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Author Kernahan Coulson

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CELEBRITIES :

Little Stories about Famous Folk

Standing (*second from left*) : Oscar Wilde ; (*fifth*) Sir J. Forbes Robertson.
Seated : Mrs. Jopling Rowe ; George Meredith ; Lady (Walter) Palmer ; H. B. Irving.

[*Frontispiece.*

CELEBRITIES : *Little Stories About Famous Folk* :: :: :: By COULSON KERNAHAN : *Author of "In Good Company," "Visions Old and New," "Captain Shannon," etc.*

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON: HUTCHINSON & CO.
:: PATERNOSTER ROW
1923

THE DEDICATION

BY WAY OF A CHANGE FROM CELEBRITIES
I DEDICATE

These pages to an old, dearly-loved, and never-forgotten friend, a "little story" of whom (as of him I have no conversations to record, from him no letters to print) is told in the following doggerel, which, for want of a better title, I call

"THE BOX WITH NO ADDRESS."

I

WHEN you send your friend a letter,
Or better still, much better,
A present, your good wishes to express,
Send you cash, cigars, or game on,
There's invariably a name on,
And of course—it's most important—an address.

If a horse—'tis in a horse-box
(You will see that it, of course, locks);
If a cycle—you will pack it in a crate;
And, as plain as you are able,
You will write upon the label
The name, address, and, possibly, the date.

But to you, my cultured reader,
As to me, a speed-exceeder
In the writing of unutterable rot,
There will come a day, perhaps distant,
Or near, and more insistent,
When ours will be what's called the "common lot."

They will put *us* in a box, then
(We shan't mind about the locks then),
And some will speak to blame and some to bless ;
When that box away they're sending,
Day of birth and day of ending,
And our names they'll write in full—*but no address.*

Yours, of course, will be " To Heaven,"
But in me, alas ! a leaven
Of the world, the flesh and devil, I must own ;
And I think—in fact I'm certain—
When at last there drops the curtain,
It will be a case of " Gone—address unknown."

II

I'd a Friend in years behind me,
Who never failed to find me ;
He was taken once two hundred miles by train ;
'Twas a road he'd never travelled
(Me 'twould hopelessly have " gravell'd "),
But God guided him, and back he came again.

Dragged back, fainting, broken, beaten
(I doubt if he had eaten),
" What about a lethal chamber ? " said the vet.
But his eyes with love were shining
And his eyes for love were pining,
And his cry when first he saw me haunts me yet.

When, next day, I found him lifeless
(Those were lonely times, and wifeless),
Found him lying by the fireside, where he died—
His shaggy head beside, then,
I laid *my* head and cried, then.
" What, you cried about a dog, Sir ? " Yes, I cried.

III

I have other friends, and newer ;
I shall never have a truer,
And if anything that's mortal can survive,
'Tis such love as that he bore me ;
Though a dog, and gone before me,
I am positive that—*somewhere*—he's alive.

In a box, one day, they'll put me,
Out of sight of sun will shut me,
And some will speak to blame, and some to bless ;
On that box, away when sending,
Day of birth and day of ending,
And my name they'll write in full—*but no address.*

But there's one, I think, will know it
(Will a pitying angel show it ?) ;
And when I stagger, sick and faint and blind,
Up against the Next World's grating,
He'll be watching, he'll be waiting,
For the master whom he loved and left behind.

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CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF, AND SOME STORIES TOLD AT, A LONG-AGO LITERARY DINNER

CELEBRITIES:

Little Stories About Famous Folk

CHAPTER I

How many readers of Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, and of his *Three Men in a Boat* are aware that the first appearance of both these enormously successful works was in serial form, and that, in serial form, they attracted no outside attention?

