch, Fleckcr's most intimate Oxford friend, had let me print a poem of his called "The Visit", which Trelawney Dayrell-Reed illustrated. And Flecker himself became a fairly frequent contributor. The poems called "In Memoriam", "Pillage", and "The War Song of the Saracens", first appeared in its pages.

It was some time in 1910 that I got the firm which owned the magazine to issue a new volume of Fleckcr's verses, to which he gave the title *Thirty-six Poems.* But the concern having, unfortunately, more good intent than capital or business management, the volume did not prosper, and on the death of my magazine after a year's struggle for existence, the sheets of the book were transferred to Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. Messrs. Dent reissued the book in 1911, with six additional pieces, under the more familiar title, *Forty-two Poems.*

During Fleckcr's Cambridge years I only met him occasionally and my memory in regard to details is less trustworthy than for the earlier period. But I recall an extraordinary luncheon at the *Petit Riche* restaurant, just after his return from a summer holiday, I think in Wales. (I have a vague notion that he had been staying at a "Fabian Summer School".) I had been invited to meet a friend of his, a friend who "lived in South Kensington". Awe-inspiring details were whispered to me regarding the friend's home, and Flecker had clothed himself in perilous splendour for the call which he proposed to make there during the afternoon. I tell myself my memory must be playing me tricks when I think of his get-up! It could *not* have been a bowler hat, a dark grey frock-coat with watered silk facings, trousers to

match, a skimpy green-knitted tie, *and* yellow boots! But if it wasn't just that, it was a mixture of garments which gave the same impression. I don't think he found the South Kensington atmosphere very congenial; and I never saw him arrayed so wonderfully again. Very shortly after this he left England for the East. I fancy that the last time I saw him in the flesh was at a luncheon at Beguinot's in Old Compton Street, when J. J Knox was present. On that occasion I heard once again the story of their adventures during the Wine Riots, a story which has been retold in an earlier chapter.

IV

After Flccker's departure for the East I heard very little news of him until the beginning of 1913, when I became associated with the new publishing firm of Max Goschen. (Owing to the regretted death of its proprietor, who was killed in the early days of the war, this firm no longer exists and its copyrights have been distributed among other publishers.) Whether we corresponded at all during the interval, I cannot remember. I suppose we must have done, since I knew his address. But, unfortunately, I have not kept any of the early letters. The first letter from Flecker on which I have been able to lay my hands is dated January 22 (1913). It is addressed from the British Consulate-General, Beyrouth, Syria, and was written, apparently, in answer to my request to be allowed to use some of his work in an anthology of modern verse which I was intending, at that time, to compile. The letter runs as follows:

"My dear Gold ring,

"I was in London a few days in December—and asked after you—but *no* one seemed to know where you were. I tried hard to get a job in town but couldn't. I never get paid a penny for anything and my book has not yet sold 200 copies. I am trying to place a play. I am in utter despair and suppose I shall have to live in this bloody country all my life.

"Of course take anything you like. I hate all modern poetry and think it perfect . .' .—except Yeats and Kipling: these Masefields—though he was a great man once—Gibsons, Pounds, Abercrombies, and people make me fume with rage.

"Q's Victorian Verse has got my
Saracens,
Riouperoux,
and my friend Marsh has got
The Queen's Song,
Joseph and Mary.
Don't take any of the above but anything else you like.

"I have much to thank you for, my dear Goldring. I am fairly well known now—that is to say, about as known as Ezra Pound or T. Sturge Moore—but for £500 a year and a berth in England I'd turn Wesleyan.

"Yours bitterly,

"JAMES ELROY FLECKER."

1 dropped the idea of making an anthology as soon as I discovered what a job of work it was going to be, and, instead, determined to try to get for my firm a volume of Flecker's poetry. By this time my belief in him was unshakable and I knew that sooner or later he was bound to come into his own. I wrote offering to take the financial risk of a new book by him (he had previously been forced to publish on commission, except in the case of *Thirty-six Poems),* and to pay a small advance, £10, on account of royalties.

Flecker's reply was dated March 6 and runs as follows:

"Just a line on some filthy imported notepapcr to thank you very much indeed for your kindness in getting me the offer of £10.

"I think there is enough for a volume—but I had some idea of adding a preface—would, in fact, if needed.

"I don't want the issue of my poems to clash with the publication of my novel—there ought to be a month's interval. I suggest that you get Messrs. Goschen to ask . . . when he is going to publish the novel, and act according. I have only just sent the MS. I have no proofs and shan't get 'em for some time.

"All my press notices should be either with you or with Dent. There have been some good ones *(Daily News, Athenaeum)* of the 42 . . .

"Could you tell me the name of a press agent less indecently slipshod than Messrs.———?

"The press notices on the cap of the 42 were rottenly chosen. I bar the idea, however, of printing them inside the book unless it is done in very small print and on different paper. Even then it's pretty horrid. The most eulogistic of the dogs write such terrible balls, alas.

"I read through your poems. Honestly, I like them extremely. I confess they seem to me to have a charming atmosphere of taking seriously a fashion of thought that is just out of date—but that is a very great charm—and I think of Pater's essay on Lamb. It seems to me you aim at something simple and graceful and attain it, while other rotters with their Exultations and Sicilian Idylls aim very high and write God-forsaken formless muck.

"With many thanks for getting me a good offer and for sending me your volume,

"Ever yours,

"J. E. FLECKER.

"Your little poems of London streets make me feel rottenly sentimental, imprisoned perhaps for life in this godless sunshiny palm-tree hole without an intelligent soul to speak to."

I was delighted when Flecker fell in with our suggestion: still more so when the MS. of *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* eventually reached the office. I wrote to promise that I would do anything I possibly could to get the book adequately noticed and to push the sales. And at the same time I urged him to write the now famous Preface, and if possible to make it controversial, in order to stir the reviewers into animation. The task of writing the Preface and of correcting the proofs—he almost re-wrote the book in proof, and substituted several new poems for those which he thought not up to the standard of the rest of the volume—must have exhausted him, for he was already seriously ill. The following letter, written in pencil on May 10, 1913, reveals his nervous and overwrought condition:

"Really, your people ought to take the trouble to understand how long it takes a letter to get to Syria. I wrote that dam' Preface and sent it within a week of getting the letter. *I am now waiting for proofs of the Preface and the extra poems* which must be published at all costs, and I *must* sec the proofs because they're most terribly hashed. The other proofs are corrected. I have sent off everything.

"I am very ill again and probably shall come to England. Can't work at much and hardly at this letter. The Preface was an awful strain. If the printers make a fuss I will pay for the rather heavy alterations. 1 *must* have the book just as good as it can be. I am anxiously awaiting proofs of the Preface and remaining poems."

Flecker did not, of course, return to England (which he was never to see again); but on his doctor's advice went instead to Switzerland. His next letter, dated June 5, came from Leysin-sur-Aigle:

"Thank the Lord this place is curing me. The journey nearly killed me. There is nothing terribly wrong—but I shall take a month or two to recover, and always have to live with precaution. Meantime many thanks for your kind letter. Herewith I have sent the proofs complete. Please look over the revise—or 'Taoping', in its new version, will come out in a hash.

"Left out first page of Preface as being rather babyish. You might let me know what you think of the book—and especially of my alterations to 'Gates of Damascus' and 'Taoping'. I am immensely proud of it. I've turfed out all the rot. It seems to me—and to the few critics who have seen it—to be miles ahead of the *Forty-Two.* If the publisher wants to puff me he can safely say that the Oriental poems are unique in English.

"I do wish one could have a few *de luxe* copies (as they do in France), on fine paper with fine binding.

"I have, alas! lost a good deal more than *£10* in not having time to get all the poems into mags. In particular 'Oak and Olive' was being kept by the *Fortnightly,* and they sent it back because they had no time to publish it by June. But never mind, let's out with the book at once!

"I have some glorious translations from Paul Fort and other modern Frenchmen, but 1 preferred to keep *The Golden Journey* original from beginning to end. . . ."

I heard from him again a week later, still from Leysin—a long and very lucid business letter, chiefly about *The King of Alsander,* and the behaviour of another publisher who, after accepting the book and getting Flecker to alter it two or three times, eventually declined to bring it out on the ground that he had "lost interest".

"Hotel Belvedere,
"Leysin, Switzerland.
"June 11 (1913).

"My dear Goldring,

"(1) Many thanks tor your letter. I am most frightfully glad about the Edition dc luxe: 1 suppose I shall be allowed one or two copies for myself. But what about sending round notices of it?

"As for the Printer's note, I'll pay anything in reason—but I don't consider myself liable for additions or omissions of complete poems. Against the omissions can be put my writing the Preface specially to please the publishers. I am liable to pay for alteration to 'Gates of Damascus',
One verse altered in 'Hyali',
1/2 do. do. 'Oak and Olive',
About six lines altered at beginning of Preface,
alteration of 'Taoping,'
as far as they are above 10 per cent, etc., as per contract. The apparently extensive minor alterations in the first few pages of the proofs are due to the gross carelessness of the printers. The last few pages were 20 times better done—except that the fellow, apparently by way of a dirty joke, put tips instead of lips in no less than four separate places—obviously on purpose. I don't think the joke was very funny.

"The advertisement is excellent.

"(2) I have long had a scheme for bringing out an anthology of French verse. Poets of To-day and Yesterday—from *after* Hugo and Musset and not including them, to the present day. Each poet would be preceded by a short notice.

"In the idea of the short notice and in the period traversed, the book would thus resemble Walch's great three-volume work —but in no other way.

"(i) There would be a large and very different choice of the more important people and none of the pages of dreary rot by the great unknown.

"(ii) The criticism at the beginning would be original and not borrowed.

"(iii) The whole book would not be more than one volume.

"It would mean a lot of toil, but very pleasant toil, doing this book—but what I want to know is—would it pay? I think if a sale in France could be arranged for it might. But the sale in France would have to be arranged through the *Marcme de France,* so as to facilitate matters of copyright for the more modern fellows. I should want three or four pounds lor buying books to cut up, typing, copying, and other exes.

"(3) I told you———was going to publish a novel. He made me revise it twice, the last time in December. I half-killed myself getting it finished this January—and sent it off. No answer tor three months, and then the inconceivable person returns the novel and says he doesn't feel like publishing it after all this time, as he has lost interest in it. And he is *under contract* to publish it. He now will not answer my letter. Give me some advice. I've got my contract somewhere—at Cheltenham I think, but my papers arc disturbed. I must obviously take legal action and claim about £200 damages. I had put in altogether four mortal months' work on the novel. . . .

"The novel, originally a very poor production, is now a very jolly and fantastic work. Whether it will sell or not I don't believe a publisher in the world could say. It may take or it mayn't. I'll send it you if you like. But—

"(a) Messrs. Goschen may well fight shy of a book which another publisher has broken his contract to evade publishing.

"(b) It might be better to get compensation before I get another publisher. Yet it might again be better the other way.

"If you care to go round to———and see what he means and tell him I'm going to claim a round £200 from him at once, I should be only too glad, but I really, I confess, see not the slightest reason why I should presume even to ask you to do anything so boring. But I think with your literary experience you might

be kind enough to give me some advice and perhaps to give me the address of a solicitor who is a friend of literary men.

"Ever yours,
"JAMES ELROY FLECKER.

"You will have the revise back by return when it comes."

Since Flecker directly asked my advice I had to tell him, out of a wealth of unenviable experience, that he did not stand very much chance of receiving any damages, whether by legal or any other kind of action. Eventually he sent the book to Messrs. Goschen.

When the MS. of *The King of Alsander* reached me I must confess that my heart sank a little, in spite of all the pleasant memories which the opening chapters revived. I did not think the book had much chance of selling, or, indeed, that it particularly deserved to sell, and I wrote to Flecker explaining my reasons for this opinion.

His reply is dated June 21 (1913):

"Thanks so much for writing promptly and at such length. The novel is a most patchy affair—I quite agree with you. I am not a novelist because I don't really think novels worth writing—at the bottom of my heart. Yet I did not burn the old *King of Alsander*—it is, by God, seven years since I lost the first three chapters of it on the way to Paris with———and——— of your acquaintance—because it has, with all its faults, some passages which I think rather jolly, and because even if a bit laboured in parts, it is such a joyously silly performance.

"1 have written to Goschen accepting their offer.

"A drama is a thing, now, that is worth writing. I have had most encouraging letters about my work in that direction from Drinkwater, of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre; but I hope that Granville Barker and no other will take up *Hassan,* my Oriental play. It may interest you to know that Yasmin is out of my play—was written for it—and also *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* is nothing but the final scene. I admit a little verse into my play here and there.

"Read the poem called 'The Golden Journey', and consider

the 'pilgrim with the beautiful voice' to be Hassan, the hero of a whole drama, and think what it would sound like actually on the stage, with Granville Barker scenery—moonlight.

"More alive to-day. I hope the novel may succeed after all. It is pleasant of you to be so prompt. The misery of literary people! *The Spectator* and *The Nation* will return or accept pretty quick. The '——' is hopeless, utterly. '——' are, I think, mad. Good God, if one ran the rottenest of little Vice-Consulates in the way the '——' is run, there'd be a row in a month!

"Ever yours thankfully,

"J. E. FLECKER.

"PS.—(I) Should much like to read your novel; didn't know you'd written one.

"(2) What do you think—if by chance 'The Golden Journey' gets known—of having the Oriental poems (plus 'Saracens' and 'Ballad of Iskander' from 42) illustrated by Syme for a Xmas Volume?

"(3) Shan't anthologisc after what you told me. Thanks."

I had one more letter from him from Lcysin (dated June 30, 1913), in which the following interesting passage occurs:

" 'In Phaeacia' (the rottenest poem in the book) should appear in *Everyman* and 'Taoping' in *The Spectator* (eh, what? the citadel of respectability stormed!) this week. Did you sec Solomon Eagle's extremely amusing jibe at me in *The New Statesman?* Who is he? Am getting fatter and stronger. I hope to be in England producing my play this autumn. Why docs no one translate great French books like Jules Rcnard's *Lanterne Sourde* or Claude Farrere's marvellous *Battaille?"*

The Golden Journey to Samarkand was issued in the early part of July, and was a success almost from the first. Mr. Frank Savery has kindly given me permission to print the following letter analysing the contents of the book, which Flecker addressed to him from Lcysin at the time of its appearance:

"Hotel Belvedere,
"Leysin.

"(July 1913) Saturday.

"My dearest Franko,

"Ever so many thanks for your letter of criticism. Helle told me particularly to tell you that she agreed with you practically in everything. So do I. I think you underrate 'Santorin'—much admired by Dunsany, by the way. 'Lord Arnaldos' was after all a translation. Otherwise I agree with you, particularly in your damnations. I might explain that the Publishers wrote asking if I had anything for them at once and I very hurriedly replied—nothing but a new volume of poetry. I packed off a weird collection of stuff to make up a volume—including a revision of *The Bridge of Fire.* I then sat down to write the book—and it was *after I got the proofs* I managed to hoof out all sorts of godless rot, and replace them by 'In Hospital,' 'Brumana', 'Taoping'; and also just at the last minute I suddenly rewrote 'The Gates of Damascus' and enlarged it. There are I reckon still two rotten poems in the book—'Phaeacia' (an unconscious imitation of Yeats and Jack Beazley) and the 'Sacred Incident'—both of which I should, however, describe as harmless rather than offensive.

"It may amuse you to know a little of the history of these things: you certainly deserve to be told if it amuses you.

"The Preface. Written when I was pretty ill—like all the later poems—is not quite sincere. My chief desire was to say what I thought was wanted to shake up the critics: not to expound the essence of poetry, which would take 500 pages. The beginning is ugly enough with 'theory' repeated so often—but I re-read the end with pleasure and thank you for the word 'manly'.

"(2) The Epilogue is the last scene of *Hassan*—or rather I wrote *Hassan* to lead up to the Epilogue. A moonlight scene, a sudden burst into poetry (you know my trick from 'Don Juan'), and the singer with the beautiful voice is the chief character of the play—the famous singer Ishak—*atiima naturaliter christiana.* If it doesn't give the public shivers down the back when it is acted in its place, I'll never write again.

"(3) 'The Gates of Damascus.' I consider this to be my greatest poem—and I am glad you seem to agree. It was inspired

by Damascus itself by the way, I loathe the East and the Easterns and spent all my time there dreaming of Oxford. Yet it seems—even to hardened Orientalists—that I understand.

"(4) 'Yasmin' is an anthology piece. It is part of *Hassan*—written for it and should sound well in its place.

"(5) 'Saadabad' is with 'Areiya', perhaps the only poem with individual passion I have written. Though verses 1, 3 and 4 of Part I are translations from the Turkish, the poem is the most passionately sincere I have ever written. It was written straight out and not a line revised.

"(6) Of course the 'Turkish Lady' won't wash. The poem is a pretty close translation in the book.

"(7) 'Doris,' dear Frank—it's very short and I don't think it's easy to say how sincere. Mightn't it come out of the Greek Anthology? 1 mean by the ship the Ship of Dreams.

"(8) Glad you like 'Hyali'. I never saw the island (which exists), but I passed it in the night—and I have seen many isles of the Aegean.

"(9) Don't you think the *legend* at least *of* 'Santorin' one of the loveliest in the world? I wonder if you weird Catholics realise that the Middle Ages is still in flower in the Aegean. 'That man married a Syren,' said a peasant once to my wife—and showed the man!

"(10) A ship, an isle, you don't mention. A very subtile poem, Frank, and when you read Henri de Regnier you will find some more.

"(11) 'Oak and Olive.' A jest after all in the good old manner. No, I wouldn't have it out of the volume, though, of course, it's very slight.

"(12) 'Brumana.' Horrible misprint—in lines you quoted—*mountain* should be *mountains.*

"Poem sincere enough, good God, was thinking of the Bournemouth pines.

"Lavdanon is the Greek name of the Cytisus, a rock rose which makes the woods lovely in Syria. It has a queer little scent.

"(13) 'Areiya' was, as it says, written in just three minutes and never altered.

"(14) My wife likes 'Bryan': I hate it—or rather find it cold. But the story (a Greek story again) is jolly enough.

"(15) Damned clever of me to write a poem as far out of myself

as the 'Painter's Mistress'. My wife has not ceased wondering. Suggested by a play of Battaille's and written on the Lebanon.

"(16) Oh, I did sweat when very ill over 'Taoping', and turned it from rot into a good poem of workmanship. Suggested by a strange amazing book of one Daguerches called *Consolata Fille du Soleil* . . .

"Concerning the Chinese. Frank, I almost accuse you of insincerity. Do you really shudder at a Japanese print? Do you really believe in the 'inhuman Oriental' myth? Or do you think you *ought* to believe in the myth?

"Don't you think that the healthy honest way for a European to look at a Chinaman or a mgger is to laugh at him? Don't you think they arc there for the joy of the picturesque—as I portray them m 'Taoping'?

"The Turks too. I hate them because I am a modern civilised man. Catholics should and do love them. Why is Turkey rotten? Why is the Turk an inefficient gentleman? Islam? Nonsense: not entirely. Simply because he thinks middle age and is middle age. Saladin and Richard were both very near each other. They talked the same language. They both believed in Aristotle. But Saladin is still Saladm—arguing with a twist—because his 'Aristotle' was translated for him and he never learnt Latin at the Renaissance. Richard is now King George V. . . .

"Do read Paul Fort. Perhaps the greatest of all French poets. The humour is wonderful. Have just read 'Mortcerf' and an introduction which quotes the most amazingly jolly things.

" 'Du temps qu'on allait encore aux baleines, si lorn que ca faisait, mat'lot, plcurer nos belles, y avait sur chaque route un Jesus en croix, y avait des marquis couverts de dcntellcs, y avait la Saintc Vicrgc et .y avait le R01.'

"2. 'Du temps qu'on allait encore aux baleines, si loin que ca faisait, mat'lot, pleurer les belles, y avait des marins qui avaient la foi, et des grands seigneurs qui crachaient sur elle, et y avait la Sainte Vierge, ct y avait le Roi.'

"3. 'Eh bien, a present tout le mondc est content, e'est pae pour dire, mat'lot, mais on est content! Y a plus de grands seigneurs ni Jesus qui tiennent, y a la Republique et y a l'Presidcnt, et *y a plus de baleines.'*

"That should send you round to the Bookshop.

"So sorry you have neuralgia: hope you are better.

"Hassan nearly ended. You shall see it when complete.

"Write again soon as your letters are a great joy.

"I don't believe in Barbey's Catholicism a bit. See Jules Lemaitre on him.

"Thine,

JAMES.

Flecker at about this time moved from Leysin to Montana, and the next letter from him which I preserved came from the latter place and is dated August 31.

"I have been a most shameful time answering your delightful and enthusiastic letter of congratulation, for which I thank you most heartily. The reviews—especially *The Times* and the *Morning Post*—have been good enough for Shakespeare: I do hope they will even be enough to sell a few copies of the book; I should hate Goschens to be badly had by the transaction.

"I have been bothered lately trying to find a new place to live in, and only got here after a frightful lot of bother. 1 am pretty sick of life. I've finished my play, but I don't suppose it will ever be played.

"Would you be so awfully good as to tell me what a poor—— ought to do if he wants to make a little gold by writing (and drawing—my wife can draw) advertisements? I mean, is it any good just inventing advertisements of Pears' soap and sending it straight to Manager, Pears' Soap, or ought one to work through an advertising agency, and, if so, do you know one? Your experience of these things is so vast. It seems to me one might do something paying in that line.

"I don't think you answered me about my idea of making a Xmas illustrated book out of my Eastern poems. Trelawney could do it very well.

"I shall write a book one day on how to spend money in a jolly way, for men of moderate income (£500-£1,500 a year). Tell the——they ought to travel. The book will sell by the hundred thousand million on the railways' bookstalls.

"Do tell me about advertisements.

"Ever yours,

"JAMES ELROY FLECKER.

"Hope you had or are having a sumptuous holiday."

From this time onwards, inspired perhaps by the splendid reception which nearly all the critics accorded to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand,* Flecker sent mc a stream of projects for books, none of which he was ever destined to carry out. The only one which he seems seriously to have begun is a translation of "Virgil, Aeneid VI", of which in a letter dated "Sunday", he writes as follows:

"1 have to thank you sincerely for the raising of my royalty. Would you let me know about when you expect to publish *The King of Alsander?*

"My next book is half-written. It is, I'm afraid, rather horrifying. This is the title—

'An interpretation
in Blank verse
of
Virgil, Aeneid VI,
based *on* the poetic value of the Sounds,
together with the Latin text
and ten prefaces
by
James Elroy Flecker,
120 pp. Wide margins. Paper, 3/6 (?)
Ready in February.'

"Seriously, this is exactly the title I intend to give the book, with which I am well advanced already. The book is simply an attempt to do a translation of 'Virgil' as satisfactory as Fitzgerald's 'Omar'—a translation which will utterly eclipse the very numerous and very feeble attempts hitherto existing.

"The ten prefaces will be as combative as Bernard Shaw's, and occupy some forty pages. They will be on the translation of sounds, on blank verse, on Hell literature, *on* preceding translations of 'Virgil', *on* 'Modern Scholarship', *on* the 'Modern Spirit', etc., and should irritate everyone as effectually as my preface to 'Samarkand'."

The letter quoted above was sent to the firm, but the envelope contained also a letter addressed to myself, giving more details about his project of translating the 6th Aeneid.

"Confidential

"Hotel Stephani,
''Montana-sur-Sierre,
"Switzerland.
Sunday.

"My dear Goldring,

"This accompanies a somewhat startling announcement to Messrs. Max. G. that I want them to publish the 6th Aeneid of Virgil translated by me into blank verse. Seriously, the translation, of which 200 lines out of 900 arc ready, will be so striking and the prefaces so combative that I think produced in the way I suggest it may bring in quite good money. Other books of the Aeneid may follow—but I can't pledge myself.

"Suppose 500 are sold at 7/6. Take 75 off for review. Call it £200 for the firm after the Bookseller's profits. Production even in fine style, with advertisements, *£60* at most. A tenner for the author and £130 for the publisher and there you are.

"Many thanks for your letter. I'm glad you like the corrections to the novel. It was very fair-minded of Goschens to give me the increased royalty.

"Would you tell me what you think of this: A publisher—friend of mine—writes me (as I told Goschen) will I write a book *The Future of Poetry* (2/6 book). Offers mc £25 down *in advance* of 10 per cent royalty.

"Do people ever accept contracts like these, my dear Goldring, unless they're starving? I would rather like to do the book and I *might* get chapters of it into Reviews. But 3 months' work for £25? To a dramatic author whose work Tree is considering with enthusiasm—but there's many a slip, etc.—it don't seem brilliant and I haven't yet closed. Of course it's damned unlikely such a book would sell more than 2,000 and that I should ever get more royalty. And if it sold 10,000 I should net the not enormous sum of £1oo.

"Please keep the above confidential. As I have to rely upon my pen now I shall have to be a bit snarky about contracts. I must have at least the chance of making good money. I think I have enough followers to be able to sell the Virgil at a stiff price and with a stiff profit, but I shall want a good fat share in the latter.

"If Goschens don't want it I shall try tl
issue it at about eleven guineas!

"There is perpetual sunshine here and perpetual leisure. Otherwise there's no particular reason for my continued existence. I get neither better nor worse and wait all day for news of *Hassan.*

"Ever yours—with many thanks for many troubles undertaken on my behalf,

"JAMES ELROY FLECKER."

As the discerning reader will easily gather from this letter, Flecker really had no commercial or money-grubbing mstinct whatever. His attempts to be businesslike and "snarky" were a delightful *tour deforce,* and they probably did not deceive himself. As everyone who knows anything about the hard facts of book production will be aware, the offer of an advance of £25 for a half-crown volume on a theme unlikely to attract a big public, was not unreasonable; whilc the poet's estimate of the publisher's probable profit from the sale of 425 copies of his translation of the 6th Aeneid at 7/6 can only be described as optimistic.

In another undated letter, written about this period, from Montana, Flecker described one more projected book, some notes for which may have been found among his papers.

"My dear Goldring,

"(1) Messrs.———have sent me the enclosed. Will you tell me what to reply? As far as I read my contract the Foreign rights are not available. What do they mean though—translation, America, or Tauchnitz? Are they any damned use, anyhow? If the 'K. of A.' begins to move, I'd like to get it hitched on to Tauchnitz.

"Please return the letter and answer if possible by return.

"(2) I *have,* it is true, a vague scheme for a book. I have quaint ideas on most tilings—literature, of course, but also current politics—and a million other things. I find that exile makes it useless trying to work these ideas up into articles, and also that if I do turn them into articles, all my dear ideas become heavy and dull. I don't, for instance, a bit want to write a long review on H. G. Wells. But I do want to say and state my

opinion for posterity that his latest work is pompous drivel, and that Mr. Polly is one of the best things ever written in any language.

"I might call the book *Poet's Porridge,* and should write it very quickly. Under headings: Literature, Politics, etc., it would consist of little brief paragraphs of rather pithy comment. You may not know that I am a violent phil-Hcllene: that will come in also. (I am writing a magnificent coronation ode for King Constantine.)

"Just mention the idea to Goschens, will you? Then if they'd like to see a bit, I'll scrape together a few pages and send them as a specimen. There is something novel about a poet damning round on current events: only, of course, I ought to be better known than I am to get a hearing."

Flecker, despite much illness, seems to have been fairly active during his stay in Montana. I had another very long and com-phcated business letter from him, sent from the Hotel Stephani, chiefly about the cost of the corrections to *The King of Alsander.* I am very glad to gather from it that the firm let him off lightly and raised his royalties. At the end of this letter he refers to an "excellent and sensible article by a lady called Hodgson, on 'Samarkand' in December *Gentlewoman* with which 1 was very pleased".

What I take to be the last communication which I had from Flecker from Montana is undated like the others, but was evidently sent soon after the publication of *The King of Alsander.*

"My dear Goldring,

"The advertisements are excellent. I hope the book will 'move': there is time yet.

"1 suggest (tho' no one ever yet took note of my advertising suggestions) that *The Times'* review, which wasn't a review but a remarkably clever synopsis, should be printed in full on the front page of the cap, if it can be done inexpensively.

"You know my play *Hassan* is going to be played in London this autumn if ail goes well: I've got an excellent collaborator. Goschens shall print it—but only after it's played and that's a long way off yet.

"Otherwise I try to revise another older play of mine and when not sufficiently inspired for that I do the Virgil, which Gilbert Murray has pronounced to be the best translation of him in English.

"I can't work much, and haven't at present any original ideas in my head. I'm only just now managing to get up to lunch after 3 months' illness. Hope to go to Locarno soon—will send you address if 1 move. As for poems I've only written 4 since 'Samarkand' and they be small ones. Clement Shorter offered me three guineas, and I've only been able to send one, whereas he asked for two.

"Re *King of Alsander* Dramatic Rights. 1 know that signature of J. N. Raphael under many an inadequate verse translation from the French and some fairly adequate Paris gossip. Of course make a bargain for the stage rights. . . . I will write formally on this subject if you like. But I would like to work the play in *collaboration* with J. N. R. if possible—a collaboration in which I should take the minor part.

"I owe you many thanks for having introduced me *to* Goschcns. They are certainly advertising excellently. I shall be not only disappointed but astonished if the 'K. of A.' don't move. The *Evening Standard* review and *Globe* are better quoting than *The Times*. The *Westminster* review is a mad muddle—it seems to think I'm a plot. How reviewers love prefaces—it's astonishing.

"If the Virgil can't be published by Oxford Press or Riccardi, I may get Goschcns to print a few copies, partly at my expense, paper bound and no advertising. Perhaps *if I* got G. Murray to write a preface they would even be pleased to do it. But I prefer to publish it in the august quietude of Oxford if possible.

"That Poetry and Drama *do* irritate me (I don't refer to your excellent review) with its childish anti-God rubbish (we're about 200 years ahead *of* these asses, on the Continent, in the middle of a Catholic reaction, and we leave that sort of vulgarity to the plcbs) and its ridiculous abuse of Tennyson and other Victorians. Do they really imagine———writes as well as Tennyson or Kipling? It's astonishing. Do write again. Do you ever sec D———? If so remember me to her fondly.

"Yours,

"JAMES ELKOY FLECKER."

Flecker went on to Locarno in the spring of 1914, and I have only been able to discover one postcard sent from there though he must have written several times. The address on the card is "Pension Rheingold, 8 via dei Fiori, Locarno", and the date on the postmark is 18th April, 1914.

"I am asked tentatively what I'll take for the rights of having 'Alsander' *translated into German. £15* or £20 suggested, of which I suppose Messrs. Goschen take half. Shall I close if offered £15? Don't think I'll get more (Langen's, Munich). Can't it get on to Tauchnitz?

"Please send copy of 'Alsander' to———for review, also copies of 'Alsander' and ' Samarkand' to———. He is a worthy fellow who offers to puff me illimitably in America: he offers to pay for the books—but I hope you can send him a free copy as he is full of youthful enthusiasms and promises to review the book in some rag or other."

To judge from the following extract from a letter to Mr. Donald Robertson, the change to Locarno made the poet more cheerful even if it did him no good.

"84.14.

"My dear Donald,

"What a pest! Are you going to make me regret having quitted the fir trees, snows, and thaws of that infernal Montana?

"And exactly 2 days ago, having procured from Gomme an address of yours in S. Remo, I wrote to you there begging you to try and return by the Gothard and see me.

"But look here. Make a sporting effort. Come and see me all the same! It's a long journey because the steamer from Stresa here (you ought to go to Stresa to see the Borromean islands unless you know them: otherwise Baveno is a few minutes nearer) is slow (4 hours), but the trip is a very jolly one. . . . "

In May he moved to Davos Platz—for Flecker, as for so many other invalids, the final resting-place before the end. The last three of the letters or postcards which 1 was able to retrieve from my files were sent from Davos. The first of these, a card, is dated June I.

"My dear Goldring,

"(I) Please send a copy of *The Golden Journey* to———at my expense.

"(2) Do send me any news there is going.

"(3) No, my dear fellow, *don't* ask me if I can write a book about Greece—descriptive tour. I can only preserve the rotten remnants of my life by lying in bed here for years—in the ugliest hole God ever created.

"(4) But I do intend to publish my great ode to Greece separately with a forty-page preface of a most violent kind, full of abuse and invective of pro-Turks, pro-Bulgars, the Liberal Press, with history of the Eastern question. I should much value an assurance that Goschens would take this; it might create a bit of a stir.

"(5) I' m still waiting to hear from Oxford about my 'Virgil', and haven't done a line more to it, or, indeed, to anything for months. I need encouragement. Tell Goschens I want to write a play on Judith, and I ought to revise my 'Don Juan', and I've got to work *Hassan* with my collaborator. And day after day I do nothing. I *must* try for that photo: *The Sphere* wants one too, and a poem!

"Ever yours,

"JAMES ELROY FLECKER.

'I' d give all my poems to be a healthy navvy."

The next one probably arrived about a fortnight later.

"Hotel Buol: Davos Platz,
"Switz.

"Dear Goldring,

"(1) I enclose photo. Will send 12 more as soon as ready. Please dispose to most important customers.

"(2) I enclose biographical details. As I have *no notion* how these should be got up, will you *please* be so kind as to work 'em up for me and have a few copies typed to send to enquirers. One can't do these things oneself: it's so grotesque.

"(3) Would you let me know if the offer of Goschens of £1*o* in advance for the 'Virgil' is definite: as 1 want to know. The Oxford Press would take it.

"(4) Please send me any money you can.

"(5) Please sec about an American press agency for me.

"I'm so damned ill I'm almost in despair. Sorry I wrote a crusty letter last time. Seems I've lost the Polignac prize, damn it. Murray & Yeats voted for me. Damn every thing.''

As far as I can recall, all Flcckcr's projects for books were welcomed by me on behalf of my firm, though not a page of MS. ever reached us of any of them. In regard to the translation of Virgil, I felt bound to urge him, in his own interests, to let the Oxford Press issue it, if they would. At this period, although it was within a few months of his death, I had no idea that he was in any imminent danger or that a complete recovery was impossible.

The last letter I can find from him is dated October 12, 1914.

"Maison Baratelli,
"Davos Platz.

"My dear Goldring,

"I should much like to hear from you—but perhaps you're at the war. Wish I were! We've got a flat and I amuse myself by lying in bed all day. I can write only a *very* little in the morning. Have pupped a war poem and some prose. Could we send a dozen of our novels to the Navy: the officers, it seems, have only too much time for reading! And they must weary of the *Strands* and illustrateds people send them. If my War poem gets published by *The Times* (80 lines blank verse) we might make a Broadsheet of it.

"Unlikely, however, that *Times* will be up to scratch. Do give me news: post is quite safe: about 7 days. Let's have news of you. Why don't you send mc your novel?"

He died on January 3, 1915.

v

"By the way, who *is* Flecker? Is he any good?"

It was Ezra Pound, I remember, who asked me this question, in all good faith, some time after the publication of *The Golden Journey to Samarkand.* The question impressed me

because it seemed to emphasise one of Flecker's most valuable qualities: he was never fashionable, never joined any mutual admiration society, and never depended, for inspiration, upon the reactions of any gang or clique. He met very few of his brother-poets. After his Oxford days he could never be said to have belonged to any particular set; and though he was, with some notable exceptions, generously treated by reviewers (despite his strictures upon them), he was never boomed by any one circle of critics. I don't suppose that he even knew the names of any of the critics who noticed his books in the principal London papers. The literary people who admired him were scattered, widely divergent types, mostly unknown to one another. As a poet he stood upon his own feet. He followed his own path, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and as soon as he had "found himself" he was apparently but little influenced by any of his contemporaries. Flecker, at a very early age, must have been perfectly conscious that he was a poet; and, having a passion for the art of poetry for its own sake, he set to work to make himself as fine a poet as it was within his nature and capacity to become. Allied with his extraordinary facility went an equally extraordinary power of restraint and of self-criticism; and he knew all about the value of taking pains. In his school days and at Oxford, his output of verse was enormous. He imitated all his favourite poets fluently and easily, and probably with a fairly clear notion in his head that these outpourings were metrical exercises and nothing more. As a corrective to his gush of experiment—the first delighted leaps from the earth of one who is determined at last to fly—he early acquired the habit of making translations, and there is no doubt that the labour and concentration involved in them were of immense help to him throughout his life, while the translations themselves, at their best, now form by no means the most negligible part of his *Collected Poems.*

Flecker's career as a poet is one of unbroken progress up to and including *The Golden Journey to Samarkand.* And if some of the work which followed the publication of this volume seems to show a falling off, it must be ascribed less to any diminution

of his capacities or inspiration than to the ravages of the disease from which he died. Even so, four poems at least, written after the publication of the *Golden Journey*—"Stillness", "The Pensive Prisoner", "The Old War-ship Ablaze", and "The Old Ships"—are equal to anything he ever did. If the *Collected Poems* has its dull pages, it must always be borne in mind that it contains much the publication or re-publication of which the poet himself never authorised. The *Juvenilia* are, on the whole, of little interest except for the second Glion poem, "Ghon-Evcning",—where we have an early indication of his love of precision, of the clear image and the vivid picture as opposed to a lazy, emotional vagueness.

From Glion when the sun declines
The world below is clear to see:
I count the escalading pines
Upon the rocks of Meillcrie.

Like a dull bee the steamer plies
And settles on the jutting pier:
The barques, strange sailing butterflies,
Round idle headlands idly veer.

These two stanzas achieve with success the effect aimed at, and the more closely they are examined the better the workmanship appears. The two remaining stanzas of the poem are not quite up to the same level. "Glion-Evcning" is dated July 1904, and was thus written before the poet was twenty.

It was towards the end of his time at Oxford that Flccker's real personality first began to show itself in his work. In the first stanza of "A New Year's Carol", Flecker sings unmistakably with his own voice:

Awake, awake! The world is young
For all its weary years of thought:
The starkest fights must still be fought,
The most surprising songs be sung.

And to get any real insight into the poet's nature it must also be realised that the poem "Envoy" is equally authentic, equally revealing:

The young men leap, and toss their golden hair,
Run round the land, or sail across the seas:
But one was stricken with a sore disease,—
The lean and swarthy poet of despair.

Know me, the slave of fear and death and shame,
A sad Comedian, a most tragic Fool,
Shallow, imperfect, fashioned without rule,
The doubtful shadow of a demon flame.

His dejections were inevitably the counterpart of his enthusiasms, and could safely be deduced from them, even if he had never given them poetic expression.

Flecker's first volume of verse, *The Bridge of Fire,* issued by Mr. Elkin Mathews in his "Vigo Cabinet Series" in 1907, though it contains a good many pieces that the poet himself afterwards suppressed or re-wrote, bears at the same time very vividly the impress of his personality and has in it the promise, at least, of what he was to become. We can see, as in "From Grenoble" and "Riouperoux", his love for places and for place-names already inspiring him; and he is high-spirited even when he is being "decadent", and serving us Kubla Khan with a dash of absinthe—as in the two sonnets of Bathrolairc. These two sonnets must have given him enormous pleasure to write, and his voice, for those who remember it, is audible in every line. They are humorous, imaginative, and extremely adroit, and it seems to me (biased as I may be by a certain sentimentality) that the years have treated them more kindly than some of the other poems of this period. "The Ballad of Hampstead Heath" is an example of undergraduate humour—brilliant overnight, but rather flat the next morning—and only useful in its place in the *Collected Poems* as a contrast to the careful workmanship surrounding it.

The faults of taste, occasional cheapness, and mere "cleverness", which can be found in *The Bridge of Fire* (mingled though they are with a youthful freshness and e*lan),* have also their interest, in that they show us, by contrast, how steadily Flecker's work

improved as he grew older. In *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* period he would not have been capable of such a poem as "Mary Magdalen". And his later version of "Tenebris interlucentem" is an enormous improvement on the one contained in his first printed volume. Not all his alterations and revisions were as successful as this. In the little poem called "We that were friends" he made a change in the first verse without improving it, while leaving in the second the unfortunate line "whom dreams delight and passions *please".* (Whatever passions may do, it is difficult to think of them as "pleasing" anybody—except perhaps a fish to whom a passion might be a "pleasing" surprise.) And his blue pencil has failed to delete the epithet "great" in the penultimate line, an epithet which is, to say the least, unhappy. Another alteration which some of those who possess *The Bridge of Fire* will regret occurs in the last verse of "The Ballad of the Student in the South". The first line of this verse originally ran: "We're of the people, you and I." In the version contained in the *Collected Poems* this has been changed to "For we arc simple, you and I"—a much weaker, because more "literary", way of saying the same thing.

Neither in *The Bridge of Fire* nor in the more mature *Forty-two Poems* can Flecker be said quite to have found himself. Up to 1910 he still wanted, for some unknown reason, to write poems about London, and he retained enough affection for his failures in this direction to print two of the worst. "The Ballad of the Londoner" docs not come off, while "The Ballad of Camden Town" is perhaps the only one of Flecker's pieces in which, by wallowing solemnly in false sentiment, he becomes unconsciously funny. In the poems of this first period—with the splendid exceptions of the "Ballad of Iskander", of "Pillage" and of "The War Song of the Saracens"—it is when he is most subjective, when his poems are most intimate and deeply felt, that he is most successful. As examples, one may quote "The Sentimentalist", "No Coward's Song", "To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence", and the beautiful "Dulce Lumen, Triste Numen, Suave Lumen Luminum". The first-mentioned of these poems shows—what is also apparent elsewhere in his work—that

Flecker understood the romantic side of friendship as only very few English poets have understood it.

It was not until Flecker went to the East, and found in travel in Turkey, Asia Minor, Greece, and among the islands of the Aegean the greatest inspiration of his life, that he really came into his own. *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* is the book of his maturity in which all his finest poetic qualities are displayed. In technique it marks a notable advance. By this time he had formed, or rather adopted, a definite theory of poetry, and it was a theory from the application of which, at that stage of his development, he gained a great deal. That, had he lived through the war, the theory would have been cast aside, there arc, at least, indications. But speculations of this sort are fruitless, and it is the work which he actually accomplished which alone concerns us. Not only is Fleckcr's own assertion, made in a letter which I have quoted, that the Oriental poems m *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* are "unique in English", fully justified, but it can, I think, be stated that few poems in our literature show a more passionate love of England than "Brumana", a poem, if ever there was one, wrung from the heart by the agony of exile. I quote the opening verse:

Oh shall I never be home again ?
Meadows of England shining in the rain
Spread wide your daisied lawns: your ramparts green
With briar fortify, with blossom screen
Till my jar morning—and O streams that slow
And pure and deep through plains and playlands go,
For me your love and all your kingcups store,
And—dark militia of the southern shore,
Old fragrant friends—preserve me the last lines
Of that long saga which you sung me, pines,
When, lonely boy, beneath the chosen tree
I listened, with my eyes upon the sea.

By nature, I do not think that Flecker ever had any tendency to be didactic; but he very likely had a strong inclination to be sentimental and subjective, an inclination which he deliberately

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restrained and of which he was himself rather afraid. The repression which he exercised in this respect has earned for his poetry a reputation for frigidity which is, on the whole, undeserved. He probably adopted his Parnassian theory, in the first instance, as a discipline and a corrective. He knew that both his "feelings" and his verbal exuberance needed pruning and canalising: and the Parnassians offered him precisely what he required.