In Volume I. of the magazine in which they first saw the light, early work by such now famous but then all unknown writers as J. M. Barrie, Eden Phillpotts, and W. H. Hudson appeared. It was edited by F. W. Robinson, then a popular novelist, for his *Grandmother's Money*, *No Church*, *House of Elmore*, and some fifty odd other novels had a great vogue in their day. Some years later he said to me (also one of his contributors), "Yes, I am very proud to think that the whole of Jerome's *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, the whole of his *Three Men in a Boat*, a part of Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* and of his *A Window in Thrums*, and also a portion of your own first book appeared in my magazine, but I don't believe that the whole of you raised the circulation by as much as a number."

"On the contrary, my dear Robinson," I replied, "we killed it." Before the said killing, a dinner was given to Robinson by his old contributors. Theodore Watts, who had not then added Dunton to his name, and so afforded George Meredith occasion to refer to him as "Theodore What's-his-name," wrote an account of it for the *Athenæum*, then the most weighty and

exclusive of literary journals. Norman MacColl, the editor, told me afterwards that he believed that this was the only instance in which a dinner of the sort had been chronicled in his columns.

"Mr. Jerome K. Jerome occupied the chair, and Mr. J. M. Barrie the vice-chair," said the *Athenæum*, "and both made speeches full of wit and humour. A special interest was lent to the occasion by the fact that several writers, some in the land of fame, and some already on its borders, made speeches in which they affirmed that their introduction to literature was in the pages of this unpretentious magazine. The brilliant author of *Auld Licht Idylls* said that when he first set out for London, in search of literary success, London was, in his mind, mainly 'a city in which the office of *Home Chimes* was situated.'" Quite so, but I would add that—handsome tribute to Robinson and his magazine as this saying of Barrie's was—after-dinner speeches, especially after a complimentary dinner, must not be interpreted too literally. Even thus early in the career of J. M. Barrie, the office of *Home Chimes* was, surely, not the only literary Mecca in London to which his eyes were turned. I do not know positively which of the three—F. W. Robinson of *Home Chimes*, Sir William Robertson Nicoll of *The British Weekly*, or Frederick Greenwood of the *St. James's Gazette*—was actually the first to accept work of J. M. Barrie's (Robinson was, I think); but I do know that Barrie once said that the man to whom he owed most was the editor who not only accepted early work, but had the courage to clap work of his between two covers and to accept the responsibility for its issue as a book—and that man was, beyond all question, Sir William Robertson Nicoll.

One item which, in its account of the dinner, the *Athenæum* did not record was a speech by Zangwill. As I remember, no vote of thanks to either chairman or vice-chairman was on the programme, the reason being that Jerome and Barrie, both shy and sensitive men, and with the strongest possible aversion from anything like self-advertisement, had stipulated that no such vote of thanks there should be. What was the occasion of his speech I am not now sure, but I remember that towards the end of the evening Zangwill rose to address the company, and that what he said—witty and brilliant as usual—was highly eulogistic of Barrie. In concluding as if taking for granted that Barrie would reply, Zangwill expressed the wish that the author of

Auld Licht Idylls would inform the company of the correct pronunciation of the name of that book.

If, as has been foolishly said, a Scot " jokes wi' deefeculty," one Scot known to me gets upon his legs to speak " wi' deefeculty." Zangwill sat down, and so long a time went by that I remembered that Barrie had once said that he never found himself " upon a platform " to make a speech without heartily wishing that he were " under " instead of " on " it. On another occasion, when he followed Lord Rosebery, he vastly diverted his audience by his unconventional opening words, which were to the effect that he had been watching Lord Rosebery closely, to see what he did with his hands, as he (Barrie), when on a platform, was never quite sure where to put or what to do with his own.

So long a time went by that most of us thought Barrie intended no reply to Zangwill. Then the former rose, and everybody leaned forward eagerly. Would Barrie content himself by saying that he was obliged to Mr. Zangwill for his flattering remarks—and sit down ?—or would he launch out into a memorable utterance, characterised by the pawky humour called forth by the occasion, or perhaps by the exquisite fancy and caprice in which he is unrivalled ?

He did neither. Without so much as a glance in Zangwill's direction or a mention of his name, but looking stolidly into space, Barrie remarked quietly, " The name of the book is pronounced thus "—and sat down.

" What a snub for Zangwill—the way in which Barrie pointedly ignored the very flattering things the other had said of him ! " whispered my next door neighbour at table with me.

Then he told a story which I fear did not particularly interest me. It was about a very rich woman—her father had made money in trade—known to him personally, who had married an M.P. said to be a " coming man." The lady, who was socially ambitious, gave very expensive and delicious dinners, to which her boast was that she invited only the elect by rank or the elect by intellect. Among the latter she included Barrie, whom she invited to dine. She did not know him personally, but was apparently of opinion that flattery, if laid on thick enough, would make amends for the absence of an introduction, and confidently and complacently awaited his reply—which never

came. Later, being at a function, at which Barrie chanced also to be present, she engineered an introduction, and after a few words of conversation, said coyly, " Do you know that you owe me a letter, Mr. Barrie ? "

Barrie, who had not caught the lady's name, expressed surprise. Then she explained. " Yes, I remember that letter," he said, looking her quietly in the eyes, " But such a communication, and from someone unknown to me, obviously required no answer."

Knowing, as I did, the lady in question, I was not surprised to hear that she had been thus rebuked, but that Barrie had any intention to snub or to rebuke Zangwill I do not believe. What happened probably meant no more than that Barrie was then unaccustomed to speak without due preparation. As vice-chairman, he knew that he would have to get upon his legs, and so had prepared the brief but sparkling speech to which we had listened so delightedly earlier in the evening. With that speech he had, if I may so word it, " shot his bolt," and, wise man, was not to be drawn into attempting a second and impromptu speech which, if it fell flat, would spoil the success of the first.

" Make a success—and run away from it," said a well-known publisher to an author who proposed to follow up a book with which he had made a hit by a sequel, and the advice was sound. One of the happiest speeches of the evening was made by Robinson himself, in the course of which he told us a story which was an object lesson in the truth of the saying, " Make a success—and run away from it," especially in the matter of following up a prepared speech by one entirely impromptu.

" Once at a three-days' Shakespearian celebration," said Robinson, " I was invited to give an address on the opening day. I had plenty of time to prepare and to memorise my speech, and what I said seemed to please my audience very much. The address on the second day was to be given by James Russell Lowell, and I stayed on to hear it. But there was a breakdown somewhere on the railway line, and Lowell sent a telegram to say that he would, he feared, be half an hour late in arriving. ' Fortunately,' said the chairman, in making the announcement, ' we have here with us to-day Mr. F. W. Robinson, who is not only a distinguished Shakespearian scholar, but, as all who heard him yesterday have reason to know, is an admirable speaker.

In Mr. Lowell's absence, therefore, I will ask Mr. Robinson once again to favour and to delight us by his rich Shakespearian knowledge and his eloquent oratory.'

" I was so taken aback," went on Robinson, " that I lost my head. Had I said, ' I am afraid, sir, that I told the audience yesterday all I have to say on the subject that is worth hearing,' the audience would have understood, and all would have been well. Instead of doing so, I was foolish enough to attempt a second speech, starting off recklessly with, ' Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,' and floating out upon the deep waters of a second address upon the raft of a few sentences which I had prepared and memorised for, but had left out of, my previous speech. Then—those few previously prepared words spoken—my raft went to pieces, as it were, in mid-ocean, and to save my life I could not think of another word. Never shall I forget the humiliation of that moment. Even now, like regiments aligned one behind the other in a review, I seem to see row behind row of white and wondering faces, staring blankly at my face, which I am sure was working and twitching with agitation and mortification. Then—only by the greatest possible effort and exertion of will-power preventing myself from covering my face with my hands for very shame and bursting into tears—I sat down without another word. What the audience, most of whom had heard me hold forth seemingly at ease and swimmingly on the previous afternoon, thought of the exhibition I had made of myself I don't know, but since then I have never made a speech unless given time to prepare and to memorise ; and having once fired off, not unsuccessfully, a prepared speech, no power on earth will ever tempt me again into attempting a second and impromptu one."