"A careful study of this theory" (the Parnassian theory), he says, in his preface to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, "however old-fashioned it may by now have become in France, would, I am convinced, benefit English critics and poets, for both our poetic criticism and our poetry are in chaos. It is a Latin theory, and therefore the more likely to supply the defects of the Saxon genius. . . . The Parnassian school," he continues, "was a classical reaction against the pcrfcrvid sentimentality and extravagance of some French romantics. The Romantics in France, as in England, had done their powerful work, and infinitely widened the scope and enriched the language of poetry. It remained for the Parnassians to raise the technique of their art to a height which should enable them to express the subtlest ideas in powerful and simple verse. . . . The French Parnassian has a tendency to use traditional forms, and even to employ classical subjects. His desire in writing poetry is to create beauty: his inclination is toward a beauty somewhat statuesque. He is apt to be dramatic and objective rather than intimate. The enemies of the Parnassians have accused them of cultivating unemotional frigidity and upholding an austere view of perfection. The unanswerable answers to all criticism are the works of Heredia, Lcconte de Lisle, Samain, Henri de Regnier, and Jean Moreas . . ."

These passages arc not only interesting in themselves, but they illuminate the poet's attitude towards his own work, and enable us to guess that he had as shrewd a notion as anyone could have of his own gifts and weaknesses. Indeed, it may be said that part of Flecker's genius lay in his realisation of his capacities. He knew what he could do, and we rarely find him groping

after things which are too high for him. I think it can nowhere be said of him that he "wrought better than he knew"; and to judge from his love of revision and of emendation he seems to have had an almost exaggerated distrust of what Mr. Arthur Symons has somewhcrc called "the plenary inspiration of first thoughts". His hatred of sloppy writing, "native wood notes", and temperamental gush had its counterpart in his devotion to the classics, and his resulting desire to create, in his poetry, a "beauty somewhat statuesque", marmoreal, indestructible. Greek names thrilled him all his life, and one can imagine that nothing gave him greater delight than to fit such names as Hylas, Aeolus, Orcithyia, into a setting of verse. But easily traceable as is his love of Greek and Roman poetry throughout all his work, it is possible, nevertheless, that the most fruitful literary influence which inspired him was that of Sir Richard Burton, the whole of whose "Kasidah" he had, as a boy, taken the trouble to transcribe. Perhaps one should qualify this by saying that it was not so much Burton as the flavour of Persian and Arabic poetry conveyed to him through Burton, which so fertilised his mind as to make it possible for him, in the fulness of time, to give us "Gates of Damascus", the Prologue and Epilogue of *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* and his play *Hassan.* There is a rare and magical beauty in such lines as these which it requires no trained car to discover:

I am the gate that fears no fall: the Mihrab of Damascus wall,
The bridge of booming Sinai: the Arch of Allah all in all.

O spiritual pilgrim, rise: the night has grown her single horn:
The voices of the souls unborn are half adream with Paradise.

To Meccah thou hast turned in prayer with aching heart and eyes that burn:
Ah, Hajji, whither wilt thou turn when thou art there, when thou art there?

All through "Gates of Damascus", and in such poems as "Saada-bad", "Jasmin", and the "Hammam Name", we have the East, the real East, as it is given us nowhere else in English poetry.

At the time of the publication of *The Golden Journey to Samarkand,* as has been seen, Flecker was already seriously ill. Whenever he had any strength to do so, be wrote, and when he could not write he lay in bed, dreaming of the great poem which he would accomplish before his eyes closed for ever. The War came to him as the great occasion for which all his life he had been looking, the occasion to which the poet must at all costs rise greatly. "The Burial in England" was his last tremendous effort. He fought for life while he was writing it, fought for strength to finish it. It is an heroic attempt, and thus to his friends there is something sacred about these lines wrung from the poet's brain by so gigantic an effort of will. Criticism, however, must care nothing for sentiment, and if one can put aside the circumstances in which it was written, one has to admit that the poem is a failure. It strains all through at the big thing, the big effect, and never reaches it. It is *voulu,* laboured: it does not ring true. Its thought has the ephemeral qualities of the newspaper leading article at the end *of* 1914—when leading articles were scarcely endowed with prophetic insight. Peace, "angry and in arms" is represented, we find by:

The same laughing, invincible, tough men
Who gave Napoleon Europe like a loaf,
For slice and portion,—not so long ago!

In cold blood, their change of heart seems unduly rapid . . . But no: of all poems, this one ought not *to* be examined in cold blood. It is the last noble gesture of a dying artist, and we can leave it at that.

If Flecker did not succeed in his effort to write a war-poem on the grand scale, at least in two or three of the shorter pieces which he wrote towards the end of his life, he reaches his highest level. The two poems, "Stillness" and "The Pensive Prisoner", both of them intimate and personal, are among the most beautiful things that he ever produced. And they indicate, also, a tendency to free himself from the Parnassian shackles. Here is the last stanza of "Stillness":

Then twittering out in the night my thought-birds fee,
I am emptied of all my dreams:
I only hear Earth turning, only see
Ether s long bankless streams.
And only know I should drown if you laid not your hand on me.

And here the first verse of "The Pensive Prisoner":

My thoughts came drifting down the Prison where I lay—
Through the Windows of their Wings the stars were shining—
The wings bore me away—the russet Wings and grey
With feathers like the moon-bleached Flowers—I was a God reclining:
Beneath me lay my Body's Chain and all the Dragons born of Pain
As I burned through the Prison Roof to walk on Pavement shining.

This is not the occasion to attempt to "place" Flecker as a poet. Anything in the nature of a final judgment upon his poetry must be left to some professional critic, unmoved by personal memories and aided in his task by that master-critic, Time. My own ideas about Flccker's work have modified in several respects during the seven years which have elapsed since the articles on which this sketch is based were printed in the now defunct *Academy,* His apparent materialism, which seemed to me at one time to limit his range, I have come to believe was no more than superficial. Flecker for many years used to be fond of saying that he was an agnostic, and perhaps he thought it was true. But in the last period of his life he definitely returned to Christianity. It is significant that his last present to his mother—sent shortly before his death—was a copy of the New Testament in the Tauchnitz edition, which he had specially bound for her, so that it resembled, exactly, his own copy. He was evidently influenced by the "Catholic Reaction" on the Continent (see his letter on p. 57) and had come to regard what he calls "childish anti-God rubbish" with impatience, as a kind of vulgarity liable to attack the half-fledged. This point may appear to have but little direct bearing on Flccker's poetry, but it seems to me essential to an understanding of the man who wrote it.

As a poet, it will be allowed that Flecker's description of the Parnassians in the Preface to *The Golden Journey to Samarkand* applied also, in the main, to himself. Like the Parnassians he loathed romantic egoism; like them he had a fine sense of language, using words and epithets with the nicest scholarship and taste; and again, like them, he preferred as a rule to derive his inspiration from the classics, from history, from mythology, from places and from beautiful names, rather than from the details of daily life and personal emotions. As a poet of "actualites" he was rarely a success; and though his mind was often filled with ideas of writing "magnificent odes"—in honour of King Constantine's Coronation, or on some similar theme—he was never able successfully to accomplish anything of the sort. His revised version of "God Save the King" is merely funny, with its exotic literary airs and graces—

Till Erins Island lawn
Echoes the dulcet-drawn
Song with a cry of Dawn—
God Save the King!

—and "The Burial in England" was labour spent in vain. We need not regret these failures, for the inception of such poems—and they only form a small proportion of his work—came evidently from the head rather than from the heart. Perhaps the poems were due (despite his Parnassian theory) to a wrong idea of what constitutes a "great" poet—the "great poet" which he was always determined to become.

It was hardly ever life—either in its ordinariness or in its strangeness—which Flecker succeeded in transmuting into poetry. His work is an escape from life, and only incidentally an interpretation of it. His emotional range is limited, perhaps deliberately. His greatest strength lies in his power to create pictures compact, clear in outline and rich in colour; and in the haunting music of which he had the secret. *Emaux et Camees* would not have made a bad alternative title for his collected poems. There are times when his art seems to resemble that of the jeweller and of

the worker in precious metals. His poems, if they rise but rarely to the highest imaginative level, are yet hammered and worked till they attain a hard, indestructible perfection. They have an impressive solidity, and it is difficult to believe that verse of such a character will be quickly forgotten. It depends on nothing transitory for its interest; and it contains no message to grow stale.

In the generations to come we can imagine that students of Literature will remember of Flecker that in an age of anarchy in verse he took the trouble to become a master of technique; in an age of formlessness he upheld the finest traditions of form. What was beautiful twenty centuries ago is beautiful still; and, as Flecker has told us himself, it was with the single object of creating beauty that his poems were written. Who can read them and imagine for a moment that he failed in his object? He only failed, as I have suggested, on the rare occasions when he wrote with other aims than this.

It is hard to believe that the glowing visions which Flecker's poems bring before the mind will prove any less enchanting to readers in the centuries to come than they are to-day, or that his lines, "To a Poet a Thousand Years Hence," will fail to carry their message through the ages to some craftsman as conscientious as himself:

0 friend unseen, unborn, unknown,
Student of our sweet English tongue,
Read out my words at night, alone:
I was a poet, I was young.

Since I can never see your face,
And never shake you by the hand,
I send my soul through time and space
To greet you. You will understand.

VI

Flecker's published prose works consist of an early fantasy called *The Last Generation,* printed by the New Age Press in 1908; *The Grecians: a Dialogue on Education,* issued by J. M.

Dent and Sons, Ltd. in 1910; his solitary novel, *The King of Alsander* (Max Goschen, 1914); a certain number of stray papers, essays and reviews contributed to periodicals, a selection from which was issued by G. Bell and Sons in 1920, under the title *Collected Prose;* and *The Scholar's Italian Book,* an introduction to the study of the Latin origins of Italian, published in 1911 by Mr. David Nutt. His two plays, *Hassan. The Story of Hassan of Bagdad and how he came to make the Golden Journey to Samarkand,* his acknowledged masterpiece, and *Don Juan,* were published after his death. Finally, a selection from his letters under the title *Some Letters from abroad of James Elroy Flecker,* edited by his widow who added a few reminiscences, was published in 1930.

As even the few rather business-like specimens which I have been able to give show clearly enough, Flecker was an easy and engaging correspondent, writing frankly from the heart without literary airs and graces, writing, indeed, precisely as he talked. His total output of prose, intended for publication, was in proportion as restricted as his output of verse which he considered worthy of print. With the exception of *Hassan,* which is in a class by itself, the prose is primarily interesting as shedding a light on the mental make-up, character and personality of the poet. He is at his best when (as in his dialogue, *The Grecians)* his occasional artificiality of style and excess of polish fit in with the general conception and serve to enhance his effects. *The Grecians,* which for some reason has suffered almost complete neglect, is one of his most successful prose efforts. And to read it will assist more towards an understanding of the man and of his poetry than any critical commentary or appreciation could hope to do. In it, with complete sincerity, with no poses, he shows us the holy places of his own mind and describes in detail the things which have enriched it. The conversation is staged now at Bologna, now Pistoia, now Florence. The debate is between two schoolmasters, Edwinson the Classic and Hofman the Scientist, and a "beautiful youth", called by the unromantic name of Harold Smith, who encounters them at Bologna. The youth listens attentively and sympathetically to what the schoolmasters have to say: and then, with much eloquence, expounds

to them his ideas on the subject of education. Finally, at their request, he reads them a paper, on "true education", in which he traces out in detail for Edwinson's and Hofman's benefit, a course of education which he hopes "will appeal to the thoughtful as possible, desirable and sufficient". There is much sound and practical wisdom in this discourse. Flecker was, as we have seen, not only the son of the headmaster of an English public school, but on several occasions himself a schoolmaster. The whole subject of education was one of his deepest and most permanent intellectual interests, and what he has to say in *The Grecians* is the fruit of long thought and considerable experience and inspired by an enthusiastic idealism. There are many passages, particularly those on school discipline, punishment and the treatment of sexual questions which it would be interesting to quote. But Flecker is perhaps most self-revealing when he is treating of the literary training which "Harold Smith" proposes to give in his ideal school, to the selected few who shall be judged worthy of it.

"The three great arts," says the "beautiful youth", "I would place m this order of educational importance—literature, representation, music. . . . But it is literature which appeals especially to educators as being always a criticism of life, however incomplete we may feel that definition to be: through reading literature we enhance our delight in life. . . . We must, therefore, give our boys the most complete literary training possible, not often worrying them by examinations and commentaries, nor ever dreaming to make them acquainted with all the great books of the world before the age of twenty-one." Of adventure-stories they should be given the best—Stevenson, Kipling, and Conrad, or among the minor writers of romance, Anthony Hope, Maurice Hewlett, Gilbert Chesterton. In regard to poetry, "we will not give even our youngest boys inferior so-called patriotic poetry to read, out of the false conception that such despicable stuff is specially suitable to a childish understanding". On the other hand "we will certainly enliven the interest of the young in verse by giving them to read such good stories as 'Sohrab and Rustum', 'Enid and Geraint', or 'The White Ship'."

He has a good deal to say upon how poetry should be read aloud. ". . . They shall read with dignity, slowly, with realisation of the beauty of each word, and of how in verse each word has its value, not only of sense, but of sound and association: they shall pause at the end of the lines and mark the metre subtly and not grossly: and all this may be taught to the wise."

He advocates the teaching of English verse, as opposed to the conventional elegiacs and iambics, and, says he, "we expect our boys to write mock Cicero and Tacitus: why, in the name of common sense, can they not write mock Gibbon or Carlyle? Nor do I think for a minute that these exercises will hinder any from forming in later years an original style, but rather the reverse should happen, for boys so instructed will very clearly understand before they leave us that style is attained by scrupulous care and individuality of expression." The art of verse is to be very diligently taught and the boys are to be initiated "by setting them to write verse translations from poems in other tongues. Our criticism will be ruthless: we shall point out vulgarity of idea, insufficiency of thought, staleness of metaphor, harshness of sound. We shall not necessarily produce great poets by this training, but we shall certainly produce young men who love poetry and (what is rarer still) who understand it. The artist may have an incomplete understanding of poetry; but only the artist can have a complete understanding of it."

The changes which he advocates in the teaching of Latin and Greek will be heartily endorsed by most English public schoolboys who have not forgotten hours of unprofitable boredom. "We shall read very quickly in class, and confine ourselves to works which are either good in themselves, historically interesting, or influential on subsequent thought. We shall divert the young with Homer, easiest of great poets, with Lucian's 'Vera Historia,' with a few legends of old Rome from Livy, and with fairytales from Apuleius. We shall not weary even Grecians with Thucydides when he talks about dreary expeditions into Ætolia; but all Grecians shall read the fate of the Sicilian expedition, and learn by heart the speech of Pericles. Into Demosthenes we will only dip; of Sophocles and Euripides we

will select the finest plays and read them, as well as the Aeschylean trilogy, more than once. Herodotus we shall read through lightly, as is fitting, and we shall take parts in the plays of Aristophanes in merry congress; of Plato we shall never weary, for he is good for the soul. Nor shall we presume to forget Theocritus and the lyric fragments, or those unfading roses of the Anthology, which tell how roses fade. And only for the very young shall we Bowdlcrise anything, since we are dealing, not with urchins, but with the select and chosen few.

"In Latin we will trouble no reasonable soul with Plautus or Terence, or with more of Cicero than is needed to grasp the excellent style of that second-rate intellect. Of Ovid, too, who is only interesting when immoral, we shall read, for the style's sake, some of the duller portions. To the claims of those deathless school-books, the Aeneid of Virgil, the Odes of Horace, and the Satires of Juvenal, we shall submit, for their fame is deserved; Lucretius and Catullus are too obvious to mention; Tibullus is a sleepy fellow; and from Propertius we shall select. Tacitus tells us much history, and is pleasant to read, nor are the letters of Pliny the Younger disagreeable; but Caesar I would abandon to the historical specialist, and Livy I would read in haste. Of Apulcius only one book is essentially disagreeable; the rest is charming, and too long neglected."

By reading on these lines, the youth maintains that the boys will love the classics more and obtain "a fuller understanding of the classical spirit than those to whom Latin and Greek are a ceaseless drudgery and evil. I believe," he says, "that they will learn no less than others have learnt, from these time-honoured studies, that calm and even fervour of mind, that sane and serene love of beautiful things, that freedom from religious bigotry and extravagance which marks the writings of the Greeks, and that sense of arrangement and justice which marks the writings and still more the history of the Romans."

Harold Smith is equally explicit and interesting in his remarks upon what books should be read and what classical works avoided, in the study by his Grecians of French, German, and Italian. His observations upon the Italian language and upon

Italy may be taken as expressing one of the strongest of Flecker's enthusiasms. I quote the passage in full, because of the clear light it casts upon Flecker's personality.

"Italian we shall reinvest with the honour and importance which it has so unjustly lost since the first half of the nineteenth century. In the days of Peacock no gentleman with any pretension of culture could afford to dispense with a smattering of this delightful tongue, whose literature we now imagine to be represented by Dante, Petrarch, and the *Promessi Sposi* of Manzoni. It is sad to think that there are now not a hundred living Englishmen who know and enjoy the calm and classic humour of Ariosto, or who care anything for the countless masters of early Italian lyrical verse, which Eugenia Levi has collected in her two fascinating volumes. Yet no classical scholar can be excused for not taking the trouble to learn this easiest of languages, when a fortnight's work will enable him to read any average Italian prose with fluency and enjoyment.

"Our boys shall know a great deal of Dante, a little of Petrarch, the two great collections of Italian verse to which we have referred, besides a little anthology of Carducci, which extends to the nineteenth century; nor shall they neglect to read the splendid 'Barbarous Odes' of Carducci himself, which, based on the Horatian metres, form so brave a protest against the natural deficiency of a tongue wherein rhymes are too easy and compression too hard. Several of the tales of Boccaccio, even some of Bandcllo and Masuccio, claim consideration, for they do not all consist, as some imagine, of indecent ribaldry, but arc full of pathos, humour, and most cunning psychological observation; and why neglect the 'Cortigiano'? Our playwrights shall be Goldoni and D'Annunzio; perhaps not the D'Annunzio of the terrible 'Citta Morta', but certainly the D'Annunzio of 'Francesca da Rimini'. For are we not the heirs of the Italian Renaissance, and shall we continue to neglect a literature not inferior to the French and far greater than the German, a literature which in the present age has produced at least two immortal names? Least of all can we dream of so doing, after gazing at the masterpieces of Italian painting. Would it not be well to know what these great men read, thought, and wrote? Have we forgotten that Italy is also the first, and will perhaps be the last,

home of the purest and most noble music? To understand the spirit of the greatest artistic country the world has ever known, greater, in my opinion, than Greece herself, by virtue of Leonardo and Michelangelo, not to mention Scarlatti and Pergolesi, is surely the direct duty of anyone who desires to enjoy all that life can offer, and to assist others to share his delight."

These long extracts have been given primarily for the purpose of showing the importance of *The Grecians* to anyone who wishes to appreciate fully the quality and nature of the poet's mind. 1 hope, however, that they may have the effect of sending readers to the book itself. The point of view has, perhaps, already become old-fashioned, and the literary judgments expressed in it, in the main so just and sound, may run counter to the taste or preferences of the future, for taste is always changing. But the quality of sincerity the dialogue will always have, and it is nowhere seen to better advantage than in the concluding sentences of the discourse:

"But we will re-found La Giocosa, and build it anew in England beside the sea that typifies our race. And if I have made no single direct reference to patriotism, let me say this now. Patriotism is not taught by bad poetry and bad literature, by rifle clubs, or Union Jacks, or essays on Tariff Reform. La Giocosa will give England men of intelligence, fit to govern her, and not private soldiers fit to be shot down for her in some financial war. And m training Grecians La Giocosa has fulfilled her duty to England. Ours shall be no ideal school for the ideal youth, but a place where hard work is done, and where boys arc toilfully prepared for the difficulties of a modern world; yet where, too, we shall train many to understand and love the sweet pleasures *of* the senses. We even hope that a few of our scholars will be among the great. Now, my friends, our long and toilsome journey is over: and it is evening."

The King of Alsander, Fleckcr's solitary novel, has always seemed to me, since I first read it in its entirety, an unsatisfactory and unequal performance. It has some beautiful passages and many amusing ones, but it never quite "comes off". The high

spirits are only intermittent, and there are some dismal slabs of "fine writing" which destroy all effect of spontaneity. Flecker, like most poets, had a tendency to adorn his prose too richly. It is just as difficult for English prose to wear jewels with success, as it is for an Englishman to wear diamond studs in his shirt front; and Flecker did not always restrain his liking for the purple patch. He is, perhaps, at his best as a prose stylist in some of his critical studies, in those two charming papers "Mansur" and "Pentclicus", and in such vigorous outpourings as *Philanthropists.*

Both *The Last Generation*—a story issued as a pamphlet by the New Age Press m 1908, and begun while the author was at Oxford—and the brief sketch called *N'Jawk,* illustrate very happily Fleckcr's love of the fantastic and the grotesque. *N'Jawk* is a delicious trifle, as amusing to-day as when I first read it in typescript fifteen years ago. It makes one wish that instead of spending months and years of toil over *The King of Ahander,* Flecker had devoted the same amount of energy to writing a series of these fantastic sketches, which would have made a volume not unworthy of the poet, and interesting as illustrating his irony and wit.

In his critical studies, Flecker gives voice to his literary preferences and opinions with characteristic impctuousness and vigour, and these pages in his *Collected Prose* arc extremely readable and illuminating. Some of his enthusiasms it is not easy to share, and occasionally his abuse and denunciations seem excessive. One gets the impression that he divided authors into those who were "magnificent" and those who wrote "God-forsaken formless muck". Writing, for example, of William Watson, he says: "The temporary reputation acquired by Mr. Watson is particularly pernicious to the well-being of Poetry; and it is ridiculous as well as aggravating that any notice should be taken of his pompous outcries." But in the same essay from which this is taken he shows, in observation after observation, that there is technical knowledge and sound sense behind his damning and his praising. Of the author of *A Shropshire Lad* (a volume by which he was considerably influenced and from

which he learnt much), he writes: "Within metres almost as limited and simple as those employed with ascetic choice by the author of *Emaux et Camees,* Mr. Housman exhibits a great subtlety of workmanship. It would not only be dreadfully prosaic, but also rather unfair to expose at any length his wizard tricks. The infinite joys that all true lovers of poetry find in the deft manipulation of verbal sounds are almost too sacred for explanation. Let a short poem be quoted, almost at random:

Now hollow fires burm out to black
And lights arc gathering low.
Square your shoulders, lift your pack,
And leave your friends and go.

O never fear, man: naught's to dread.
Look not left nor right.
In all the endless roads you tread
There's nothing but the night.

The quiet and forcible alliterations of the first and last lines, the surprising vigour of the third, the impressive slowness of the fifth line is remarkable. There is, moreover, an art in the juxtaposition of sounds about which it is rather sacrilegious to talk, not because of any super-human merit 111 this particular poem, but because the art of melody is one of suggestion, and not of code." Here is one poet writing about another with the accent of authority. He can say with impunity much that the layman would scarcely dare to say even if he thought it. Flecker may not always be right, but his opinions have at least an intrinsic and lasting interest.

Of the art of criticism in general Flecker took a very high view. In his essay on *The Public as Art Critic,* he gives a brief but illuminating sketch of the ideal critic of poetry. "The critic of poetry must know all the minutiae of the technique, not so much that he may be able to carp at faults as that he may realise perfection. He must know his art so well that he feels at once and instinctively, not after reflection merely, whether the lines he is reading ring true. Yet he must not be a pedant:

he must have a deep experience of life, he must be a man of character. In the true sense of the word he must be moral. He must prepare for his task austerely: it is a high one. He must cast aside for an hour his own puritanism and prejudice, his petty, even his noble beliefs about the world, and become receptive of the impressions of others to the extreme limit of human nature. . . . The critic must be of purer mould than the poet himself. He must have a profoiuid love for man, not the vague enthusiasm of the humanitarian but a vivid delight in all the men in the world, men sinful, men splendid, men coarse, or cowardly, or pathetic. And in all the phenomena of nature, sordid or shining, the background to our tragedy, he must admire, if not the beauty, then the force, the law, the cruelty, and the power. And with this enthusiasm in his soul he will bitterly condemn dullness, weakness, bad workmanship, vulgar thought, shoddy sentiment as being slanders on mankind; and in this sense and this sense only—that it is the glory of man—great art is moral."

This passage is an additional illustration of the fact that there must always be a strain, at least, of true "nobility" in every fine artist, and that Flecker had very much more than a strain of it in him.

Of Flecker's *Hassan,* which has now for so many years been accepted as a modem classic—so wonderfully is it compounded of poetry and farce, of the fantastic and the beautiful—it is unnecessary here to speak in detail. 1 first read the MS. of the play in bed—in the hotel in Paris in which Oscar Wilde died—on a rainy January morning. I had to read it hastily, because the MS. was required of me and I was unable to prolong my stay in France, and it certainly gave me the "shivers down the back", which its author anticipated. A year or two later I was present at the first performance of it at His Majesty's Theatre for which Delius had written the accompanying music. It was a memorable event in theatrical history.

vII

When I look back on James Flecker and remember what he meant to his wide circle of friends, it is to feel much more than

a sense of personal loss. It is to feel that something has gone out of life which the new generation does not know, perhaps cannot be expected to know, in view of the grisly shadow under which it has grown up: something rare and irrecoverable—a radiance, a generosity of heart and mind, a natural (not stimulated) ecstasy which, where it still exists in our present barbarous age is apt, as in the case of Major Frank Thompson, to be ended by a Fascist firing-squad.

Flecker's attitude towards life was what that of the aristocrat is supposed to be, but usually is not. He had caught some of the spirit of the Italian renaissance; and, in compensation for the shortness of his days, he was given the capacity to live them with the intensity of one of those figures whom Cellmi has described for us, and to appreciate the earth's loveliness in a way which has been given to few men since that fierce sweet renewal of springtime in the Western world. He was, as far as I know, completely without ulterior motive or base ambitions. He never could have played the now too familiar game of literary and social intrigue by which verse-writers of only moderate talent inflate themselves into great figures. His conception of what is required of those who practise the art of poetry would have made any such proceeding simply unthinkable—a game for bagmen, not for kings. Even in his critical appreciations and denunciations, which I think often erred on the side of over-enthusiasm and were occasionally at fault, he was at all events never cheap. Nothing, in this connection, showed him in a more favourable light than his rage when some of the English *vers librists* and their associates were leading a hue-and-cry against the Victorians, damning Tennyson and Browning right and left in a noisy effort to call attention to their own not very successful experiments. Flecker's sense of the continuity of the English poetic tradition made this kind of vulgarity unbearable.

If Flecker was not a "great genius", he was a man of great intellectual integrity and courage, a superb craftsman with a real devotion to his art. His best work has certainly the qualities of permanence, and the interest which future generations take in his personality and in the details of his short life will assuredly

be not less than that aroused by his predecessors in our poetic tradition.

It was the play *Hassan* which first brought his poetry to the notice of the wider public. To-day, among the cliques and coteries who form our intelligentsia, he is as little read and as much out of fashion as Rupert Brooke. But the hundreds of thousands of men and women all over the English-speaking world, who read poetry for their own delight, regardless of current critical opinion in exalted literary circles, will continue to appreciate him long after the work of some of our more difficult modern poets has faded into oblivion. In the art of poetry, though Mallarme may prove an exception, the obscure has never yet survived.

1922.

2

D. H. Lawrence

I

As LAWRENCE was the joint "discovery" of Ford Madox Hucffcr and Violet Hunt, it naturally followed that I began to read him almost as soon as he began to write. I remember seeing him in the office of the *English Review,* just after Ford had accepted his poems. He came in with a young woman, and was closeted with the editor for some time. After they had gone, I asked Ford about him. Ford said he was a young school teacher, called Lawrence, who was going to be a remarkable poet. I had registered a thm young man with a reddish "quiff", a fair moustache, noticeable blue eyes, a very high stiff collar and badly-made clothes. For some reason, probably because of my own immaturity, I did not care very much for *The White Peacock,* but parts of *The Trespasser, Sons and Lovers,* some of the stories in *The Prussian Officer* (particularly "The Shadow in the Rose Garden") and *Twilight in Italy,* soon convinced me that Lawrence was far and away the greatest figure among my contemporaries, and from then onwards I seized on all his books as they appeared. *The Rainbow* remains, of his novels, the one I happen to care tor least, but the circumstances *of* its suppression and the cowardly way in which the heavy swells of the literary world deserted its author roused my wrath and disgust. Lawrcnce had started his career under the happiest auspices. His work had been launched by England's leading literary review. Almost every serious critic had acclaimed him. He never had to struggle for that "recognition" which so many writers of eminence have only been accorded long after death. He received it in generous measure

from the moment he began to write. This, of course, made the treatment dealt out to" him all the more contemptible. Look at it how you like, *The Rainbow* prosecution was a bad show up for English letters and those eminent persons who allowed Lawrence to be thrown to the wolves, without making a protest, deserve even more condemnation than the professional muck-rakers who brought it about.

I owe my introduction to Lawrence, in the personal sense, to S. S. Kotcliansky, the Russian translator. It occurred early in 1919, when he and Miss Barbara Low were among Lawrence's closest friends and spent their time and energy in his service precisely as if he were a little Messiah.

In speaking of them, Lawrence used often to say to me: "These Russian Jews are so *heavy"* He certainly dispensed with "loyalty" in casual conversation, and no doubt he found them, as at times he found his wife and, indeed, all his close associates, irritating. Few people who knew him were lucky enough to escape occasionally getting on Lawrence's nerves. He constantly got on his own nerves. All the same, Lawrence was not *fundamentally* disloyal and the proofs of warm friendliness which he gave to people *to* whom he was sincerely attached were not invalidated by the harsh things he was apt to say about the same people behind their backs.

Lawrence's association with Kot and Barbara Low lasted so long that a considerable correspondence must have resulted from it. Perhaps, some day, a supplementary volume of Lawrence's letters will appear. There must be many hundreds in existence which have not yet been printed. Lawrence's Psycho-Analytical studies were, I believe, largely directed and encouraged by Miss Low, whom 1 suspect of a considerable share in his *Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious.*

It was probably in Koteliansky's house in Acacia Road, St. John's Wood, that my first meeting with Lawrence took place. I had recently moved from Ycats's maisonette in Woburn Buildings to a house in St. James's Terrace, Regent's Park, a few minutes' walk from Acacia Road. Lawrence used to come to lunch with us sometimes, when he was staying with Kot.

He was a delightful guest for a poor and servantless household, because he always made a point of helping to set the table and of washing up. He really enjoyed these simple domestic tasks and used to insist that the washing up should be done immediately after the meal and that the dirty plates should not be left to accumulate. Betty, the Dublin girl to whom I was at that time married, interested him. He admired her large brown eyes, her "big nose" and what he called her "silent quality", and was anxious that she should play the part of "Mrs. Holroyd" in the play he had recently written and was eager to have produced. If Lawrence was a perfect guest in an unpretentious home, he was an equally good host in his own. Betty and I once spent a week-end with the Lawrences at Hermitage in Berkshire, where he had rented a small cottage from Margaret Radford. The details of this visit will always remain clearly in my memory. The way he kept his Prussian wife, Frieda, "in her place" was slightly embarrassing at first. There was a painful moment just before the midday meal on Sunday. The potatoes were cooking in an open pot on the fire and Lawrence was watching them. Suddenly Frieda made some remark which he found particularly exasperating. His blue eyes crackled with rage, his red beard bristled, his hand shot out to the potatoes. Only our presence, I am certain, restrained him from "saying it with missiles". But in a few moments the storm was over. His aunt Ada and his rich and respectable uncle, who owned a stocking factory somewhere in East Anglia, were coming to lunch and Lawrence and I went off to the pub to buy them some beer. Lawrence was now in the highest spirits. He was determined to tap the uncle for enough money to enable him and Frieda to bolt for Italy—the English climate made him ill and depressed—and throughout the meal he was at his chirpiest. During the afternoon, when the relatives had returned to the inn, after inviting him to dinner, we went for a walk and hatched plans for extracting the necessary cheque. (I may mention, in parenthesis, that to go for a walk with Lawrence through the English countryside was an unforgettable experience. It is one of the characteristics of genius to be able to see things which normal people miss.

Lawrence made me feel that I had never really **"seen"** a wood before.) Later in the evening we sent him off to his dinner, and wished him luck. He returned triumphant, in a few hours' time, waving a cheque for £10 and we had an evening of rejoicing. When I came downstairs the next morning I found Lawrence and Frieda singing South German folk songs at the tops of their voices while they laid the breakfast table. Life with Lawrence could never be *dull,* but I doubt if he would have found any Englishwoman with the nervous solidity to stay the course. Voluble, full-bosomed, Prussian Frieda was built to weather storms. Like a sound ship, broad in the beam, slow but sea-worthy, she could stand any amount of buffeting. And I have no doubt that she found the Von Richthofen card a useful one. Lawrence, I should say, was less of a snob than most people, much less of a snob, for example, than the "inverted snobs" who are to-day so prevalent. But the fact that his wife was sprung from a "baronial" family was not lost on him. Indeed, he never seems to have discovered how little it really meant.

As soon as I displayed my eagerness to be of use to Lawrence, Koteliansky uttered a salutary warning. "If you don't want to lose Lawrence's friendship," he said, "you must be very careful never to let him guess that you are doing anything for him." I had no difficulty in taking the hint because, much as Lawrence the man attracted me, it was Lawrence *the writer* to whom, out of a love for good literature, as disinterested as Ford's or Ezra Pound's, I wanted to be of service. I had, by that time, got into touch with the American publisher, Thomas Seltzer, who had all the right ideas but insufficient capital, in the long run, to carry them out. Seltzer made me his London agent, and for several years published nearly everything I advised him to publish. As a result of interminable correspondence—he had scarcely heard of Lawrence—I succeeded in making him issue *Women in Love* in a limited edition, and pay over £50 in advance. The MS. of this novel had been hanging about for three years and there is no doubt that Seltzer's enterprise in regard to it started the ball rolling again, relieved Lawrence of the nervous irritation caused by frustrated publication, and "put him across"

in America. Seltzer subsequently published a number of Lawrence's books, and advertised them well during the years that he remained solvent.

During a tour through Germany which I undertook in the summer of 1919 I met Dr. Kippenberg, director of the Insel-Verlag at Leipzig, and did some unofficial agency work for Lawrence. The books I specially recommended for translation were *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow.* (1 recommended the latter not because I liked it myself but because I thought it had a certain heaviness which the German public would appreciate.) Apparently my recommendations had some effect, for I find the following note from Lawrence sent from Taormina on November 20, 1920:

"Dear Goldring,

"I asked Secker to send you a copy of the *Lost Girl* to this address; hope you will get it all right. We are back here after various wanderings—nothing doing—weather masses of rain and wind incredible. Promised to go to Germany in Spring—Insel-Verlag supposed to be publishing So/25 *and Lovers* and *Rainbow* in translation. No news besides—hope your [sic] doing well, both.

"Yrs.,

"D. H. LAWRENCE."

In 1919 I was regarded, perhaps rightly, as a hectic "idealist"—strange what contempt and loathing this word arouses in the British bosom!—and believed the Millennium, sponsored by such diverse types as Henri Barbusse, Ramsay MacDonald, E. D. Morel and (shall we say) Bertrand Russell—was almost at hand. I gave up trying to write anything except, what the critics, no doubt justly, labelled "propaganda", became secretary of the English section of the "Clarte" movement, and with Harold Scott and others started the "People's Theatre Society", especially for the production of "Dawnist" plays. My political ideas at this period seem, in retrospect, rather immature and half-baked, but I had strong revolutionary, pacifist and internationalist

convictions, believed the "revolution" was gaining ground, and that soon people would be ready for a "red" theatre. My Lawrence discipleship, due to the remains of my literary instinct, got entangled with all this. Actually, although I was completely unaware of it until I read his letters to Lady Cynthia Asquith, Lawrence loathed pacifists, idealists, and all the people at whose feet I was at this time sitting.

Mrs. Carswell pointed out in her book *The Savage Pilgrimage* that Lawrence was not a "conscientious objector". She evidently considered the term "conscientious objector" a term of opprobrium and was anxious, for that reason, that it should not be applied to Lawrence. It is, of course, unthinkable that a fierce individualist like Lawrence should ever be one of a herd, or a member of a party. But his views on the war were far more drastic than those of the average "objector", and he would not thank his biographer for trying to save his reputation with the respectable by hinting that they were less so. Writing on November 21, 1916, he says to Lady Cynthia Asquith: "We should say enough of war because the desire of something else is strong and most living in us. It is foolish to drop down at last in inertia, and let the war end so—in inertia. While we have the vitality to create, we ought to stop the fighting—otherwise, when the end comes, we are spiritually bankrupt. Which is final disaster." This passage precisely expresses what my own views were at the time, though it took me many years before I felt in a mood, as he says in another letter, to "damn humanity". I thought, believed and hoped that "humanity" would refuse to let itself be damned. At times, even now, I believe and hope it will refuse. No "conscientious objector'' hated militarism more whole-heartedly than Lawrence did. Writing to Lady Cynthia on September I, 1916, he says: "the whole of militarism is so disgusting to me, that—well, well, there is silence after all". Again, on November 15, 1916, he observes that "war cannot be thought of, for me, without the utmost repulsion and desecration of one's being. For me, the war is wrong, and nothing, neither life nor death, can make it right."

Propaganda against the war, much as he loathed militarism,

was nevertheless repugnant to Lawrence. I, on the other hand, not having the excuse of genius for what might be regarded as selfishness, thought it my job as a man of letters to plunge into the fray on the side of peace and risk the consequences. Accordingly I denounced the "capitalist" war whenever I could get into print, my novels and my play were made the vehicles for red-hot "propaganda", 1 joined and started societies, corresponded with pacifist writers on the Continent and became a member of the 1917 Club. In vain, after we met, did Lawrence urge me to "look after number one and let humanity stew in its own juice". No, not altogether m vain, for it was undoubtedly Lawrence's influence which accelerated the "cold fit". My novel, *The Black Curtain,* which I dedicated to him, marked the end of my revolutionary preaching through the medium of fiction. With *Nobody Knows,* published in 1923—the most highly-praised and widely-read of my novels—my work took a fresh direction and the artist in me raised his battered head. At the same time I gradually became completely disillusioned as regards that "old advanced crowd", which Lawrence, with more first-hand knowledge to go upon, had denounced so venomously as long ago as 1916.

When I started the " People's Theatre Society", it never occurred to me that I should have the slightest difficulty in securing the production of one of Lawrence's plays. Alas, I had reckoned, in my innocence, without my "committee". At this point any reader who has ever, from the purest motives, started anything, will at once stretch out a hand in sympathy. My first idea was to lead offwith a production of *Touch and Go.* But about this play the committee, although agreed upon the policy of producing a play by Lawrence, a policy which had been publicly announced, raised objections. The theatrical experts, of whom I was not one, pronounced it impossible of production. As it has never, to my knowledge, been put on, even during the Lawrence boom, I can only assume they were right. It is one of Lawrence's failures, though naturally he did not think so himself. Discussion went on interminably, until at last most of the original committee (who had their own axes to grind) resigned.

We then joined forces with the "Curtain Group", a triumvirate of conscientious objectors, interested in the theatre, who had met in Dartmoor, and had subsequently given one or two productions. Harold Scott, the co-secretary of the "People's Theatre Society", was one of the original three. By electing his two former partners to the committee I hoped we should at least be able to secure a performance of *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd.* Early in 1920 some amateurs, mostly miners, gave a production of this play at Altrincham, near Manchester, which I attended. I was greatly impressed and hurried back to London in triumph, to report to my colleagues. At last it seemed certain that we should be able to justify our existence, and keep faith with our members, by producing a play by Lawrence. If a company of amateurs could put on the play successfully in the provinces, surely, with all the professional talent at our command, we could do the same in London.

Unfortunately, I had not reckoned with the possible opposition of Harold Scott's "old faithfuls". They did not agree with me and were determined that what I proposed should not be done. No sooner had I won over dear Harold, by hours of argument, to my views, than they fell upon him and won him back again! After all, from their standpoint, I was the interloper and they the original members of the "group". I was, to my despair, outvoted on the Lawrence issue, and resigned from the society. The "People's Theatre Society", now the "Curtain Group" in all but name, embarked on an elaborate and expensive production of a Serbian play by Tucic, called *The Liberators,* and promptly died of it, in debt. My many months of toil on Lawrence's behalf were thus completely wasted. Had I not been outvoted the society might have established itself as the prestige acquired by a good production of *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd* should have been enough to set it on a sound foundation.

While all these wrangles and discussions were going on, Lawrence was in Italy, waiting for news that never came. Coincidentally, with the founding of the "People's Theatre Society", I had persuaded an enterprising publisher, C. W. Daniel, to start a series of revolutionary plays, under my general

editorship, the title of the series being "Plays for a People's Theatre". It grew out of my own pamphlet play, *The Fight for Freedom,* which I had submitted to him for publication. This I had provided with a preface detailing my scheme for an "all-red" theatre of the kind that was beginning to spring up in various parts of Europe. The opportunity came of, at least, getting *Touch and Go* into print. No other publisher would then look at it, and it has only quite recently been re-issued, among Lawrence's collected works. Daniel accepted *Touch and Go* at my instigation, and I believe paid an advance which, however small, must have been welcome. It was not really a suitable play for the scries, because, as I have shown, Lawrence detested "propaganda" and, though I did not realise it at the time, was completely out of sympathy with my earnest and rather naive political preoccupations. Nevertheless, it was a great pity, from every point of view, that the series was not launched under the cloak of Lawrence's literary prestige. As it happened, Mr. Daniel not unnaturally published the plays in the order in which he received them, so that Lawrence's came second. This annoyed him until my explanatory letter, which had been delayed in the post, arrived, with the rain, to soothe his "social nerves".

I have lost many of Lawrence's letters to me, owing to my rolling-stone existence, but the few I have found arc sufficient to indicate that—unlike most of his friends, disciples and fetch-and-carry men—I escaped anything like a quarrel with him.

"Palazzo Ferraro,
"Capri,
"Naples.
"January 3, 1920.

"Dear Goldring,

"We have struggled our way down Italy, perpetually on the move, and no sort of rest. That's why I haven't written before. I suppose we shall sit here for a time.

"There, if I'd known, I wouldn't have let Macdermott have that option—but it doesn't much matter, and if necessary, could no doubt be bought back from him for his £15.

"I heard from Scott and Seltzer—they sent me £50 for the novel—but I doubt if they'll publish it. Probably Seeker will do it in England.

"Italy is frightfully expensive, particularly travelling. I daren't shift again—and Berne is far off. One lives on the financial verge as ever—but so be it. I expect *Touch and Go* will soon be out. Could you give Daniel my address here, and let me know when he is sending out publishers' copies. I might write to one or two people, and make the reviewers act, anyhow.

"I am glad Chapman & Hall are going to do you. Yes, I am pleased if you inscribe to me. Why the devil did the reviewers ignore your play? Could you send me a copy? I might get the *Times* to come in, at this late hour.

"My wife loved Baden—really better than Italy. The Italians have a grudge against us now. Perhaps in May we shall go to Germany. Let us all meet there and have a good time. We often speak of you. I don't want to come back to England, anyhow.

"I do hope Mrs. Goldring gets out of that pamphlet shop: it's horrible.

"A thousand greetings from us both.

"D. H. LAWRENCE."

"Fontana Vecchia,
"Taormina,
"Messina, Sicily.
"March 9, 1920.

"Dear Goldring,

"I have just got yours of February 28th. We have taken a house here for a year. Note address.

"About the Fight, Barbusse will put his party-umbrella over it all right. If you'd had a Barbusse preface at first, it would have been luck. But best not to be too political.

"Yes, do squeeze *Touch and Go* out of McDermott—tell him he can have his £15 back. I am so curious to know what they do with Mrs. Holroyd at Altrincham: should like to see B., with her big nose as Mrs. H. She's got the silent quality.

"I like Irene Rooke so much—or did when I met her—also Rosmer.

"I doubt if England will ever be Clartc'd.