Recording here what Robinson then said reminds me of another story which I heard since. At a public meeting, Mr. Kipling and a certain noble lord were on the platform, and the chairman called upon the noble lord, a great person in the county, to speak first. In his jovial, breezy way, the latter protested.

" We have present here, sir," he said, " the most distinguished living man of letters, and it is not for me, a titled nobody, to take the place of honour. Pray, sir, let Mr. Kipling, whom everyone is so impatient to hear, be called on first to address the meeting. Then, if a few minutes of the time scheduled for the close of the meeting remain to be filled—then, if what I may happen to have

to say is likely to interest anybody, I shall be pleased to weigh in with my few words, but, take precedence of so eminent a man as Mr. Kipling by speaking first, I protest I cannot."

In no country is what is sportsmanlike and generous so much appreciated as in England, and loud indeed was the applause when the noble lord resumed his seat. So the chairman called on Mr. Kipling to make the first speech of the evening, and a very fine speech I understand it was.

Meanwhile the man who told me the story had whispered to the noble lord, with whom, I understood him to say, he was well acquainted, " I call it very sportsmanlike and chivalrous of you, thus to insist on giving place to Kipling ! "

The other looked at him—I imagine with a twinkle in his eye—and said, " *Of course*, I was the proper person, among those present here, to be singled out to speak first ! I should not be doing my duty to myself and to my own class to pretend otherwise. That is the sort of thing I was born for. But that is not to say that I am as good a hand at making a speech as some of these clever writing Johnnies. It is their business to write able articles and to make clever speeches—not mine, which is to be myself, and fitly to fill the position in which it has pleased a wise Providence to place me. And I don't mind telling you that I will be hanged if I knew what on earth to say here to-night—until I happened to come to know what Kipling is going to say. It wasn't till I chanced to hear what Kipling is going to say—I dined with him last night—that I saw my way clear. In fact; what he will say gives me my cue, and I've got a neat little speech prepared, for I'm one of those duffers who, to put it in language understanded of the people, can't speak for nuts unless I've got the thing up beforehand. So you see; if I had been turned on first, before Kipling had said the thing that gives me my cue—bang goes the bottom out of my speech. That—and none of your damned stunt about sportsmanship and chivalry—is the real reason why I asked the chairman to put the t'other chap up first. So now you know."

And the good man who told me the story added, with many a wise shake of his head, that when he read in the local paper a report of the meeting in question, with an " editorial " that positively swilled over with tush and gush about the sportsmanship, modesty, and chivalry of the noble lord in yielding place

to Mr. Kipling, he wondered how many other similar incidents about which we read in our papers, and in which public men, titled folk, or royalty are pictured on a pedestal and with a halo around their head, are not " put up " jobs too, if only we knew, as he did in this case, the inner facts. " How many, indeed ! " I murmured, to humour him ; but my private opinion was, none the less, that the noble lord was a much cleverer person than the man who told me the story supposed the noble lord to be, or himself was ; and that in replying as he did the noble lord was doing no more than amusing himself by pulling the other fellow's leg.

Turning again to the report in the *Athenæum* of the dinner to Robinson, I read that " Mr. Robert Barr (' Luke Sharp ') delighted the company by a quaint and laughable speech." He certainly did. His hair just beginning to be streaked with grey, but bluff, hearty, brown-bearded, and so sailorly of appearance that one might have guessed him to be an admiral, but never to be an author, Barr stood at the table without so much as a glint of a smile on his sallow and smallpox-pitted face, and told story after story that kept his audience amused.

One was about his friend Mark Twain, who had just told it to Barr ; and, lest a reader should think the story irreverent, I venture to suggest that irreverence lies in intention rather than in what is said ; and that intentional irreverence on the part either of Mark Twain or of Robert Barr I do not think there was.

" Monday morning seems rather a slack time in rural England," said Mark Twain. " I went into the post-office of a country village, last Monday morning, to despatch a telegram, and found myself the only person at the counter, and the only attendant a young lady who was reading a novel " (he pronounced the word with the accent on the last syllable). " She looked up when I came in, and seeing, I suppose, that I wasn't the squire, or the parson, or anybody of consequence in the place, but just a casual stranger come to the village perhaps to take a rubbing from one of the brasses in the church, she resumed her reading. I was afraid I had happened in just when she had reached what critics call the *dénouement,* and, as a novelist myself, it was not for me to destroy illusion and come between the reader, the author, and the thrill by pushing sixpence and a filled-in

telegraph form under the wire rail that fenced off and protected duchesses in disguise, as the ladies employed in English post-offices apparently are, from everyday folk who pay taxes, buy stamps, and want to send a wire. So I waited patiently till her grace had reached the bottom of the page, when I thought it possible she might condescend haughtily to attend to me. Not a bit. She flicked the page over, and began at the top of the next. As I was to have a Scriptural name, I have often thought it might just as well have been Job as Mark or Samuel, for a patriarch I may live to be, but never, I fear, a prophet or a saint. Whether the prophet and the saint ever allowed themselves amusements I don't know, but I am given to understand that Job so far relaxed from the strenuous life as to invent a game that is played to-day and is called Patience. That is the game I took a hand in with the duchess, and it is just as well for Job that he was standing out of that rubber, or he'd have spoiled his record and lost the championship. I let her grace read on to the very end of the chapter, which Job would not have done in my place, but when she started to begin another I thought it about time to throw in my hand. 'Young lady,' I said, 'I will not insult you by assuming that you are no more than a member of the English Royal Family. I am prepared even to believe that you are the mysterious Third Person in what I was brought up to call the Trinity, but, all the same, if you will be so good as to skip off that stool, accept my sixpence, and send this wire, I shall be obliged.'

"And—never do the thing half-heartedly when you start paying compliments, Barr—I am bound to say that it fetched her."

In his own speech at the dinner, Robinson referred proudly to the fact that some of Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums* stories had appeared in his magazine, but he did not mention a story of a very different sort by the same hand. Hidden away, for it has never been reprinted, in that defunct and forgotten magazine is one of Sir James Barrie's whimsical masterpieces. Between thirty and forty years have passed since I read it, and I have no copy to which to refer, but, as I remember, it was called *John Hubbard's Husbands*, and the plot was upon the following lines.

John Hubbard, who tells the story himself, had three

sisters. To mix my metaphors, they hung fire in the marriage market. His duty to his sisters and his parents clearly was to find for the three girls the husbands whom, unaided, they were unable to find for themselves. One sister was a " Martha,' domesticated, matter-of-fact, intensely practical, and devoid of all sense of poetry. For some reason she had to write to an eligible young bachelor, and John Hubbard penned the epistle, which was supposed to come from his Martha-like sister. The bachelor was a poet, and this letter to him was so beautiful, and breathed so soulful an atmosphere of poetry and romance, that the bachelor felt in reading it that here indeed was a spirit akin to his own. He replied to this young lady, who was so evidently his spiritual counterpart, in the same strain. Other letters—all supposed to be from the sister, but all written by John Hubbard—were exchanged, and when at last the bachelor and the young lady met, he was already half in love with her letters, and so, it seemed to him, with herself. John Hubbard's difficulty then was to sustain the illusion. His sister was a healthy girl and a hearty eater. Judging by her supposed letters, a butterfly was scarcely less dainty and delicate of appetite. At meal times, when the young man was present, she appeared to subsist on butterfly fare, but I seem to recollect an " aside " by John Hubbard which was to the effect: " But you should have seen her at the cold beef and bread and cheese and pickles in the larder, after he was gone ! "

Fortunately for John's schemes, and more so for his sister's creature comforts, the time of engagement was brief. The bachelor promptly married his fairy princess while yet the illusion was undestroyed, and John Hubbard breathed again.