"Everything feels unsure here—but at last, after seven months drought, it rains a little. That will soothe the social nerves.

"Send me word.

"D. H. LAWRENCE."

"Osborne Hotel,
"50 Strada Mezzodi,
"Valetta,
"Malta.
"May 26, 1920.

"Dear Goldring,

"Ages since I heard from you—the post is simply abominable. I think they just *burn* the conglomerated mail when the strikes have done with it. But I got *The Black Curtain* which we read and which is interesting. But ugh, how I hate the War—even a suggestion of it.

"We came to Malta for a few days—a strike held us up—no steamers. Thank God we go back to Taormina to-morrow. But oh Lord, I' m glad to return to Sicily.

"I got copies of *Touch and Go* just before we came here. It has a nice appearance—book. How *is* your People's Theatre? Hope it goes. Is there any news of it? A man here showed me MS. of various plays—good ones, really—translations.

"Love's Tragedy—by Knut Hamsun, 4 act, a famous thing, unknown 111 England.

"To the Stars—Leonid Andreyeff, 4 act—weird.

"The Snake Charmer—very comic—2 act—German.

"Julius Bierhaunu

"Lady Sofia—George von Omptede—4 act—comedy.

"The White Fan—Hugo von Hoffmansthal—I act—poetic.

"Do you think anything could be done with these? Magnus—the man who has the MSS.—wants to publish the things if possible—sell them outright to a publisher. But he retains the acting rights.

"Let me know how everything is. You may of course be gone to Germany or the ends of the earth—or you may be

producing plays like billy-o. I'm going back to Taormina to work. How is Mrs. Goldring?—feeding herself, for a change?

"Yrs.,

"D. H. LAWRENCE."

The "Magnus" referred to is the Maurice Magnus who wrote the *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion.* 1 had already been put in touch with him by Norman Douglas and had received the MS. of his *Memoirs,* which I tried in vain to get a publisher to print. We corresponded frequently, although we never met. This I regret, notwithstanding Lawrence's ferocious but superb description of the man, in his introduction to the *Memoirs.* I wish I could find the other letters which Lawrence wrote to me from Malta, as they threw further sidelights on Magnus. Perhaps they are still mouldering in an old suitcase, left behind in somebody's cellar and forgotten.

In July 1920 I sent Lawrence a copy of my *Reputations,* which Chapman & Hall had issued. This contained an essay called "The Later Work of D. H. Lawrence", which appeared first in *Art and Letters.* Lawrence liked this book—he had not liked either my play or the novel called *The Black Curtain,* which 1 dedicated to him—and, in a letter dated July 20, 1920, from Taormina, part of which is printed on pages 508-509 in *The Letters of* D. *H. Lawrence,* edited by Aldous Huxley, he observes: "I had your *Reputations* this morning: find it very witty and amusing. God, it is time those stuffed geese were carved: the old-stagers, and semi-old-stagers. In the end, I suppose, I shall have you hacking at me, for an old bird." I must have told him that my circumstances were improving a bit, for he adds later: "So glad you are getting quite rich. Good! I do hope you are taking it out of the mouth of the Murrys and Walpoles of this world. I am creeping on in my own measured way, cook and the captain bold, etc. But even we have a little bit more than usual."

Early in 1921 Lawrence conceived the idea of appointing me, in an honorary capacity, his official London respresentativc. I

suppose the reason for this was partly the success of my efforts on his behalf in America, partly the fact that there was no one else among his friends with a similar knowledge of publishing whom he felt he could trust. I did not grudge either the time or the energy required to undertake the job, but on reflection—and after some conversation with Kot and Barbara Low—I felt I ought not to take on such a big responsibility. The tide was turning now in Lawrence's favour and his literary affairs needed the expert handling of a professional agent. I accordingly advised him to go to Curtis Brown (since he had left J. B. Pinker on friendly terms) and in his letter written from Taormina on April 4, 1921—quoted in the *Letters* on page 514—he acknowledges the force of my arguments and takes my advice. Lawrence, as Kot had already warned me and as I was fully prepared to believe, was a dangerous man to work for and any hint that he was being helped made him see red. Nevertheless he was by no means the snobbish cad which Mrs. Carswell unwittingly makes him out to be in her book *The Savage Pilgrimage.* Writing of those, other than herself, who were trying to be useful to Lawrence, in 1916, she observes: "1 did not fit well with them, and there was something in their relations with him that saddened me. If he needed them, then he did, and it was his affair. But I got the feeling that he did not think much of them, and was using them for what he needed, not so much willingly as *malgre lui."* This was before I met Lawrence, so I do not know at whom these shafts are aimed, unless one of them was Philip Hcscltinc. It was one of Lawrence's weaknesses to give people the impression that he "did not think much of" friends who happened not to be present. I remember that he gave me this impression about Mrs. Carswell, of whose "clinging" disposition he complained, but I quickly saw through it as a harmless foible.

Early in 1922 Lawrence started on many years of travel—in Australia, the United States, Mexico and other far distant spots. I also embarked upon long years of exile, in duller lands. Lawrence was taken up by the literary "fashionables", who successfully **hitched their various wagons to his star,** and **certainly had** no

further need of any humble spade-workers. It was not until chance washed me up on the facc-powder-and-lipstick-covered shores of the French Riviera, some ten years later, that I got into touch with him again. While he was in Mallorca in 1929, friendly messages came to me at Nice through an American artist, and since the old ardour had not in any sense waned, I wrote to him when he arrived in Bandol. His reply from the Villa Beau Soleil, Bandol, dated Monday, October 18, 1929 was written in a sadly shaky hand, unlike the lovely bold script of ten years earlier.

"Dear Goldring,

"How amusing to hear from you again. I always asked after you and had bits of your news, so knew all, except the new wife."

(After this came sundry references to the "old" wife and her second husband, very flattering to myself.) He continues:

"We got this little house for the winter, I'm hoping my health will be better—it's devilish bad. If only I knew what to do about it. Am miserable.

"If we come Nice way—not likely, but you never know—I shall write you first—and if you come this way, do come and see us. The house is too little for guests, but the village is nice. It would be fun to talk things over. Must be ten years since we met. Aunt A. and Uncle F. have just sailed for India, where he is to sit in the chair of Arabic at Delhi. But since *Lady C,* we are not on writing terms. But I feel I *must* make the peace. I *must* hear Aunt A. on Delhi!! Do you remember theme Hermitage.

"If only I was well I'd come to Nice for a week. Greetings from both.

"D. H. LAWRENCE."

Alas, this letter arrived just at a time when my wife and I were passing through one of the worst of our temporary financial crises and hanging on by our eyelashes, thankful if we could

even achieve one square meal a day. If I had possessed the few hundred francs necessary to take me to Bandol and back, I would have hurried there at once to have that talk about old times for which Lawrence himself was evidently eager. It was not until the spring of 1930, when I raised enough money to transfer my home to London, that the journey became possible. I wrote to Lawrence, telling him our news, and mentioning the day when I would stop off at Bandol 111 the hope of seeing him. I took the letter down to the Cafe Gambetta to post, but before buying a stamp I bought the evening paper. In it I saw that Lawrence had been hurried to Vence in a dying condition and that there was no hope of recovery.

The news stunned me. In spite of the evidence of the shaky handwriting, I had not realised that his illness was so serious. I wrote at once to Frieda Lawrence, the conventional letter to which of course no reply was expected.

On the day of Lawrence's death I happened to enter an Anglo-American bar in Nice which was frequented by the Riviera correspondents of English and American newspapers. One of these—not perhaps the noblest of God's children—had a much-thumbed copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, extracts from which he was reading aloud to his friends in the shocked tones of a Sunday school teacher. When I came in he buttonholed me, supposing (rightly) that I might have known Lawrence but not realising that I had no wish to discuss him. For I was overcome with the sense of loss. Why hadn't I had those few hundred francs which would have enabled me to see, for the last time, the man who had meant so much more to me than any other contemporary writer! Lawrence *dead* screamed itself at me while this brother of the pen said: "Look 'ere, damn it all, this is wot 'c writes. Sheer muck." I lost my temper and told him that if he and his colleagues sent obituary messages describing Lawrence as a pornographcr they would disgrace their profession and the papers which employed them. I think his story was watered down a bit as the result of my outburst, but he adopted an attitude of outraged virtue and he did not forgive me.

I was not given a chance of attending Lawrence's funeral at Vencc and a day or two later I left for London. Some days after my return to England I was staggered to see in the London *Star* and in several provincial newspapers the following paragraph, supplied by a news agency:

"Sculptor Attacked.
"Sequel to Taking of Study of D. H. Lawrence.

"Nice, Tuesday.

"Strong criticism of the action of the American sculptor, Mr. Joe Davidson, in making a bust of the late D. H. Lawrence, the English novelist, is made by the British author, Mr. Douglas Goldring. Mr. Lawrence died a few days ago and Mr. Goldring alleges that Mr. Davidson had only a slight acquaintance with him, and that 'he broke into the sickroom' to make a study of Mr. Lawrence, when the patient was much too ill, as events proved, to be disturbed.

"Mr. Goldring has left for London, where he intends to make the matter public."

This story was printed in the Paris editions of two American newspapers, and probably in the Continental *Daily Mail.* It was, I need hardly say, an entire fabrication from beginning to end. The only explanation of it I can give is that a Jewish-American novelist, who disapproved of Joe Davidson, had said something of the kind and that his story, to pay me out for having defended Lawrence's memory on the day of his death, had been fathered on me by one of the Riviera correspondents. I denied it promptly but, to my surprise, I was unable to get *The Star* to print my contradiction until it was too late to do any good. (Not that it is ever possible in England, where to be accused and acquitted is just as damaging as to be condemned, to catch up with a lie of this kind.) The provincial papers behaved better. *The Sheffield Independent,* under the caption "Dying Author's Bust. Author Repudiates Alleged Criticism," promptly quoted my brief denial. "Mr. Goldring has written repudiating the paragraph. He says: 'I do not know Mr, Davidson

and have never made any sort of allegation against him. I left Nice on 6th March, nearly a week before the alleged criticism was made.' We tender our apologies to Mr. Goldring for any annoyance the news agency paragraph may have caused." Unfortunately few people ever see protests or denials. A few days later H. G. Wells wrote to me: "My dear Goldring, go slow on this Lawrence story, etc." This was decent of Wells, as it enabled me to send my repudiation to an influential quarter. The whole business worried me out of all proportion to its importance.

After Lawrence's death the accusations and mud-slingings contained in Mrs. Catherine Carswell's biography, *The Savage Pilgrimage* led to a good deal of acid correspondence.

I know nothing about the controversy between Mrs. Carswell and Mr, Middleton Murry, and care less. The conception of Lawrence as a modern Messiah, surrounded by groups of "holy women", "Judas Iscariots", "those who failed", and "approved" disciples, I find frankly nauseating. If Lawrence was really a sort of latter-day Christ, common decency suggests that there should be less jostling for position at the foot of the cross, fewer hissings and recriminations. Judged purely as an account of Lawrence's life, however, *The Savage Pilgrimage,* for all its lack of humour, and its Lowland Scottish intensity, seems to me sincere and valuable. Where I find it exaggerated is in the impression it gives that Lawrence was unusually ill-treated and persecuted. In view of the fact that throughout his life he never made the slightest concessions to public opinion, never took a job (after he gave up school-mastering) or did a line of hack-work, he had a far better time than most uncompromising men of genius. *The Rainbow* prosecution was the worst thing that happened to him. Over *Lady Chatterleys Lover* and his pictures he only got what he must have anticipated in the way of abuse, while the financial consolations were considerable. In his struggling days there were always friends ready to help him, either with gifts of money or in other ways. He even successfully tapped the Royal Literary Fund at quite an early stage in his career.

It is a popular view, largely put about by his feminine disciples, and also encouraged by himself, that only women are capable of "really understanding" Lawrence. I don't believe it. The best of Lawrence can only be separated from the worst of him, in my opinion, by a man and by an Englishman at that. Richard Aldington and Aldous Huxley have contributed far and away the most discriminating studies of Lawrence which have yet appeared. Women tend to swallow him whole—"message", masterpieces, hysteria and tosh in one gigantic mouthful.

Wonderful Lorenzo! What a catfish he proved in the decorous literary aquarium, and what a peck of silly squabbles he left behind him!

The Lawrence I knew best and love most to remember was the hard-up, uncompromising, chirpy Lawrence who mocked with cheerful heartiness at all the fashionable "stuffed geese", the Lawrence who washed up the plates and dishes (preparatory to sitting in the jungly garden at St. James's Terrace and talking about Indian Mysticism), who "spoffled" at his wife when she annoyed him and carolled German folksongs with her before breakfast, the Lawrence who could turn a mere walk through a wood into one of the most memorable experiences of a lifetime. This Lawrence was the most remarkable and certainly the most "exciting" personality I am ever likely to meet, and I am glad to be able to say, with hand on heart, that my loyalty to him never wavered and was never marred by any unfriendly thought or act.

The article on "The Later Work of D. H. Lawrence", which first appeared in the quarterly *Art and Letters,* edited by Sir Osbert Sitwell and Professor Herbert Read, is appended as a footnote to this chapter. Its publication preceded my personal acquaintance with Lawrence and possibly accounted for the friendship and cordiality he showed towards me until his death.

II

When we look back on our first meeting with those people who in our lives have affected us most deeply, we have occasionally

to reproach ourselves for what, in the light of later experiences, seems a shameful lack of perception on our part. We remember how we failed to appreciate immediately this or that person, whom we now venerate—how we thought him a little dull. He was silent, perhaps, had no engaging small talk; and his oddity, instead of intriguing us, was merely irritating. In short, on the occasion of that first encounter, which turned out later to have been an event of so much importance in our lives, we saw nothing in our future friend, and disliked the nothing that we saw. Then came the gradual change in our attitude, the belated realisation. But during the time it took us to reach the stage of understanding, in some degree, the complexities of the individual who at first baffled us or seemed repellent—but not of understanding them so well as to preclude the possibility of still further surprises—by how many acquamtances, now scarcely remembered by name, were we not momentarily charmed? The man most worth knowing, is, indeed, never quite knowable: there is something left over, something still in reserve, which maintains the bond unbroken. It is just the same with books as with persons. There are the books we skim, laugh at and throw away for ever; and those which are forbidding and difficult, which reveal their beauties only if assiduously wooed and worked at, which for adequate appreciation demand from their readers a period of brooding and digestion. And these arc the books which, when it came to the point, we should probably take with us to that hypothetical desert island. They might not be the "hundred best", but they might easily turn out to be the hundred most aloof.

Aloofness is certainly not the distinguishing quality of English letters at the present day. Indeed, there was perhaps never a time when our scribes were more uniformly ingratiating or struggled more desperately to please. No pretty lady or earnest young curate has ever approached some of our leading novelists and quill-drivers in the fervour of their desire to make a good impression. During the War period especially, the great mass of current literature cowered like a veritable Uriah Heep before public opinion, rubbing its hands with invisible soft soap. Now

it put on an alluring smile and cracked on a top note of patriotic propaganda, now dropped a crocodile tear, now did a bit of "sunburstry" or provided a diverting display of verbal fireworks. Throw down a shilling and its one-man-bands would play you any tune you pleased. And even when it was naughty (for two shillings), it was oh! so careful to show that all the time its heart was in the right place. Our literature and journalism, our writers and journalists seemed to strive, almost with one accord, to reflect every popular prejudice and to echo every popular *banalite.* There was scarcely to be found a single "conscientious objector" among them who had the pluck to follow his own road, giving the herd—in passing—a sound clump over its collective *tete de mouton*!

Among the exceptions to this generalisation—which is perhaps no more unjust than most—the name *of* Mr. D. H. Lawrence occurs immediately to the mind. No fawnings here, no parade of cheap attractions, no cadging from the crowd with a display of grease and grins! Mr. Lawrence has always been obstinately himself; your kind favours will make no difference to him and are certainly not "solicited".

From the occasion of his first appearance on the literary horizon Mr. Lawrence has been a difficult writer. He has never made any advances to the mob; and even his prose style is a kind of barricade to prevent the intrusion of the many into the walled garden of his mind. At one time an additional barricade between his work and those who have subsequently appreciated his individual genius was erected by the "boosting" of a certain inner circle of the leaders of literary fashion. The very peculiarities of such early books as *The White Peacock* attracted this *claque,* with its flair for the less important phenomena of genius. For a little while they pretended to consider Mr. Lawrence the white hope of English letters; and they succeeded in making his books the vogue among a section of the London intelligentsia. It became the correct thing to admire Mr. Lawrence—until he suddenly applied the acid test of the value of these protestations and of this admiration by publishing *The Rainbow.* Then what a change of front! The deafening silence, broken only by the

sound of the white rabbits of criticism scuttling for cover, which formed the sequel to *The Rainbow* prosecution, will not soon be forgotten by those who were in London at the time. Not one of Mr. Lawrence's fervent boosters ventured into print to defend him; not one of his brother authors (save only Mr. Arnold Bennett, to whom all honour is due) took up the cudgels on his behalf. English novelists are proverbially lacking in *esprit de corps,* but surely they were never so badly shown up as when they tolerated this persecution of a distinguished confrere without making a collective protest. But our intelligentsia has always been more fickle and cowardly than the man in the street whom it so dearly loves to deride. All this is not to prove that *The Rainbow* is a satisfactory book. In many ways, irrespective of its fate, it is, as a work of art, perhaps one of the least successful novels which Mr. Lawrence has written, as it is the most ambitious. But if it must be called a failure, it is at all events a splendid and not an ignoble failure.

The chief effect of *The Rainbow* affair on Mr. Lawrence seems to have been to cause him to retire more deeply into himself. His work has become more difficult, his peculiar transcendental philosophy more obscure. He has sought more and more to discard inessentials, to ignore the surface of things, until gradually he has released himself even from the unconscious nationalism of *Sons and Lovers.* In that most beautiful and perhaps immortal novel, he has shown us the very heart of the real England, the England which still has a heart. The book is full of the true English spirit, is fragrant with a love of England, is in the best sense national, so that it can hardly fail to reveal to the middle-class Imperialist "Britisher" who reads it the heart of the "English" Englishman.

But in his last few volumes, *Twilight in Italy, Look! We Have Come Through!* and *New Poems,* and in a remarkable series of essays which he contributed to *The English Review,* Mr. Lawrence is concerned with humanity as a whole. He has transcended nationalism, and views the agonies inherent in the marriage of man's soul and body from the standpoint of his mystical philosophy. The argument of *Look! We Have Come Through!* sets

forth a spiritual conflict at once individual and universal, a conflict of absorbing interest to any human being, regardless of creed or race, who has reached the stage of development necessary to its understanding. As a poet, he is concerned only with what is at the core of human life, and thus his work—to borrow the phrase currently applied to pictures and statues of a certain kind—has always a "beyond" to it. All great poets, by the divine accident which we call inspiration, show us at moments, and often quite unconsciously, a glimpse of this beyond. Mr. Lawrence's moments of illumination (and perhaps this proves that in a strict sense he is not a "great poet") are, however, never quite unconscious. He seems overwhelmed by what he has seen, to have seen more than he can possibly express, perhaps more than is expressible—in words. His quest is for the means to be articulate. He strives, often with a kind of desperation, to clothe his vision in words, and frequently his poems are battlefields on which he has been defeated. There are times, also, when he is like a man who has been blind, who is just recovering the use of his eyes and is convulsed with the effort to see a little more, a little further into the radiant world which is within an ace of being miraculously restored to his vision. Now he has a sudden glimpse, and in a flash a new heaven and a new earth reveal themselves; but again, in a moment, all is chaos and obscurity, a veil of clouds and a rushing of waters. Thus the poems at the end of *Look! We Have Come Through!* called "New Heaven and Earth", "Elysium", "Manifesto", and "Craving for Spring", contain alternately passages of great sublimity which do indeed open windows in the mind, and passages of mere bathos and confusion.

Of those who have the patience to read the book through few, however, will miss the significance of lines such as these—

When I am trodden quite out, quite, quite out
every vestige gone, then I am here
risen, and setting my foot on another world
risen, accomplishing a resurrection
risen, not horn again, but risen, body the same as before,

new beyond knowledge of newness, alive beyond life
proud beyond inkling or furthest conception of pride
living where life was never yet dreamed of, nor hinted at
here, in the other world, still terrestrial
myself, the same as before, yet unaccountably new.

Then conies the ecstasy of discovery—

Ha, I was a blaze leaping up!
I was a tiger bursting into sunlight.
I was greedy, I was mad for the unknown.
Inew-risen, rcswrected, starved from the tomb
starved from a life of devouring always myself
now here was I, new-awakened, with my hand stretching out
and touching the unknown, the real unknown,
the unknown unknown.

In "Elysium" he returns to a favourite theme—

Delivered helpless and amazed
From the womb of the All, I am waiting, dazed
For memory to be erased.

Then I shall know the Elysium
That lies outside the monstrous womb
Of time from out of which I come.

"Manifesto", an effort to explain the author's sexual philosophy, seems to me to contain more confusion, mingled with commonplace ideas, than the other metaphysical poems, and to have fewer flashes of illumination. But as a statement of some of the cardinal points in Mr. Lawrence's belief", some passages m it have an obvious mterest and value—

Let them praise desire who will,
but only fulfilment will do,
real fulfilment, nothing short.
It is our ratification
our heaven, as a matter of fact.
Immortality, the heaven, is only a projection of
this strange but actual fulfilment,
here in the flesh.

Many mystics have tried to deny sex altogether, but Mr. Lawrence sees in the bodily union of men and women the central mystery of human life, a mystery indissolubly connected with every real religious impulse of mankind, a symbol of an ultimate spiritual consummation.

Perhaps the most profound and moving poem in this volume is the last one, "Craving for Spring". It is a passionate appeal to Life not to forsake the frozen and corrupt world, not to leave it under the dominion of Death.

Come quickly, and vindicate us
against too much death.
Come quickly, and stir the rotten globe of the
ivorld from within,
hurst it with germination , with world anew,
Come now, to us, your adherents, who cannot
flower from the ice.
All the world gleams with the lilies of Death the Unconquerable,
but come, give us our turn.
Enough of the virgins and lilies, of passionate,
suffocating perfume of corruption,
no more narcissus perfume, lily harlots, the blades of sensation
piercing the flesh to blossom of death.
Have done, have done with this shuddering,
delicious business
of thrilling ruin in the flesh, of pungent passion,
of rare, death-edged ecstasy.
Give us our turn, give us a chance, let our hour strike,
O soon, soon!
Let the darkness turn violet with rich dawn.
Let the darkness be warmed, warmed through to a ruddy violet,
incipient purpling towards summer in the world
of the heart of man.

There are people, perhaps, to whom the passage quoted above, and indeed the whole poem, may sound like the vapourings of a madman. To others it will sound like a kind of martial music of the soul, filling them with strange fervours and with unspeakable longing.

When Mr. Lawrence drops the cloak of the seer and squeezes his individuality into the confines of more or less "ordinary" verse, he moves about with a power and confidence which few of his contemporaries can equal. He comes down from metaphysics into the art of poetry, "trailing clouds of glory", and seems to see all the visible world with freshened eyes, and as if for the first time. Nature reveals her secrets to him as she has done to few poets and those only the most cherished. When he uses more or less conventional metres—as in the "Hymn to Priapus", in "A Youth Mowing", "Giorno dei Morti", "Sunday Afternoon in Italy", and the wonderful "Ballad of a Wilful Woman"—he gives them always a personal, unconventional twist, and evolves a new, strange and beautiful music. The following verses from the "Ballad of a Wilful Woman" will serve to illustrate his use of metre—

While Joseph pitches the sleep-tent
She goes far down to the shore
To where a man in a heaving boat
Waits with a lifted oar.

They dwelt in a huge, hoarse sea-cave
And looked far down the dark,
Where an archway torn and glittering
Shone like a huge sea-spark.

He said: "Do you see the spirits
Crowding the bright doorway?"
He said: "Do you hear them whispering?"
He said: "Do you catch what they say?"

The whole volume is full of brief, vivid, unforgettable pictures and images, like the following sketch of a type of young woman whom the poet calls "Frost flowers"—young women who

dart and flash
before the shops like wagtails on the edge of a pool

Or this, from a poem called "People"—

The great gold apples of night
Hang from the street's long bough.

And in the piece called "The Sea", Mr. Lawrence shows once again—as he showed in *The Trespasser* and in several of his other books—that he understands the sea as truly as the greatest of his country's poets, and that he feels for it something which only Englishmen seem to have been able to express.

A good deal of Mr. Lawrence's later work, for reasons which have already been given, leaves the reader with a sense of disappointment. Sometimes, when he strives hardest to liberate his ideas, he creates only the chaos which he has himself defined—

What is chaos, my love?
It is not freedom.
A disarray of falling stars coming to nought.

But how thankful we should be for the achievement of this lonely genius! Even when his verse is most chaotic, even when he most fails to set free his own thought and his poetry most nearly resembles "a disarray of falling stars", the sparks from the furnace of his inspiration retain sufficient heat to enable them to set fire to the minds on which they fall.

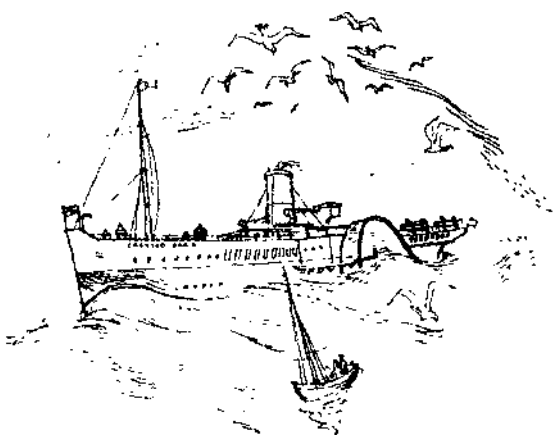
HOMAGE TO LONDON

A Cockney Pilgrimage

The Timely Inn

The Crested Eagle

Some Reflections on the Middle-class Victorian



I

A Cockney Pilgrimage

THE GREATER part of the London I knew and loved in pre-war days was built during the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth. London was—and still is, in spite of all the destruction which has taken place in the past twenty years—pre-eminently a Georgian town, as regards its domestic architecture. My appreciation of Georgian architecture is thus to some extent subconsciously connected with my sentimental devotion to my birthplace. Actually, I was born in Greenwich when it was still a part of Kent, but my paternal grandfather, like his father and grandfather before him, was born in the City. The demolition of familiar London landmarks thus causes me a pang of regret both on aesthetic grounds and, owing to my Cockney origin, for more personal reasons. I never get tired of exploring London, particularly the East End, and, of recent years, especially since the formation of the Georgian Group, an added zest has been given to my wanderings through having to keep a look-out for good Georgian buildings which are threatened, as only really good buildings seem to be threatened, by the housebreaker. Most of my London rambles have taken place on Sundays, which is the best day for them. If some of the landmarks I refer to have disappeared before this chapter is in print, I can only plead that London is being knocked to bits so rapidly by the "developers" that it is impossible for any writer to keep pace with them.

On a Sunday afternoon, no more agreeable London walk can be taken than a stroll through the City. In its streets, alleys and courtyards one meets scarcely a soul except the policemen and a few caretakers' children; one hears hardly a sound except

now and then the insistent ringing in the empty warehouses of what I have always supposed to be burglar alarms. The churches are shut between the services, the Tower of London is not on view, many of the more interesting public-houses do not even open for the permitted hours, and except cast of Aldgate, it is impossible to obtain any sort of a meal. Apart from these disadvantages, Sunday is by far the best day of the week for studying the baffling complexities of the famous Square Mile, locating its most interesting buildings, many of which conceal themselves with amazing ingenuity, and admiring the exterior of the churches and, in particular, their towers and spires. Do you know Little Love Lane, Honeysuckle Square, Pissing Alley (rechristencd "Passing Alley", in deference to Victorian refinement), Mason's Court, containing the famous Dr. Butler's Head, Three Tun Court? Have you seen the doorway in Great St. Helen's, surmounted by a carved cherub, with the inscription "Laus Deo St. Helena 1633"? Have you ever noticed the monument to the printers of Shakespeare's First Folio, outside St. Mary Aldcrmanbury? Do you know St. Clare Street; and can you find your way easily to the George and Vulture, most famous of the City taverns immortalised by Dickens? There is no particular reason, let me admit it at once, why anyone should be in a position to give the right answers to such an examination paper. But Sunday is the day for acquiring the necessary information, should you wish to do so. The sight of a sooty mass of crumbling Roman brickwork, in London Wall or in Cripplcgatc Churchyard, will serve as a reminder to those who have any historical imagination that every step they take they are walking over more than sixteen centuries of English history. Few tourists ever visit the City on Sundays, except perhaps to go to Evensong in St. Paul's Cathedral; it is reserved on that day for the meditative Londoner. Since my boyhood—I was first hustled all round the City at the age of ten by an antiquarian clergyman, and given a glass of milk and a bun for lunch in Crosby Hall—destruction and rebuilding have gone on at a terrifying rate. Lovely Finsbury Square is doomed by vast new erections which seal the ultimate fate of their gracious surroundings and, worst tragedy of all,

Crosby Hall itself has disappeared. Edward Callow in *Old London Taverns* (1899) describes the place as it was in his day.

"At Crosby Hall you can dine well and moderately, as to cost, in the same old Banqueting Hall where sweet Anne of Warwick has often feasted, or in the Throne Room upstairs, where the crook-backed King received the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London. . . . Crosby Place, as it was called, is one of the most interesting buildings in the City of London. It was originally built between the years 1466 and 1471 by Sir John Crosby, a wealthy grocer and woolstapler who, with eleven other doughty citizens, was knighted for his gallant defence of the City against an assault by Faulconbridge the Bastard. . . . Crosby Hall was not only the fairest merchant's palace in the City but was, and is now, after all its vicissitudes, the most perfect and complete specimen of Gothic domestic architecture of that period in London."

Sir Thomas More bought the house in 1513 and resided in it till 1520. He is believed to have written his *Utopia* here. In Shakespeare's time it was the home of the Countess of Pembroke, sister of Sir Philip Sidney, and there can be no doubt that "the Bard" knew it well. He made it the scene of much of the action in *Richard III*. When it was sold to the Bank whose ugly premises now occupy the site and its demolition was decided on, there was a tremendous outcry in the press and throughout the country. A Crosby Hall Preservation Committee was formed with Sir Vesey Strong as Chairman, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings collected about £50,000 from the public. One of the City companies, the Plumbers, offered the Bank an alternative site adjoining Crosby Hall. The L.C.C. and the Corporation of London expressed pious hopes that the building would be preserved. Finally King Edward VII intervened m person. All to no purpose. The Bank held to the strict letter of its rights, and to the lasting shame of all the authorities concerned, the crime of removing it was committed in 1907. To-day, the poor building, rc-ercctcd in what was once Sir Thomas More's garden in Chelsea—they had to pull down an old house which

had been occupied by Dean Swift to make way for it—stands forlornly as a reminder of what twentieth-century vandalism, combined with official impotence, can accomplish. The success of the Bank in defying national sentiment has inspired many other commercial concerns to do likewise. The destruction of Crosby Hall was thus, in more ways than one, a national disaster.

For the London of the guide-books I have as warm an appreciation as any man living. Westminster Abbey and Selfridgcs, the Inns of Court, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, Lyons' Corner Houses, the Coliseum, the Mall, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, the Tubes, and the omnibuses, the Picture Galleries, the British Museum, Greenwich, Blackheath, Hampstead, Chelsea—all these, and much besides, must be seen and enjoyed before it is possible to get a general impression of the capital. The western riverside suburbs, the Malls of Hammersmith and Chiswick, Strand-on-the-Green, Chiswick Village, Kew, Richmond and Hampton Court arc all delightful; and, preserved in perpetuity, in the neighbourhood of Putney and Wimbledon, is some of the loveliest woodland scenery in Surrey. London's famous parks and commons, its better known residential districts and resorts, certainly deserve the praises lavished on them. If here I devote myself chiefly to less beaten tracks and more squalid neighbourhoods I do so, not out of inverted snobbery—if offered the choice of residing in Highgate Village, Chelsea, Blackheath, or the Mile End Road, I should certainly not choose the Mile End Road—but because they have the particular kind of interest to which it is my main object to call attention. There is—or was, before the plague of flats—a certain bland uniformity and reserve about the London districts inhabited by the middle and upper classes, which is not very easy for strangers to penetrate. In Berlin, similarly, in pre-Hitler days, I walked about for hours in Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg without experiencing anything like the same feeling of getting on more intimate terms with the place that I had in the neighbourhood of Alcxanderplats or Halischcs Tor. To know anything of what London really means, of what Londoners arc really like, it is essential to explore the older working-class districts in which the

Cockneys still predominate, and especially is it necessary to gain some knowledge of the Port of London between the Tower Bridge and Gravesend and Tilbury. For the Port of London is the real heart of the vast town, its pride, its glory, the chief source of its greatness. Love of Dickens, since not quite all the streets, inns and landmarks of Dickens's London have yet been destroyed, induces many visitors every year to wander into some of the ungenteel districts I know best. Other parts never find their way into the tourist's itinerary, and are completely unknown even to the majority of middle-class Londoners, who as a rule have little enterprise or curiosity. Yet they are abundantly worth visiting, and have a strange, haunting, individual beauty, and as much romantic glamour, for the discerning, as can be found anywhere. Hampstead and Chelsea, Blackheath, Richmond and Kew form obviously pleasing sections of London's complicated pattern. Islington and Clerkenwell, Hoxton, Spitalfields, Wapping, Shadwell, Poplar, Limehouse, the Isle of Dogs, Southwark, Bermondscy, Rotherhithe, Woolwich, Bow and Bromley, ofter the sharpest contrast. Much about them is superficially repulsive; even, to the ultra-refined, a little horrifying. But there is a tang and racincss about East and South-East London which make many of the Western "dormitories" seem flat and tame by comparison. Both must be known thoroughly by anyone who wishes to get London in just perspective.

Dr. Johnson, who knew and appreciated London better than anyone before or after him, once recommended Boswell to explore Wapping. It was sound advice, though Boswell was evidently not the right person to whom to give it. In October 1792, he obediently made his way to Wapping, "but," he records, "whether from that uniformity which has in modern times to a great extent spread thro' every part of the metropolis, or from want of sufficient exertion, we were disappointed." A century later, an American painter and etcher—James MacNeill Whistler—saw and recorded what Boswell missed.

To reach Wapping, the best way is to proceed to Tower Hill, skirt the Tower of London and descend St. George's Street,

East, the former Ratcliff Highway, and afterwards bear to the right until Wapping High Street is reached. Tower Hill contains several public-houses which occupy the sites of once famous taverns. At the Bull, the poet Otway died of hunger in 1685. The Crooked Billet replaces a house of great architectural interest, dating from the reign of Henry VI. And down near the entrance to the Tower, on the right, is the rebuilt Tiger, whose predecessor, so it is said, once had the honour of sheltering Queen Elizabeth. It is still a very pleasant house and the reconstruction is not architecturally offensive. As a rule, when brewers get possession of a house of historic interest it seems to work like madness in the brain. They can't rest until they have knocked the place down, thrown out the old oak beams and mellowed furniture and erected a new red brick disaster, plastered halfway up with lavatory tiles and labelled "Ye Olde Whatnot", on the site. Their passion for bogus Tudor, Tottenham Court Road "Jac Oak" and other horrors, is almost pathological. (After this generalisation, let me apologise handsomely to the many exceptions to it, who have reconditioned their old houses with loving care, under the best expert advice. O si sic omnes!)

The Ratcliff Highway has little of interest at the present day; it is neat, decorous, well-behaved and quite deserves to be called St. George's Street. The approach to Wapping, by any route, is not enticing. We get a glimpse of the river at Wapping Old Stairs, where there is a public-house called the Town of Ramsgate, so named in honour of the fishermen from Ramsgate whose smacks used to anchor just off its windows. This mn was being reconstructed when I saw it last. I hope it is still possible to watch the river and the shipping from the windows of its new saloon bar. Farther on we come to the principal entrance to the London dock, flanked on either side by a terrace of spacious Georgian houses, built of brown brick, and then to the rectory and churchyard, church and school. Wapping churchyard, in summer, seen from the rectory gate, is one of the loveliest spots in East London. It is as green and quiet, as shady and peaceful as the churchyard of a country village. Close to the

church is an old charity school for girls and boys. In niches above the doorway are the carved and painted figures of a boy and girl in the costume of the late eighteenth century. Here is no journeyman work, but the work of a true artist, however humble and unknown. The expression of sweetness and innocence in the children's faces is infinitely touching, and characteristic of the inoffensive sentimentality of the period which saw the establishment of the Foundling Hospital. On the other side of the church is the Turk's Head public-house, rebuilt in 1927 and now devoid of interest. At the back of it a large Roman Catholic church indicates the presence m Wapping of a populous Irish colony.

If one continues along the High Street, one comes in a few minutes to one of Wapping's principal attractions, the Prospect of Whitby public-house, in Wapping Wall. This famous house, which has a weather-board frontage on the river and a "Vcran-dcr" under the bow window, on which one can sit out in summer and watch the shipping, was immortalised m one of Whistler's etchings. A few writers and painters, occasionally a contingent of "Mayfair" Bohemians, find their way here on summer evenings, but it has not yet become spoiled, nor is it likely to while the present genial publican has charge of it. After leaving the Prospect we come to one of those open spaces of which the L.C.C. has reason to be proud. Its name is the ''King Edward VII Memorial Park". When I first knew Shadwell, this was a drab piece of waste land, full of rusty tins and broken bottles. It is now a well-laid-out pleasure ground, with a delightful riverside promenade, and seats, tennis courts and flower-beds. There must be a large Jewish population in Shadwell, for I noticed that the L.C.C. regulations were duplicated in Yiddish. The views of the Thames shipping which arc obtainable from the park are among the finest to be had m East London. It is astonishing how far, on either bank of the river, one has to walk before it is possible to see anything of it. At Shadwell comes the first real break in the long wall of warehouses which stretches from the Tower.

The Church of St. George's in the East, Shadwell, a magnificent

example of the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor, with a tower 150 feet high, gains in splendour, like St. Ann's, Limehouse from its situation and surroundings. From here the hardy explorer may push on by a network of mean streets to the Grapes in Limehouse Reach. This somewhat dingy house has always been identified with the "Six Jolly Fellowship Porters" in *Our Mutual Friend;* but it you go to it do not mention the name of Dickens. Tourists arrive here, on occasion, who do not know their manners. They crowd into the house, make all the regulars uncomfortable, gaze round them open-mouthed, chatter about Rogue Riderhood and retire without even buying a glass of beer! They are not popular. Limehouse Causeway, Pennyfields and the late Charlie Brown's Railway Tavern have been put on the tourists' map by Thomas Burke and others, and need no description here. Rubberneck-wagons, conveying trippers on a personally conducted tour to "London's Underworld", set off almost every evening in the summer from Southampton Row; and Charlie Brown's is one of their principal objectives. The price of these tours is 7*s. 6d.* including the conductor's services, and I have often thought of gratifying my curiosity to the extent of three half-crowns. The Causeway, at least to the casual eye, is severely respectable and perfectly safe. There are several Chinese restaurants in it, and in the one I usually go to, Chong Chu's, the food is fairly good and very cheap. The proprietor, when I was last there, played a large number of Chinese gramophone records, including several which I gathered were Chinese "comics". Some of the half-caste children one sees in the Causeway and Pennyfields are as pretty as peach blossom. There are some fine, rich, racy pubs in this district, where you may see Cockney "breakdowns" danced to the music of strange, home-made instruments and where the customers make their own entertainment instead of getting it out of a machine. In view of the rubberneck-wagons I shall not specify where they may be found. Descending the river a stage further—it is best to return to the Commercial Road and jump on a bus or tram—one comes to the Blackwall Tunnel, where the Cubitt Town (Isle of Dogs) omnibus starts. When I

first explored the island over twenty-five years ago, the bus was a slow one-horse affair of the pill-box type with room for no more than eight or ten passengers. To-day the ordinary buses of London Transport maintain the service. The general aspect of the Isle of Dogs, with its interminable streets of little houses all dating from about the middle of the nineteenth century, is not prepossessing except to those who have a well-trained eye for the macabre. Nevertheless it has its surprises and its beauty spot. The latter is the County Council Garden, by the riverside, which ends in the glass-domed entrance to the Greenwich Tunnel.

This is the point from which to see Greenwich Hospital to best advantage. It is one of the finest belvederes on London's river, and if only George Lansbury had had his way, we should have here a municipal restaurant and beer garden with a good band and every possible aid to our enjoyment. Lansbury, alas, has had no successors with sufficient political sense to continue his beneficent activities and to-day there seems little prospect of our being allowed to make the most of our amenities or to consume "alcoholic refreshment" in pleasant surroundings. In consequence few strangers to the district make their way to what a fellow-explorer refers to as the "Dog's Gardens". This is a pity, because, even without a glass of beer, it is delightful to sit on a bench here, watching the lovely barges, with their great expanse of patched brown sail, all the coming and going on the river and Wren's masterpiece *on* the farther shore. There arc two pubs on "the Dogs" which have back-yards overlooking the Thames; though there is nothing on the outside of either to indicate the fact. They arc "surprises". Both have terraces, with tables and chairs by the waterside, and both arc pleasant places in which to spend a peaceful summer evening, especially for those who take an interest in ships. There is also a breath of really fresh air, even on the stuffiest summer nights.

No great capital makes less use than London of its natural advantages. It is amazing that with our congested streets, poisoned as they are by the fumes of innumerable cars and buses, *we* have not re-established our river steamers, or, better still,

allowed some enterprising firm to start a service of water-omnibuses.[1] I believe an offer to establish such a service was made to the L.C.C. some years ago, and rejected as impossible. Where there is no will, there is never any way. Let us hope the indefatigable efforts of Sir Alan Herbert will eventually be crowned by success.

From the Isle of Dogs, one can walk through the tunnel under the river and emerge on the south bank close to the Ship Hotel at Greenwich. If Greenwich was a hundred miles distant from London, instead of five rather squalid, tram-infested miles, it would be famous throughout England, a place of popular resort with a flourishing tourist traffic. Its proximity to Charing Cross, the poverty-stricken districts which separate it from that centre, and the absence of a proper steam-boat or motor-boat service, have proved its undoing. "Dear leafy Greenwich", as a local poet once apostrophised it, has not yet recovered its Victorian vogue. Yet few towns have more historical associations than Greenwich; few can show more glorious examples of English architecture. Greenwich Park, with its magnificent elms and groves *of* Spanish chestnut trees (planted under John Evelyn's direction) and its superb views, must rank as one of the finest public parks in the country. Horace Walpole, writing to Bcntlcy in July 1755, remarks: "Would you believe, I had never been in Greenwich Park? I never had, and am transported. Even the glories of Richmond and Twickenham hide their diminished heads." As late as half a century ago Greenwich was a fashionable resort for Londoners, who went to dine at one or other of its noted taverns to indulge in the whitebait for which it was famous. For nearly a century the Government of the day dined annually at Greenwich. It was at the Ship Hotel at Greenwich that a dinner was given by his friends and admirers to Charles Dickens on his return from America in 1842. In Murray's *Handbook for Kent and Sussex* (1863) the following passage occurs:

"Greenwich abounds in hotels, or more properly taverns; the best of which are, the Trafalgar (very good), the Crown and

[1] This chapter was written in 1938. This year, 1948, a service of water omnibuses has at last been inaugurated by private enterprise.

Sceptre, and the Ship. All these are much frequented by parties from London, especially during the whitebait season. This most delicate fish, one of the spccialites of London gastronomy, is found only in this part of the river, near Greenwich and Blackwall, between the months of April and August. It was at one time supposed to be the fry of larger fish, and the catching of it was pronounced illegal: but English ichthyologists, and principally Mr. Yarrell, have proved it to be a distinct species belonging to the Clupeidae (herring family) and have bestowed on its the name of Clupea alba; thereby relieving Lord Mayors and Aldermen 'from the awful responsibility of convicting whitebait fishers in the morning and feasting on the "pisciculos minutos" in the evening*."

Of the famous taverns, the well-situated Trafalgar, adjoining the hospital, whose dignified windows overlook the river, was in a semi-derelict condition for some years after the War.[1] It lost its licence and when I saw it last, the building was up for sale. I am glad to hear that it has now been converted into flats by the authorities of the Royal Naval College and should like to think that the representations made by the Georgian Group had some effect on the decision to preserve it. The Ship is an ordinary public-house; the Crown and Sceptre I have never succeeded in locating. If any "hotels" remain in Greenwich, they certainly do not obtrude themselves. Even the street once called "Teapot Alley" no longer lives up to its nickname. Chesterfield House, now called the Ranger's Lodge, in Chesterfield Walk at the top of Croom's Hill, has been recently redecorated by the L.C.C. and turned into refreshment rooms which supply the needs of visitors to the park. This dignified house had a magnificent saloon, with three large bow windows, added to it by Philip, Earl of Chesterfield, of epistolary fame. Some of his letters to his son arc dated from here. Near it is Macartney House, once occupied by the family of General Wolfe, the victor of the Heights of Abraham, who was buried in the Parish Church of St. Alphege. Near him lies Lavinia Fenton, who played Polly Pcachum in the *Beggar's Opera* and subsequently became Duchess of Bolton.

[1] **The 1914-1918 War.**

Of all the London streets I know well there is none that I admire more than Croorm's Hill which climbs by the side of Greenwich Park to the vast airy plateau of Blackheath. Some of the houses in it are of considerable antiquity, almost all are lovely to look on, yet few Londoners of the western districts seem to have heard of it.

The old royal palace of Greenwich, called "Placcntia" or the "Manor of Plesaunce", was a favourite residence of the Tudor monarchs. Henry VIII was born here in 1491. He married two of his wives here, Catherine of Aragon, and Anne of Cleves, and it was to this palace that he brought the ill-fated Anne Boleyn. In her short reign the reveilings in the palace were on an unprecedented scale. Henry, after her trial and condemnation, sat waiting under a tree in the park, listening for the sound of the canon which he had ordered to be fired at the Tower of London to notify her death. At Greenwich, the first "disguising after the manner of Italic, called a *Maske*, a thing not seen afore in England", was performed on the night of the Epiphany, 1513. Bloody Mary was born at Greenwich in 1515 and Queen Elizabeth in 1533. Elizabeth frequently resided at Greenwich, and it was here that she had those curious interviews with the Earl of Leicester and Sir Walter Raleigh. It is supposed also to have been the scene of the famous cloak incident. From the windows of her palace the Queen was able to watch "the pinnaces of her adventurous seamen, as they floated by on their way to fresh discoveries in the 'New-found world' ". James I began the building of the "Queen's House" (just behind the hospital) for Anne of Denmark. It was completed by Inigo Jones for Queen Henrietta Maria. After the Restoration, Charles II, who had a great liking for Greenwich, enlarged and walled the park, had the gardens laid out by the great Le Notre, who designed the gardens at Versailles, built the Royal Observatory, and began a magnificent new palace. The only portion of it that was completed now forms part of the west wing of the Royal Naval College. Another lover of Greenwich was Dr. Johnson. When he first came to London from Lichfield to write parliamentary articles for the *Gentleman' s Magazine* he took

apartments next door to the Golden Heart tavern in Church Street. He devotes a few pompous lines to Greenwich in his poem, *London:*

> *On Thames's hank, in silent thought we stood*
> *Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood;*
> *Pleased with the seat that gave Eliza birth,*
> *We kneel and kiss the consecrated earth.*

He is said to have composed the greater part of his unreadable *Irene* while walking in Greenwich Park. On the wooded hilltop between Blackheath and Woolwich is a recent addition to the amenities of the Borough of Greenwich, Charlton House and the gardens surrounding it, which was acquired from the Marion Wilson family. When I asked a policeman on point duty outside St. Alphege Church where it was, he appeared never to have heard of it. I was equally unsuccessful with my inquiries of several pedestrians, but at last I found a youth who could direct me. The house is well worth a visit and should be much better known than it seems to be. It is a remarkably fine specimen of a country mansion of the time of James I and was erected in 1612 by Sir Adam Newton. It is now used as a Public Library. In the grounds, which include tennis courts and a pleasant, shady promenade, are some of the oldest cypresses in England. Charlton used to be famous for its annual fair, known as "Horn Fair", where all sorts of vessels of horn were brought to be sold. No doubt the name is connected with the Miller of Charlton whose misfortune (or fortune) is associated with Cuckold's Point, where the river bends into Limehouse Reach. This point used at one time to be marked by a tall pole with a pair of horns at the top, and the story of the ancient jest is thus recorded by Murray:

"The land from Charlton, near Woolwich, as far as this point was, says tradition, granted by King John to a miller who had a 'fair wife', and in whose house the King was unseasonably discovered. The miller was desired to 'clear his eyes' and claim as much land as he could see on the Charlton side of the Thames. He did so, and saw as far as this point; having a grant of the

land on condition of walking once a year to Cuckold's Point with a pair of horns on his head."

I cannot leave Greenwich without commending the Yacht, a little public-house in a street, parallel with the river, which runs past the back of the Trafalgar. Its chief attraction is a billiards-room with a large window overlooking the stream. Near it in the same street is an attractive old house with a bow-windowed weatherboard frontage on the river which is now the office of a firm of barge-owners but was formerly a public-house called the Three Crowns. From Greenwich, good walkers can proceed by a pathway which runs by the riverside as far as Blackwall Tunnel, take a bus through the tunnel and return westwards via the Commercial Road. An alternative route is to take a bus to Blackheath and Charlton, walk down the hill from Charlton to the main road, proceed by bus or tram to Woolwich and cross the river by the Free Ferry to North Woolwich, whence there is a bus which takes one by tortuous roads to the main lines of City-going traffic. Many years ago when I was staying at the Felsted school mission in the Victoria Dock Road, I used to spend hours going to and fro on the *Will Crookes* and her sister ferry-boats, watching the shipping and the marvellous winter sunsets. At North Woolwich, near the landing-stage, there are some rather dreary public gardens and a pleasant public-house with a terrace in front of it. In the sixties this was quite a fashionable resort. The Woolwich Ferry—or rather the view of the extent and vastness of the Port of London and of the multitude and variety of the ships that use it, obtainable from the deck of the ferry-boat—is to my mind one of the major sights of London. I wonder how many of the inhabitants of Ealing or of Golder's Green know of it?

If the glamour and interest attaching to the river-side districts below the Tower Bridge is of the kind which no explorer of average intelligence can fail to appreciate, it has to be admitted that the charm of the poor neighbourhoods to the immediate north and east of the City, which have not the romantic attraction of the docks to help them, is of a more recondite character.

Spitalfields, Shoreditch, Hoxton, Clerkenwell, Pentonville and Islington form part of the essential Londoner's London. To the foreigner they may seem like a mere desert of mean streets, dotted here and there (but sparsely enough) with buildings of architectural value or historic associations. Short of drawing up a questionnaire and persuading the inhabitants to fill it in—supposing them to be capable of doing so—there is no means of obtaining data about the family origins of the population of these districts. Conclusions must be drawn from casual contacts, the behaviour of audiences in music-halls, the appearance of the people in the streets. My own view, admittedly guess-work, is that discounting the alien immigrants, mostly Jews, the inhabitants of these quarters are largely descendants of the real indigenous working-class Cockneys who, centuries ago, were crowded out of the City and whose families have never become prosperous enough to make the great trek over the bridges to South London. Spitalfields, which lies between Bishopsgate Street Without and Whitechapel is, of course, an exception, as it is now almost exclusively inhabited by Jews. From the standpoint of the intelligent visitor there is, however, more to be seen in Spitalfields than in the surrounding Cockney strongholds. Here the silk-weaving industry was established, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, by French Protestant refugees. For a time the weaving industry flourished exceedingly, as the splendid houses of the master weavers, a few of which may still be seen in Spital Square, Elder Street, White Lion Street and Fournier Street, sufficiently indicate. As in so many other parts of London, rich and poor, employer and employed, lived in the closest contiguity. A stone's throw from the stately houses in Spital Square there is still, at the end of a tunnel-hke passage leading out of Blossom Street, a tiny court called Loom Court, containing four or five little cottages evidently built to house very poor weavers. It is a popular view that Spitalfields, Hoxton and Shorcditch were always slums; but from the appearance of the streets at the present day it is evident that up to a century ago this was far from being the case. The poor courts and alleys of Hoxton doubtless sheltered an indigent and sometimes

desperate population, while neighbouring streets were moderately respectable, and Hoxton Square, Charles Square and King's Square definitely prosperous.

The depression caused, among other occurrences, by the South Sea Bubble, had a disastrous effect on the weaving trade in the early eighteenth century and led to riots and angry broadsides. One of these is called "The Spitalfield Ballad: or the Weaver's Complaint against the Callico Madams (1721)" and the following is a characteristic verse:

Then our trade was in health,
For our women of wealth
We had silk, rich embroid'ries and satins;
Fine stuffs and good crapes
For each ord'nary Trapes
That is destind to hobble in pattins.
But now we've a chince
For the wife of a prince
And a butterfly gown for the gay Dame,
Thin painted old sheets
For each trull in the streets
To appear like a Callico madam.

Economy campaigns were evidently as unpopular among eighteenth-century tradesmen as they are to-day. The weaving industr y revived, and some wonderful work has been turned out in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, even up to quite recent years. Now only a handful of old people remain—in Bethnal Green—to keep alive the traditions of their beautiful craft, the secrets of which will probably die with them.

Christ Church, Spitalfields, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor and completed in 1729, is a splendid example of the architecture of the period, with an imposing portico and a handsome tower and spire of Portland Stone, 234 feet high. Fournier Street, formerly Church Street, which runs past it to Brick Lane, has a number of handsome red-brick houses of the early Georgian period, some of which (number 14 in particular) have beautiful carved porches. Singularly little help can be obtained from

Wheatley, Cunningham, Mrs. E. T. Cook (Darlington's Guide) or any of the other authorities I have consulted, in reconstructing bygone Spitalficlds. That many wealthy people lived here is evident. The majority were, no doubt, French Protestants, but others were City merchants of position. A number of English Quakers, mostly wool-staplers and silk-dyers, lived in the adjoining Norton Folgate. Devonshire House, close to Spital Square, was until about thirty years ago, the principal Friends Meeting House in London. The fact that this district was a well-known centre of Nonconformity may possibly have caused the French Huguenot refugees to settle in it.

The new Spitalficlds market has involved the removal of many old houses in the parish, but sufficient remain to make it worth exploring by people who care for London domestic architecture of a type which has never yet been surpassed in elegance and convenience.

Shoreditch has little of the kind to offer. The Church of St. Leonard, dating from 1740, is by the elder George Dance, and does not compare with Christ Church, Spitalfields, but the churchyard is pleasant, and the parish stocks have been preserved. There is a large tomb in the churchyard bearing the laconic inscription "Dr. John Gardiner's last and best bedroom. 1807." In Shakespeare's day, Shoreditch was the actor's parish and several members of the companies which played at The Theatre and at The Curtain, including the great Burbage, arc buried here. As the district was on the main road to the Eastern counties from the City, its inns were numerous and much frequented. In this respect it resembled Southwark in the eighteenth century. Here, as in other parts of London, wealthy people had no objection to living in close proximity to the less fortunate, but at the beginning of the eighteenth century, judging from the aspect of the houses, the prevailing note must have been one of lower middle-class respectability. The chief trade for which Shoreditch was noted was, and still is, cabinet-making. No doubt many of the men still employed in the Shoreditch workshops are descended from generations of craftsmen who never stirred from the parish. Nonconformity, of all kinds, was firmly entrenched here by the

eighteenth century. Side by side with it, however, as is evidenced by the Old Brit in Hoxton Street and the Eagle saloon in the City Road, mentioned in the old song:

Up and down the City Road,
In and out the Eagle
Thai's the way the money goes—
Pop goes the weasel!

was much of that genial and slightly uproarious love of the good things in life which we find reflected so constantly in the pages of Dickens. No doubt many of the people who used to flock to the Britannia Theatre in its great days were directly descended from the poorer patrons of The Curtain. To-day the Old Brit is a cinema and the Eagle is a very commonplace public-house. That Shoreditch has not forgotten its Shakespearean connexions is evidenced by the elaborate scries of illustrations to Shakespeare's plays, in coloured tiles, which adorn the passage leading to the saloon bar of the White Hart public-house, in Hoxton Street. This house is popularly known as the "Old Number Nine" because it stood at the corner of the ninth court, descending the street. Some of these courts, each containing a row of little cottages with tiny front gardens, still remain and arc decidedly picturesque. Hoxton Square, a few yards from the Old Number Nine, was once owned by Israel Wilkes, the father of John Wilkes. The Rev. Edward Calamy and other Nonconformist divines lived there in the late eighteenth century. Another eminent "Old Hoxtonian" was Mary Wollstonccraft, who lived in Queen's Row, Hoxton, before her marriage to Godwin. The principal object of interest for the tourist in the parish of Shoreditch is the very interesting but too rarely visited Geffrye Museum in the Kingsland Road. It occupies the alms-houses erected by Sir Richard Geffrye in 1703—a delightful range of buildings, with an admirable statue of the pious founder over the central doorway—and contains very many beautifully carved chimney-pieces, staircases, porticoes and panellings removed from demolished houses, examples of the fine craftsmanship and feeling for interior decoration possessed by our forefathers. To-

day, one of the chief charms of Shoreditch lies in the animation, vivacity and rough humour of its inhabitants and in the number of little old-fashioned shops which abound in its streets and alleys. One of these, Pollock's toy theatre shop, where you may still buy the same old prints "a penny plain and tuppence coloured" which delighted our great-grandparents, has a fame outside the district and has often been described by enterprising journalists. One of the best public-houses in Shoreditch borough, to judge from its outside appearance, must have been the White Swan, at 196 Shoreditch High Street. It is an excellent eighteenth-century house, with a pleasant early Victorian frontage. How it came to lose its licence I do not know.

Much of old Shoreditch has been rebuilt in the past half-century, and most of the rest will doubtless disappear before long. The destruction of its slums was overdue. If only our "developers" would turn their attention to places like Shoreditch, and leave Mayfair alone, how the most ardent Georgian fans would applaud their activities! Near the top of Hoxton Street, by Whitmore Street, there is a block of recently erected artisan's flats called Crossbow House, which augurs well for the future. Every now and then the L.C.C.—if, as I suppose, the credit belongs to it—does things so well that one can but regret its occasional lapses. The churchyard gardens in many slum areas and many (though not all) of the new working-class flats they have erected could hardly be improved upon. The L.C.C. comes in for a good deal of criticism; but when it is entitled to unstinted praise it ought to receive it.

If the visitor with a guide-book finds himself in Shoreditch—an unlikely event—he can get back without much difficulty to such things as are starred in Baedeker. The graves of Bunyan and Defoe in the Bunhill Fields Dissenters' Graveyard, John Wesley's Chapel and grave and the Wesley Museum, the Charterhouse and Charterhouse Square, St. Giles Cripplegate, St. Bartholomew the Great and Bartholomew Close, with its one remaining Tudor House, are all within easy walking distance. I prefer to leave these and to plunge into Clerkenwell, still the headquarters of what remains of the London clock and watch-

making industry, and its shabby-genteel neighbour, Pcntonville. In Clerkenwell the New River reaches its destination in spacious waterworks close to Sadler's Wells Theatre. Grimaldi the clown and the beneficent Sir Hugh Myddleton, who created the New River and nearly ruined himself in doing so, seem to be the dominating figures in Clerkenwell. Myddleton has given his name to a street and a square, while poor Grimaldi and his "hot codlins" will long be associated in the Londoner's memory with Sadler's Wells. He went to live in 37 Pcnton Street, after marrying the manager's daughter, and used to be carried home drunk night after night by the friendly publican of the Duke of Cornwallis tavern at the top of Pentonville Road. He is buried in the churchyard of a once derelict but now restored church, St. James's, Pcntonville, and his gravestone, still often visited, bears only the words "Sacred to the memory of Mr. Grimaldi, Died May 31st, 1837". The humble, forgotten squares of Pentonville—Lloyd's Square, Myddleton Square, and Amworth Square, together with Percy Circus—form a kind of early Victorian suburban oasis, lost in the heart of London. I forget where Mr. Pooter is supposed to have written his immortal *Diary of a Nobody*, but it might well have been in Lloyd's Square. Of recent years Arnold Bennett's *Riceyman Steps*—easily identifiable from the King's Cross Road—which lead up to Lloyd's Square, has called the attention of "arty" and literary people to this district, and extraneous "Bloomsburys" may now often be encountered there, on the prowl. Quite a number have settled in it. The New Merlin's Cave is the best-known public-house in the neighbourhood. It makes some attempt to carry on the traditions of its famous predecessor and has "musical evenings", though I never went to one.

In Pentonville we are but a few steps from the once dominating Angel, which has now degenerated into a teashop. Almost opposite, at the top of the City Road, is a public-house called Ye Blue Coat Boy, which dates from 1636. There used to be a large painting of a boy in the traditional costume of Christ's Hospital above its facade, but alas, the house has now been rebuilt and the painting has disappeared.

We now turn into Islington Upper Street, one of the most animated and distinctive thoroughfares in Cockney London. On the right, as we enter, is the Islington Empire, and at the top of the street Collins' Music Hall. Islington is one of the last strongholds of the old London music hall. It continues to flourish here because here arc to be found exactly the right audiences. The *rapport* between the performers and the house is as complete as it ever was in the old days of the Tivoli, the Oxford and the Canterbury. Every joke goes home, particularly the bawdy ones. The laughter is whole-hearted and to hear it revives one's faith in human nature. The choruses arc shouted from stalls to gallery, a touch of pathos brings a tear to every eye; the return of an old favourite, the older and the more decrepit the better, is the signal for a riot of sentimental affection. A music-hall artist who has once got on the right side of an Islington audience can be sure of a welcome there as long as he or she survives. The Jews appear to have invaded Islington in large numbers, but they have been assimilated and are not dominant. There is no better Cockney than the "little Yiddisher boy", who belongs to a district that is mainly Gentile. The Jews of Whitechapel, on the other hand, are a race apart.

Charles Lamb's little cottage in Colebrooke Row still stands. In a pub in Frog Lane, Islington—the Barley Mow—George Morland, in 1800, alternately boozed and painted *to* provide himself with the means of boozing again. I have not been able to identity it. Colley Cibber and his redoubtable daughter, who kept a public-house, were Islington worthies of the past. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was a popular place of residence for City Merchants. Their comfortable houses remain, and one or two of the squares still retain a genteel appearance. Still more so do the contiguous districts of Northampton Park and Canonbury. Canonbury is a delightful Victorian survival. Its streets are quiet and dignified, its houses have big gardens and sumptuous conservatories. The latter, I have heard, were the particular pride of the late Richard Sickert, once Canonbury's most illustrious resident. A really energetic explorer of the more genteel quarters of Cockney London might

with advantage pursue his investigations even as far as Barnsbury and Highbury. But these *are* only for the expert and the connoisseur. There is nothing in them to strike the eye, nothing "worth seeing"; no doubt they arc inhabited almost exclusively by the "wrong people". No one in Bloomsbury has any friends in Barnsbury. Nobody in Ealing has ever heard of the place; Wimbledon is unaware of its existence. Nevertheless, commodious residences abound there, inhabited by Londoners, each of them possessed of a heart "like wot you 'ave got", and perhaps a bigger and a better one. To me Barnsbury typifies all the mystery and fascination of London. I would far sooner go to tea with Mrs. Brown of Barnsbury than with Prince Machiavelli of the Palazzo Bogus in Venice. What the Palazzo Bogus is like anyone can imagine. But what goes on behind Mrs. Brown's Nottingham-lace curtains in her double-fronted villa—unless one happens *to* be a Barnsburyite—one cannot even guess. In their way, all the districts through which we have wandered in this rambling promenade belong essentially to native London, but none are more reluctant to reveal their secrets than Barnsbury.

2

The Timely Inn

I

You SEE, a drink in a pub isn't in the least *like* a drink anywhere else. It isn't the same thing at all. In a pub there's a kind of . . . a sort of . . ." Thus did a young friend of nunc, known to his intimates as Bobby, once endeavour to explain to our hostess—when we were week-ending together in a riverside house near Marlow—that visit to the local Black Swan which had made us late for luncheon. As he beamed through his horn-rimmed glasses, Bobby looked like a delighted but slightly bewildered lamb, who has just started to make discoveries about life. The pub! And while he grinned and waved an expressive hand in his attempt to describe this indescribable masculine "something" to a young woman with ravishing frocks and a charming house in which to display them I thought of Chaucer and the Tabard Inn at Southwark, of Shakespeare's Mermaid, and of Chris Marlowe, of Goldsmith and Sam Johnson and Sam Weller and Dick Turpin, and a whole host of other matters appertaining to inns and taverns which happened to be lying about in my head. "There's a kind of . . . a sort of . . ." I should jolly well think there is! The longer I spend in exile,[1] far away from the streets of my home town, the more keenly do I appreciate the inimitable flavour of our inns, with their democratic tradition of sociability, ease and good fellowship and their age-old association with the arts of music, poetry, painting and the stage. I say this not to be in the fashion of the moment; for I am too good a Londoner not to have felt warmly towards our public-houses as an institution

[1] **This piece was written in Nice in 1929.**

even in the years when I never used them. One of the few good things which the War has brought about in England is the dissipation of the snobbish prejudice against the public-house which grew up during the late Victorian era. Our pubs have now very definitely been "re-discovcrcd"—let us hope in time to save them from the Philistines and Prohibitionists.

In the autumn of 1929 I had the good fortune to spend a month's holiday in London, after an absence of two years in the South of France. One of the first of the old haunts that I re-visited was the Nonesuch Tavern, that club of clubless artists, where in time past I had spent so many happy hours. Nothing much seemed to have altered. Mine host and Miss Annie, genial as ever, were at their accustomed station behind the bar and gave me the sort of welcome which makes a man feel that he has in truth come home. The ceiling of the saloon was, as usual, half-covered with packets of pennies done up in coloured tissue-paper, which had been thrown up and somehow made to stick—contributions to next year's Children's Picnic. The mechanical piano (a penny in the slot) was thumping out one of the well-remembered tunes. A few of the tables were occupied and some familiar local characters, accompanied by peculiar but intelligent mongrels, stood in a group consuming their morning beer. Before I had finished my own "Toby", Nina Hamnett came in, and after her half a dozen other painters and fellow-novelists whom I had not seen since I was last in England.

Anything that on the outside looks less like a rendezvous for poets, painters, musicians, publishers, novelists, art critics and selected members of the idle poor than the Nonesuch, it would be difficult to imagine. Architecturally, it leaves all to be desired and its style of decoration is the worst that the late 'eighties could produce. Inside, also, the scene is calculated to appal the honest bourgeois and to baffle the most conscientious American tourist in quest of celebrities. At night the crowds, the noise of the piano, the roar of laughter and conversation, and the haze of tobacco smoke must make it seem like an inferno to the uninitiated. It is the most democratic saloon bar in London. All classes rub shoulders in it with perfect ease and good-humour.

But "Mr. K." has an exact knowledge of his clientele and their tastes and extraneous elements are not encouraged. Professional ladies with more zeal than discretion have discovered this before now to their chagrin. The Nonesuch closes at ten o'clock. At that hour Dora, mindful of their health, sends her obedient children for a little walk before bedtime. "Now spurs the lated traveller apace, to gain the timely inn," that is to say any inn which, owing to our queer licensing regulations, is allowed to remain open for another hour.

"Stands England as it did?" I anxiously asked myself during the weeks of my stay, as I wandered about London enjoying with eyes, ears and nose, all the familiar sights and sounds and smells. As far as the pubs were concerned, the answer—much to my relief—seemed to be in the affirmative. But how long would it last? Danger threatened! To the eye of the returned exile, who has been dreaming of home as long as I had, the signs everywhere apparent of the peaceful penetration of America were alarming in the extreme. Prostrated before the Golden Calf of Transatlantic prosperity, the country seemed to be offering up its individuality, its traditions, its freedom of action and of speech, everything it ever had that made it great, in a gesture of supplication to the United States. "Come over to England and standardise us!"

II

That America contains many millions of highly-cultivated, civilised, progressive, stimulating and altogether delightful people, goes without saying. Although in England we get but a small proportion of the great army of American tourists who flock to Europe, of those who do come to our shores the majority are sympathetic to our ideas, like our customs and way of living and would not wish us to be less English than we are. Similarly, when the Englishman—and particularly the literary Englishman—visits America, he would not for the world have it less American than it is and would feel most uncomfortable if he found it in any way "anglicised". It is certainly not from that small section of the vast, mixed but imperfectly-blended

population of the United States, which we know best and with which we have most in Common, that the "American menace" comes. Yet the American menace to our civilisation is very real, for all that, though our friendships and intermarriages, and the fact that we, as a homogeneous people, find it hard to realize that the Americans arc not homogeneous, blind most of us to its existence.

If Germany had won the War it would certainly have been humiliating for England; but at the same time, as we are a stout-hearted and tenacious race, it would have braced us morally, while culturally we should have lost nothing and perhaps have gained much. We should certainly have gained an increased consciousness of, and pride in, our national individuality. No such advantages can be claimed for the American victory, or for the dissemination throughout the British Empire of American ideas and "ideals" which has resulted from it. America's triumph has produced in us a kind of moral relaxation, while her mechanised and standardised civilisation which is now overwhelming us, if it be not violently resisted and spewed out, must eventually destroy our own Culturally all great European countries talk more or less "the same language", have simitar standards of values and preserve the same fundamental decencies of the intellect and of the aesthetic sense. Nothing, on the other hand, could be more alien and inimical to Europe than the "cultural" language of America—as spoken all over the world by Big Business in the form of Hollywood films, canned jazz and mammy songs—which England more than any other Western country now appears to be so pathetically eager to acquire. The voice of American commercial and imperialistic propaganda is not the voice of the America which the best of us respect and admire; but, alas, it is the only one to which the masses of our people seem to pay any attention.

I was thus all the more thankful to be able to breathe now and then the still uninfected air of the Nonesuch Tavern. It was at the Nonesuch one day that I encountered an old friend whose gloom at the invasion of our island home surpassed even my own. "In ten years' time," he said, "there won't be a lift or an undertaker left in England. Morticians will bury us in caskets, elevators

shoot us to the twentieth floor. There will be no water-closets, only toilets; no music-halls, only cinemas showing Hollywood films; no pubs, only chain teashops and American-owned drug stores and cafeterias. Our America-mania has now reached such lengths that even Bernard Shaw (who has given us a knock or two in his time) was constrained, in *The Apple Cart,* to show us where we are going. The younger generation of our vast middle and lower-mid die-class is now entirely under the influence of these standardised, non-creative 'amusements', produced and forced upon us by American finance, which are just as habit-forming as deleterious drugs. Well, one day, I suppose we shall wake up and find ourselves annexed to the United States as a nominally self-governing colony. At present, if you look around you, you will see that our Royal Family and our public-houses arc almost our only great national institutions which remain untouched by American influences. While they last, they are the sole rallying points for the English people, if they wish to save themselves. But do they? I doubt it. *Quos Deus vult pcrdere!"*

Reduced to a depressed silence by this harangue, I gazed around me, caught sight of the dart-throwers in the four ale bar and took heart. Nothing canned, standardised or uncreative about that! Perhaps our pubs may one day form the breeding-ground of an English Sinn Fein movement, of which our over-run and downtrodden country, God knows, is sorely in need. At all events, before they arc swept away by the combined pressure of American Big Business and our own doctrinaire reformers, I am optimistic enough to hope that some resistance will be offered. A nation which reforms its public-houses out of existence, and deprives the people of their normal centres of communal sociability, does so at its peril despite all the hes of all the statisticians.[1] In man's descent to the robot, acceptance of State interference in the ordinary social habits of law-abiding and self-respecting citizens is the step which counts.

The saloon-bars of our public-houses, whose names are often fragrant with historic association, are now the Londoner's safest

[1] **This danger at least seems to have passed.**

refuges from the ever-growing cosmopolitanism of his vast city. They have far more character than the cafes of Paris, which is now rapidly becoming an American capital. The Parisians have let their city furnished and retired into nooks and corners while their transatlantic *locataircs* occupy all the best seats. Nothing of the kind has yet occurred in London. Our democratic pubs are still centres for that informal, civilised sociability which for generations has been one of the greatest charms of London life. Shenstone was not the first, nor—let us hope—will he be the last Englishman to affirm that he still has found "his warmest welcome at an inn".

The strongest argument the prohibitionist can bring forward against our public-houses is that some of them are undoubtedly squalid, dirty and badly run. This is chiefly the fault of those licensing magistrates who not only close so-called "redundant" public-houses, but refuse to sanction schemes for improving the houses which their own policy has rendered objectionable. All public-house premises should be clean, hygienic, comfortable and home-like, and where gardens and terraces exist, proper use should be made of them. Better control should also be exercised over the quality of the drink sold. In Nordic countries like our own, the foundation of national temperance is based on cheap and good beer. At present our beer is expensive and not nearly so good as it was and ought to be. In general, however, the changes for the better which have taken place in our public-houses during the past *ten* years[1] are remarkable. These have been largely brought about by the fact that the professional and upper-middle-classes, of both sexes, partly owing to the tremendous increase in foreign travel which has taken place since the War, have come—very sensibly—to regard the pub as the English equivalent of the cafe. In the next ten years we ought to be able to make our pubs places to which any man of any class can go with his wife, daughter or fiancee with as much impunity as he can go with them, at present, to a restaurant or teashop. Nineteenth-century puritanism and "respectability" debased our inns from their original status. It is for us to raise

[1] **i.e. between 1920 and 1930.**

them at least to the Continental level, and to take an extra pride in them because they are English.

III

Oddly enough, although during my first adult years in London I was an indefatigable explorer of the town, could early claim to have followed every existing bus-route to its termination and thus knew many hundreds of public-houses by name, it rarely occurred to me to enter one. It may have been that I still retained, in those days, an undergraduate distaste for "pub-erawling". A more probable explanation is that, from habit rather than principle, I was practically a teetotaller; and as the public-house never presented itself to me as any more a "haunt of vice" than the Ritz or the Athenaeum Club—or any other premises on which people consume alcohol when talking to their friends—it had no special allurements. When I returned to London in 1919 not only my own ideas and circumstances, but all the conditions of social life in the town had radically altered. All sorts of barriers had been broken down by the War, all kinds of strange meetings and re-groupings had taken place. While other institutions had changed out of recognition, the public-house continued to play its part in the communal life of London, and men frequented it as something stable and traditional in a world of chaos. During the years which have elapsed since the Armistice I can truthfully state that many of my happiest hours have been passed in conversation with my friends in public-houses, nor has much foreign travel done anything but confirm me in my appreciation of them. In exile on the Riviera, though the sunshine streams into my room and from my window I have the most entrancing view of the mountains and the sea, my thoughts continually fly homewards and often I find myself saying over the evocative names of cherished inns, names which, gathered together like a nosegay of cottage flowers, emit something of the blended fragrance that for me is England. Each one recalls hours of talk and laughter, the companionship of chosen friends, happy days and joyous nights. The Green Man,

The World's End, The Valiant Trooper, The Yorkshire Grey, The Hole in the Wall, The Ship and Shovel, The Hawarden Castle, The World Turned Upside Down, The Prospect of Whitby, The Three Crowns, The Prodigal Son, The Tiger, The Black Bear, The King William IV, The Goat and Compasses, The Hoop of Grapes, Dirty Dick's, Charlie Brown's, The Man of Kent, The Ship Hotel, and the Mitre at Greenwich, The Doves on Hammersmith Mall, The Two Drovers, The Rising Sun, The Harmony Restor'd, The Volunteer, The Antelope, The Cadogan Arms, The Pink and Lily, The Hand Clasp'd in Friendship—the mere compilation of such a list is a delight in itself. The Ship and Shovel, an old-fashioned village inn imbedded among more modern houses in a side street near Guy's Hospital, owes the second part of its name to that fine old sea-dog Admiral Sir Cloudeslcy Shovel, who, when on shore, habitually frequented it. So fond was he of the house, which in his day was called The Ship, that he entered into negotiations for its purchase, but died before they could be completed. To do honour to his memory the name was altered to The Ship and Shovel.

Public-houses are conservative institutions which is not the least of their charms for those who have a sense of the past. They preserve furniture, decorations, jokes, witty sayings, and portraits of race-horses, jockeys, pugilists and famous clients, for generation after generation. And, like private houses, they become impregnated with the personality of those who keep them. All publicans seem to be fond of animals, and besides the inevitable cat and dog belonging to the house, many have more unusual pets. "See the Aviary" is an invitation displayed by a cosy little pub in a turning off the Strand. Several houses I know possess singular parrots. Another, in South London, has an aquarium, lavishly adorned with ferns, in which a number of solemn goldfish moon about for the amusement of the solitary drinker. Charlie Brown's museum of curios and the astonishing assortment of stuffed animals that depend from the ceiling of Dirty Dick's in Bishopsgate, are widely known; but the amateur of the late Victorian period would do well to pay a visit to The

Tiger, that famous inn opposite the entrance to the Tower of London, in which Queen Elizabeth is alleged to have slept. Here he will find, preserved in a glass case, many touching relics of the Boer War, including one of the tins of chocolate which Queen Victoria presented to the troops at Christmas, in mint condition. He will also find, in the saloon bar, the most comfortable leather-covered club arm-chairs that a lazy man could wish for.

I know of no more agreeable way of spending an evening with a young but learned friend than paying a round of calls in the City. How quiet and cosy it is! No noise, no traffic except the necessary omnibuses, nothing but snug peaccfulness after the day's work! Many a happy hour have I spent thus with a friend who lingers in my memory as the most sympathetic, urbane and erudite of companions. I remember once that in a little street off the Minorics—called, I think, St. Clare Street—we found tucked away the tiniest and quietest of London's hotels. The brass of its door-knocker glittered like gold, and through the lace curtains we could see into its snug, brightly-lit parlour, where the fire was blazing on the hearth and the kettle singing on the hob. If I ever have occasion to stay in the City I have often thought since that I should like to make Hawton's my headquarters. Most of the City hotels have disappeared, many have closed their doors within my own memory, but so far Hawton's still remains.

Much that is of interest to the student of London life and character may be found in the inns and taverns that were frequented by the comedians and music-hall stars of a past generation. In the palmy days of the London music-hall the artists, uncorrupted by profitable visits to Hollywood, did not disdain the pub. Indeed, a number of them—including G. H. Chirgwin, "the white-eyed Kaffir"—when they retired from the boards, became publicans themselves, and so kept in touch with "the profession" by ministering to its thirst. In a turning off Oxford Street, not far from what used to be the Oxford Music **Hall,** there was till recently **a** demure, discreet little public-house which used to be one of the favourite **haunts of the late Dan**

Leno. Many photographs of the great little comedian in his most famous roles adorned the walls of its snug saloon. The house was presided over by two handsome ladies in middle-life, who were faithful to the black satin of the Victorian barmaid, and preserved in it an atmosphere of quiet decorum. Towards the end the old laughter was hushed, the old high jinks were over, nothing lingered on but memories of the past and ghosts of bygone happy days. I am old enough to remember the noble and imperious race of pre-war barmaids, with their golden hair, their black satin bosoms and the disciplinary methods which lured so many a peer of the realm to virtuous domesticity by way of the Registrar. The barmaid, I understand, is no longer the danger that she used to be, to the mothers of debutantes. It is a pity. Several of my friends would be all the better for marrying a barmaid. They arc an admirable type of London woman—virtuous, understanding, kindly and respectable. And they are capable in later life of acquiring any amount of dignity—a fact which the two mature Hebcs who as girls ministered to Dan Leno used admirably to exemplify.

A friend of mine who is an amateur of public-house mahogany and racing prints of the Dickens period has made a large and curious collection of inns which cater for his particular passion. The mahogany in the Ship Hotel at Greenwich, I remember, excited his commendation; and he once lured me into a dim saloon the walls of which were adorned with a coloured print of a Derby winner of the 'forties and an engraving of its noble and side-whiskered owner. The house, to a connoisseur, was decidedly "Wellerish"; an authentic Dickens inn of the best period. Another friend is an enthusiastic dart-thrower, and frequents only the four ale bars in which this noble and ancient game is played with the seriousness which it deserves.

Of all the London public-houses, the ones which adorn in such a fascinating way the banks of the Thames are those for which I have the deepest regard. My beer never seems to taste so good as when I can see, through the window of the saloon, the funnel of a steamer or the red-brown sail of a barge. It has always struck me with astonishment that the majority of our poets and painters,

who more than any other classes of the community ought to be above the easy raptures of the snobbish and untravelled tourist, should race across the Channel to find excitement in continental cafes while remaining blind to the romantic glamour of so much that lies upon their own bus routes. It was left to Whistler to discover The Prospect of Whitby; and I doubt whether, even yet, any native artist has found out the Three Crowns Inn on Rainham Marsh, with its marvellous view of Half Way Reach. As for our poets, with the exception of the unfortunate Thomson, "B.V.", now little read, and some of the lesser fry (myself among them), they seem to have gained far less inspiration from London than from their trips abroad.

About a mile above The Three Crowns there is another small inn on the river bank, close to Dagcnham Breach, which some years ago I used to be fond of visiting. It is no longer accessible to the general public, for the Ford Motor Works have closed the road and only the employees of the factories in its vicinity can now slake their thirst there. The children of Dagenham are similarly prevented from paddling in the summer on the sandy shore near the inn, and from watching the ships go by; and the local fisherman can no longer drop his hooked worm into the waters of the Breach. For many generations Dagenham Breach was a favourite resort for London anglers. The famous ministerial "white-bait dinner" began when the occupant of a house beside this lake invited William Pitt to dine with him in order to taste the eels of the pond and the whitebait of the river. Pitt brought other members of his Cabinet with him and the dinner became a yearly institution. After a time the venue was changed to the Ship Hotel at Greenwich, and the dinner was held there every June or July up till the 'eighties. There are still a couple of old cottages, by Dagenham Breach, one of which may be part of the house that Pitt visited. They look strangely rural amid the surrounding factories and smouldering rubbish dumps. But the anglers have disappeared and *no* doubt, by this time, most of the fish arc poisoned.

For a good view of the river, the bay window of the dining-room in the Ship Hotel, in my native town of Greenwich, is

hard to beat, though the terrace of a humble pub on the opposite side of the river about half a mile lower down, runs it close. The pub I refer to is in the Isle of Dogs, but as it is a friend's discovery I will not disclose its name. Only the initiates know of its terrace. One might easily call at the house without discovering either the fact that one was close to the river, or that, by opening a back door, one could come out into a yard containing a few forms and tables, with all Thames and its shipping at one's feet. There arc several good Thames-side inns at Wapping, Rotherhithe and Blackwall; but I must not, at this juncture, deprive the reader of the joy of searching them out for himself. If he wishes for precise details from me he must await the publication of my *magnum opus.* In the years to come *Goldrings Collections for a History of the Licensed Premises of London,* in fourteen volumes, with two supplementary volumes dealing respectively with oyster Shops and Wine Bars, will inform the curious student of the history, special cliaracteristics and interesting associations of every public-house in the London area. Alas, although an indefatigable worker in my chosen field, I fear it may be many years before even the first of my projected volumes is ready for the press; and perhaps, since life is both precarious and short, my pen may drop into the pewter before even that one is completed. No matter; other Londoners no less gifted than myself will assuredly take up my task if I have to relinquish it unfinished. Among my colleagues in this branch of research—each of them a mine of extensive and peculiar information—it would be unjust of me not to pay a tribute in passing to Nina Hamnett, E. Powys Mathers and Philip Heseltine. Mr. Heseltinc is particularly noted for his scientific inquiry into the quality of our beer, the deterioration of which can only be regarded as a national calamity. And what would not the student gain if only Augustus John could be induced to put his vast store of information about London inns at his disposal!

IV

If the beer has deteriorated in our public-houses, the food—whether sandwiches, "snacks at the bar", or midday

ordinaries—has decidedly improved during the past ten years. The public-house lunch has now become a distinctive and popular feature of London life, and would no doubt be largely "written up" if English journalists were not so preoccupied with the interesting characteristics of every capital except their own. The oyster shops and oyster bars, though few of them are licensed premises, have for the most part preserved their individuality and despite the fantastic price which the oyster has now reached, are still much frequented by those Londoners who object to being standardised and arc unable to enjoy their food in Corner Houses or chain teashops. The task of opening oysters seems to lend a peculiar richness and fruitiness to the Cockney character. Indeed, I know few more engaging London types than the veteran oystermen of my acquaintance. The two who look after the oyster dive in the basement of the Horseshoe in the Tottenham Court Road; deaf George in Chancery Lane (the "purveyor" for so many years to that staunch libertarian Mr. E. S. P. Haynes) and a score of other worthies in the City seem able to defy the passage of time, ignore change and go on opening shells through all the destructions and rc-buildings of the town as if endowed with immortality.

The London wine bars have not quite the same democratic quality, or the same wealth of tradition behind them as the public-houses. Nevertheless, several have already acquired an agreeable patina of age and association, have become as it were "crusted". Henckey's in Holborn, which dates from the end of the seventeenth century, is my favourite. I like the huge barrels, the high ceiling, the discreet alcoves and the willing boys who balance the glasses so adroitly on their trays and never spill a drop. It was, I think, Harold Monro—excellent poet and no less excellent connoisseur of Sherry—who, many years ago, first introduced me to Henekcy's. Amateurs of late Victorian London—the age of Phil May, the "Pink 'Un's ripest period—will find the atmosphere of that time perfectly preserved at the El Vino, which stands in the shadow of the Piccadilly Hotel and almost adjoins the Vine Street Police-station. There used to be, perhaps still is, an admirable white port to be obtained here

to which Louis Marlow and myself have many a time done justice. A certain fruitiness was always noticeable in the frequenters, of both sexes, of this bar; and the glittering top hat of the Manager invariably aroused my admiration. In pre-war days Short's in the Gaiety Theatre Building used to be as much frequented by elderly chorus ladies as was the Bedford Street Bodega by out-of-work actors. A feature of Short's was its delicious currant buns, the like of which I have eaten nowhere else. Other honoured names are those of Finch, Long and Mooney. Mention should also be made of Shirreff's Wine Shades under Ludgate Bridge which have plenty of character and are pleasantly mid-Victorian.[1] In general, however, our wine bars do not compete for intimacy, sociability and Cockney raciness with the public-houses. One of the pub's greatest allurements is, paradoxically, its air of privacy. A good pub is not a shop, it is the home of the publican. When you enter an inn for the first time, you enter a man's house and meet his family and friends. Beforehand, you cannot tell whether you will like either. If your impressions are unfavourable you can easily discontinue the acquaintance: if the reverse, you can add the house to your calling list with the happy knowledge that you will invariably receive a welcome there.