Sister Number Two was as romantic and soulful as the sister just married was matter-of-fact. Number Two would have proved an ideal soul-mate for the first young fellow, but his matrimonial hash (" You've yet to settle Gibson's hash," says Browning in *Youth and Art*) was—perhaps in more than a metaphorical sense—settled. John had to look elsewhere for his second husband. The only eligible bachelor in view was hard-headed, practical, and loathed poetry. But John contrived an excuse for a letter to him—again written by John, but this time supposed to come from sister Number Two, and a more businesslike epistle was never penned. The soulful and

romantic sister was revealed as detesting poetry and the unpractical. She discoursed in fact with such sound common sense upon things domestic—from marketing to the darning of socks and the airing of beds by a warming-pan—that the recipient of the letter made haste to secure this domestic treasure before she was snapped up by somebody else.

By exactly the same methods—I need not go into particulars of the duplicity which he called diplomacy—John Hubbard secured a husband for Sister Number Three ; and as the story ends, we see John reflecting upon the curious fact, not that his three sisters have now a life partner each, but that he, John Hubbard, has three husbands.

This clumsy and perhaps not all correct outline of a story which I last read between thirty and forty years ago gives no idea of the story's whimsicality and charm. Told as only Sir James Barrie can tell it; with exquisite art and incomparable play of humour and fancy, any other author would long ago have reprinted *John Hubbard's Husbands*, whether expanded into a longer tale or as it stands. When; in the 'nineties, I was editing a Christmas Annual for a great publishing house, I asked Mr. Barrie, as he then was, to name his own terms for permission to reprint the story. As his reply redounds only to his honour as a craftsman in refusing to allow the republication of what he—mistakenly, I think—considered unworthy and inferior work, and contains nothing private, I venture to print that reply here :

"*Garrick Club, W.C.*
"*July* 24.

"My Dear Kernahan,

"I have published so much poor stuff that my only remaining credit is that I don't always republish it. So let the story you speak of lie where it fell.

"I am glad to hear you are bringing out something new yourself, and am very hopeful of it.

"If you ever see ——, tell her that if I ever went anywhere——. Besides, I am living in Surrey at present.

"Yours very truly,
"J. M. Barrie."

Laconic, but, except for the description of the story as "poor

stuff," very much to the point, as what Sir James Barrie writes always is. I remember another occasion when he made an equally brief remark about Queen Victoria, who, so it is said, did not err on the side of extravagance in the gifts she bestowed on her dependants. She had, it seemed, presented an old and faithful servant with a snuff-box which, as the legend goes, was not silver but only silver-plated. He, perhaps prizing the gift more for the sake of the giver than for its intrinsic value, felt called upon profusely to express gratitude, and exclaimed, " This is too much, Your Majesty."

" God knows that it is not," the Queen is reported to have answered fervently.

" And I can't see that it was," was Barrie's comment.

CHAPTER II

TREE SEES IRVING HOME, AND OTHER STORIES OF TWO GREAT ACTORS

CHAPTER II

ONCE at a little dinner at which Sir Herbert Tree, Mr. Zangwill, and Stephen Phillips sat together, an autograph collector begged those present to sign his menu card.

Tree had just whispered to Phillips, "To be born a great personality is an asset in life, but for an actor who is so born there is a penalty attached. Of Henry Irving it has been said that only the fact that he could never, in any circumstances and in any rôle, be other than Henry Irving, prevented him from being a great actor. But supposing it were possible for each of us to be born of some other nationality than that of which we are. Has it ever occurred to you that if Irving had been born a Jew he would have looked just such a Jew as Zangwill! In my own mind I always think of the head of the great profession I follow as 'Israel Irving.'"

With Tree's words in his mind, Phillips, when the menu card was passed to him for signature, inscribed it with the composite signature, "Israel Herbert Phillips," and handed the card to Zangwill to add his name.