It is not my purpose to do more here than scratch the surface of a vast subject; and, if possible, by doing so, to show that our public-houses are reputable English institutions which for centuries have been centres of sociability, places where Englishmen of all types and classes can freely mix and discuss at their case affairs of interest to themselves and the community. There are people still who imagine that the poorer classes, who form the majority of every nation, must be lacking, merely on account of their poverty, in all the virtues which make a people great. These rashly assume that the privileged minority, who have managed successfully to exploit the masses, arc alone honest, sober and respectable. They regard the public-houses as the low and disreputable haunts of shady characters, simply because working men, on whose labour they rely for everything they have and

[1] **Alas, Hitler passed that way.**

enjoy, form the majority of those who frequent them. No stigma attaches, in their eyes, to the expensive American bars in which the well-fed millionaire consumes potent drinks at high prices. It docs not occur to them that an infinitely greater quantity of alcohol is consumed per head in the smoking-rooms of the most august London clubs than in the bars of London pubs.

In defending the pub, I do but follow humbly in the footsteps of departed giants. Our literature, for generations, has been rich in appreciations of good taverns and many of our greatest minds have borne witness in their favour. Even Sir Walter Scott, despite his pronounced respectability, praised the inn as being the free rendezvous of all travellers, "where the humour of each displays itself, without ceremony or restraint". And has not an admirable bishop described it as "the best theatre of natures, where they are truly acted, not played"? Warming to his task, the great divine gives us in a couple of sentences the whole essence and quiddity of the inn. "To give you the total reckoning of it: it is the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the Inns of Court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness, and the citizens' courtesy. It is the study of sparkling wits, and a cup of canary their book, whence we leave them." I trust the time may never come, when any honest Londoner may be reduced to mourning over the memory of deserted inns as he miserably absorbs his ice-cream sundae in some cafeteria or drug-store. But if it ever does, Oliver Goldsmith's lines will seem far more poignant to him even than they do to-day:

Low lies that inn where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where honest swains and smiling toil retired',
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.

Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place;
The white-wash'd wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The vamish'd clock that click'd behind the door;

The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose . . .

To remind the scornful and the ignorant that my theme is not to be derided, nor my sentiments held in contempt, I will end by calling as a witness the august figure of Doctor Samuel Johnson. Here is his unanswerable verdict: "There is no private house in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master *of* the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house as if it were his own; whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for the welcomer you are. No servant will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward m proportion as they please. No Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."

1929

3

The Crested Eagle

I

THERE are certain places one has never visited about which one has heard so often and so much that clear pictures of them have formed themselves in the mind, pictures so vivid and complete that one hesitates to destroy them. Blackpool, Toledo, Lima, Huddcrsfield, Granada, for example, are towns which I should be shy of visiting in the flesh. Toledo, Lima—why, in imagination, I have spent months in both these cities! In the Byronic period of my youth I indulged in a romantic *affaire* at Granada; while in the ultra-realistic period which followed and corrected it, I staged a whole drama in Huddersficld and Blackpool. It was all about a mill-hand and it bore a suspicious resemblance to *Hindle Wakes.* A year or two ago I actually came within striking distance of Toledo, but for some reason or another I hesitated. A sort *of* fear came over me. Supposing Toledo wasn't true? *My* Toledo is *perfectly* true; and so long as I do not exchange it for the one on the map, nobody can ever deprive me of it. Had I the courage to risk the exchange? That was the question. In any case, I didn't, on that occasion, risk it.

To the list of places familiar to me in imagination but never visited, I might until recently have added Margate, and above all, Southend. In the case of Southend the exchange of the imaginary for the real was entirely in my favour. For it docs in truth "beggar imagination", it "beats belief", it is all that I or anyone else could ever possibly have thought it was, and lots more besides. I doubt if England can produce any place that is richer, riper, *juicier* than Southend. It does the heart good merely

to think of it. My approach to this pearl of towns was made in all the circumstances of romance. One Sunday morning in June I took a bus into the deserted City and boarded the good ship *Crested Eagle,* from the Old Swan Pier. She is a large paddle-boat, built to accommodate a horde of passengers, and she was packed with East-Enders, all of whom were as excited as I was myself. The East-Ender, at all events, does not take his pleasures sadly. We were off at last, swooping down the river through the lifting mist. No sooner had we left the pier than the corks flew from about five hundred bottles of Bass, and their contents were poured down as many thirsty throats. What sighs of gratified relief, what wipings of the mouth with the backs of hands! On the upper deck the chocolate-sellers and the boys with fruit-baskets were doing a roaring trade. The Sunday newspapers also were unusually succulent that morning. *One* of those "Society" divorce cases was in progress which used to be reported in columns and columns of scabrous detail. How the hard-working and virtuous East-End mother enjoyed her justifiable revel in sin at second-hand! "Whatever she done," said Mrs. Alf, "'e didn't ought to 'ave treated 'er like *that."*

We were nearing Greenwich. There was Greenwich Hospital on our right, and the Observatory bulging up queerly from among the trees on the hill above it; and there was the hotel, by the pier, to which Cabinet Ministers used to drive on Sundays, in the Victorian era, to eat oysters and whitebait. To find the real London nowadays, the London which is the capital of England and not the "hub of Empire", you have to come East and descend our river. Greenwich has far more of the true London flavour—that inimitable, indescribable "something" which it takes the genius of a Dickens or a Marie Lloyd to capture and reveal—than has the Strand or the re-built Regent Street. On we went, after stuffing a few more hundreds of passengers on to our already crowded decks. The sun was shining brightly now, bringing out all the colour in the brown sails of the barges that, in couples, made their graceful way upstream. We passed Dagenham, with its tiny beach covered with paddling children, and its queer wild stretch of "undeveloped" land overgrown

with giant cow parsley, enormous sorrels and thistles, and stunted trees and purple mallows. (But 1 must not give away the secrets of Dagcnham; it has its romantic surprises for the explorer hardy enough to discover them.) We swept by Purfleet with its solid, dignified and intensely English-looking Royal Hotel, that might have been erected in the year of Trafalgar, so well docs its architecture accord with the old training-ship, relic of the Nelson era, which is moored nearby. A few minutes more and we were in sight of Gravesend on the one side and Tilbury on the other. The huge funnels of monster liners could be seen behind the Tilbury station hotel, and in the foreground was the old fort which gave such a feeble account of itself when the Dutch fleet sailed up the Thames on that memorable occasion when poor old John Bull had the shock of his life. On the Gravesend side one could see the trees of the old Rosherville Gardens, the last descendant of the Vauxhalls and Cremornes of an earlier age. It is now, alas, no longer famous for shrimp teas and innocent delights.

Positively, we were beginning to smell the sea. The river was broadening into an estuary. Soon we should be there! Excited groups crowded into the bow of the ship and scanned the horizon for the beloved, the sacred pier. I was quickly infected with the prevailing excitement. At last, at last, with my very own eyes, I was going to see Southend. When the pier came in sight there was a general bustle and commotion. Shrill maternal voices cried, "'Ere, Bert, come 'ere." Families were marshalled and collected by anxious mothers while fathers hastily swallowed their last half-pints.

II

The moment I set foot upon the pier at Southend the whole stupendousness of the place was revealed to me as in a flash. The pier must be a mile long, at least, perhaps longer, and a toy-railway hurries the impatient excursionists from one end of it to the other. From the first moment that one steps ashore into the town, the fun begins. The odour of the whelks and winkles,

wafted from a dozen open-air booths, is perhaps the first thing which attracts the visitor's attention. Many of my fellow-voyagers, as soon as the familiar and to them delicious smell assailed their nostrils, made a dash for the stalls, which were quickly besieged by eager purchasers. And the fact that there was no R in the month had no terrors whatever for East-End lovers of the "succulent bivalve". Baskets full of oysters were opened and swallowed in the hot June sunshine. Those who didn't patronise the shell-fish stalls bought sticks of striped "Southend Rock", or allowed themselves to be hustled by relentless and rather bibulous chauffeurs into motor "sharries". The energy of the place was simply terrific; it was shattering. I imagine there must be more things that you can do for sixpence or a shilling in Southend than in any other place in England. Before I had been a quarter of an hour on shore I found myself, much to my own astonishment, sitting in a char-a-banc, tightly wedged in between two ladies of generous proportions and the most ear-splitting good-humour. We were going, or so it appeared from an inscription in chalk upon a black board, for a superb tour through the beauty-spots of south-east Essex. The chauffeur who, I fancy, owned the car, was evidently a licensed wag. His sallies produced the most excruciating spasms of bowel-twisting laughter from his clients. The darlings, with that heart-warming abandonment to mirth which constitutes for the Cockney something very like an armour against Fate, really did "laugh until they nearly died". Our humorist, however, had not yet sprung his best joke on us. At last we got under way and spun along hard, shining roads, smooth as a dinner-table, between lines of red-brick villas. When we left the villas behind the country still had the rather dusty, sophisticated look of urban Essex. A mile or two further and we should, as I happened to know, get into a well-wooded and attractive countryside and reach villages pleasant to look upon on a June morning. But that was where the chauffeur's supreme joke came in. Our destination was only a hideous red-brick pub, barely out of sight of Southend! Here we waited a quarter of an hour while driver and passengers slaked their thirst. When we crowded back again

on to the car an optimistic photographer proceeded to make our jaunt historic by taking photographs of us. The fat ladies were ecstatic. Little Gertie was held up, like a rag doll, before the eye of the camera, and was afterwards very sick. This jaunt occupied about an hour. And there were hours and hours and hours before the *Crested Eagle* was due to reappear to take us home. Food of some kind or another seemed indicated and I explored a vast grill-room where a band, composed of three relentless young ladies of the Jewish persuasion belaboured their respective musical instruments in a way which indicated muscular development of no ordinary kind. The meat, also, was high; but the waiter's intense, his heart-felt sympathy made up for this little accident. "I told them so . . . 1 told them so, sir, in the kitchen. I didn't quite like to warn you against it, seeing as how you seemed set *on* a bit o' steak, like . . .'' He was quite perfect. To be waited on by an English waiter is a rare and, as a rule, a delightful, experience. For an Englishman, exiled for the greater part of the year, to hear once more the caressing, sympathetic, good-humoured voice of an authentic "William" or "Henry" is an experience which surely renders sentiment excusable. How few of them there are left! It was just like Southend to produce a perfect specimen. Visions of dead waiters—ah, where are the waiters of yesteryear?—flashed before my mind as this last of many Williams commiserated with me. I thought of an old friend at The Cock, and of that incorrigible old sportsman who once flourished at Stone's, in Panton Street, who never failed to make one's steak and pint of Burton the more enjoyable by giving one a tip for to-morrow's races. Tip for tip was the old gentleman's motto; and it was not at all a bad one in that London that has now so nearly disappeared. There was a character, too, at The Sceptre, an old English eating-house with mahogany pews that is now, alas, only a memory cherished by a faithful few. The Sceptre used to stand within fifty yards of the back door of the Cafe Royal, and it was a great place in its day. Thackeray frequented it in the 'fifties, and Swinburne a little later. Its cooking remained obstinately English, and until the end it maintained the excellence of its port. London has so very

few English restaurants left that the closing of The Sceptre was a real misfortune and to me a source of keen regret. Why it is that in the capital of England it is so hard to obtain plain and wholesome English food and be waited on by one's fellow-countrymen I cannot imagine, unless the explanation is that there are so few Englishmen left: who can afford to enter a restaurant at all. For if we arc not overwhelmed by the "Argentine, the Portuguese, and the Greek", the assertive Celt has at all events triumphed over us and robbed us even of any sense of our own nationality. Nearly every "Englishman" I know is either an Irishman, a Welshman or a Scot. And how they boast about their respective countries! One wonders why they ever exchanged them for poor benighted England, for which they express so much contempt. The Scotch, who have colonised Hampshire, Sussex and Kent, where they occupy the finest manor houses and fill most of the "key positions", are perhaps the worst offenders in this respect. Not satisfied with ousting the sleepy Saxons from their traditional homes, they can rarely resist the temptation to expatiate complacently *on* the superior virtues of the Scottish race and the scenic and climatic advantages of the land from which they are voluntary exiles. If asked why it is that, if their country has so many attractions, they do not prefer to live in it, a dreamy look comes into their eyes but the explanation, whatever it might be, is not forthcoming. The Welsh are scarcely less lyrical about themselves and their country than the Scotch and the Irish, and phrases about dawn on the Welsh mountains fall glibly enough from their lips. But how often does one hear an Englishman go into rhapsodies about sunset on the Essex marshes, or dawn upon the Sussex downs?

III

The day was only beginning. There were any number of things waiting to be done. For most of the younger visitors it was now the hour of love and sleep. All over the public gardens lay enlaced couples, silent, motionless, half-somnolent, half-ecstatic. The Bishop of London would, I am sure, have been highly

shocked at the sight which they presented: and most foreigners, unused to our ways, would have been, to say the least, surprised. This kind of thing is managed, perhaps, in a more practical fashion in France. But the Londoner's temperament is essentially different from that of his Parisian neighbour. I strongly doubt whether any section of the community is sounder, more moral and more fundamentally decent than the hard-working people of the East End. And the East-End girl who, following the fashion of her kind, indulges in a little innocent love-making with the general public to act as chaperon, would probably be shocked and indignant if she discovered what prurient-minded ecclesiastics thought of her proceedings. I have often noticed in Kew Gardens, that although there are many parts of the Gardens which arc unfrequented and offer discreet seclusion to the amorous, it is always in the most crowded avenues that the billing and cooing takes place. This seems to argue a sense of propriety positively Victorian in its strictness. The East End undoubtedly has its code of manners and behaviour, a code evolved to suit the special circumstances and conditions of life in small and crowded homes.

The crowds not occupied in the important business of love-making surged up and down "the front", hired rowing-boats, went for sails in yachts, got into "shanies", paraded up and down the gigantic pier, listened to the band, ate things out of paper bags, laughed or gaped at the Pierrots, guffawed at the comic nigger with the banjo, or sat upon seats in the sunshine, placid, vacant, rather speechless, but perfectly happy. It was frightening to think how hard they must have worked during the week in order to have earned such a capacity for simple enjoyment. I made numberless good resolutions, because for me, alas, the time was not passing quite so quickly as it was for them. And yet how good it was to be home again, in England, after many months of exile, and how delightful to be able to watch the ships entering or leaving that sweet "Themmes", which to the Londoner must always be at once the most sacred and the most romantic of all the rivers in the world. For the Thames is no less sweet when, full-grown, it merges with the sea at Southend,

bringing with it its great ships and its vast fleets of barges, tugs, and tramps, than it is when, as a "stripling", it brims so gently through the meadows of Eynsham and of Bablock Hythe. At the Thames mouth there is something exciting and adventurous in the air. Generation after generation of roving islanders, setting out for travel, trade, fighting or exploration, must have thrilled with anticipation at this very point, where sea and river meet.

A large red motor omnibus upset my reflections by coming to a panting full-stop just in front of me, and since I am nothing if not willing to oblige, I climbed on to it and away we went to the riverside town of Grays. Grays is a queer old place, embedded in a ring of new workmen's dwellings, villas and factories. What charmed me most about it was a muddy creek and wharf, where barges innumerable clustered, some aground in the mud of the creek, others moored in main stream. The barges were splendid specimens, brightly painted and most beautifully named. There was one called the *Sweet William,* which particularly took my fancy, and 1 should dearly have loved to sail in her up the Med way or along the Essex coast. But, alas, there was apparently no one on board, and 1 had no opportunity of proposing myself as a passenger. From the market-place of Grays a whole fleet of omnibuses leaves at six o'clock precisely for different parts of South Essex. They start off one after another and go careering down the country roads. Omnibuses have their faults, but if one does not possess a car, there are worse means of locomotion on a balmy summer evening. Tempted by the opportunity of seeing Rainham Hall again, I abandoned all thought of returning home by the *Crested Eagle,* and was soon in country which, despite its nearness to London, has not quite lost its ancient rural character, and has a queer charm of its own, though, perhaps, it is a charm which it takes an East Anglian to appreciate. Flat it certainly is, but it is not dull when you come to know it. The trams and unlovely villas and workmen's dwellings of East London will, I suppose, reach Rainham all too soon. But at present the village remains much as it was; and the exquisite Georgian village house, which John Harle, a

prosperous coal merchant and shipowner, built for himself in 1729, is not yet hemmed in by mean streets or factory buildings. What a gem of a house it is! I could not but commend the taste of my great-grandfather who, after having thoughtfully eloped with an heiress still in her teens, brought her here to live, while he risked her fortune on the Turf. Of its period and kind—it is in no sense a manor house, and could never have had much more land attaching to it than the few acres of its walled garden—Rainham Hall is one of the most perfect examples of the domestic architecture of the Age of Taste that I can recall. It is a modest and dignified English home, exquisite in its details. It stands close to the old church, with its squat tower and dumpy spire, and lies back only a short distance from the street, from which it is separated by a very beautiful wrought-iron clairvoyee. It is a square, three-storied house, built of red brick with stone quoins. It is not over-ornamented, but such ornament as there is, for example the elaborate front porch, is altogether lovely.

The bus hurried on past Dagenham and Bccontree, and night was falling as we traversed Poplar and Stepney, and entered the deserted City. When we passed Temple Bar and came into the glaring, crowded Strand, it was like entering another country, peopled by quite different types from my fellow-voyagers on the *Crested Eagle.* Had I made a voyage into England, and returned again to Great Britain? That, at all events, was how it felt.

1926.

4

Some Reflections on the Middle-class Victorian

IN THE first decades of Queen Victoria's reign, Londoners were enormously proud of their smoky, foggy, gas-lit city. In spite of its stinking river and appalling slums, they shared to the full Dr. Johnson's belief that the man who is tired of London is tired of lite. The poor were down-trodden and oppressed, certainly, but how could one be a Chceryble without them? Even the ragged urchins over whom the genius of Dickens cast a romantic glamour were not always or wholly miserable, had some spice of excitement, some hope, however faint, of winning a prize in the lottery of urban life. The whole capital throbbed and pulsated with violent activity, even during the hungry forties. By the end of the following decade, its trade was booming and its blood-pressure correspondingly high. Bohemia produced a personal journalism which spoke its mind and slanged its enemies with high-spirited violence; there was a racy native literature; a rip-roaring night-life; an abundance of crude drama. The whitebait of Greenwich and the joys of Rosherville Gardens were within the reach of all but the most indigent. Religion had a kick in it and Derby Day was an annual saturnalia.

For the black-coated worker, with his foot firmly on the lowest rung of the social ladder, the career was more open to the talents than it has since become. If content with his lot, his two sovereigns a week at least enabled him to live in the New Kent Road, in an eight-roomed house with a plot of garden, and to satisfy his philoprogenitive instincts by raising a bouncing family. If he aspired to better himself, industry, thrift, intelligence and integrity almost invariably brought their deserved rewards. Security, based on sound investments, was within the reach of those who cared to strive for it.

For the rapidly increasing middle-class, ranging from Micawbers to Tulkinghorns, from Pooters to Forsytes, life had a meaning and a purpose. The terrific sexual gusto, resulting from the repressions imposed by the new Victorian code of respectability, made it entrancingly worth living. The battle for civil liberty, as far as the middle-classes were concerned, had been fought and won. At no time in our history has England been such a "free country" as it was in Victoria's reign. This freedom, in the heyday *of laisser faire,* was in certain respects, such as the sweating of labour, shockingly abused according to modern ideas; but at least the ill-paid workman was not conscripted as cannon fodder and sent abroad to be massacred in wars out of which his employers derived huge profits. Even on the undcr-dog, Victorian liberty had the effect of a tonic and invigorating breeze. The heroic Chartists of 1848 started a movement which the Tories of the day, aided by the military, could no more suppress than their descendants, using the same futile methods, were able to suppress the rising tide of Irish, Indian and Burmese nationalism.

In the year of my birth, 1887, the dockers won their "tanner", after the police had charged the crowd in Trafalgar Square on "Bloody Sunday". On that famous occasion, although the bearded H. M. Hyndman beat a rather hasty retreat to his home in South Kensington, John Burns and R. B. Cunmnghame Graham went to gaol with their comrades. Some twenty-five years later it happened that I met those veterans. Politically, they were extinct volcanoes, but it was not difficult to imagine that, in their youth, the two old men had plenty of fire in their bellies.

We arc concerned here, however, not with the struggles of the proletariat but with the rise to prosperity of the professional classes in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Feeling themselves to be safe and secure, they worked prodigiously, ate and drank in proportion, procreated numerous children and had a blind but stimulating faith in themselves, their country, their constitution and their God.

Although excessive drinking had gradually diminished since the days of the Regency, in the period from 1840 to 1900—if

we are to believe oral tradition—few ecclesiastics, lawyers, merchants and university professors habitually went to bed entirely sober. Every normal middle-class family had its wine-merchant as well as its doctor, and stout young port of a vintage year, suitable for laying down, could be bought at 18s. a dozen. (This was the original price of the famous '67 vintage). Tee-totalism, sternly disapproved of by the Great Queen herself, made few converts except among the Noncomformists. Writing from Osborne to Mr. Gladstone, as late as February 10, 1894, Queen Victoria observed: "The Queen has approved Canon Basil Wilberforce's appointment, but wishes to add a condition to it, viz—that he should not, when preaching at Westminster, use the very strong total abstinence language which he has carried to such an extreme hitherto. Total abstinence is an impossibility; and, though it may be necessary in individual cases, it will not do to insist upon it as a general practice . . . " In the 'sixties Archbishop Magec, speaking in the House of Lords against "Local Option" made the observation: "I think it better that England should be free than compulsorily sober." If the more prosperous English families made abundant use of the wine which maketh glad the heart of man—and thanks to Free Trade and low customs duties were able to buy it very cheaply—beer, the great appeaser, equally consoled the agricultural labourer and the industrious artisan. It was strong, obtainable at practically all hours, and brewers made their fortunes by selling it for a penny a pint. Barrels of beer were kept in every cellar and cooks in middle-class homes rarely allowed policemen, coal-heavers or other backdoor callers to go away unrefrcshed. The hard-worked clerk or shop assistant could procure himself a pint of stout and a dozen oysters for a shilling whenever he felt in need of them. In Dickens's day oysters, which now suggest the payment of super-tax, were synonymous with poverty.

The peak years of prosperity and well-being, for middle-class Viaorians, were roughly between 1860 and 1900. In those four decades anyone who had the spending of from £500 to £2000 a year could secure a spacious and dignified existence for himself and his wife and for all the olive branches with which the

Almighty saw fit to surround them. Houses were roomy and gardens sufficiently extensive to permit of croquet lawns, which later became tennis courts. Servants were plentiful, hard-working, poorly paid and often almost embarrassingly loyal to "the family". Long leases were the rule rather than the exception for, with the weather set fair, few fathers of families liked the idea of change. Young men spent money freely, but the paternal sovereigns were of solid gold, were not unreasonably withheld and you could buy a lot with them. Why were they made round, if not to enable them to circulate? No wonder the middle-classes were satisfied with themselves and with the world they lived in. Sons respected the "dear old guv'nor" and fathers, when writing to their children about their mother, could rarely lorbear to qualify her as a "magnificent woman". Emotions were simple and spontaneous. Stage stars received enormous ovations and popular preachers thrilled their congregations by the booming of impressive platitudes. In Westminster Abbey, on a famous occasion, Dean Farrar sent an audible shiver of feeling through serried ranks of worshippers, in bustle and broadcloth, when he proclaimed: "My brethren, the Past is o'er: the Future yet to be."

Although the middle-classes throughout the nineteenth century were accustomed, particularly by modern standards, to "do themselves well", a large proportion of them also observed that rigid code of respectability, sexual morality, financial probity, prudishncss and Sabbatarianism which we now label "Victorian". It is customary for fashionable historians to assure us that England did not become "Victorian" in the accepted sense before the 'seventies, but this verdict only applies to the exalted circles they consider worthy of study. Among the middle-classes "Victorianism" cannot be separated from the Sabbatarianism which had already begun to make headway early in the eighteenth century, and in 1781 reached its climax in the Lord's Day Observance Act introduced by Bishop Porteous, with consequences still persisting. There was a strong recrudescence of this dreary kill-joy spirit after the Regency. In 1835, for example, a politician named Roebuck wanted to stop Sunday travel and

close clubs on Sundays. In 1856 a Bill for the Sunday opening of the National Gallery and the British Museum was defeated in the House of Commons and Greville made the comment that "Cant and puritanism are in the ascendant and it will be well if we escape more stringent measures against Sunday occupations and amusements. It is stated that the Sabbatarians are so united and numerous that they could carry any election!" The cult of the Sabbath, which included much Bible-reading and regular attendance at church or chapel, was observed in the majority of middle-class London homes throughout the greater part of Victoria's reign, particularly in suburbs like Clapham to which City families migrated after the opening of the railways. The influence of "the Clapham Sect", composed of wealthy philanthropists like the Stephens, Thorntons and Macaulays, had a marked effect in setting a high moral tone. Most of the well-to-do suburban families had Quakers, or Nonconformists of more aggressive views, in their ancestry, and it was the habits of industry, sobriety and integrity, inculcated by their religious upbringing, which, as they themselves realised, had contributed in large measure to their prosperity. With simple fervour, therefore, they regarded God as the safest of all investments. "We know whate'er we lend to Thee repaid a thousandfold shall be", as one of their favourite hymns expressed it.

In the professional classes, recruited from men with a more liberal education than was necessary for commercial life, conformity to Sabbatarian conventions was often only skin-deep, though appearances were kept up and rigid standards of outward propriety maintained. By the 'seventies, however, the younger generation was already beginning to break free from the disciplines and formality to which their elders had been subjected. My grandmother coming on one of her younger sons flirting with his fiancee reproved him by saying that "your father never kissed me before we were married". This provoked the amused retort: "All I can say is that either my father was a fool or else my dear mother is a liar!"

The prevalence of prudery in regard to sexual matters which, in my own childhood, even extended to references to natural

needs, was qualified, in the mid-Victorian period, by a lack of inhibition in certain respects which we should to-day consider surprising. A French observer, Francis Wey, who visited England in the late 'fifties, gives an example of this inconsistency. In the volume, the title of which, in its Enghsh "adaptation", is *A Frenchman Sees the English In the Fifties,* M. Wey thus describes an embarrassing adventure at Brighton.

"In fine weather, bathing takes place in full view of the front, swarming with idlers of both sexes. Men go into the water stark naked, which surprised me, knowing how easily shocked English people are. Never shall I forget my bathe at Brighton! It was on a Sunday, at the time at which worshippers return from church. I had been assigned a cabin in which to undress. It was a wooden construction on wheels placed at the water's edge, with steps half submerged by the waves." It was easy enough to get into the sea unobserved as the cabin screened him from view. Unfortunately, M. Wey went for rather a long swim and, as the tide was going out, his return journey was a lengthy one and when he at last got into shallow water he found his cabin high and dry, about fifteen paces from the sea. "To put a finishing touch to my discomfort", he contmues, "three ladies, a mother with her daughters, had settled themselves on camp stools in my direct line of approach. They seemed very respectable females, and the girls were both pretty. There was no possibility of reaching my cabin without passing in front of them. They each held a prayer-book and they watched me swimming about with serene unconcern. To give them a hint without offending their modesty, I advanced cautiously on all fours, raising myself by degrees as much as decency permitted. . . As the ladies did not move, I concluded they had not understood my dilemma, so crawling back, started to swim again. But one cannot swim forever, while one can sit without fatigue for hours." The situation was further complicated by the fact that M. Wcy's host, "Sir Walter G.", was standing about on the front, holding up his watch and showing obvious signs of impatience. Finally the swimmer overcame his bashfulness and "striving to adopt a bearing both modest and unconcerned,

reminiscent of the lost traditions of innocence of a younger world, I stepped briskly past the three ladies who made no pretence of looking away. When at last we got home, Sir Walter teased me good-naturedly about my misadventure, and his wife told me that she knew the ladies, who were very puritanical! They disapproved of bathing on Sundays and had adopted that unexpected method of discouraging Sabbath-breakers."

Another example of the inconsistency of English prudishness is recorded by M. Wey, who considered it largely a matter of *words*. If one can replace a coarse expression by some euphemism conveying exactly the same meaning, all is well. "English people would die sooner than mention their *posterior*, but they roar with laughter at the story of the lady who said she had plenty to sit on but nowhere to put it." In *action*, he sometimes found English behaviour unaccountable. "For instance," he says, "at the Ascot races, where one has to remain five or six hours in public on a space of ground where no cover can be found, tents have been erected by private enterprise for a purpose which is easy to surmise. Instead of screening them from view as much as possible, these ' conveniences' are placed in the very midst of everything, among the dancing tents, drinking booths, etc. We saw a bevy of fashionable ladies rush from their elegant carriages, laughing and talking as if to attract attention, and disappear all together into one of these shelters. The wind shook the canvas which, being both too short and too narrow, gave the onlookers a good view of what was going on inside. The utter indifference of these highborn beauties was an encouragement to the impertinent curiosity of the spectators.

"When English people are not icicles they are apt to become shameless. Habits and customs show up quite clearly these extreme contrasts. The family circle is rigid and puritanical, but vice is crudely displayed in public."

In the Diaries of the Reverend Mr. Kilvert, recently published, the writer, an extremely virtuous young clergyman, mentions his detestation of the bathing-drawers which, in the 'seventies, were apparently coming into use. He also records, without a tremor of self-consciousness, the whipping of a naughty little

girl on the bare "posterior", a form of punishment which he considered both commendable and cfficacious.

As was to be expected in a period when social life was subject to severe disciplines, conventions and repressions, unruly human nature took its surreptitious revenges. The appalling social consequences of discovery lent an excitement to secret transgression which young people, in our own day, are scarcely able to imagine. What I have heard from my elders about London night life in the 'seventies confirms the truth of the detailed picture of it contained in *Desolate Sunset,* a novel by one of our greatest Victorian authorities, Mr. Michael Sadleir. *The Hardman Papers,* and other memoirs of the period, also give us revealing pictures of what lay behind the Victorian facade. It may be suggested, however, that although Victorian scandals now make fascinating reading and volumes of Victorian pornography, bound in calf and labelled "Sermons", have become valuable collector's pieces, it would be unjust to conclude that, in the mass, the Victorian middle-class were hypocrites or that, at least the female portion of them, were any less virtuous than we have hitherto been accustomed to suppose. Divorce was extremely rare and accompanied by so much social obloquy, from which even the innocent parties suffered, that none but the most courageous or the most desperate ever dreamed of resorting to it. To-day, most people *of* middle-class ancestry who bother to investigate their family history for a couple of centuries or more can do so without discovering a single trace of any matrimonial discord. This, of course, docs not mean that all husbands were physically faithful or that all marriages were happy, though it does indicate that our grandmothers and great-grandmothers and their predecessors maintained a high standard of conjugal morality and that the middle-class family, as a social unit, was based on solid and indestructible foundations. To get some idea of the Victorian way of life, we cannot do better than contrast it with its opposite, the modern American way of life. The latter, which is dominated by the American national slogan, "there's no friendship in business" and by the conception of marriage as a provisional contract, easily entered into and as easily terminated,

conduces to excitement, change and perpetual competition, to sentimentality, hysteria and ruthlessness, but little towards stability, comfort, and what Europeans regard as civilisation and the art of living.

In the Victorian age, strongly influenced as the London middle-classes were by the towering genius of Charles Dickens, who sprang from them, not only was there a great deal of friendship in business as in every other walk of life, but there was an enormous amount of family geniality. Uncles and aunts, who have to-day almost ceased to function in the lives of nephews and nieces, were greatly in demand as family intimates, and in moments of domestic difficulty accepted their responsibilities and obligations without demur and often with commendable generosity. The "wicked uncle" was a very real figure and so full-bloodedly detested by the patrons of melodrama and the readers of popular fiction that very few uncles cared to cast themselves for this role, even if they had any natural inclination to do so. Similarly, such was the magic of Dickens, the most hard-fisted employers squirmed at the thought of being labelled "Scrooge". The swarming families of girls and boys who grew up together in the large Victorian "villa residences" in the suburbs of South London formed intimate friendships which often lasted a lifetime. Hospitality of a simple kind was lavish. The young were constantly in and out of each other's homes and intermarriages betwcen young people whose parents were friends and neighbours were the rule rather than the exception.

The chief Victorian vices, which even Dickens was powerless to keep in check by all his gifts of ridicule and satire, were the censoriousness, on moral grounds, which too often accompanied feminine virtue and the corresponding vice of social snobbery. A study of the great Victorian novelists reveals an astonishing preoccupation with the subject of social grades and distinctions. To-day what publishers call "naturals" in the best-seller category are mostly concerned with sex, crime, medicine, or the plutocratic "good time", but less than a century ago a novel with such a title as *Ought We to Call on Her?* was certain of a prodigious circulation. Even minor practitioners of this sort of fiction, in

the "three-decker" days, could be certain of a comfortable income if they rang the changes on the perennially absorbing theme. A considerable fillip to middle-class snobbery, by causing far-reaching complications in the complex pattern of social grades, was given in the 'fifties by the sudden rise to fame of Dr. Arnold of Rugby and the subsequent birth of the English "public school" as we know it to-day. Arnold, like most reformers and artists of creative genius, was a man of middle—or "lower-middle"—class origin, in no way remarkable as a scholar or outstanding as a theologian. Nevertheless, as the originator of a defined national type, which was to exercise a profound influence on the social and political life of this country for the best part of a century, he ranks as one of the very greatest of Victorians.

Although, as I have remarked, Arnold's influence on education led, as an unfortunate by-product, to an increase of snobbery, it cannot fairly be condemned on that account. No one will wish to defend our besetting national weakness, particularly in its more ridiculous or cruel manifestations, but at least it can be said that the desire *on* the part of the Victorian father to raise his family in social estimation gave him something to live for which was neither wholly selfish nor wholly contemptible. Snobbery, like the inferiority complex of which it is a symptom, provides a creative impulse which can produce results which are not be be despised and for which no one who achieves them need feel ashamed. In the 'forties and 'fifties of the last century, notwithstanding the transference of wealth from the gentry to the middle-classes which resulted from the Napoleonic wars and the industrial revolution which accompanied them, the line of demarcation between those who had some claim to patrician birth but little money, and those who had money but no pretension to blue blood was, as Thackeray's novels so frequently reveal, still very clearly defined. The outlook on life, education, pleasures, sporting proclivities, manners, appreciations and speech of the gentry differed in a thousand ways from those of the increasingly well-to-do class whom they considered their social inferiors. In patrician country-houses even lawyers and doctors were often received by the housekeeper and only

admitted to the Presence strialy for the purpose for which they had been summoned. It was in matters of speech that, among Londoners especially, the cleavage between the classes was perhaps most marked. The " City " was particularly derided, even in my own recollection, by members of the aristocracy—whose families had made their fortunes there no more than a century previously—because of the Cockney accents of the aldermen and their wives. By contrast, the most impoverished curate, if he was a scholar, had taken a degree at Oxford or Cambridge and could speak "the King's English", was regarded as a "gentleman" and accorded the social privileges of his status.

It was on the basis of the respect paid by the upper classes to a classical education, and of the superior habit of mind—because it was "non-commercial" as regards its sense of values—which such an education is designed to produce, that Dr. Arnold proceeded to add the inculcation of the Christian virtues. Thus, the son of the aitch-less and possibly money-grubbing alderman, by the time Arnold had finished with him, not only talked like a gentleman but also—and herein lay Arnold's claim to be a pioneering genius—believed that it was incumbent upon him to act like one.

1943.

SYMPATHIES

Violet Hunt

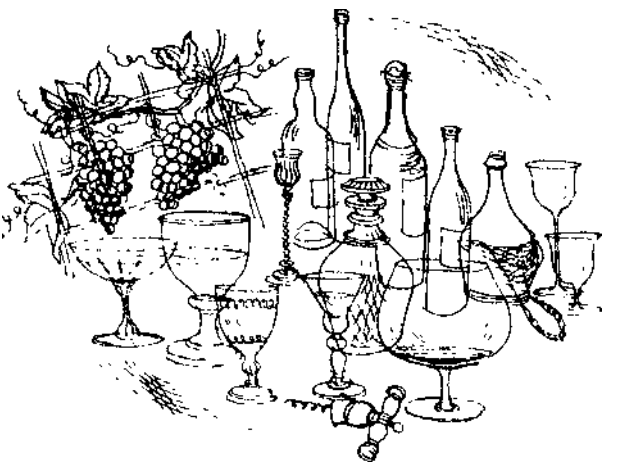
In Belgium with Bill Mathers

Edwardian Memories

West Country Memories

Redding on Wines

1855



I

Violet Hunt

HALF A century ago gossip about Violet Hunt was already current, not only in literary circles but also throughout that section of London's upper-middle-class society which was sufficiently intelligent to concern itself with writers and artists. It even penetrated to Oxford. By 1906, if Violet Hunt's name cropped up in the conversation of literary aspirants, it immediately caused a stir. "Do you really know Miss Hunt? *Do* tell us what she's like. Is she as fascinating as people say? Is it true that she once lived in Paris with a French actress and met Willy and Colette? Is Robert Assheton in *Sooner or Later* a portrait of the man she had an affaire with . . . ?" Several of my friends enjoyed a reflected prestige from the fact that they had met Violet in London and had actually danced with her. In our youthful—and provincial—eyes, she ranked, by hearsay, as one of the most exciting figures of the Edwardian capital which was to be our future stamping ground. "Fast", fashionable, brilliant, daring; leading spirit, as we imagined, in a circle of metropolitan celebrities of both sexes, from our undergraduate standpoint, she was glamour personified. The story that, as a young girl, she had been proposed to by Oscar Wilde, lent the final touch of piquancy to her established legend.

Looking back on all this, after a friendship with Violet which lasted for over thirty years, I am not prepared to say that our preconceived impression of her personality was, in any essential, incorrect. When I first met her—it was at a Sunday luncheon party in Cheync Walk, in the summer of 1907—she had already, in one sense, passed her prime. She was then in the middle forties. The queer beauty she must have had as a girl had faded and the hard glitter of the experienced woman of the world had replaced

the sensitive daring of her youth. But, as with a mature actress who won fame as an ingenue, it was not difficult to imagine what she had once been like, and her large, liquid eyes, slightly arched nose and petulant, discontented mouth, contributed to a still exciting sex-appeal.

If the sort of society in which Violet Hunt moved hardly deserved, from the purely snobbish standpoint, the capital "S" she was prone to apply to it in her novels and in conversation, it was probably the most amusing, the most intelligent and the most worth-while that late Victorian London had to offer. If it had few connections with the fox-hunting aristocracy and the naval, military and diplomatic caste formed by its off-shoots—types for whom Violet retained a certain yearning respect—it was the kind of society in which the celebrities among whom she had been born and brought up had found themselves very much at home. It was the kind of society which had included Tennyson, Browning and Ruskin at one end, and Swinburne, Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelite painters and poets at the other. It formed the intelligent world, midway between the "high" and the "half", which received Henry James with open arms when he first came to London and continued to attract him until, with advancing years, he preferred quiet tea-parties with sympathetic peeresses. If it had a certain Bohemian flavour, it nevertheless dressed for dinner, while its daughters were often invited to dances at almost the best houses.

The topographical background of Violet's social activities, to which she remained faithful throughout her long life, was the Victorian Artist Quarter, comfortably and highly respectably established among the villas of Campden Hill. Her parents, Alfred and Margaret Hunt—the former an admired and modestly successful landscape painter, the latter a popular novelist who combined literary esteem with large sales—were already persons of consequence at the time of her birth and became increasingly so during the next four decades. Hunt was a Liverpool man who had had a notable career at Oxford before he became a painter. He was never as widely known to the general public as his wife, but his work was highly valued by many of his fellow-artists

and by some of the leading critics. Although not invited to join the Royal Academy, he was for many years a pillar of the "old" Water-Colour Society. He had, moreover, an excellent prose style, and was a frequent contributor to such "heavy" reviews as *The Nineteenth Century*. The following newspaper paragraph, dutifully copied out by his wife, indicates how he was regarded by his contemporaries:

"A very complete collection of the works of Mr. Alfred Hunt has been brought together in Bond Street by the Fine Arts Gallery. These pictures exhibit this accomplished Master at his best, and will no doubt be fully admired. The catalogue is prefaced by notes by Mr. Edmund Gosse who tells us that the painter is the only living artist of note who enjoyed a distinguished University career. To have won the Newdigate, a fellowship at Corpus and written a prize poem are certainly unusual honours with British painters, although Mr. Hunt, one of the most modest and unassuming of men, would be the last to plume himself on such triumphs. But his scholarly training and his fine feeling for Art never won him popularity at the Academy, and there arc pictures of rare excellence in this Exhibition—notably the ' Whitby. Evening'—which were rejected at Burlington House."

Alfred Hunt was no relation of Holman Hunt, as some have erroneously supposed, although Holman Hunt and the other leading pre-Raphaelites were among his intimate friends.

Margaret Hunt—Tennyson's "Margaret", as an obituary notice recalled—was the daughter of the Reverend James Raine of Durham, a famous scholar and antiquarian with a large acquaintance among men of letters. After her marriage, her success as a novelist and fame as a hostess made her one of the outstanding figures in the literary-social world of her time. In a preface to her novel *The Governess*, revised and re-issued by her daughter, Ford Madox Hucffer observed that Mrs. Alfred Hunt "had a distinct gift for observing character and the gift (nearly as good) for setting character down on paper. She had, moreover, a brilliant social popularity—if that can be called popularity

which consisted in having most of the great men of the day constantly in her drawiifg-room and equally constantly afraid of her biting and nimble tongue. From Rossetti to Ruskin, and from Ruskin to my grandfather, Madox Brown, and from Madox Brown to Sir John Gilbert and the artists of the old Water-Colour Society, and from them to Sir Charles Dilke or Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, there was not one that, from the 'seventies to the 'nineties, would not have told you that Mrs. Alfred Hunt was the wittiest woman in London".

It was thus in a home constantly re-echoing with the conversation of "celebrities", of famous painters, poets, novelists, scholars, even politicians, that Violet and her two sisters were born and brought up. The latter, after they "came out", soon made successful marriages and deserted London to live with their husbands in the North of England. Violet, who had inherited a share of her parent's gifts and was endowed with many of her own, remained to the end of her life firmly rooted to Campden Hill. Until her father's death, at the beginning of the present century, the Hunts occupied No. I Tor Villas, a house which has since been flattened by bombardment. In 1902, Violet bought a forty years' lease of a smaller house—South Lodge, 80, Campden Hill Road—within a few yards of her old home, and went to live there with her widowed mother. When the lease was about to expire, in 1942, she expired also. She was then in her eightieth year.

Of Violet's childhood, girlhood and early life I know little except the bits and snatches she confided to me in her old age, what I have been able to deduce from her books, and the stray remarks of a few surviving contemporaries. She received an excellent education at the famous girls' High School at Nottmg Hill Gate, to which neighbouring figures in the world of art and literature sent their daughters. May Morris and Sickert's sister, Mrs. H. M. Swanwick, were among a number of her schoolfellows who, like herself, achieved distinction in after life. Later, possibly at her father's suggestion, she spent a year or two at an Art School, but soon began to write verses for the magazines and, no doubt, articles for such papers as would print them.

She made many friends among artists, one of them being George Boughton, R.A., who made a drawing of her in red chalk, as an "Italian Contadina", which is now in my possession, but her real interests were literary. Andrew Lang was one of her mother's literary circle who encouraged her to write verse. Another of them unfortunately gave her a rather different kind of encouragement. He was a married man, of "good family", a fact which Violet was inclined to stress, who after a career in the consular service had become connected with a publislaing firm and a director of an illustrated weekly. How long their liaison lasted, or when it began, I never inquired, but it is certain that in the course of it, no doubt unintentionally, he did her a grave injury from which she suffered until the end of her life. When his wife died and he was free to marry her, instead of making the conventional amends, he married someone else.

Had Violet begun to make him "scenes", to bore him with tearful reproaches? Or was he simply tired of her? All I can assert is that the episode, in view of her intense and passionate nature, permanently affected her character and outlook. At the same time, by lending them their bitter Bronte-ish flavour, it undoubtedly contributed to the success of her novels.

Emotional experiences, of the kind which fell to Violet's lot in her girlhood, affect different women in different ways. Some they render frozen, taciturn and sour. Others they drive to excesses of tempestuous, sometimes undignified, self-expression. On Violet, her shattered romance had the latter effect. Nevertheless regard for her reputation, in a society eager to be shocked by the mere suggestion of illicit love, as well as her natural regard for her parents' feelings, made it essential that she should take every possible precaution to guard her "guilty secret". Such situations were the central theme of innumerable Victorian novels and lent a now irrecoverable excitement to Victorian "Sin". Was it the witty Mrs. Ada Leverson, Oscar Wilde's friend, who remarked to a young man: "Ah, my dear, Sin, was such fun!" Violet was by nature incapable of restraining her urge to confide; she was no good at secrets. Even as a girl, her schoolfellows had nicknamed her "the immodest Violet" because of her

lack of reticence. She could not safely confide in her " Society" friends, but she seems to Have had no such inhibitions as regards her more tolerant literary associates. I remember as a youth being shown, in a publisher's office, the settee on which Violet "used to weep on W. L. Courtney's shoulder". By these tearful confessions which evoked both sympathy and affectionate amusement, Violet contributed largely to her own legend. Fortunately for herself she had a sense of humour and such astonishing resilience that her moods of self-pity never for long impeded her social gaiety and zest for parties.

At some time or other, probably in the late 'nineties, rumours that their daughter was being talked about in connection with a married man, whose wife was said to be contemplating proceedings, seem to have reached Alfred Hunt and his wife with the result, very fortunate for Violet's development as a novelist, that she was packed off to Paris. How long she stayed there and what friends she made in France, apart from Colette, she never told me and I never asked. She certainly acquired a thorough knowledge of modern French literature and French influences can be traced in all her later novels.

Violet's career as a writer began with the publication in 1894 of *TheMaiden's Progress: A Novel in Dialogue* which, as much on its own merits as out of respect for her mother, had a flattering reception in the press. This was followed, at yearly intervals, by *A Hard Woman, The Way of Marriage,* and *Unkist, Unkind!* She published nothing in 1898, but *The Human Interest* and *Affairs of the Heart* appeared respectively in 1899 and 1900. A translation of the *Memoirs of Casanova,* in two volumes, unsigned out of deference to her father's objections, came out in 1902 and a translation of Berthe Tosti's *The Heart of Ruby* a year later. These translations were presumably the result of her stay in Paris. In 1904, Violet produced *The Celebrity at Home* and *Sooner or Later.* She was now a woman of forty-two, and it was with the second of these novels that she securely established her literary reputation. The appearance of *White Rose of Weary Leaf* in 1908, confirmed it, at least in the estimation of those of her fellow-writers whose opinion she most valued. After a decade of

increasing mastery over her medium, she now found herself in the front rank of women novelists and at the height of her social popularity. Not only were the survivors of her parents' circle affectionately loyal, in spite of her indiscretions, but she had acquired a scarcely less distinguished circle of her own. From Henry James to Somerset Maugham, from H. G. Wells and W. H. Hudson to Rudyard Kipling and such unliterary figures as Sir Austen Chamberlain and Lady Houston, her acquaintance ranged far and wide and the hospitable drawing-room at South Lodge continued to overflow with them.

Unfortunately for Violet, perhaps even more so for its editor, the appearance of *The English Review*, with its galaxy of star contributors, caused her, in 1909, to renew an old acquaintance with Ford Madox Hueffer. In her youth she had known his father, Dr. Francis Hueffer, his grandfather, Madox Brown, and all his prc-Raphaclite connections, a fact which, in spite of the disparity between their ages, made a bond in common. Although, to the outer world, Ford maintained a brave, even "Olympian" front, no sooner was the review launched than he became overwhelmed with matrimonial troubles and also involved in financial difficulties which reduced him to a parlous state of nervous exhaustion. The temptation to apply first-aid, especially when he pretended to be contemplating suicide, was not one which Violet could resist, nor was Ford the man to refrain from clutching at a life-belt. The story of their strange liaison and the complications which arose from it, has been told by Violet herself, with fictional embellishments and complete lack of reticence, in her book *The Flurried Years* (1926) and with, it is hoped, more objectivity, by the present writer, in *South Lodge* (1943). A partial explanation of Violet's part in the affaire may have been the fact, known to myself and others, that she suffered from a thwarted ambition to become a legally married woman. Like so many women whose early emotional life has been untidy, she had a hankering after bourgeois respectability and a strong urge to comply, at last, with the conventions, even if passage through the Divorce Court on the part of her future husband was, as in her case, a preliminary. At first it seemed

as if their plans would be successful but when Mrs. Elsie Hueffer, after instituting divorce proceedings, changed her mind and decided to abandon them, Violet's dream of reviving the glories of the South Lodge salon as Ford's wife was rudely shattered. Both of them had made a mess of things. Violet had told her family of her intended marriage "when the divorce goes through" and Ford was already installed in South Lodge as her mother's paying-guest. *The English Review,* which had originally brought them together had been sold for a song to Sir Alfred Mond who, after acquiring it, promptly terminated Ford's editorship. He was financially ruined, suffering from neurasthenia and in a state of acute depression. In this rather desperate situation, Violet behaved with her never failing courage. She raised money from her executors by taking out a bill of sale on Ford's furniture and effects, paid his most pressing debts and met his obligations to his wife and daughters. Ford on his part, convinced—quite erroneously, as I have since been assured—that it was his wife's intention to ruin him, smarting from the loss of his beloved review and the disloyalty, as he supposed, of some of his closest friends, conceived a plan to resume his father's German nationality and then to arrange, under German law, the divorce and re-marriage denied him in England. There is no doubt that the impulsive Violet willingly aided and abetted him in this hare-brained scheme. Legal authorities were consulted and prodigious efforts were made to carry it through. Ford exiled himself to the University town of Giesscn to qualify for German citizenship, paid court to his German relations and hired a lawyer, at considerable expense, to help set the wheels of German legal procedure in motion. Months of exasperating delay followed. Either the barriers of red tape were really insuperable or else Ford lost the energy and had not the driving power necessary to overcome them. In any case, they eventually decided to pretend that their project had been successfully realised and to return to London, ostensibly as man and wife, in the belief that no awkward questions would be asked, and that no one would ever know.

Unfortunately for Violet, in connection with the publication of *The Governess,* a gossip writer, in an illustrated paper, referred

to her as "now Mrs. Ford Madox Hueffer". Whereat the real Mrs. Hueffer, not unnaturally, instituted proceedings for libel. The paper lost the action and had to pay substantial damages. Ford and Violet, not being parties to the suit, did not have to appear in the witness-box. Their inability to produce any evidence of their alleged "marriage" caused a scandal which reverberated in Violet's family circle and decided some of the older and more respectable of her parents' friends to drop her acquaintance, though they did so with pained reluctance.

That Violet should feel hurt and humiliated was only to be expected. Nevertheless, such was her resilience, and so undiminished was the loyalty of her literary colleagues and her numerous suffragette admirers, that her South Lodge parties continued to be as crowded with "celebrities" as ever. It soon became apparent, however, that the nervous tension between the two protagonists in what the younger among us considered a serio-comic drama, was rapidly increasing as poor Violet, realising her folly, became more and more reproachful. Soon after the outbreak of war, in the summer of 1915, Ford escaped the domestic imbroglio by joining the Army. When he was demobilised he severed his connection with Violet, changed his surname to Ford, formed another attachment and passed out of her life.

Violet, now over fifty, was left alone in South Lodge, in a house full of memories and ghosts, and packed with books, pictures and pieces of furniture of which almost every important item was associated with a famous name. The arm-chair in which Oscar Wilde sat when he proposed; the desk which had belonged to Christina Rossetti; the inlaid Spanish cabinet which came from the office of the *English Review;* the inscribed presentation copy of D. H. Lawrence's poems; the round table from the studio of Holman Hunt; the William Morris dinner-table—the list was endless. Anyone who didn't know Violet might have imagined that after such an accumulation of heart-aches, "wrongs" and emotional turmoils, she would retire to some extent from the public view. Not a bit of it. Old actresses never withdraw from the limelight until it is finally switched

off, and Violet, always prone to dramatise herself, remained game to the end. She took an active part, with her friend Mrs. Dawson Scott, in founding the P.E.N. Club and became an original member of its Committee. In 1921 she published *Their Hearts,* her last and one of her best novels. She continued, obstinately, to call herself Mrs. Hueffer and for another ten years the tradition of South Lodge hospitality was maintained almost unimpaired. A whole generation of younger writers who regarded her, with respect, as an Ancient Monument, accepted her dinner invitations and invited her to their innumerable parties. The 'twenties, for literary people, was pre-eminently a decade of parties, and Violet continued to be a star turn at the best of them. After all, she had known nearly every writer worth knowing for the best part of half a century and could gossip about all of them. "What a cat she is, the old dear!" was the characteristic comment of one who had spent an amusing evening in her company. (Violet, at one time, used to breed smoke-grey Persians in her back garden and even wrote a book about The Cat, in a series of animal biographies. There was always a certain feline quality about her charm.)

Towards the end of the 'twenties, when the years began to take their toll, Violet concentrated the whole of her attention on the past, particularly on the pre-Raphaehtes, among whom she and Ford had been brought up. Her memory for the events of yesterday and the day before became increasingly unreliable, but her memory for sights, scenes, personalities and snatches of conversation, dating back sixty years or more, was astonishingly clear and vivid. Victorian "celebrities" obsessed her thoughts. She collected all the letters and documents she could find relating to them, and arranged them in a muniment room which she established in her basement and had fitted with a teak door, to protect the contents from damage by fire.

No one knows where they are now.

Her last, and one of her best, books, *The Wife of Rossetti,* appeared in 1932. After its publication, she began to collect material for a life of Charles Augustus Howell, but her capacity

for concentrated effort gradually deserted her, and it was never more than half completed. In her final years she became, as she used pathetically to admit, "tiresome". Her mind wandered, her memory failed and she constantly repeated herself although, almost to the end, she continued to have her "bright intervals". The house, which had resounded with noise and chatter for thirty years, which had never ceased to be crowded with guests, was now almost deserted. The lonely old woman spent her days wandering through its empty rooms, worrying her faithful servants and longing for a chance caller. Few came, and few could be induced to accept her pathetic invitations to dinner. When the Second World War broke out, and her house was shaken in the blitz, she imagined that she was with her father, in the Welsh mountains, during a thunderstorm. Her servants had constantly to assure her that she was at home, safe in South Lodge. She died there on January 17, 1942.

With Violet Hunt's passing went one of the last survivors of a period when Literature and the Arts, scholarship and "culture" were sufficiently valued by the wealthy classes to allow those who cultivated them a comfortable standard of living, combined with a large measure of public esteem. They were "celebrities", almost to the same extent as the film star, pugilist, B.B.C. favourite or politician of the present day. In view of her up-bringing, it was only natural that, all her life, Violet remained "celebrity-conscious". It added to the bewilderments of her later years that she was unable to realise how completely, as the result of culture-destroying wars, writers and painters had fallen in the social scale. Who would now cross the road for the pleasure of meeting an author, except possibly another author? Fortunately for herself, Violet never lived to see the effect on all the things she believed in, of nuclear fission. Her interesting, exciting, sociable, financially secure and highly civilised little corner of the great world finally collapsed when Hitler passed that way. The bombers signalised the end of an epoch when they blew out her windows.

It has often been alleged by her women friends that Violet secretly enjoyed her emotional tragedies and got considerable satisfaction out of the squabbles and litigation in which she found herself involved. She must have liked being "talked about", and from what she said to me I am certain that she hated the idea

of being quickly forgotten. There can be no **doubt that, artist** as she was, she realised to the full the literary value and dramatic possibilities of her innumerable imbroglios. She was a student of historical gossip, adored scandalous memoirs and devoted all her intelligence and imagination as a writer to the analysis of affaires of the heart. Apart from the Suffrage Movement, in which she joined with intense enthusiasm, her only interest in politics was of the personal kind, that is to say in the loves, jealousies and hatreds of politicians. She was, in fact, a specialist in "private lives", as well she might be, since her own had been a subject of discussion among friends and enemies since her girlhood. Acute as her emotional sufferings may have been, she never suffered in silence or kept her sorrows to herself; so perhaps her friends were right when they said that she enjoyed them. As a mere man, a full generation younger than herself, I can only say that whatever may have been the oddities of her character I found her fascinating and irresistible. As she grew older, her wit, like her mother's before her, became salted with a touch of malice. Her life-long friend, Ethel Colburn Mayne, once observed that "Violet is always ready to sacrifice her best friend to her worst epigram." In spite of this, those of us who knew her well forgave her sallies because of the sterling good qualities which lay beneath them. She was essentially kind and warm-hearted and boundlessly hospitable. Some of my most valued memories are associated with South Lodge in which, from youth to middle-age, I was so frequent a guest and in retrospect her memory is dear to me. She was, as we say, "a character". If she had her faults, she was never dull and, even in a crowd of clever people, there was never anyone quite like her.

As to whether her novels will continue to be read, if the explosions and tumults caused by transatlantic hysteria ever subside sufficiently to permit the continuity of literary tradition, I find it impossible to hazard a guess. They were brilliant, in their period; they are certainly "dated"; but the wheel revolves full circle. Her book of memoirs which covers the Ford episode, *The Flurried Years,* her biography of *The Wife of Rossetti,* her two volumes of short stories called *Tales of the Uneasy* and *More Tales of the Uneasy* and *White Rose of Weary Leaf* seem, on various grounds, to have the qualities which should make for survival. But who can say? Will students of social life and

manners, fifty or a hundred years hence, be interested in the celebrities of Campden Hill in the late Victorian and Edwardian epoch? If they are, it is difficult to see how Violet's personality—a catfish in that decorous aquarium if ever there was one—can fail to attract their attention to herself and her books.

1947.

2

In Belgium with Bill Mathers

IN THE summer of 1936 my wife and I spent a few weeks in Belgium, staying first at Nieuport-Bains, one of the most agreeable places on the hideous Belgian littoral, and afterwards in the rebuilt town of Nieuport, a mile inland, Nieuport-Bains, at the mouth of the Yser, has a fine bathing beach, a pleasant *digue* and a casino which, when we were there, was closed and semi-ruinous. Perhaps the little place has now recovered its pre-war prosperity and put up its prices accordingly. We found it exceedingly cheap, as we were well lodged and exceedingly fed for about nine shillings a day, for the two of us. The cooking was done by the white-haired mother of the *patron,* who produced a number of delicious local dishes never seen in the restaurants of the big hotels run by limited companies. We used to go and read the boring menus displayed outside the local Metropole and congratulate ourselves on our good fortune. Apart from bathing, there was little to do at Nieuport-Bains except take the electric tram into Ostend. The journey occupies forty-five minutes and the trams run every half-hour. In the opposite direction one could, for a change, go to La Panne, on the French frontier. There was no place of any interest in between.

As our room was only available for a fortnight and we could not find another in Nieuport-Bains that we liked so well, we left the sea front and put up at the Grand Hotel at Nieuport. This town, during the War, was the centre of a great deal of fighting and the scene of a minor British disaster of which there were only few survivors. The town itself, with the surrounding system of sluices, was completely destroyed by the enemy artillery but has since been bravely reconstructed on the

original lines. As elsewhere in Belgium, the old bricks and tiles have as far as possible been used again, with excellent effect. The Cloth Hall, dating from 1480, which had a massive baroque bell tower, and the Gothic church, famous for its rood loft—buildings once starred in Baedeker—have been replaced by new constructions in the same style, and the Grande Place, with its original cobblestones, has been preserved. Although the whole town has only been rebuilt during the past ten years, it nevertheless retains something of its medieval atmosphere and compares admirably with the appalling new bathing resorts on the coast. There is a British War Memorial outside the town consisting of a cenotaph in grey stone guarded by stylized British lions, looking disgruntled, rather bewildered and slightly lost without their umbrellas. A certain number of British tourists stop at Nieuport, to visit a section of the trenches which has been preserved just as it was in 1917, and other reminders of the War such as gun emplacements, blackened trees, ruined farm buildings and unfilled craters. A building connected with the system of trenches, which was used as a dressing station by the Belgian troops who nicknamed it the "maison de caoutchouc", dates back to the famous Battle of the Dunes, fought here in July 1600, between the Dutch under Maurice of Orange, and the Spaniards. Its powers of resistance must have been remarkable as, although frequently pounded by shells, it is still undamaged.

A local hero of 1914, who created the inundations by opening all the sluices, has established a cafe facing the scene of his exploits, which we occasionally visited after dinner. But I found this part of Nieuport too full of ghosts *to* be at all comfortable. The sky was often overclouded on stuffy evenings, and when a moon fitfully appeared it gleamed balefully on the sinister dunes and the silent, almost stagnant waterways. Mechanical music came in sudden blasts from canal-side *estaminets,* but the ghosts, on leave from the death-infested dug-outs, seemed, to my oversensitised imagination, to be shouting it down with their gallant, heart-breaking Tipperarys. "We died for f——all," they seemed to cry. "The whole show was a bloody fraud, not worth a——. And now you pay five bleeding francs to see the

trenches where we got our guts blown out! Orl right, mates. 'Ave it your own way. *Your* time's coming!" I confess, I did not like those war-stricken environs of Nieuport, but preferred the Grand Hotel and the Grande Place, and the little port, with its barges and fishing-boats and tiny steamers.

Our stay at Nieuport will always be hallowed in retrospect because while there, we persuaded our old friend Edward Powys Mathers—known as Torquemada to readers of the *Observer* and as "Bill" to those who loved him—to join us for a week or so. Rosamund, his devoted wife, was unable to get away, so he came alone, with the intention of working. Bill came, saw, and quickly conquered this very dull "small port". (He mentioned, in *Who's Who,* that one of his recreations was "small ports".) He took a room in our hotel, a bourgeois establishment designed for the convenience of *commis-voyageurs,* and was immediately recognised by the *patron* as "Monsieur le Poete". Continental hotel-keepers, fortunately, have different standards of value about their guests than those of the ex-temporary gentlemen in plus-fours who manage too many of our English provincial inns. In twenty-four hours Bill became a Nieuport celebrity. Although obese, bald, eye-glassed and wispy-bearded, Bill's appearances were never against him. He looked like a benign Chinese mandarin, he carried his distended stomach with an air; he had dignity, a voice gentle and low and a peculiar personal quality, like other poets I have known, of being somehow unobtrusively first-rate. *Dear* Bill! To see him advance, with a dancing, swaying motion, across the cobblestones of Nieuport, dispatch-case in hand, used to melt my heart. How difficult it is, in the vastness of London, to spend a few idle hours with one's friends! What preparations *one* has to make, what telephonings, what adjustment of dates! It is almost impossible for the poor to live a civilised social life in a country without cafes. Across the channel one can chat endlessly and at ease over a bock or a Pernod and every casual encounter in the street inevitably leads to the nearest *bistrot*

We saw most of Bill and Rosamund when we were living at Nice, near the Place Gambetta, and they were staying higher up,

at St. Sylvcstre. Bill enjoyed the sunshine and used to bask in his garden, sometimes clad only in a rather scanty blue shirt, dividing his time between writing poetry, doing his monumental translations and reading the detective stories of which he was inordinately fond. He introduced me, I remember, to the works of Earl Derr Biggers, the creator of Charlie Chan, for which I have always been grateful. In Nice we had many adventures together. On one occasion, we all went to a fair in the old part of the town. Bill could never resist fairs; they appealed irresistibly to his childlike nature. The party split up and Bill and my wife dallied at a shooting-gallery, while Rosamund and I wandered off to watch a motor-cyclist doing hair-raising stunts in a kind of iron cage. After Bill had shot for about a quarter of an hour, and run up an account of some thirty francs, the time came to pay. Neither he nor Malin could find any money. Leaving my wife as a kind of hostage with the now suspicious proprietor of the booth, Bill walked to the nearest cafe, blandly borrowed a hundred francs from a waiter, leaving his wrist-watch as security, and returned in triumph. He then casually felt in the pockets of his pants and produced a wad of notes which had been there all the time! Bill reminded me of an ingenious, impish, extremely naughty but always in the end submissive and penitent small boy. The productions of M. Pernod fils, when absorbed by him in formidable quantities, only accentuated these charming qualities. For reasons of health, he gave up Pernod in later years and, when he was with us at Nieuport, confined himself to Italian Vermouth as a source of comfort and inspiration.

In the mornings he took his books and papers to the obscurest little cafe he could find and spent the hours before lunch working out those fascinating, torturing crossword puzzles which for years delighted readers of the *Observer.* I have never cared for crosswords—they seem to me too like work—but many friends who enjoy them have told me that Torqucmada's puzzles were unique. His death robbed them of an eagerly-awaited weekly pleasure and they felt his loss as one feels that of a familiar friend. Although Bill's expectation of life, since the War, had always

been poor and he was constantly in bad health, at Nieuport he seemed to us to be in untisually good form. He bathed, took photographs and pottered about happily among the cafes by the tiny harbour. It must have surprised him to have lived on into his later forties. When I first met him—I think we must have been introduced by Luke Hansard—he was thirty-four or five and quite resigned to the prospect of not lasting much longer. 1 have no doubt that it was his wife's constant care and devotion which gave him some of the unexpected extra years. But, as Rosamund wrote to us, after his death, "he was very tired of being ill".

Of Bill's achievements as a poet, translator and Oriental scholar much has, no doubt, been written by people better qualified to appraise them than myself. I read *Black Marigolds* when it first appeared, with delight mingled with excitement; some *of* his subsequent translations seemed to me minor masterpieces, and I shall always treasure my presentation copy of the last volume *of Eastern Love* both out of affection for the donor and appreciation of the book itself. But, apart from his writings, Bill had much to give his friends in the way of conversation. His inquiring mind had led him into many odd fields of study, in search of what was amusing and beautiful, and it was both a pleasure and a privilege to lead him on and draw him out. He had not a trace of intellectual snobbery, and he was certainly no smell-fungus, although he had a good deal of curious learning stored away under the counter. In pre-war days, our universities took some pride in producing, in addition to the annual output of incipient Colonial Governors, class-conscious Civil Servants, muscular public-school masters, lawyers and curates, an unworldly breed of scholars and gentlemen, who carried on a great tradition. Bill Mathers belonged essentially to this category. He was perhaps fortunate in not having lived long enough to be liquidated. Wherever the Fascist war against civilisation has triumphed, the poet, the philosopher, the scholar and the man of letters have been among the first to be attacked, perhaps because their lives arc based upon a respect for truth. In Spain, not only the poet Lorca but thousands of intellectuals, from university professors to

simple schoolmasters, have been shot by the "Nationalists" merely for the modern crime of being civilised. In Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia such men are to-day being flogged to death in concentration camps, thrown into latrines and subjected to every torture that the sadistic imagination of subhuman brutes can devise. Everywhere the infection spreads. Perhaps Bill Mathers was lucky in passing over before having to watch all that he lived for and valued being submerged in mud and blood.

1939.

3

Edwardian Memories

No WRITER, I imagine, ever forgets the first guinea earned by his pen, or the moment when he first saw his name in print appended to his contribution. In my case the guinea arrived in 1905, when I was a boy of seventeen, reading for Smalls in a country vicarage in Somerset. I had contributed a copy of verses to *The Academy,* then controlled by Mr. P. Anderson Graham, the editor of *Country Life,* and not only did I receive a guinea, but also an invitation to a banquet at the Dieudonne, given to celebrate *The Academy's* rebirth. I could not attend the banquet, but my excitement at receiving the invitation was enormous, and the number of poems I produced under the spur of this encouragement was colossal!

My University career was short and sweet. Faced with the necessity of earning a living some years sooner than I had anticipated, it was again Mr. Anderson Graham—this time in his capacity as editor of *Country Life*—who gave me my chance. I shall never forget our first interview. I arrived shaking with shyness, and in reply to his question as to what my literary ambitions were, I murmured, with blushful sincerity, that I wanted to be a poet! This answer must have been irresistible, for I found myself engaged on the spot, not, of course, to write verses, but to learn the severe and solemn trade of sub-editing. The years I spent on the staff of *Country Life* were perhaps the most useful apprenticeship I could have served. I discovered, quickly enough, that to earn a living by the pen is by no means all raptures and roses, lit by purple spots of inspiration. I learnt what hard work meant, and if I had paid more attention to Mr. Graham's salutary criticism I might have picked up the elements of a prose style. For Anderson Graham was that now rare thing,

an editor with a genuine love of letters and a genuine interest in young men whose ambition it was to write. If he had troubled to put into practice those principles of writing clear, straightforward and compact English, which he knew so well how to inculcate, he would surely have been an essayist, and perhaps a novelist, of high rank. In early life he had been associated with W. E. Henley and his tastes were therefore robust. His great loves in literature, when I was on his staff, were Tennyson and Walter Scott. (He used to tell me that Wandering Willie's tale was the best short story in our language.) Swinburne he regarded as a "minor poet", an opinion which in those days shocked me profoundly. Graham was an editor of the old school. His great bulk, his enormous dented bowler, big, boyish face, tanned and wrinkled by exposure to all weathers, his tiny, acute eyes, his slow, rolling walk, were unforgettable. He was a Johnsonian figure, a survival from a vanished Bohemia, and in his ample person carried on a great tradition.

It was while I was reading the proofs of Anderson Graham's articles for *Country Life*, and writing innumerable little poems at odd moments, that he introduced me to Ford Madox Hueffer, who was at that time contemplating his *English Review*, Hueffer, afterwards Ford, engaged me to act as the sub-editor of the new venture in my spare time, and my happiness was complete. In those days my capacities for hero-worship were prodigious. Contact with the really great names in our literature filled me with humility and awe. The life of the artist (was 1 not myself a poet who had earned a guinea?) seemed the most glorious adventure conceivable. I had never at that time encountered a "business man"; for commerce and money-making I had a supreme contempt. All that kind of thing belonged to worlds which I had never explored and did not want to explore. I never heard anything about them at school or at Oxford, certainly not among my mother's friends, who were exclusively religious, and ranged from the then Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Boyd Carpenter) at the head, to the youngest local curate. Religion, which in its orthodox form I distrusted, art and letters, which I loved, were the two soils in which I had been nurtured, so that

my translation to Ford Madox Hueflfer's review was like a translation to Heaven. Whatever else it was—and I still think it was one of the most brilliant editorial adventures in our literary history—Hueffcr's review was certainly not commercial.

My first duty under my new chief was to accompany him on a week-end visit to Joseph Conrad, who was then living in a farmhouse near Luton called Somcrics. Hucffer was curiously mediaeval in those days. He was the last of the Barons, travelling with his retinue. I was the retinue. My role was to be silent, attentive, respectful and obedient; and I believe I played it to perfection. It was a dripping wet winter evening when we arrived at Luton. Editor and "retinue" got into a stuffy fly, which very slowly splashed its way along the country lanes to Conrad's door. The house was surrounded by trees and seemed unutterably melancholy, ghost-haunted and eerie. The rooms were dim and candle-lit. Conrad, as 1 remember him, was a broad-shouldered, stooping man, with bright brown eyes and very elaborate manners; and he talked a queer exciting mixture of French and English. After dinner we went to his study on the first floor. I hid on a sofa while my host and my employer talked to one another endlessly about Flaubert's technique, about Emma Bovary's drive through Rouen with her lover, about the marvellous closing paragraphs of *Un Coeur Simple.* The perfection of that wonderful *conte,* then first revealed to me, has been a joy ever since. The life which Flaubert led in his hermitage on the banks of the Seine, when, with prodigious energy and patience, he built up his masterpieces, was surely the life of a saint—one of the most romantic lives of which we know the details. I felt it first that evening. Conrad talked eagerly, with many shrugs and gesticulations, and for hours I sat listening to Hueflfer's high, querulous drawl blending with his deeper, more staccato notes.

The English Review was edited in a flat over a poulterer's shop in Holland Park Avenue. Sometimes gobbets of blood, oozing from the suspended carcases of rabbits, made the threshold positively unsafe; but it was a delightful flat when you reached it, though as an editorial sanctum it always struck me as being

slightly eccentric. Hueffer also, it must be admitted, was a slightly eccentric editor. When 1 arrived, after my day's work on *Country Life,* I was usually dispatched to the Shepherd's Bush Empire to secure a box or two stalls for the "second house". Here we used to repair, evening after evening, with the manuscripts which had accumulated during the day. Hueffer would hold the manuscripts on his lap, and while the jugglers hurled golden bottles at one another with prodigious violence he would dictate his letters and decide their fate. But the moment Victoria Monks, or someone of the kind, made her appearance, then the cares of editing were at once forgotten. The manuscripts slipped unheeded to the floor and we both enjoyed ourselves. So far as I can recall, at least the first five or six numbers of *The English Review* were edited from the Shepherd's Bush Empire. That they were none the worse for it, those who possess file copies can sec for themselves.

The flat seemed always full of people. I remember particularly the merciless practical jokes of Percival Gibbon, and Mr. Scott-James's sombre benevolence. Then there was the spectacular figure of Mr. Cunninghamc Graham (whose illegible handwriting I had to try to decipher), Mr. W. H. Hudson, tall, white-haired, black-eyed and silent-footed, Violet Hunt, Edward Thomas, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Stephen Reynolds, Edward Garnctt, Edgar Jcpson, and a host of others whose names I cannot recall. Thomas Hardy I once saw in those rooms—a little, quiet, grey man wearing a red tie, who discussed in a weary voice the ailments of his younger relatives, while all round him the latest lion-cubs pranced and roared.

Conrad was there fairly often in the first months of our existence. I remember one occasion when he enraged me so frightfully that I seriously thought of challenging him to a duel. He was discussing with Hueffer some new book on which he was engaged. It was a very technical conversation, writers' shop, and not particularly interesting. But at intervals of about three minutes Conrad would turn to me and say, "Now, Goldring, you must remember this is strictly confidential. *I know what you journalists are! No paragraphs, please!"* I got a riper and riper

scarlet, till I nearly burst. If there was one thing in those days of which I had no doubts whatever it was that I was a creative artist. A journalist indeed! A pedlar of literary gossip to half-penny newspapers! I can tell you, it was bitter. Conrad, I feel sure, had not the faintest notion how deeply he was insulting the callow youth who sat and glowered at him.

Among the many amusing experiences of those days I remember particularly a visit to The Pines at Putney. It was in May 1909, about a month after Swinburne's death, and the object of my call was to negotiate with Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton for one of Swinburne's posthumous MSS., an article on the plays of Francis Beaumont.

After my arrival at the house I was left to cool my heels for about fifteen minutes in a very pleasant but—as it seemed to me—rather commonplace drawing-room, in which a few pictures by Rossctti and by some of the lesser pre-Raphaelites were the principal indications of the house's special character. At last the door opened and a little shambling figure came in to greet me. It was Watts-Dunton. He seemed to be about four feet high. He was dressed in a long, shiny, black frock-coat, and wore white woollen socks. He had on dark spectacles, and his white hair was long and unkempt. He came towards me across the room with both his little arms outstretched, caught my hand (as if by a lucky shot), after several unsuccessful efforts, and shook it quickly up and down. But in spite of his queer appearance I remember being immensely impressed. Watts-Dunton had undoubtedly the manner and bearing of a "personage". Nowadays I notice many attempts to achieve this manner, both among my contemporaries and among the leading men of the generation before me; but I can think of no instance in which the effort can really be called a success. The Victorians must have had a certain style about them. Modern conditions perhaps prevent its recapture. Nowadays, as far as my own experience goes, almost the only writers who really have a "presence" arc the Dublin poets and journalists.

We discussed (at rather tedious length) the merits of Swinburne's poetry. Watts-Dunton claimed that Swinburne had not

yet received his due as one of the greatest nature poets in the whole range of English literature. He was writing a book, he said, to prove it. Then we talked of the merits of the article I had come to buy, and finally we got down to brass tacks. I found Mr. Watts-Dunton a keen bargainer, and it was soon evident that on one side of his character he was an astute and highly capable man of affairs. We tussled amicably over the price to be paid for the "American rights", and I remember that his lowest offer was exactly ten pounds more than the highest price which I was authorised to bid.

Before getting up to go, acting under advice, I made some halting references to *Aylwin,* a book which to this day I must confess 1 have never read. (At a safe distance I am prepared to admire it immensely.) No sooner had I blurted out my little compliment than the old gentleman scrambled to his feet and made me the most charmingly ceremonious bow. So I hastily got up from my arm-chair and returned it, with as much grace as I could muster. Youth and age saluting one another!

Aylwin was evidently a favourite topic of conversation with its author. In measured, rather guttural tones he expatiated on the prodigious success it had attained, attributing this success to the exciting nature of the story. He recounted endless anecdotes about Victorian heroes who had sat up all night to finish it, unable to lay it down. From the financial standpoint he regretted bitterly having allowed it to appear in "The World's Classics".

The discussion *of Ayhvin* had the effect of loosening his tongue, and he settled himself in his chair and discoursed to me for a full hour on literary matters. Referring to *Country Life*—I told him that I was connected with that paper—he remarked, "It is a most beautiful publication. All of it is charming, even the advertisements!" He spoke also of Anderson Graham's novel *The Red Scaur,* of which he had the highest opinion. By some accident the long review of it which he wrote for *The Athenaeum* was not inserted. To this misadventure he was inclined to attribute the fact that the book had not a larger sale. I was charged to convey an urgent message to Mr. Graham, begging him to write another novel of "country manners and pursuits".

Returning to the subject of Swinburne, he described him as the last of the old generation of poets and the first of the new. "Speaking now, a month after his death, I tell you that this country has yet to appreciate him fully. The time will come when he will be still more highly thought of even than he is to-day." He mentioned "Hertha" as being an example of a type of nature poem which future generations would appreciate at its just value. His view of Swinburne seemed to be that he was a poet in advance of his time. He seemed genuinely surprised at the tributes paid to Swinburne in the press. "I had no idea he was held in such respect and veneration." He added, as I got up to go, that Swinburne's death would immensely increase his sales, and thus the market value of his copyrights! I went off wondering whether, after all, Hucffer would rise to that extra ten pounds.

Some months later, when I published my first little book of poems (now happily forgotten), I sent a copy to Mr. Watt-Dunton, and received a very flattering letter in reply, which contained an invitation to me to go again to sec him at The Pines. But for some reason or another I never went, nor did it ever occur to me to advertise his favourable comments at the head of my reviews. Looking back I am astonished at my own *naivete,* at my juvenile fine feelings! Not only Watts-Dunton, but even Joseph Conrad, and several other eminent literary personages, wrote me flattering letters about that "little brochure", as one of them described it. If they would only do the same thing again, I feel sure that my enterprising publishers *on* both sides of the Atlantic would wireless their ecomiums up and down the world within a few hours. Can't you imagine it? ''Eminent English novelist says Douglas Goldring's poems show extra-ordinary promise and remarkable powers of expressing deep emotion in simple and beautiful language." Well, we live and learn—too late.

Stephen Reynolds was for a time a constant visitor at the flat in Holland Park Avenue. He was a very lovable man, but I have rarely detested any book as much as I detested his novel *The Holy Mountain,* of which it was my duty to read the proofs.

My hatred of this story became a standing joke. It has persisted to this day, and I still think that Reynolds was that rather rare thing among writers, a greater man than his works.

In the course of my sub-editorial duties it often fell to me to run about London calling on contributors. Bernard Shaw was one of the people on whom I had to wait. I cannot now remember what it was I had to see him about, but I have a vivid recollection of his beginning the conversation on the landing of the floor above, while I was sitting in his dining-room. He rushed in in the middle of one sentence and rushed out before the end of another.

Max Bccrbohm was a particularly agreeable celebrity to call on in this way. He talked on every subject under the sun except the business in hand, and made mc ill with laughing. As I had always been a great admirer of his works, it was delightful to find him as amusing and as "nice" as one could possibly have expected. Those were days when affectation among literary men was carried perhaps to a higher pitch even than now. But the great Max, as I remember him, was absolutely unaffected, natural and charming.

Looking back on Edwardian days, the temptation to belaud a past epoch is strong upon me. And yet I cannot be sure whether it is I who have changed or the atmosphere of literary London. To me, in those days, it seemed that men really did care for literature for its own sake. A man would take a pride in praising his enemy's book. And it was a favourite saying of Huefler's that "one doesn't crab another fellow's benefit". "After all, my dear Goldring," he used to say, in his drawling high-pitched tenor, "dog docs not eat dog." A generous attitude, that. Is it fashionable to-day? I hardly think so. And looking back it seems to me that in those days there was more than a show of critical detachment among the men who took criticism seriously—that there was, indeed, more serious criticism. The aspirant to literary fame did not attack Society first, and produce the goods only after he had made elaborate preparations for their reception. On the contrary, there were genuine discoveries, and the discoveries were disinterested. Were they? Or do I only imagine

all these things? Did I give credit where none was due, out of ignorance? And do I only think that the English world of letters has now deteriorated because I know it so much better? I give it up. Youth covers everything it sees with something of its own romanticism. Perhaps one's eyesight at twenty is not trustworthy, and perhaps young men—at least in pre-war days—were too apt to credit their elders with possessing their own unspoiled idealism. But of some things one can be certain at any age, even at twenty. Kindness at least is always recognisable. My memories of the now distant past are in this respect uniformly happy. No young nobody from nowhere could have been treated more generously by his elders than I was. I hope the experiences of those who are to-day beginning their writing life are equally pleasant. But perhaps the boot is now on the other leg. Youth has come into its own, and (quite rightly) will "thank you for nothing". It is the old-stagers who are now in need of encouragement and help, at the hands of their juniors. They rarely get it. How often they deserve it is another matter.

1919.

4

West Country Memories

WHAT DOES the West Country mean to a Londoner like myself? Flattered by this memory-jogging question, put to me by Mr. Malcolm Elwin, when he was editing the *West Country Magazine,* I spent an hour or so considering the matter. Various place-names, evoking agreeable recollections, floated across my mind—the Isle of Purbeck, Wareham, Lulworth, Weymouth, Lyme Regis, Bath, Beaford, Barnstaple, Newlyn, Senncn Cove, St. Just, Hambridge, SheptonBeauchamp, Montacute, Ilminster, West Pennard, Wells, Glastonbury, Exeter, Hope Cove, North Lew. . . . Now I come to think of it, whenever I have had an opportunity of exploring my native land my instinct has usually been to strike South and West, rather than North and East. This must be due to temperamental reasons rather than to any call of the blood, though my maternal grandfather, a typical "Forsyte", was born at Exeter. His family came from South Molton, of which town his grandfather, a prosperous stone mason, had been the mayor and local big-shot in the late eighteenth-century. In June 1936 curiosity made me visit this place, when I was staying in the neighbourhood, but I was conscious only of a vague feeling of repulsion—a feeling increased by the hidcousncss of the stained-glass window with which some of my relatives had decorated the parish church, in memory of their ancestor.

My plcasantcst recollections of Devonshire, apart from a wartime holiday at Parracombe, are of occasional visits to my father's youngest brother. "The Reverend Arthur," as we called him, was a noted raconteur, fly-fisher, cricketer, bon viveur and wit, who spent the last ten years of his life as Rector of Beaford.

The book he wrote there still seems to me, like the work of another clerical angler—the Reverend Charles Marson, to whom I shall refer later—to have many of the qualities of a good vintage port. It was published by the Bodlcy Head, under the title *Memoirs of an Unclerical Cleric,* but outside the restricted circle of his relatives and friends little notice was taken of it. No one could have cared less than its author.

The western county which, since the days of my youth, has appealed to me most deeply, is not Devon, nor Cornwall, nor even Somerset, but Dorset. When I was a schoolboy my parents took a cottage in Swanage, which we used in the summer holidays and for occasional week-ends. In those days I was an energetic cyclist, swimmer and walker and, as I was old enough to read and enjoy the Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy, I explored every mile of the "Hardy Country'' with an enthusiasm amounting to rapture.

Social intercourse on the sands of Swanage Bay, among the young people who frequented them, was promoted by a curious organisation of Cambridge undergraduates called the Children's Special Service Mission. They "specialised" in holding prayer-meetings for public schoolboys and sometimes selected prospective converts to take for goody-goody walks and talks. I remember going to the Tilly Whim caves with one of these eager evangelists and being genially encouraged, en route, to keep my wicket up. "Take care, old man, to guard the three stumps of purity, decency and honour. And never forget, as long as you live, that the best way to do it is to keep a straight bat." I cannot pretend that these muscular Christians had any influence on my own conduct as I continued, unregencrately, to be the bad boy of my family. But I suppose their fancy picture of the English type of "Christian gentleman" must in some way have penetrated my subconscious mind, as a standard to which other people, such as Cabinet Ministers and national spokesmen, ought at least to aspire. It was not until more than thirty years later, when General Franco and Mussolini were being hailed as "Christian gentlemen" in Conservative circles, that it suddenly came over me that there must, after all, have been something

in what those fellows preached. How much the world would have been saved if our rulers and their Foreign Office underlings, instead of hobnobbing with Fascists, had played the game with a straight bat and saved the national stumps of decency and honour!

My mother as a fanatical Anglo-Catholic did not wholly approve of the evangelical activities of the C.S.S.M. She had, after earnest search in the locality, discovered a village—I think it was Worth Matravers—where the vicar was sufficiently "High" to suit her taste, and to this church we were haled off every Sunday morning. I have forgotten where we had our mid-day meal—perhaps we had a picnic lunch—but in any case, in the afternoon, we explored the lovely coast and discovered the delights of Kimmeridge Ledge, St. Aldhclm's Head and Chapman's Pool. I have loved this part of Dorset ever since and found, in 1944, that even its occupation by the Army had not robbed Purbeck of its mysterious glamour.

As my mother was bent on making me a High Church missionary, she kept a sharp look-out for any signs of sin. When these were not wanting, she handed me over to a succession of clerics who had the reputation of being good with young men. Our house at Oxford was constantly invaded by Cowley Fathers, deaconesses and other Anglo-Catholic pietists of both sexes, and whenever advice was wanted in regard to my upbringing it was automatic that some influential devil-dodger should be called in to give it. As it was intended to send me to the University, and as I was distinctly not the prize-winning type of schoolboy, I needed coaching for Rcsponsions. Advice was accordingly sought from the Reverend Stuckey Coles, who was then the Principal of Pusey House and already a legendary Oxford "character". Stuckey was enormously tat and was famous for his gusts of wheezy (but saintly) laughter. He received me very kindly, gave me an expensive Turkish cigarette as I sank into an armchair, and after some preliminary cross-examination, interspersed with jokes which made him shake like a jelly, decided that the right place for me—the place which would do me most "good"—was the clergyhouse at Shcpton Bcauchamp in his

native Somerset. Stuckey was the patron of this living and one of his sisters and her husband occupied the Victorian family mansion which dominated the village. The clergyhouse, to which I was duly despatched, was a Victorian Gothic building with pitchpine panelling, picture frames, mostly containing faded Arundel prints, ending in crosses and a semi-monastic rule of life which included the imbibing at nine o'clock at night of a revolting beverage called "cocoa-nibs".

As there were a number of vacant bedrooms in the house, Stuckey made it a practice to send down to his old home any Oxonian flotsam and jetsam whom he considered would derive benefit from its Little Gidding-like atmosphere Fortunately for me, one of the temporary inmates was a young clergyman who was taking duty for the Vicar of Harrington—a nearby village—during his absence on sick leave. I was, in those far-off days, a budding poet, my inspiration being derived chiefly from Swinburne, Baudelaire, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons and the "decadongs" of the 'nineties. I wrote God knows how many "poems" in my austere bedroom. Judge then of my delight, my awe, my excitement, when I discovered that the before-mentioned young clergyman had been an Oxford friend and contemporary of Lord Alfred Douglas, and a contributor of poems to *The Spirit Lamp* and to Stewart Headlam's paper, *The Christian Socialist.* It seemed almost incredible to me, at seventeen, that anyone could have survived from that fabulous past age, "the 'nineties". I suppose that to-day that is how the very young feel about "the 'twenties" and even "the 'thirties". My new friend gave me the complete poems of Walt Whitman, which I read, entranced, from cover to cover. He also let me read, and copy out, his own little masterpiece of satire, "The Rector Explains His Position". I have cherished this poem for forty years and during the General Election of 1945 I was hard put to it to refrain from quoting its concluding lines to the broad-minded near-Socialist vicar of my village, who stressed his inability to take sides and, like the bishops when confronted with the atom bomb, maintained his earnest desire to sit on the fence:

See all from all men' s points of view,
Use all men's eyes to see with,
And never preach what anyone
Could ever disagree with.

It was Gabriel Gillett also who first inspired me with a longing to meet that remarkable character, the Reverend Charles Latimer Marson, perpetual curate of the village of Hambridge. By a fortunate coincidence, my first tutor had to give up teaching me after a few months and someone had to be found to take his place. By dint of wire-pulling I got myself transferred to Hambridge Parsonage.

Marson was a man who, in the largest crowd, would have arrested attention. He was dark-haired, tall, broad-shouldered, with humorous, twinkling eyes and a magnificent Roman nose. In cassock and beaver, snuff-box in hand, shoulders thrown back, he looked like a Cardinal who had retired from the hierarchy to become a comedian. I suppose that, after Sydney Smith, he was the greatest wit and the most corrosively satirical pamphleteer the Church of England has ever produced. In his early days, like his friend Bernard Shaw, he had written for the *Saturday Review,* under the editorship of Frank Harris, and when a curate in Soho had been a member of Stewart Headlam's Christian Socialist group. It was customary to say of Marson that his was a "wasted talent" because his ecclesiastical superiors, who strongly disapproved of him, kept him exiled in a remote corner of a backward county. So magnetic was his personality, however, that he was able to get away with anything he chose to do in the parish, and he was not the kind of man to let his talents go to waste for lack of exercise. In pursuance of his belief that the pub and the parish church should be regarded as the communal centres of village life and that the villagers should be equally at home in both, he encouraged the gipsies, in wintertime, to come in and warm themselves round the stove at the back of the church. They were glad of the opportunity and brought their frying pans and eggs and bacon with them, so that in the middle of the sermon suggestive sizzlings could be heard by

occupants of the rear pews. In return, the gipsies used to humour the kind gentleman by letting him baptise their babies.

Marson loved the rich Doric of the countryside and encouraged the revival or continuance of the traditional miracle plays, performed at Christmas in the kitchens of the bigger houses, and took an active interest in the "Harvest Home" festivities. On one occasion the parsonage handyman, appropriately named England, apologized after a "Harvest Home" dinner for obliging with one of "they wold ancient songs" when called upon to sing. It proved to be the now well-known folk-song, "I sowed the seeds of love". One of Marson's close friends was Cecil Sharp, the gifted head of the Hampstead Conservatoire, who was already enthusiastically interesting himself in the collection of that heritage of traditional songs which was in so much danger of being lost. Sharp came to stay at the parsonage, and together he and Marson visited the old people in Hambridge and the surrounding neighbourhood, bribing or cajoling them to sing all the songs they could remember. Sharp recorded the tunes and Marson took down the words. On several of these occasions it was my privilege to accompany them. To Marson's delight the largest number of tunes, most of them with bawdy words attached, were supplied by a hospitable and comely widow who, in her spotlessly clean cottage, followed the ancient trade of village harlot. She sang song after song, with her hands clenched and her eyes shut. The result of the Marson-Cecil Sharp collaboration—terminated, alas, by the usual disagreement—was the first two volumes of *Folk-songs from Somerset*, published in brown paper covers by Barnicott and Pearce, of Taunton. Alas, I have lost my presentation copies, with Marson's inscriptions in them.

Rumours of Marson's extraordinary "goings-on" penetrated eventually the chaste precincts of the Bishop's Palace at Wells. Marson had little use for bishops, who, as he once observed, "like worn-out race-horses, are only useful for the purposes of propagation". The occupant of the see at that period was the Right Reverend Wyndham Kenyon, whom Marson used irreverently to refer to as "Ventosus" or plain "Windy". When it was known that he was about to make a descent, special popish

ceremonial was hastily concocted for his reception. On his first appearance in the church, the organist, coached by Marson, greeted him with the strains of "Ecce, sacerdos magnus". Afterwards the unfortunate bishop found himself, forced into wearing a cope, at the end of a procession in which the choir, preceded by a crucifix-bearer, chanted a hymn specially written for the occasion. The first line of it was: "Come, plead the Mass for England." The face of poor Ventosus, who obviously felt his position acutely, was, as they say, "a study". How Marson failed to be inhibited I have never clearly understood, but I suppose Windy felt that such a dangerous man and such a formidable controversialist had better be left alone.

I have searched the map of the county in Mr. Edward Hutton's *Highways and Byways in Somerset* without finding any trace of Hambridge, nor is the village mentioned in the text. There is no reason why it should be, for it remains in my memory as a bare and unattractive hamlet, while both the church and the parsonage dated from about 1840, and looked it. Langport was the nearest town, though occasionally we strayed as far as South Pethcrton, Martock, and Ilminster. Of the neighbouring villages, those I remember best are Curry Rivel, on the ridge of hills adorned by Burton Steeple, and Barrington, with its then dilapidated Tudor mansion. Our range of country, for exploration, was as a rule restricted to the capacity of the parsonage pony, a cantankerous marc whose name comes back to me as Polly. I used to ride her about the fields and lanes when she was not required to pull the bright-yellow dog-cart which Marson had bought second-hand from a Langport bookie. In this rakish trap Marson and I made numerous calls in the neighbourhood, and I remember being taken in it to have tea with the Lord Lieutenant of the County, old Mr. Ccly-Trevilian. When the Marsons first came to Hambridge the trap was drawn by a donkey, which had been bought from a local greengrocer. On the first occasion, when Marson drove up with his wife to attend a "county" garden party at the Lord Lieutenant's house, the donkey insisted on making for the back door, with which he was already familiar.

I have forgotten how I managed, once, to get as far as Montacute. Perhaps I borrowed a bicycle on which to make the journey, the purpose of which was to convey a message to the vicar, who was a friend of Marson's. This kindly, bearded cleric showed me over his church, where he was engaged in repairing one of the old coffin stools. As it was term-time, his sons were away from home, and it was not till many years afterwards that I met two of them, Theodore and Llewelyn Powys, through Louis Wilkinson.

Marson, as his charming book on coarse fishing, *Super Flumina*, reveals to the few who have read it, was an enthusiastic angler, and initiated me into the art of catching jack with a spoon bait. There were several streams near the Parsonage and I spent happy hours on their banks waiting for my float to bob, then striking at what I judged the right moment and, if lucky, landing my catch. I have never done any fishing since those days, nor have I ridden a horse since I said good-bye to Polly. The unspoilt country in which I lived, while Marson was steering me through my Tacitus, has vanished beyond recall. Gone are the farmers' gigs, the vicarage dog-carts and the carriages-and-pairs of the landed gentry. The broad dialect, so well reproduced in the poems of Barnes, is now rarely heard except in the mouths of the very old.

I have wandered into Somerset on several occasions in recent years, but I have never made any attempt to re-visit Hambridge. When I stayed at the Red Lion at West Pennard in the summer of 1943, only the taste of the "rough" reminded me of the past.

1946.

5

Redding "On Wines"

IT Is surely a lamentable thing that the appreciation of good wine which seems to have characterised the Victorian era should now have become so rare among Englishmen. No longer (as in the 'sixties) does the family solicitor feel it incumbent on him to mitigate the aridity of his documents by offering his client a glass of old port. No longer does a sojourn at one of the Universities provide our young men, if not with an education, at all events with an educated palate. The great sherries seem almost to have disappeared, the port which comes to us nowadays, in the opinion of our elders, has deteriorated to the same extent as our discrimination; nor is taste in clarets and in burgundies what it was. Drinking, in short, is ceasing with us to be an art, and is becoming every day a cruder appetite. The ceaseless infiltration of "un-English" ideas from the United States of America, combined with the Technicolor illustrations of the American way of life afforded us in our cinemas, are in this respect, as in so many others, undermining our civilisation. We drink for results; it is only the effect which matters. Far too many of us have accepted the simple formula that champagne is undoubtedly the best way of "getting there" if you can afford it, but that hard liquor will do well enough if you can't.

The true wine drinker, the man who regards good wine as "poetry in solution", and feels for it the same romantic regard which inspired our grandfathers, is become one of the rarest kinds of connoisseur that exist among us. We often encounter individuals who collect postage stamps and, still more often, men who haunt sale-rooms and antique shops to display their *expertise* over pictures or old china; while as for those to whom book-sellers' catalogues are the favourite form of literature, they

arc an immense class. But I wonder how many people there are left who keep a copy of Redding, *On Wines,* in their dining-rooms, and whose favourite diversion is the examination of a long and complicated wine-list? In the 'fifties the study of Cyrus Rcdding's learned treatise was so much a part of a gentleman's education that the volume found its way into Bohn's Library, and went into several editions in that august scries. Now, alas, it is a familiar denizen of the sixpenny barrow.

That there are a few left among us who preserve the old tradition goes without saying, and perhaps they make up in enthusiasm what they lack in numbers. Of my personal acquaintances I can recall perhaps half a dozen devotees, of whom the most remarkable was an Oxonian poet, who had the reputation of being the most distinguished classical scholar of his year. He was a man of the most refined susceptibilities; nevertheless, I remember that he habitually faced the startling decorations of the Trocadero Restaurant merely for the pleasure which it gave him to turn over the pages of its gigantic *Carte des Vins.* Another friend had an exotic Soho acquaintance "in the trade", from whom he procured those humble wines of the people which used to be imported to give Italians, exiled in London, the illusion of home. To my friend, I suppose, they gave the illusion of travel.

I imagine the true wine lovers of to-day as an austere and temperate body of men (far more temperate, indeed, than most teetotallers); impecunious; lovers of the sun; addicted to foreign travel; yet, to a man, claiming France as their only real *sccondepatrie.*

Foreign travel being still, for the moment, made difficult by a variety of post-war restrictions, the devotees who remain at home are thrown back on wine merchants' remnants and on chance discoveries in shops. With them hunting for cheap yet drinkable wine is become a pastime, like hunting for Longton Hall figures or for first editions; and the difficulties of the search are increasing daily. Nevertheless, discoveries—since our cellars even now must contain some millions of uncorked bottles and every unopened wine bottle is an adventure—are still to be made by those who persevere.

The unearthing, in a sleepy provincial town, of a bottle of old Liebfraumilch for the sum of three-and-sixpence,[1] recently filled a friend of mine with elation for an entire week. He carried his bottle home as tenderly and reverently as if it were a Waterford decanter. Another acquaintance, visiting a still sleepier town, came on a whole *cache* of golden Montrachet at its original price.

No such good fortune has, alas, come my own way; but among the minor consolations of collecting I reckon the discovery of a "Touraine Superieure", in a hock-shaped bottle, for the modest sum of half-a-crown. It was not a "selling line", and its original roughness had accordingly been toned down by some years of repose in the wine merchant's vaults. I suppose its name did not convey very much to the ordinary purchaser of Graves and Sautcrnes; but to me it brought delicious memories of white wines drunk on the banks of the Loire in the golden evenings of a far distant June—memories of Pouilly and of Vouvray, where the wines are so different from the searching *mousseux* which is all that seems to be left: over for the inhabitants of Saumur. When I got my bottle home and sipped it at dinner, the flavour of the wine reminded me of Vouvray. And who would not like to be reminded of Vouvray, gentlest and most tranquil of the little towns of France?

I feel sure there must be many people who share my perhaps childish pleasure in reading the names on wine bottles. There must be others to whom, tor example, the word Nuits suggests at once that little wayside station which the Marseilles *rapide* passes on its upward climb into the mountains of the Cote d'Or; whom the word Macon afflicts with a certain reminiscent dreariness; to whom Barsac has an intimate and sunny connotation, recalling memories of a cheerful little town on the banks of the Garonne, where life was once so easy and the sky so blue.

The average French taste in wines, as I recall it, differs considerably from the taste of the average Englishman. I remember in a score of small inns up and down France finding in each, as the

[1] **Written in 1920.**

piece de resistance on the wine-list, a sweet (and to me) slightly indigestible Sauterne. The wines labelled "Sauterne" are not among my favourites. Of the bottles which I have helped to empty I recall few except those from the historic vineyards at Chateau Yquem and Chateau Filhot with enthusiasm. Not so Chablis-Moutonne, Graves, Meursault, Pouilly. At Gien, on the Loire, I once drank a bottle of old Pouilly with a friendly innkeeper, the fragrance of which still lingers in my memory. We sat at a round iron table outside the hotel. Beyond the double row of trees was the stone parapet which enclosed the treacherous, swift-flowing river; and in the distance, on the opposite bank, a white house gleamed ghostly in the moonlight. When my innkeeper was a boy he had fired from the window of that house against the Prussians. "They are afraid of us now," he remarked truculently. "The next time we shall beat them, sure enough!" How peaceful it seemed to be sitting like that in the still night, the sky above us powdered with stars like diamond sparks, the huge river swirling down towards the sea a yard or two from the table on which reposed the bottle and our glasses!

Another French wine for which I have always had an affection bears the label "Chablis-Moutonne". I recall a bottle drunk at *dejeuner* at the Cafe de l'Embarcadere at St. Germain, on a hot summer morning, whose golden smoothness must have made even the gods envious. In the sunshine afterwards, walking along that terrace which overlooks the Seine, one felt (I remember) not unlike a rather dissipated god, and at four in the afternoon the idea of a good strong English cup of tea was far from displeasing.

But of all the wines which I ever tasted in France, the most unique, the most unforgettable, was a bottle of ancient Graves unearthed for me from the cellars of the Hotel des Ruines at Coucy le Chateau. It was on Easter Eve in 1914. Throughout Holy Week that year the weather was damp and cold, and I remember distinctly feeling the presage of coming calamity as I travelled by gradual stages from Calais to Lille, and from Lille—passing through Arras and St. Quentin—to Laon and Coucy. It was late on a frosty evening when I reached Laon—that

treasure of a town, perched on its abrupt hill. The picture which it presented, with its streets of old houses with pointed roofs, its frowsy inimitable inns, and its two glorious churches—the whole place surrounded by moss-grown ramparts and illuminated by a cold and impassive moon—remains engraved on my memory. But I drank no wine at Laon that was worth recalling. The supreme adventure of that journey awaited me at Coucy.

1 think it must have been the peculiar melancholy of Coucy, under a grey sky, which made me so reckless. The treasure stood at the end of the wine-list, the dearest wine in the house with the exception of the Champagnes. It called itself modestly "Graves"—name usually associated in English minds with the eighteenpenny table wine sold in pre-war days by the nearest grocer. I asked the *patron* about it, but he seemed annoyed. He suggested the inevitable Sautcrnc. I asked him if the Graves was not a good wine? This was too much for his honesty. He confessed, with ill-humour, that it was magnificent, then with a sigh went off to the cellar in person to procure it. It was in an ancient dark red bottle, covered with cobwebs, and embossed with an heraldic seal. The *patron* handled it in the peculiar way which the wine drinker immediately recognises. The uncorking became an event of ceremony. The *patronnc* emerged from her retreat and hovered. The two waiters turned away from duller occupations and stood like elderly acolytes while the *patron* himself seized the corkscrew, wiped the neck of the bottle and laid it in its little basket with the tenderness of a mother laying her child in its cot. When the first drop from the glass was caressing my palate all was understood, all forgiven. The yielding of the bottle appeared as an act of personal kindness, which it was presumptuous to have asked of mine host on the strength of so short an acquaintance. I wondered how he could possibly have held my paltry seven francs one-half so precious as the thing he sold. On the following evening it did not seem fair to demand another bottle, but I was constrained to ask how many more bottles of this wine of wines remained in the cellar. There were six more; and I promised myself that I would come back again to Coucy and drink them up. Among the many minor exasperations

of the War, the thought of German officers swilling all that liquid poetry, in one orgiastic night, was to me not the least.

So much more pleasure is (to my mind) to be got from drinking wine than from absorbing Peace beer or, what is still worse, Peace whisky, that I cannot help wondering why it is that wine-drinking has not come back more definitely into favour with the English public.

There are still, in tee wine merchants' cellars, quite a number of little-known wines waiting to be rediscovered. Wines from Cyprus, Marsalas, tables wines from the North of Spain (red and white Rioja), white wines from the Crimea, red wmes from Carlowitz, moselle from Luxembourg—all these and more can be found, by search, in the restaurants and wineshops of Soho. Not all experiments, naturally, will end in success. Disappointments will be encountered frequently enough, even by the enthusiast with experience; but no man of taste should be deterred by them, from adventure.

The charm of wine is something quite distinct from alcoholic stimulation, which can be obtained more easily by other means. Something of the genius of the place it conies from manages to get into it. Wine, to-day more than ever, helps to bring a little warmth and gaiety and friendliness to our social occasions. Its use in moderation (and the real wine-lover is incapable of drinking to excess) seems to me to form a part of that art of living which our French neighbours understand so much better than we do. At the risk of being sandbagged by some indignant Pussyfoot I must confess my sympathy with the ancient tag—Boileau is it, or Boufflers?—

Allcz vieux fous, allez apprendre a boire.
On est savant qaund on boit bicn;
Qui ne sail boire, ne sait rien.

6

1855

I

MUCH OF my spare time during my ninth and tenth years was spent in a dark, rather cheerless apartment, whose windows were obscured by various sorts of garden bushes and creepers. Its official title was the "morning-room", but with the inconsequence of children, we knew it as the "tank". Down to the "tank" flowed the treasures rejected by our parents: the songs of Samuel Lover (with steel engravings), a large leather-bound edition of Byron similarly illustrated, Dr. Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination,* elaborate editions of the works of Rogers and Campbell, and any number of other outmoded books, which had had to make way for Ruskin and Carlyle and Tennyson and Browning and their like. They were stuck anyhow—the rejected ones—on the shelves of two tall untidy pine bookcases, and none of us cherished them except me. My particular joy, however, was a battered casket of the brightest green enamel, adorned with brass knobs and an elaborate central plaque representing an Oriental building, with a number of gentlemen in the foreground, with turbans on their heads, wearing red baggy trousers. This picture was called "Le Palais du Bey de Tunis". When you opened the casket an odour of fragrant antiquity assailed you, not from the casket itself—which came, I fancy, from no more romantic source than a legal banquet attended by my grandfather about the year 1855—but from its contents. It was filled to the top with oblong cards of thick parchment, dating from the first years of the nineteenth century, on which had been painted the various symbolic figures represented by the different groups of stars. The position

of each star was indicated, and the card pierced accordingly, so that by holding up the one with, say, Ursa major and Ursa minor on it to the light, you could learn to discover those groups in the heavens for yourself. I well remember Cassiopeia, a lady in sandals, seated on an Empire chair with a red plush seat, holding up with one hand the insufficient drapery which concealed her lower limbs. Then there was Auriga, in a beaver hat and scarlet socks, nursing a goat and two rabbits, and Virgo, a lady with angel's wings, wearing sandals and a plentiful supply of garments, and holdmg in one hand a lily. Among the curious beasts, Monoceros, with Canis minor (a very modern-looking black-and-tan) on his back, and Draco, a creature like the sea-serpent, stick in my memory. Underneath the green casket rested always a pile of four books: two volumes of the *Drawing-Room Scrap-booh, British Painters of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* and a volume of *Illustrations to Childe Harold,* issued in the blessed year 1855, by the Art Union of London. These volumes and I became the greatest friends; on Sunday afternoons we were inseparable; and I cannot now smell the odour of old parchment without letting my thoughts travel back to them, and to the green casket in the "tank", under which they stood. The green casket has thus come to symbolise for me all that is meant by "Victorian" when applied to literature and art.

Youth proverbially colours the things it sees with its own vividness, with all the glory that remains to it from the "trailing clouds". No doubt the *Drawing-room Scrapbook* is poor stuff, also the efforts of the gentlemen of the Art Union; yet, coming across the four books the other day, dust-laden in an upper room in the new house to which their owner's vagrant habits had carted them, I seemed to feel nearly all the remembered delight as freshly as if I were once more a child. Looking at them with eyes that find in art their greatest satisfaction (among the modems) in the work of such painters as Van Gogh, Cezanne, Gauguin, and Renoir, I had no sort of friendly disposition towards the 1850s. Indeed, of all epochs I regarded it with the greatest horror. (Yet can it be that my young son will find it as de-lightful as I find the generation that preceded it?) There is much

to make one laugh in these old picture-books, but the essential charm of them—when they are charming—has more points in common with the charm of, say, the Russian Ballet, than one might at first sight suppose. Both rely to a large extent on glamour, on all the things which are opposed to realism. Both, in effect, are romantic.

II

The Drawing-room Scraphook for the year 1840 is adorned for the last time by the poetic efforts of L.E.L., a young lady as beautiful as she was unfortunate, and "as accomplished as she was beautiful", who perished at Cape Coast Castle in 1839, and whose early death, according to her biographer, caused a "shock" as violent as that which attended the death of Lord Byron and of Sir Walter Scott. A good deal of water, you will notice, had already flowed under the bridges since the great days. No apologist, and certainly not myself, will, I fancy, rise at this date and call Miss Landon blessed. She was a quite wonderfully bad writer. *The Arrival,* however, a rhymed dialogue illustrated by E. T. Parris with a picture of two girls whose two heads seem to grow out of one neck—for twenty years I imagined they were joined together, like the Siamese twins—has distinct if unconscious humour. Louisa and Cecilia one afternoon lament the fact that their papa has taken a castle in the Scottish Highlands, where their jewels are wasted, and there is "not a decent neighbour near".

CECILIA. I'*sure our English country seat*
Was quite enough of a retreat;
A solitary grand old hall,
Shut up within its high park wall!
And there, at least, was no despair
O'er robes of price too good to wear.

LOUISA. *No, what with Henry s friend Sir John,*
And the young Lord of Erlington,
And Lady Peter's guests, and all
The people from Comhe-Merival,

And Captain Mathews and his bride,
And all our London friends beside,
One ne'er pined for a human face
Nor mourned o'er unsunned pearls and lace!
But I protest it was unkind
To bring Court Apsley back to mind . . .

If anyone asked me why I find this delicious, I should not know what to say. I can only confess that I can still spend a Sunday afternoon over this kind of thing, though I know it to be fatuous. But the pictures are different. There are qualities possessed by these engravings—especially those of Oriental subjects—which are lacking in much modern work: above all, an extraordinary *glamour.* The gorgeousness of the East must have affected these old T. Alloms and J. Jenkinses profoundly, and in their way of giving expression to their emotion—their minute, painstaking, mid-Victorian way, that knew so well how to give the exact values of satin and cloth and lace, the exact velvety sheen of a dark eye, and from whose ladies not an eyelash could fall without its being observed by their creators—they succeeded, sometimes enormously, where their successors have failed. "The Rajah's Daughter", for instance, by one F. P. Stephanoff, engraved by J. Knight, is altogether delightful. A young girl with almond-shaped eyes, pencdled eyebrows and dark hair mostly concealed by a jewelled head-dress in the nature of a turban, is kneeling in the foreground, in a silk bodice studded with pearls and an ample dress of transparent flowered gauze over silk, with a long musical instrument like a guitar in her hand. By her side is the lotus, and in the background a vista of romantic minarets. In spite of the fact that the values of the different stuffs have been rendered with a meticulous elaboration, and that each minute detail has been put in with care, the picture, nevertheless, remains full of "atmosphere". These details, for any knowing observer who has a strict regard for truth—or rather for "actuality", a totally different thing—may be, and doubtless are, inaccurate. Yet so strongly Eastern has been the artist's idea that this idea he communicates. And what is art if not "communication"? If

there were nothing really Eastern about this picture, it would yet be the quintessence of the East.

Not all the plates are as happy as this, though "The Gipsy Mother" by Robertson, engraved by Greatbatch, is admirably composed, and, but for a touch of forced sentiment in the mother's expression, would be really fine. As it is, the encampment underneath the tree in the distance, on the left of the picture, makes one greatly want to see the original painting. "The Andalusian Lover", by Edward Corbould, is mid-Victorian Romanticism *pur et simple*, reminiscent of Thomas Haynes Baily—the sort of thing from which, had one been a young man in those days, one would most violently have revolted. But turning on to the pictures of places, such as the "New Palace of Sultan Mahmoud II on the Bosphorus", by T. Allom; "The Tomb of St. George, Bay of Kesrouan", by William Bartlet; "The Great Mosque and the Alcazar, or Dungeon of the Inquisition, Cordova", by D. Roberts; and particularly to the pictures of stormy seas, one finds a spaciousness, an infinite, romantic wonder that seem now to have left us for ever.

III

The magnificence of those black storms, of those dazzling "white horses" which dashed themselves against the frigates' wooden walls, the splendour and romance of them! The coming of the steamer seems to have driven much of this from marine painting. True, some of our academicians produce large canvases showing lifeboats rescuing passengers from stranded liners, but they are nearly always mere deserts of inanimate paint. There is no wonder in them. Steam and engineering have practically conquered the elements, and So-and-So's preparations have rendered even the minute discomfort of sea-sickness avoidable. The thought of a storm at sea, from the standpoint of art, has become domesticated. To be drowned in it is a catastrophe on the same plane as being run over by a motor omnibus, or blown to pieces by a shell I have met people but little younger than myself who can read such lines as these—

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as bundless, and our souls as free,

without turning a hair. They find nothing in it. "There's nothing much, anyway, in calling the sea 'dark blue', " they say: "any fool could have called the sea 'dark blue'. " Or again, "Waft," they sneer, "what a stucco word!"

The sails were filldand fair the light winds blew,
As glad to waft him from his native home;
And fast the white rocks faded from his view,
And soon were lost in circumambient foam.

It is only by inhaling the perfumes that arise from the green casket that used to keep watch over the *Drawing-room Scrapbook* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* that I get the full flavour out of these lines. But what a flavour it is! The palaces, cities and countries, sung by Byron and depicted by these old draughtsmen and engravers, seem to belong to some superb but vanished world, of which Albion and proud Lisboa formed a natural part—

What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold!
Her image floating on that noble tide,
Which poets vainly pave with sands of gold,
But now whereon a thousand keels did ride
Of mighty strength, since Albion was allied,
And to the Lusians did her aid afford:
A nation swoln with ignorance and pride,
Who lick, yet loathe the hand that waves the sword
To save them from the wrath of Gaul's unsparing Lord

Gaul and Albion and the Lusians and proud Lisboa—especially proud Lisboa—were places and peoples that Turner certainly knew *all* about, his followers at least something. Proud Lisboa appears to me radiant, in my dreams, whenever I have had too much supper. I see its great harbour shut in by a line of hills surmounted by gleaming palaces, see the rolling white clouds,

the "dark blue" waves all tipped with white foam, the skimming feluccas and majestic frigates—all the pomps and glories of old-time shipping. There, when I go ashore (in my dreams), I find maidens with dark eyes fringed with languorous lashes. They lean down to me, "skilled in the ogle of a roguish eye", from balconies set just within hand-reach, on the sides of palaces of pink stucco; and sometimes they drop red and sometimes white roses into my bosom. There is always the gentle tinkle of a mandolin in attendance, and the murmur of a love-song steals through the window in the evening silence, so that I stop with one hand on the sword-hilt and the other *on* my heart, prepared for the adventures and abductions and hairbreadth escapes that inevitably follow.

They were drunk, those romantics—Byron, Turner, Hugo, and their hosts of imitators, even down to the compilers of the *Drawing-room Scrapbook*—drunk in the Baudelairean sense, drunk in the way that *no* "realists" wall ever at all be able to understand.

They have, of course, been exploded. Abler critics than the young friends I have quoted have been at pams to show, in admirably turned sentences of annihilation, that there is "nothing in" the facile Byronic epithet, that it is finer art to talk about "'Omer smiting 'is blooming lyre", than about—

> *Sky, mountains, rivers, winds, lakes, lightnings! Ye,*
> *With night, and clouds, and thunder—*

and so on. To "ye" (even when used by Mr. Kipling) they particularly object. The poetry of a tramp steamer rolling down the Channel with a cargo of tin cans, old iron, etc., etc.—type Masefield—may be new and sweet. Personally, I think it is. The professional critic of literature, however, is rarely content to add permanently to the existing list of things that are good. Only a limited number of such, in his view, are permissible. If he add he must simultaneously subtract. To admire the tin cans, you must jibe at this sort of thing, find it false, and strike it from its place—

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleet? sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan —
Without a grave—unkneird, uncoffin'd,and unknown.

With professional art criticism I am less familiar, but I have no doubt those old engravings, those treasures of my childhood that supported the weight of the green casket, are equally vulnerable. To be sure, they have been disposed of long ago. Who ever mentions their very date without a snigger and a holding up of hands? Yet such is the abiding influence of things loved in one's extreme youth, that, at the risk of shocking the very advanced, I must maintain that the early Victorians knew a thing or two that an age which prides itself on its omniscience has been unduly eager to forget.

1910.

ANTIPATHIES

England's Committees

Plush

An Outburst on Gissing

Clever Novels

The Blood Combine

I

England's Committees

H. M. BATEMAN'S famous drawing of colonels lining up in their club to write a letter to *The Times* happily illustrates a characteristic of middle-aged Englishmen. This urge to remedy abuses, to "get something done", to "call public attention to the matter" and, generally speaking, to waste time and money on wholly unprofitable forms of patriotic endeavour, sweeps over many of us before we reach fifty, and when it does it usually survives all other passions. Hence the enormous numbers of Committees, Councils and Societies which England contrives to support. An Englishman, unlike the Scot who keeps his eyes in the boat and never forgets the career and the knighthood in the offing, will often work far harder for causes which can bring him neither money, fame, nor thanks, than he will at the job from which he derives his bread and butter. Yet most Committees, after the initial stages are past, do their best to hamper and discourage the enthusiast who called them together. The reason is that they are almost invariably invaded and dominated by a section of the English upper-middle-class which has been described by Sir Osbert Sit well, with botanical precision, in his novel *Those Were The Days.* The Freemartins, in his bitterly amusing satire, are typical of the kind of English family whose members contrive to get their finger into every pic, who "run the country". The unearned increment inherited from their industrious Victorian sires gives them boundless energy and ample leisure for furthering Good Causes. God has created them to be the life and death of Committees. Committees are their vocation, their hobby, their natural means of self-expression. Many a village war memorial bears tribute to their taste and

judgment. As the Frecmartins are persons of social position, they naturally expect to have a Peer as their Chairman. The more respectable of the less-known Peers, not satisfied with gilding the prospectuses of doubtful companies, are usually only too glad to serve in this capacity. By signing letters to the press—and thus insuring their insertion in our most august daily—they and useful to the Cause, with the minimum of trouble to themselves, and at the same time they acquire a reputation for devoted public service. (The letters are, of course, drafted for them after working hours, by busy enthusiasts living in shabby flats, of whom no one ever hears.)

Most Committees arise out of newspaper controversy. Someone writes to the Press pointing out that a valuable invention, such as the Iron Lung, ought to be made available to every hospital and clinic; that a certain park, threatened by the speculative builder, should be preserved for public enjoyment; or that action should be taken to safeguard school children crossing dangerous roads. The writer of the original letter, finding himself supported by other correspondents, warms to his work, and in his zeal for humanity calls an informal meeting. Inevitably, Freemartins, scenting the quarry from afar, turn up to see if they can help. But they are wary birds; they bide their time, and do not declare their hand too soon. A Committee is formed, and the convener of the meeting is usually invited to undertake the work of Honorary Secretary. This means that he must slave like a black, supply his own typing, advance all the necessary petty cash from his own pocket, and litter his own premises with the new Society's paraphernalia. Wives have divorced their husbands for less. When subscriptions begin to pour in and a bank account has been opened, the Freemartins make their first move. A Bishop's wife, or someone equally formidable, with the relentless horse-face that is the terror of all "paid workers" and the banc of all distracted Honorary Secretaries, gets up in Committee and says: "I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that we circularise the Members of both Houses of Parliament." The Chairman applauds the idea, the motion is promptly seconded, and all the other Freemartins solemnly nod agrecment.

Lady Maude is such a practical woman! The Secretary, if he is not a complete fool, groans at the prospect of having to waste the members' subscriptions. But he is powerless: the motion has been carried. He gains permission, however, to open an office and engage a shorthand typist at £*2* a week. Having no personal axe to grind, he advertises in the *Daily Telegraph,* selects the most competent assistant he can discover, sends out the useless circulars, and then starts on the laborious task of office organisation. In this he is, of course, greatly helped by his hired expert. There are innumerable highly-trained women who are prepared to work themselves to the bone, for a nominal salary, in what they consider to be a Good Cause, and he has no difficulty in finding one. So the office gets going, and after all the initial difficulties have been overcome, begins to run smoothly. The income of the Society steadily rises, its financial foundations acquire strength, it can at last be said to be established.

At this stage the Frccmartins begin to sit up and take "an active interest". Previously they had been content to attend meetings only occasionally, chiefly in order to snub and discipline the Honorary Secretary, but now, they feel, is the time to "take control". The first step is to find a really nice girl—of "good family", naturally—to take over the office management. "Miss Bmks, no doubt, has done excellent work, *most* excellent work, but she is not really the *type* we want, not really *suitable."* As most of the Frccmartins have some nit-wit protegee in mind—guaranteed Cheltenham, Roedcan, or Wcstonbirt and cither a Colonel's daughter, a Bishop's niece, or a Peer's first cousin—much secret intrigue goes on behind the scenes, from which the Honorary Secretary, whose own turn will come later, is carefully excluded. Violent passions and animosities are generated. A collection of ladies and gentlemen who, taken separately, are persons of the highest moral character and unblemished personal honour, develop, as a Committee, every human vice of meanness, malice, suspicion, treachery and double-dealing it is possible to conceive. At last, however, the more experienced and persistent Frccmartins agree on a candidate for the job—already, as we have seen, capably filled by a woman who works for her living—

and Miss Binks is dismissed, with a week's salary in lieu of notice, to make way for Miss Ermyntrude Faunceworthy-Prendergast. The Honorary Secretary, after two or three weeks of Miss Ermyntrude, begins to realise that his own number is up. He may struggle on for a month of so, out of loyalty to the members he has induced to join, and in the hope of seeing that the original "aims and objects" of the Society are carried out. But he is soon given to understand that he has exceeded his usefulness, in other words that the Freemartins, having sufficiently exploited his enthusiasm, now wish to cash in on the kudos his energy has earned them. He tenders his resignation, usually with relief. Another Freemartin triumph! Soon the socialite members of the Committee, now purged of its shabby originator, begin to receive flattering paragraphs in the gossip columns, and the titled Chairman comes in for obsequious praise in papers which, six months ago, had never heard his name, for having signed letters which he never wrote and has only hastily read.

This, in brief, is the history of a large number of English Committees. They are a fascinating study to the detached observer, because each one is a miniature House of Commons, and by watching its manoeuvres he gets to know *how the country is governed* and to understand the technique by which the ruling class continues to rule. Nearly all Committees have their "Clive-den sets". The important decisions are arrived at privately, in clubs and at dinner-tables, so that when the meeting opens every-thing has been arranged and rehearsed beforehand. Matters of policy are proposed, seconded and carried before the outsiders, excluded from the set, have had a chance of considering them.

One good quality about our Committees is that they are the last stronghold of the English. In every other department of our national life, the Scotch are predominant. The immigrant Scot will do almost anything to advance himself socially in this country—he will even play cricket—but you can rarely get him to join a Commitcee, unless he has a strong ulterior motive. In that field the English are still supreme. Apart from snobbery, the Freemartins, to do them justice, rarely have any ulterior motives for their activities. They blindly obey a class instinct to

boss, to throw their weight about, and make it appear to their compatriots that they are not parasites, living—like the *idle* rich—on the toil of others, but a privileged class which thoroughly deserves its privileges because its members are "the great unpaid". And, to be fair to them, if they are never "starters" they are often capable "runners".

It is hardly necessary for me to add that there are plenty of exceptions to the type of standard English governing class Committee which, as a natural historian of my compatriots, aided by Sir Osbert's *Those Were The Days,* I have here attempted to describe.

1939.

2

Plush

EVERY writer who is neither a prig nor a prophet must, I imagine, look forward to a time when he may be privileged to pay supertax. After all, the mere fact that nobody has heard of you, that your books, when they appear, drop silently to the bottom of the pond, that your publishers lose a hundred pounds or so whenever you hypnotise them into sending your MS, to the printers, is by no means a convincing sign of real greatness. The books which sell, even the "best-sellers", are those which give the public something for its money. Reviewers, of course, are asses, the public is another ass. But if the ass is obstinate, at times vicious, who that knows him can deny his ultimate sagacity? It is my convinced belief that all books which are good of their kind make money, if not in the writer's lifetime at all events after his death. The current cant about neglected talent is, surely, the purest bunkum. A man of talent may have to endure some years of undeserved obscurity, but even under existing conditions he must eventually be recognised. And recognition means sales, and sales mean cash.

And so when we search for the bottle of ratsbane with which to fill the inkpot (prior to a cheery onslaught on the Established) we have to make it clear that it is not the bank balance of the successful writer which is our objective, but rather a point of view towards wealth to which the man who has arrived is naturally prone. Nothing is sadder than to watch an artist who has made money begin to adopt the money standard. Here, as in everything else, it is the first step which counts. And after the initial surrender he begins gradually to judge everything by the money there is in it, and everybody by the amount of money

he possesses. His own surroundings become heavily upholstered, and he develops hatreds against those who live on bare boards which are far more virulent than the mild envy with which the penurious regard *him.* He loses his sense of values and he loses his innocence: and with his innocence he loses all the keen edges of enjoyment.

And yet cash, and lots of it, ought to be an extraordinarily jolly thing to have, particularly if it has been acquired by a man's unaided toil. It *is* a jolly thing. It makes all kinds of adventures possible, and it brings to those with the wit to accept it the priceless gift of freedom. With enough of it in your pocket you can step gaily into one of those alluring chocolate and cream express trains which glide regularly out of Paddington Station. You can go to places like Polperro or Marazion—just for a lark. You can voyage to China or Peru. You can run a publishing firm, start a satirical weekly paper, found a monthly magazine. If you are very rich you can even spend a few days at Cap d'Antibes and watch Chaplin dining at the next table but one; or you can stay, perhaps for a week, at Palm Beach. You can give dinners to the friends who were decent to you when you were poor. You can wear your oldest clothes until they fall to pieces, nor will it matter, since you will never again have to ask anybody for a job. And if you are human, and not so high-minded as the heroes of your own novels, you can occasionally amuse yourself by snubbing one of the toads who insulted you in the days when they could see your feet protruding through your boots. You can even ask to dinner the "Literary Editors" who—in the time of your poverty—somehow forgot to answer your letters. And, sure in the knowledge that they will accept, you can introduce them to all the wrong people. You can even, occasionally, *buy* a book.

No. I don't believe anybody grudges a writer all the money he is able to make, provided only that he preserve his integrity. But how many successful writers are there who can do this? Indeed, this tragic loss of integrity is just as often the prelude to success as a result of it. The germ of *arrivisme,* reintroduced, perhaps, from Montparnasse or Greenwich village by some

frigid and calculating poet, seems to have infected too many even of our most distinguished talents. We can observe them becoming socially careful, watch them detach themselves from the folk below them on the financial ladder and grin up engagingly at those who have climbed a rung or two higher. Soon, even the air they breathe becomes thick and soft and heavy as their carpets. They put on flesh and their work fattens like the backs of their necks. They grow a surface and that surface has the peculiar, indefinable quality of plush.

Plush. To think of it is to think of all the sumptuous respectability which is our Victorian heritage. It is the outward and visible sign of our inward and spiritual materialism. It is the symbol of successful mediocrity, and it lines the seats of the mighty in the world of British letters. It limits a man's outlook, takes the sharpness from his voice, muffles all his mental processes. The brown plush sofa, the red plush curtain, the purple plush dining-room "'suite"—all these have long been familiar. It has remained for the present day to add to them plush poetry, plush drama, plush criticism, and the suave and comforting plush novel. The plush point of view naturally relegates the genius—with the madman—to the plush-padded room. Both are equally disturbing, unexpected, and unreliable. In that holy of holies, that citadel of all that is orthodox and commercially profitable, the smoking-room of the Mausoleum Club, even the raising of an eyebrow by one of the younger members is regarded with disfavour. From the street outside not a cry ever penetrates its thick plush curtains.

Plush, lush, hush! Ssh! It is almost enough, isn't it, to turn one into the *Telegraph-Post's* conception of a Bolshevik—a nice big bloody one, with snow on your boots, a knife between your teeth and an automatic in your trousers pocket? Not that these weapons would be of the least avail to you in an attack upon entrenched positions. You cannot fight or struggle with plush. Even fire, the untamed, cannot prevail against it. If you run amok, and with a shout of laughter attempt to dash your way into the Mausoleum, before you have even passed the Porter's *guichet* you will be caught and suffocated by plush, suppressed by

plush, drowned in rolling seas of plush. A plush table-cloth will be tied round your head, your legs will be skilfully weighted with a dozen tomes of plush criticism, and a bevy of flunkeys in canary plush breeches will bear you away and drop you feet foremost into that river of black, unfathomable plush which glides so sombrely past the plush benches of the Mother of Parliaments. Then, after they have returned to the Club in search of their reward, the plush-clad major-domo will hand each faithful Jeames his O.B.E. Those nimble flunkeys are the Swiss Guards of the Palace of Plush. I know them all by name. So, if you think for a moment, do you.

And now a word in your ear. At the bottom of their hearts *they envy us.* . . . And they are right.

1922,

3

An Outburst On Gissing

"IT is a terribly sad book, but oh, so true!" said an elderly lady of my acquaintance, when she came to the last page of George Gissing's *New Grub Street.* After I had finished the book myself—she pressed it upon me and would not be denied—I felt inclined, with certain reservations regarding its truth, to make the same comment. I know that I fled that evening to the nearest picture palace, in the hope that Chaplin would dispel from my mind this grisly vision of Victorian London. For exasperating as Gissing's stories are—and to me *New Grub Street* is the most exasperating of them all—they do succeed in conveying an impression of actuality. Gissing is a faithful recorder, but he docs not understand what he sees, and the running commentary which he supplies is an agonising revelation of a starved soul with a warped outlook and a false sense of values. His portrait gallery of worms undoubtedly must have had living prototypes. He could not have invented such people out of his inner consciousness. But surely only a Gissing could have thought of them as "heroes", or invited sympathy from his readers on their behalf!

No doubt, in the 'eighties and 'nineties of the last century, London contained any number of hard-up literary men, of high ideals and defective education, who bore the motto "please kick me" suspended round their servile necks. And to such men, as to Gissing himself, normal human beings—individuals with blood in their veins instead of diluted Stephens' ink—must have looked like villains. I must confess that it is the villains who arc the only characters to whom Gissing introduces us who seem to me at all tolerable. The way they spurn and ill-treat his heroes and heroines is intensely sympathetic. Anybody with a spark

of intelligence would feel tempted to do the same. Any woman worth her salt would fly from a nincompoop like Edwin Reardon, the hero of *New Grub Street,* in six weeks, not six years. She would fly from him because her good sense would urge her instinctively to revolt against the diseased vanity and egomania which underlay his deadly virtues.

The appeal to pity in Gissing's books is so repellent that the ordinary reader who comes to Gissing without any *parti-pris* can only suspect that self-pity—in the author—combined with a deficient sense of humour, are responsible for it. Again and again Gissing asks you to admire some seedy clerk who studies masterpieces of literature in his attic, carries about with him that battered old stage property the "much-thumbed Horace", and yearns disastrously for higher things. Personally, as I read of his endeavours and ideals, his misfortunes, his wretched poverty and unsuccess, I feel growing up within me an awful desire to do him a mischief, and I hurry on impatiently till the flourishing and heartless villain does it for me. If 1 were an employer of a Gissing hero I should be tempted to sack him when he least expected it, out of sheer *mechancete.* I should listen to his tragic outburst about his invalid wife and his eight starving children without a grain of pity; and end the interview by advising him curtly to take his family to the workhouse and himself with them.

And yet, after indulging in all these lively emotions, after hurling works by Gissing into the garden or out into the street, after stamping on them or using them as missiles, it is necessary to make acknowledgements. Characterless work arouses no emotions in the reader whatever. Perhaps it requires as much talent in a writer to make one really angry as to give one pleasure. If Gissing's people did not *live*—live in all their native beastliness, sham humility, lack of humour and smarmsy fine feelings—one could not possibly get in such a rage either with him or them.

I remember on one occasion, when I was denouncing Gissing to a brother novelist, he interrupted my flow of invective by reminding me of this truth. Gissing is not negligible: his books are social history, documents, detailed, relentless statements of

lower middle-class life in what, in some respects, was one of the darkest ages in English social history. They are statements of fact drawn up by one who actually lived the life which he describes, dimly perceived its horror, but not having the imagination to enable him to escape from it himself, painted in pathetic colours the lives of men who similarly failed. The chief weakness of Gissing as an artist lies perhaps in this lack of imaginative insight. He seems to have been unable to perceive that his pathetic literary strugglers had only to pull themselves together, and to get on to their hind legs without appealing to fate to come along and help them, in order to be free. If a man is free within himself, he can laugh at the superficial servitude imposed upon him by economic circumstances. But Gissing's people are chained far more by their own idiotic sense of possession (the "little home", the "few choice books"), and by their Victorian respectability, than they are by their poverty. This patent fact never seems to have occurred to Gissing himself, with the result that when he ceases merely to record, and throws the high lights of heroism on to his character's worst faults, he becomes a source of moral infection. A *cordon sanitaire* should be drawn round the admirers of Gissing's heroes. Such people arc a danger to the community. To be a Gissing type is to be a plague-carrier; to admire one is, perhaps, almost as bad.

From the point of view of literary style, Gissing's writing has always seemed to me atrocious—as objectionable as the people and die life which he describes. His style is pretentious, pompous and illiterate. He rejoices in circumlocution, in the use of big, shoddy words where simple ones are ready to his pen. I remember a horrible passage in one of his lesser novels which describes a man going into his bedroom to change for dinner, in these terms: "He withdrew into his bed-chamber for the purpose of attiring himself in the habiliments proper for the evening." When he came out again, one gathers that he was "attired" in "faultless evening dress". Perhaps the real pathos of Gissing's life is to be found in that word "habiliments"; but how is the precise flavour of it to be put into words? To say merely that his writing shows an ambition to be "genteel" implies a covert sneer which

Gissing does not deserve. Perhaps he was in some ways quite a simple man. But he overrated certain things—"education" among them. No doubt in his passion for education (he was a precocious schoolboy) he became deeply learned, far more learned than many who have enjoyed greater advantages. (He says somewhere, "I had in me the making of a scholar. With leisure and tranquillity of mind, I should have amassed learning. Within the walls of a college I should have lived so happily, so harmlessly, my imagination ever busy with the old world . . .") Yet he seems to have valued mere learning for its own sake in a way impossible to any truly educated man. Perhaps the chief thing which "education" can do for the individual is to give him such a healthy contempt for learning as an end that he is free to use it as a means. The really educated man can treat learning as a servant to the understanding, instead of valuing it, as Gissing did, for its own sake. Another thing which Gissing similarly overrated was "social position". His writings reveal the lamentable fact that almost the only kind of Englishmen who can really despise class distinctions and get free from them are those whose social degree is marked in plain figures. Pathetically, over and over again, Gissing "loves a real gentleman".

His point of view towards learning, the learning derived from books, is disclosed in his most popular work, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, a volume which, for reasons which baffle me, is still beloved by an enormous number of readers. Here we see the poor, middle-aged student, spending the evening of his days in retirement, poring over his books, working in his garden, culling beautiful thoughts from the classics. What a charming picture! How perfectly sweet! Could Marcus Stone himself improve upon it? To me this book has a reek of corruption and decay; it smells fouler than a rotting corpse. Faugh! Better the twilight of the drunkard and the debauchee than this sentimental death-in-life. The spectacle conjured up of Henry Ryecroft in his library makes me want to throw open every door and window in the house. Perhaps the reason is that though I love the *contents* of good books, I am not a "bibliophile", and I detest libraries.

To my mind a book which is a real book should send the reader back to life refreshed and stimulated, instead of providing him with a dusty funk-hole in which he can shelter from that mental struggle which ought to be perpetual between the cradle and the grave.

I suppose that Gissing's novels have been kept alive by their half-unconscious revelation of the world in which he lived, of the sort of influences which moulded his mind. He knocked the lid off Pandora's box, so that to-day his readers' nostrils are appalled by the mixed odours of Victorian stuffiness which assail them as they turn the pages of his works. But interesting as the revelation is, it does not make Gissing a great novelist. His reputation is largely a factitious reputation, a truth which Mr. Frank Swinnerton himself, in his admirably impartial critical study of the author, is forced to allow his readers to infer.

4

Clever Novels

DURING the period when our intellectuals were suffering from their first attack of Freud-fever, I remember attending a lion party which had been convoked by a lady from Girton. Several schoolmarms of the most advanced type formed the audience, and the principal lion was an Irish novelist and poet—one of the wittiest and most fluent talkers I have ever met. The conversation was directed ruthlessly towards psycho-analysis by one of the schoolmarms who, dressed in beads and djibbah, sat on a cushion on the floor and gazed at the poet with eyes full of yearning. The Irishman was fully equal to the occasion. He seized the ball of conversation, threw it into the air, caught it, played with it. He held everyone's attention, and negotiated every awkward comer with an ease which simply took one's breath away. The yearner, I could see, was struggling to memorise each word. . . . After a while, giving the audience a chance to prattle and himself to get his breath, he turned to me with a broad grin and whispered, "My God, what in Hell's name is psycho-analysis?" Another instant and he was back again, and roared steadily for the rest of the evening. The schoolmarms were enchanted!

I was reminded of that intense lady dressed in her djibbah and adorned by "peasant art" when I read Miss Clemencc Dane's *Legend.* The group of female writers to whom (with admirable skill) Miss Dane introduces us all exhale a curious aroma of the girls' high school. They yearn; they take "their art" with extreme seriousness; they talk about it and about one another with a breathless sense of their own importance. But for the lady in the djibbah I should have considered them as hopelessly

incredible; now I am impelled to believe that Miss Dane is writing from a wealth of experience which I do not envy her.

During the past twelve years, in one way or another, I suppose I have seen something of as many different sets and circles in literary London as most writers. I have been to imiumerable Evenings, even to some given by distinguished lady novelists. But, dull as they were, none of them, thank Heaven, remotely resembled the Evening described by Miss Dane. The parties given by the most distinguished woman writer of my acquaintance were quite aggressively unliterary. Butterflies from Mayfair (or perhaps from Bayswater) made up the bulk of the guests, though there was, of course, a fringe of distinguished dull dogs who wrote books. Mr. H. G. Wells was always "coming on later", and, rather sympathetically, never came. We ate at the appointed time, drank, smoked and gossiped; and it wasn't, as far as I can recall, "literary" gossip cither. If we indulged in any mutual admiration, we certainly didn't display it; and even if Mr. H. G. Wells *had* arrived I don't suppose anyone in the room would have moved an eyelid. (The party I am thinking of glittered as regards "names": apart from the butterflies, I think I was the most unknown person present.) In the lower literary altitudes, particularly those frequented by the kind of person whom Miss Dane has thus deliriously described—"He sat on the floor, and he called you 'dear lady', and sometimes he would take hold of your watchchain and finger it as he talked to you. But he was awfully clever, I believe. He wrote reviews and very difficult poetry that didn't rhyme"—I have always found the conversation much more professional. Writers whose chief occupation is reviewing, as Miss Dane suggests, often put on conversational airs impossible to a Thomas Hardy, a Walter de la Mare, or a D. H. Lawrence, and usually succeed in pulverising the poor devils who drain their heart's blood to provide them with their raw material. And they use incredibly long words! But even in these circles I have never met with anything approaching the curious group feeling which Miss Dane describes, with anything like the rapturous self-absorption of her characters. I never found a party of men and women who talked shop "until

dawn"; I never knew an author who "wrote all night", though I have known many who (with more sense) danced all night whenever the opportunity presented itself And I never heard of any woman writer who, dying at twenty-six, was considered worthy—by a publisher—of a long and detailed biography, however ably done. In this part of Miss Dane's story, and it is one of the principal points in her plot, I find it hard to believe. Her people, however, I take on trust. The sexual inhibitions common to over-educated Englishwomen lead to the queerest results, to the strangest warping of character and mind. Miss Dane has studied the outer manifestations of this branch of feminine psychology so carefully that she makes her characters live, and even succeeds in making them interesting, though the interest is to a large extent pathological. But to have made a book about "literary people" interesting at all is in itself a remarkable achievement. She has done it by analysing the spites, the secret vanities and hungers in warped female hearts, and her method is perhaps the best there is for portraying an author as a human being. A writer is never so much a man and a brother (or a woman and a sister) as when he (or she) is behaving like a toad. His spites are usually concealed; his other emotions displayed and exploited. The inexorable impulse of production forces him to turn them into "copy", and thus, in a sense, to deflower his own personality. It is this fact which renders all the more deplorable the rage now prevailing among writers of clever novels for filling their canvases with life-size portraits of clever novelists. For clever novelists, in the flesh, are as a rule more depressing even than their works. These unfortunates, when seen herded together in a London club, or collected in a London drawing-room, always remind me of sufferers from some incurable malady. Something—their load of culture, perhaps—seems to oppress them and imprison them; they resemble fish struggling helplessly in a net from which there is no hope of their ever being able to extricate themselves. They cannot—or so it appears—escape from the society of their own kind. They are imprisoned in their particular literary clique, and the result of this imprisonment is disastrous. In a really smart highbrow

novel, for example in the later books of Gilbert Cannan, Mr. J. Middleton Murry's *Still Life* and Miss Romer Wilson's *If All These Young Men,* we meet over and over again members of the same dreary set viewed from different standpoints and described by talents of varying efficiency. The bloom, alas, has been rubbed off these characters, in the same way that it has been rubbed off the picture-postcard belle, after her thousandth appearance in *The Tatler;* and one realises that the "art" person can be very nearly as tiresome as "art" furniture or an "art" cottage. When I try to read novels like Mr. Murry's *Still Life,* I like to remember King George II, that lovable character who didn't like "boetry" and didn't like "bainting" and had no hesitation in saying so. Mr. Murry deploys his culture rather aggressively. You guess he has "swotted up literature"; and even on page one you divine that laboured last word on Dostoieffsky. His heavy load of reading gives his work a portentousness which (for me, at any rate) renders it almost unreadable; so that I never persevered to the end with *Still Life* or discovered what eventually happened to his familiar characters—characters who, in one disguise or another, make up the bourgeois literary world as we all, alas, know it.

Miss Romer Wilson has more imagination than Mr. Murry and a more vigorous talent. She started admirably with her *Martin Schuler,* poked her head for a moment out of the soup tureen, saw a live human being and described him. But having thus written one brilliant book, the admiration of her fellow-intellectuals appears to have been too much for her. They seem to have dragged her down from her point of vantage, with the result that in her second novel she has done little but report their conversations. She has done it with a certain acidity, a sympathetic dreariness. The conversations are perhaps new to her; but at least she is quick enough to divine that to some of her readers they may be as stale as last week's newspapers. So she has tried to give them a new turn, to dish them up in a new way. But it is no use: it is the same cold mutton. Every nook and corner of the minds of her clever friends have long ago been explored and their contents exploited by their clever enemies.

But there is hope for Miss Wilson for traces of her disgust are noticeable on every page of *If All These Young Men.* She will escape yet into the open, and find queer people who (though, perhaps, they drop their aitches) are too big for patronage and too acrid to serve up as "perfect dears".

Mr. Caiman, alas, seems now permanently to have ensconced himself in the deepest armchair in that curious cock-and-hen club which to-day takes the place of "Bohemia". Nowadays when he publishes a new novel one knows in advance that "everyone" will be in it: and everyone always is. The few additions from the outer world, in his recent photograph albums, have been some earnest Jews and a curiously unconvincing prostitute. Clever as he is, he does not seem to realise that for people of normal intelligence the prostitute is absolutely the dullest type of human being on which a novelist can use his talent. From the romantic standpoint, the prostitute has been found out. She is utterly *passee de mode.* The details of her career should be set out in Blue Books for the edification of sociologists. Even the realist has no excuse for not avoiding her: she is not real. The same objection—that they arc not real people—applies to what used to be known, in far-off days, as the "smart set". These sub-human types come in still for an enormous amount of attention from clever novelists with anaemic imaginations. A recent example is to be found in a novel called *Richard Kurt* by Stephen Hudson, which describes in agonising detail the lecheries of a set of futile cads of both sexes, in whose doings no sane person could be interested.

Perhaps it is the chief defect of the clever novelists that they cannot appreciate personality, will not look for it under the masks which nowadays are worn in the same way that the animals put on protective colouring. Up till the middle of the last century personality was marked in plain enough figures. Idiosyncrasy was carried to extremes, human beings blossomed as extravagantly as flowers in a favourable soil, and the flavour of these rich personalities could be conveyed to paper by writers who were not necessarily men of genius. How much more vivid, and, from the point of view of psychology, how much more

enthralling is many a volume of eighteenth-century memoirs than the average clever novel of to-day! In an age when nearly everybody wears the same kind of hat, and lives in fear of his neighbours, exceptional human beings require discovery. They must be sought for; the masks must be torn from their faces; the varnish must be scratched away. But if we dig down deep enough we can find the same degree of human interest in our contemporaries as in their predecessors. Marat, Gilles de Retz, Casanova, Benvenuto, Jeanne d'Arc, Robespierre, Elizabeth Chudleigh are all present with us could we but recognise them when we meet them in the Tube. The romantic creations of a Gautier or a Merimee are far truer to life—to life that *is* life—than all the clever little people in the clever books of Mr. Murry, Miss Wilson and their competitors. The most fantastic conceptions of the romantics come closer to essential truth than do the photographs taken by so many of our modern novelists of persons who, though possessed of speech, and dressed like men and women, are little more than human automata. Things have come to such a pass that if any of the characters who have left their mark on the history of the world were to be accurately portrayed in a novel, the book would be damned by the critics on the score of its grotesque improbability. And if any of the figures who are leaving their mark on the world in the present year of grace were to be described in their habits as they live, with the thoughts they actually think attributed to them, the author would almost certainly be put in gaol.

It is precisely in their courage and originality in the choice of material for their stories, and in the wide range of their imagination, that genius and commercial success meet on common ground. The "clever novel" gets the long notices in the weekly reviews; but Miss Marie Corelli, Mr. Robert Hichens, and Miss Ethel M. Dell rake in the shekels. It is only when a clever novelist escapes from the influence of whatever coterie he graces, that he begins to make money. Mr. Alec Waugh's schoolboys arc fresh ground, and so also are Mr. Evans's Welsh peasants and Mr. Thomas Burke's denizens of China Town—hence their popularity. Mr. W. L. George is another successful writer who has kept free

from the coteries. By his passionate interest in the political and social ideas which are absorbing the attention of his fellow-men, he has shown that a novelist may also be a good citizen and play a valuable part in the life of the community. Miss Rebecca West has most of the clever novelist's defects; but she, too, has looked out of the club windows. In *The Return of the Soldier* she has written a readable story, because she has managed to escape the snare of writing about writers and the people whom writers know. She got away from the "set and clique" atmosphere and gave her imagination its chance.

Perhaps the secret of the whole business is *colour*. The "clever" writers are afraid of colour. Genius is never afraid of it. And the people whose business it is to cater for the crowd have at all events the horse sense to pile it on for all they are worth.

1920.

5

The Blood Combine

WE HAVE heard a great deal, since the War, about the "new spirit" which is said to be animating the world's youth, and optimists from every country—turning their backs upon their own despairs—are eagerly crossing seas and frontiers in search of it. Some of them even come to London; and as usual we English can deliver the goods. There certainly is a new spirit abroad among our poets and men of letters. The air is thick with it. It is inescapable. To the earnest and cultured visitor who wishes to understand it in all its complex beauty, I cannot do better than recommend a study of the career and character of Mr. Mortimer Blood. For Blood, perhaps in a greater degree than any of his contemporaries, is the embodiment of "the new spirit", in post-war England. You may, of course, think it rather a commercial spirit, but if you do, you must remember the age in which we live. Have we not just fought a gigantic war for ideals, and have not most of our ideals been blown to atoms in the course of it? On the whole, we should be thankful that things are no worse and that our predominant literary figure should be as efficient, as respectable, as he undoubtedly is.

It is not necessary to describe Blood's early life in great detail. We can imagine him at his public school, at his University. We can see the proud father paying the bills which shall cleanse his son of all connection with trade; we can hear the paternal injunction to the youthful Mortimer to take care to make friends "who will be useful to you in after life". His school and his University endow him with culture; and contact with boys whose inherited ideas are slightly different from his own enable

him (for he is intelligent) to realise the value of things which men of the cruder commercial type dismiss as "nonsense". He tastes the delights of scholarship and the pleasures of aesthetic appreciation. He realises what is the attitude of the "best people" towards art, perceives that—socially—there's something in it. He himself has a liking for literature and a faculty for expression. He decides to write.

And so, his education completed, Mortimer Blood advances to the conquest of London with the addresses of innumerable "useful" acquaintances in his pocket-book. His talents are as polished and overbearing as his manner. He is determined to get on, to move from one set to another until he is indubitably, unassailably in the "best set" of the particular world which he has made it his business to conquer—the world of letters. Criticism at once attracts him. He perceives that if it is carried on in the serious weekly journal to which his social struggling has afforded him the entrce, it will give him, if not power, at least the sense of power. He begins, then, as a reviewer. His words are read by his own circle, admired, perhaps feared. "Did you see how Mortimer Blood cut Stiggins to pieces in *The Watchword?*" "Blood has taken up Amelia Jones. She's all the rage now", and so forth. All this pleases him. But Blood's commercial instinct shows him quite clearly that to make a solid success as a critic he must write a weighty revaluation of some acknowledged classic. He must find something new and startling to say about Shakespeare or Turgenev, or Balzac or Baudelaire or Shelley or Swinburne or—anyone you please. In addition to this, he must become a specialist, an "authority". The private lives of Pye, Modderwell, Robert Montgomery, Kirke White, or their sixteenth- or seventeenth-century equivalents, can be usefully explored. One of these forgotten drivellers (whom the Bloods will never allow to rest *in* peace) must be discovered to have been "unjustly neglected". And so Blood starts, let us say, a Modderwell cult. Of course he is not so foolish but that he knows how to preface his essay with some such remark as this: "We are not of those who fancy that the mere fact that a poet flourished in the eighteenth (or seventeenth or sixteenth) century endows his

work with merit or renders it worth reading in the age in which we live." All the same,* though the other drivellers may be allowed to be drivellers, this particular driveller (Blood's own find) is worth another run. A heavy and respectable publisher brings out an annotated edition of the resuscitated poet. Blood's introduction, an amplification of his newspaper article, appears in big print. All Blood's friends write columns about it in the Press. They display still more learning. They pay grateful tributes to Blood's learning.

This little adventure in biographical research helps to put Blood "on the map". The great Mr. Parkhurst Moss becomes aware of him. Blood goes to tea with the great man at the Athenaeum Club. Their liking for one another is immediate. Each recognises a kindred spirit. Blood perceives in Moss the greatness of his own type and the potential greatness of himself. Moss prophesies that Blood will go far.

When the War comes Blood is, alas, incapacitated from throwing himself into the breach. Writer's cramp has him in its grip, and fingers which can no longer hold the fountain-pen could hardly be expected to grasp the rifle with effect. Doctor after doctor assures him of it. A secondary reason for his exemption is his value to the allied cause in a "literary capacity". For Blood, like Moss—whose sonorous appeal to our youth to be worthy of England's greatness was read aloud after evening chapel in a dozen of our leading public schools—is *bien-pensant.* But if he is now a victim of writer's cramp, it so happens that his income has at this moment reached the point when he can employ a highly efficient secretary. The war depletes the ranks of London's literary journalists. Culture is imperilled. The home fires of the aesthetic ideal begin to die down. Who is there to step forward, to keep things going? Why, Blood—and his stenographer.

And so this devoted man, under the disguise of "Wat Tyler", "Masterman Ready", "Sylvanus", B.M., and M.B., saves our island culture. Like the gentleman in the receiving office at the British Museum, every printed book is brought before him and by the vehicle of a dozen of our greatest newspapers his blame

and praise, his judgments and his denunciations are dinned into the ears of his million readers. No editor can do without Blood now. Even proprietors take luncheon with him. Those who have fashionable wives and houses in Rutland Gate invite him to their subdued wartime dinner parties.

The poetic talent which Blood has long developed almost in secret, a talent hitherto recognised only by the inner circle of his own soul-mates, is now suddenly appreciated by the world at large. His little sheaf of early verses becomes, in a day, a rarity for which Charing Cross Road will pay the highest prices. Would Blood be human if he withheld from mankind that for which it has shown so flattering a desire? Blood, as a poet, is prolific. A strain of lofty patriotism inspires his dignified numbers. Based, as they are, on a profound study of our classic English poetry, Blood's verses bear all over them the hall-mark of true greatness.

But rivals appear. And what rivals! Glorious youths fresh from the blood-stained battlefield, with the glow of martial ardour tingling in their veins and Old Etonian neckties adorning their ncwly-donncd civvies! Not rivals, no, these dear, these noble young fellows, but warm-hearted associates. Blood "gets in touch". His beloved and revered friend Mr. Moss would like to meet them *so* much. A little luncheon, now, at the Athenaeum? "Let me arrange it. Moss, I assure you, will be honoured." The flame-haired warriors, more skilled like the outmoded hero of those adventure stories which amused our youth, to wield the sword than hold the pen, are honoured too. Moss! Phew! Their stuff must be pretty good for Moss to want to meet them. Moss, all smiles, assures them it is *great.* They have their good time and they deserve it. When London tires of feting them, the great kindly 100 per cent American bosom receives them and fetes them with renewed vigour. And when they've used up their material and have no more war poems in their heads, home they come to the genial society of Mortimer Blood and his august patron, Mr. Parkhurst Moss.

Blood stock by this time has risen many points. No longer is it necessary for him to fill a score of jobs in his own indefatigable person. He has jobs to give away. One mighty organ he edits,

two long-established publishing houses look to him for their marching orders, over the literary columns of several weekly reviews and daily newspapers has he cast his rain coat. And so the poets, after their joy ride, sink comfortably into their allotted office chairs—Blood's lieutenants in the great campaign for encouraging sound literature with a high moral tone. They take their cue from their benefactor. After all, the average decent dog licks instead of bites the hand that feeds it. At the word of command all the stuff that isn't "quite nice" in tone, that is tainted with revolution and "disloyalty" (to the possessing classes), that is "eccentric" or by a man whom "nobody in our set knows", or by someone who sneers at Mortimer Blood, is sold, without comment, to the second-hand bookseller, while those who arc in the white book of the patronage department profit by the extra space. And, of course, the poets can review one another to their heart's content. And they can review Mr. Blood. (Can't they, just!) Nor does it stop there. The American trips have enabled them to establish personal and amicable relations with our cousins on the other side. How can the intellectuals of the Great Republic continue to breathe without knowing of the virtues of Mr. Blood? And when the articles on Mr. Blood, by his staff, have been printed in New York, Mr. Blood himself, no less, takes up his pen to explain to the United States the genius of his dear young friends.

It must not be supposed that the Blood Combine is a commercial undertaking which is not based on sure foundations. On the contrary, it is built to endure. The lively youth (of good family of course: the tone must not be lowered) who shows promise at his public school or at his University is always well received at the Blood Employment Bureau. The dear young fellow is taken *on* and shown the ropes. *The Scarlet Radical,* for example, which has the proper respect for its betters always shown by British Labour (which now, as ever, is sound at heart), will—at a hint from headquarters—try him on its reviewing staff. The lesser novelists will be given him to start on. The tyro visits the young poet who smokes his cigarette among the review copies at the office of *The Scarlet Radical,* and has

a delightful reception. The poet expands, throws him a dozen volumes. "All these are tripe, I expect," he says, in his genial way. "You ought to be able to get some fun out of them. Give 'em two hundred words each and make it amusing." A week later the British workman sees a column of undergraduate humour over the fledgling's name. Of course, he doesn't read it. But the staff of the Combine read it. And if they like it, promotion follows. The youth is allowed to write a whole half column about, for example, Samuel Butler. It is a serious, wordy half-column. No jokes here. Ssh! His feet are now upon the ladder. Thus are Bloods propagated, and thus, while the system lasts the great traditions of English literature will never be endangered.

1922.

APPRAISEMENT

The Gentleman Tradition in England

I

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SHORTLY before September 3, 1939, Lord Lloyd's "British Council" conceived the idea of trying to impress the Greeks with the virtues of British democracy by subsidising Professor Katzansakis of Athens—at the modest rate of £5 a week—to write a book on *The Gentleman Tradition in England.* I have often wondered how the Professor got on, whether the work was completed and if it has now been published in Athens with the approval of Mr. Tsaldaris and General Napoleon Zervas and a suitable dedication to Sir Reginald Leeper or Mr. Ernest Bevin.

The subject is so bristling with embarrassments and complications that few Englishmen could enlarge upon it with any feeling of confidence. For a foreigner, so entangled has it become with snobbery, social pretensions, questions of "good form", manners and deportment, the difficulties of analysing his theme to its essentials must have seemed well-nigh insuperable. "What exactly do the English people mean by a gentleman?" is a query with which, in accordance with the well-known formula of Dr. Toad, any investigation must begin. This at once (at least, for Englishmen) leads to the conclusion that our ideal national type cannot be explained with any exactness, by any of us, and that all attempts at a definition of the indefinable must be regarded as personal interpretations which others might qualify, or even totally reject, with equal authority.

Having made this admission, I feel free to dogmatise to my heart's content, but the reader must understand that I do so more in the hope, *currente calamo,* of clearing up my own ideas than

with any illusion that what I say may prove to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Let me begin by remarking that it seems to me beyond the possibility of dispute that to the English subconscious mind the word "gentleman" has two distinct meanings. The first merely indicates social status, the second and more important—because distinctively English—implies that the person referred to as a "gentleman" adheres to a recognised code of manners and morals and exemplifies in his character a number of qualities which the English race particularly admires. Anybody of any nation may be a "gentleman" in the social sense, provided he belongs by birth to the privileged classes, has made his way into them by the accumulation of wealth, follows one of the learned professions or holds a commission in any of the Services. On the other hand, in England, only a man who approximates to our ideal national type and possesses the quality which schoolboys call "decency" can expect to be regarded as a "gentleman" in the ethical sense. It thus remains fundamentally true that in England "there are gentlemen of every class, including even the aristocracy". Our "gentleman tradition" has no real value, either for ourselves or for the rest of the world, unless it is recognised as the tradition of producing in large numbers and in every rank of life men of good-feeling and civilised instincts who believe in justice and liberty and whose word may be relied on. No sooner has this generalisation been made than we are confronted with the figure of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, to whom in large measure we owe it. Arnold had no idea of tampering with the class structure of Victorian England; he was not a revolutionary or a political reformer. Where his originality came in was in combining the two attributes of social status and Christian character and presenting them to his contemporaries as indivisible. He invented a "type of boy", and it was his self-imposed task, and that of the other headmasters who were inspired by his conception, to turn out this type in ever-increasing numbers. As Lytton Strachey puts it, "by introducing morals and religion into his scheme of education he altered the whole atmosphere of public school life". The Victorian "English gentleman", who

was the possessor of an old school tie was, like his creator, essentially a product of the middle-classes and embodied many of their solid English virtues. Arnold's association of the normal middle-class ambition to achieve the status of gentility with Christian ideals of conduct met with marked success, not only at Rugby but in all the smaller public schools conducted on the Rugby model. "Gentleman is as gentleman does" soon came to be one of the most widespread of popular aphorisms and the belief which Arnold inculcated that the possession of property was not enough, in itself, to make a man a gentleman and that social prestige can only be justified by the acceptance of implicit obligations of public service and a high standard of personal honour, found general approval. Arnold's ideas were attractively publicised by one of his pupils and disciples, Thomas Hughes, whose story, *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* had an enormous circulation and a corresponding influence on Victorian thought. Tom Brown, with his muscular Christianity, courage, honesty, manliness, loyalty and patriotism embodied and codified the middle-class conception of Tennyson's "ideal knight". As old Squire Brown meditated, when sending Tom off to Rugby: "What is he sent to school for? . . . If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman and a Christian, that's all I want."

The defect which, in course of time, showed itself in the Arnold system, was its insistence upon turning out a "type of boy". Boys who were individuals, not mediocrities, were apt to be either crushed by the machine or painfully ejected from it. On this account the old "governing class" boarding schools, such as Eton and Harrow, whose pupils were predominantly of patrician birth and did not require to be "moulded", had great advantages and acquired a prestige which they still retain. Although an oligarchy, Eton has always been in certain respects more democratic than the smaller public schools, has allowed more scope for the individual to develop character and personality. As a school for leadership, designed for future holders of high office, it has resisted the Arnold tradition and retained that of an aristocracy uninhibited by ethical restrictions or

middle-class morality. In our researches for the ideal "national type", therefore, we shall not find Eton a fruitful field for investigation. On the other hand, among the serried ranks of pro-consuls, politicians, ambassadors, generals, bishops and other important persons who have emerged from Eton during the past century or more we shall find a larger number of poets, novelists, painters and musicians than was produced by all the other public schools put together. A search through the "Alumni" of a school founded in 1564 and re-modelled as a public school by the Charity Commissioners in the middle of the nineteenth century reveals not a single creative writer, artist or musician. Three historians and a sporting journalist are the only wielders of the pen whose names are recorded in the list. The reason for this is that the artist is an individual and, except in rare cases of arrested development, is never "a sound type of boy" of the kind which schoolmasters encourage. In saying this, I intend no disparagement either of the artist or of the "Christian gentleman" who for several decades exerted so admirable an influence on our national life. It was a great thing for England that it should have possessed an elite, formed from its bourgeoisie, which at least aimed at possessing the qualities enumerated in Kipling's "If" and, by and large, succeeded in being modest, kindly, incorruptible, healthy in mind and body, patriotic, loyally devoted to the service of the State and more proficient in such universally popular games as cricket and football than in the traditional blood sports of the landed aristocracy. The new model gentleman, moreover, gained the respect of the masses of the people. Popular magazines plugged the Tom Brown theme for over half a century and errand boys came to regard him not with resentment as a social superior but as something which they themselves might become—"a gentleman in the true sense of the word".

The seeds of decay in Arnold's structure, a decay which first became apparent at the time of the Boer War, were unfortunately present from the outset although they did not germinate until after his death. In the first place the two different kinds of material he had to work on, which Matthew Arnold labelled

"Barbarians" and "Philistines", proved ultimately unreconcilable owing to the dissimilarity of their family traditions. The "Barbarians" were the sons of the squires and titled families who had owned property if not for centuries at least for several generations, many of whom regarded the Army as their natural career. These constituted Arnold's hardest problem. The task of moulding these often arrogant young patricians, with their inherited predilection for hunting and shooting, bullying inferiors, gambling and fornicating into "ideal knights" on the Tennysonian model, was no easy one though it is surprising how well, on the whole, he accomplished it. With the "Philistines", sons of men newly enriched by the industrial revolution—the profiteers of their period—he had less difficulty. The great human reservoir from which these boys had emerged comprised the solid body of industrious yeoman farmers, craftsmen, artisans and shopkeepers which, in spite of the acquisitiveness of those who had amassed wealth, was fundamentally religious, god-fearing, and reliable. It had every right to regard itself as the "backbone of the country" because, in the course of centuries devoted to commerce, husbandry and the arts of peace, it had produced England's greatest achievements and thrown up a disproportionate number of its greatest men. It had built the cathedrals and parish churches, translated the Bible, developed and defended our Parliamentary system, colonised America, given us an incomparable domestic architecture and enriched literature and art with a thousand glorious names ranging from Shakespeare to Charles Dickens. Their forefathers had resisted the power of the great religious houses in pre-Reformation days, rebelled against enclosures under Robert Kett, fought the Cavaliers under Cromwell and made possible, by their stubborn courage, the victories of our admirals and generals. When Arnold began his work of creating from such robust material his new model gentry, their families had not enjoyed their wealth long enough to be corrupted by it. The stock was sound and all he had to do was to intimate to his young "Philistines" that in order to qualify for their new rank they must conform to the standards of moral conduct in which most of them had been nurtured

and observe the code of Christian behaviour which he laid down for them. In process of time two things occurred. First the "Barbarians" began to impose on Arnold's Christianity a cult of "good form" which had certain snobbish implications, and secondly the "public school type" became politically standardised. A large proportion of the "Philistines" came from families with a strong Nonconformist background and a tendency to Liberal or even Radical opinions. All this was ironed out by the process of developing a "type of boy". The public schoolboy, formed on the Tom Brown model, believed with religious fervour in the Crown, the Church and the Party. The Conservative Party was the "gentleman's party" because it was "patriotic". It stood for Queen, Country, Empire and Established Church; so there was nothing to bother about. The question was settled. There was room neither for political nor religious doubts. The schoolboy's mind on these subjects was closed. Like Hitler's youth in a later age, he took his orders from the "high-ups" and accepted their directives without a murmur. Obedience to superiors was engrained and "good form" made discussion "not done". Three generations of public school education on the lines originated by Arnold provided England with a very large upper-middle class from which the clergy, the learned professions, officers of the Army, Navy and the higher grade of civil servants at home and throughout the Empire were almost exclusively recruited. So long as the real rulers of the country remained reasonably efficient, patriotic and gentlemanlike, the existence of this class contributed much to our national unity and strength. Their discipline and solidarity were indestructible and any deviation from the views expressed in *The Times,* the *Morning Post,* the *Standard* and other Conservative newspapers was punished by social ostracism. Even in my own schooldays, the first few years of this century, the presence of a Liberal in our midst would have seemed astonishing. My House Master, whom I now suspect of not having been "true blue", was careful to explain the fact that he took in the *Daily Chronicle* on the ground that it had the best book reviews. Apart from politics, however, fifty years ago, the "old school tie" was still

sentimentally regarded as a badge of personal integrity, as evidence of adherence to a certain code of "decency". No "gentleman" ever referred to himself as such for much the same reason that no one, however pious, would think of referring to himself as saintly. The gentleman's aim was so to behave himself that all who came in contact with him would, on their own volition, bestow upon him the coveted title. Cabbies and others understood this foible of their betters and in gratitude for a substantial tip would say: "Thank you, sir. I could see you was a real gentleman." To sum up, the Victorian gentry served their Queen and country with loyalty, devotion and scrupulous honesty. They might be fooled: they could not be bribed. They despised money-grubbing, profoundly disliked and distrusted the Arts, were snobbishly contemptuous of retail trade—regarding anyone who engaged in it, however profitably, as being socially beyond the pale—were modest, considerate to servants and inferiors and if unduly conscious of their social standing recognised that it carried with it definite obligations.

The first serious cracks in Arnold's standardisation of an ideal national type occurred when the renegade Liberal, Joseph Chamberlain, the "first gentleman of Birmingham", thrust his adventurous nose into the Tory strongholds and secured "Barbarian" support. By that time the "Philistines" were so conditioned by Barbarian ideas of "good form", so unable to think for themselves politically, so incapable of judging national events in accordance with their love of liberty and justice and their natural sense of decency that they were swept *on* with the tide. Sons of prominent pro-Boers, like the painter C. R. W. Nevinson, whose father, Henry W. Nevinson, was the very incarnation of "the gentleman tradition in England", were mercilessly ragged at public schools if they were suspected of sharing their parents' views.

To enumerate the disasters to his country brought about by Joseph Chamberlain would be outside the scope of this enquiry. It is sufficient to mention that his wrecking of the Irish Home Rule Bill of 1886 laid up endless trouble for future generations besides helping to produce the situation which encouraged the

Kaiser to make war in 1914, while his dubious dealings with Rhodes, Jameson and other South African millionaires and Empire-builders made him morally responsible for the war against the Boer Republics. This inglorious episode in our history, which embittered the last years of Queen Victoria, had the minor effect of undermining the moral basis on which the prestige of the "gentleman" with the masses of the people had rested. Emotionally influenced by the embryonic fascism of Rudyard Kipling, misled by the Tory press, swayed by instinctive loyalty to "Queen and Country" and unable to differentiate their country's interests from those of avaricious Rand Jews, financial crooks and aristocratic imperialists, most of the upper-middle class quickly became infected with war hysteria. Among the gentry, the "pro-Boers" like Henry Nevinson and H. W. Massingham, who alone remained faithful to the code, were a reviled and persecuted minority. The conduct of military operations was exclusively in the hands of the "Barbarians"—the military caste—and scandal after scandal revolted genuine patriots and horrified Englishmen of decent instincts. Swarms of Society women descended on Cape Town and cases labelled as containing surgical dressings and other medical supplies intended for the wounded were found on arrival to contain champagne for their delectation. The orgy of caddishness, incompetence and corruption was only brought to an end when the Liberals asserted themselves and made a statesmanlike peace of reconciliation. Public opinion, soundly based on the good feeling and right instincts of the people, thus prevailed over the aggressive imperialism of the ruling class, slavishly supported by the conditioned products of the public schools. On the whole England's Christian gentlemen did not come very well out of this testing experience although, a decade later, the last generation of them were destined to justify themselves by a final glorious and heroic sacrifice. When England went to war in 1914, to rescue "Brave little Belgium", her public schoolboys rushed to the colours in an ecstasy of unselfish idealism which brought out their finest qualities. While the military caste, the commercial plutocracy and the bureaucrats coolly made their plans

for doing well out of the national emergency, the successors of Tom Brown thronged the recruiting stations without waiting for commissions.

It is the fashion nowadays to deride Rupert Brooke as a sentimentalist, a "dated" poet. His surviving contemporaries who remember how they felt before the vision faded and the sublime illusion was finally dispelled in shame and misery, will not think of him like this. His poems are the swan-songs of a race of middle-class Englishmen, who, no doubt, had their faults and limitations, but who were not mean, not self-seeking careerists, not vulgar publicity-hunters. These upholders of the "gentleman tradition" rarely rose to high commands, for they did not belong to the military caste and had no aunts in the peerage, nor did they come from families engaged in trade which carried on "business as usual". They were sons of country parsons and doctors, schoolmasters, college dons, lawyers and civil servants. In the holocaust of war, the fine flower of our public-school gentlemen were wiped out, while those who survived were for the most part so impoverished that they could no longer maintain for themselves and their children the modest standard of living to which they had been born. After the war, the "Tom Browns" dwindled to a small minority in the schools whose prestige they had created. Sons of "old school tic" heroes had to be sent to secondary schools—much to the advantage of all concerned, as we now realise. This social change meant the beginning of the end of "class education", and a definite step towards the ideal of a classless society.

Their places at the public schools—much to the alarm of the masters—were taken by what was bitterly described as "a wholly new type of boy". These were the sons of the "hard-faced men" who had done well out of the war by holding their country up to ransom during the years of peril. Such boys could hardly be expected to place conceptions of personal honour before self-interest. Not for them the contempt for mere wealth and "cash values", the obligations of service, or the rough and ready Christianity of their predecessors. In the homes from which they came, money was the one true god and

imitation of the surface manners of those who had possessed great wealth for a generation or two, and become ennobled in consequence, was their idea of learning to be "gentlemen". Their highest ambition was to get into the "Tatler" set, and they suited their politics to fit the views of the plutocratic riff-raff who dominated it.

Since the close of World War One, the once popular view that the social status of the gentleman implies, and is inseparable from, the sterling English virtues of modesty, patriotism, justice, generosity and all-round "decency" has been generally discarded. The old ideals of conduct were still cherished, but people soon became aware that they were not the monopoly of any particular class. The old type of public schoolboy had been admired because you could rely on him to behave like a decent chap, particularly to his servants and social inferiors, but the public soon revised their opinions about the aggressive newcomers, recruited from a section of the population which they had every reason to hate and despise. Wars impoverish honest men and only enrich the sharks, the crooks, the bureaucrats and the V.I.P.s. From this popular judgment there is no appeal. Thus the "old school tie" and the "Rocdean accent" became first a music-hall joke and then a cause of active resentment. Public events, such as the General Strike and Non-intervention, during the Armistice years, exacerbated class hostility. A group of social misfits came, moreover, into prominence who, in their various ways, served to emphasise the final divorce of "England's gentleman tradition" from any association with birth or education. Some of them were amusing "degenerate aristocrats" who harmed no one but themselves, but whose preoccupation with sex and gin helped to destroy any case that might be made out for the preservation of parasites. Others again were more actively dangerous because they attracted the floating germs of Fascism and infected those with whom they came in contact. What finally destroyed the normal Englishman's respect for his betters was the solidarity with which the upper classes supported their country's enemies in the Spanish Civil War. The orders given by the Chamberlain Government to our warships in the

Mediterranean, forbidding them to afford assistance to British merchant seamen when their ships were bombed by the Italian and German aviation in the service of Franco outraged everyone who possessed what the Victorians called "the instincts of a gentleman". Lord Cecil resigned the Government Whip in protest, proving thereby once again that "in England there are gentlemen of every class, including even the aristocracy". In his letter of resignation he observed: "It is admitted by the Prime Minister that the attacks were illegal, that in fact the British subjects killed were murdered. Yet the British Prime Minister declined to take any action, economic or military, to protect British lives and property. . . . I do not believe that any other British Prime Minister has ever made a speech like that of Mr. Chamberlain. . . . It seems to me inconsistent with British honour and international morality." Thus spoke one of the last upholders of the Victorian "code". I hope Professor Katzansakis, if by chance he reached the same conclusions as myself, was not deprived of his subsidy by his employers. Neither the British Legation at Athens who selected him for his task, nor the British Council, which fixed his fee, are likely to approve of them. No one in England ever dreams of using the word "gentleman" nowadays and the fact that the British Council fastened on this old-world Victorian theme sheds a strange light on the mentality of the people who, at least in pre-war days, were running it. But perhaps, after all, we should do well not to lose sight of our ideal national type. The Arnoldian effigy has fallen from its pedestal; but ought we not now *to* carve a new one in the image, possibly, of a simple soldier, A.R.P. worker, airman, miner or merchant seaman, and associate him with the qualities which we admired in his predecessor? Our basic belief in human decency, it we maintain it, can alone carry us safely through the vast changes and convulsions which lie ahead of us. In the classless society towards which we are now unmistakably heading, it is the survival of our authentic "gentleman tradition" which will enable us to make England once again a "land of hope and glory". To end these somewhat rambling observations, I can do no better than repeat which I

believe to be true. Our "gentleman tradition has no real value, either for ourselves or for the rest of the world, unless it is recognised as the tradition of producing in large numbers and in every class men of good feeling and civilised instincts who believe in justice and liberty and whose word may be relied on",