Zangwill looked at it casually, and then, his eye catching the composite signature, he looked more closely, and with never a smile—on the contrary, with something more approaching a disapproving frown upon his Sphinx-like countenance, he very carefully obliterated the offending "Israel Herbert Phillips," and as carefully inscribed "Israel Zangwill" underneath.

I did not notice the incident, though present at the dinner, which I have cause to remember, if only for a very fine piece of acting by Tree. Being an informal, even fraternal, gathering, there was no speech-making, but only, as it were, a reminiscent gossip on the part of anyone who addressed the company.

Tree began by telling us how, many years ago, he was invited by Robert Louis Stevenson to go to Bournemouth to hear a play

which R. L. S. hoped Tree would accept and produce. With the premise that I write only from memory, the following is, as nearly as I can recall, Tree's account of what happened.

" I arrived at Bournemouth station in the middle of such a deluge that I felt as if I had come to the ' mouth ' of that ' bourne ' from which no traveller—who cannot swim—returns. From the amount of water about, and from the antiquated state of things in general, this might, indeed, have been the historic Deluge, my business being to interview Noah on Ararat, instead of Stevenson at Bournemouth. Noah might, too, as vainly have scanned the horizon within view of Ararat for a cab as I to have hoped that the pious folk of Bournemouth would in those pre-historic (I wonder whether I may say ' Tree-historic ' ?) days permit any vehicle to ply for hire on the Sabbath.

" But to say, as some folk do, that the drama is founded upon real life is less true than that real life is founded upon the drama. Real life, in fact, plagiarises the drama. In this instance, just as in a tragedy there is often a touch of comic relief, so in this drama and tragedy of real life, of which I am sketching the scenario, a touch of comic relief was fortunately afforded—and by a drunken porter. How he got drunk, and in Bournemouth, on the Sabbath, only his Maker knows. Again, so like is real life to the drama, in which the necessary characters come upon the stage exactly when they are wanted, so the required character came upon the scene at the required moment. I refer to the fact that the wife of the drunken porter happened to be also at the station—whether to prevent further libations, or to bring him new supplies, I cannot say—but there she was. The porter, except that he could walk, was too fuddled to be of any use to me, but his wife happened to be passably pretty. To cut a long story short, I made violent love to her when the porter was temporarily " off " ; and so great a factor, in real life as in the drama, is—shall I say a prepossessing appearance ?—I made love to her to such good purpose that she persuaded her husband to guide me to the road where Stevenson lived, and to carry my bag, which I fervently hoped he would carry better than he was carrying his liquor.

" Stevenson had written to me that his house was called ' Skerryvore,' by which name I had expected to arrive at a castle, instead of which I found only a detached, or semi-detached (I

have forgotten which), villa. There was neither knocker nor door-bell, but, observing something gelatinous that dangled from a hole in the wall—I was by no means sure it was not a charge of gun-cotton cunningly contrived to blow to pieces intrusive callers come to interrupt a great author at work—I summoned up courage enough gently to tweak it, to see what would happen.

"Nothing happened—except Mrs. Stevenson, who, I assume, had been fastened to the other end of the gelatinous thing, and so had been jerked to the door by my tweak.

"Thoroughly unnerved, I pleaded guilty, when she said in an accusing voice, 'Mr. Tree?' But it was she and her husband, not I, who should have felt guilty. They had decoyed me to Bournemouth on false pretences. With self-conscious pride, which should have been conscious guilt, that precious pair of innocents informed me that the play had been written in a week. A week! Seven days! And I, who knew that not every practised playwright, with the stagecraft, of which Stevenson then had none, at his fingers' ends, could write a successful play in as many months—I, for my sins, which are many, had to sit there, yawning my head off to the end (God knows it was nearly the end of me!).

"But I am proud to remember that later, when he came to realise that not even genius can produce a successful play unless time and thought and infinite pains go to the making, it was my privilege and honour to produce a play which bore the name of that great artist, that prince of good fellows, and that man of immortal genius, Robert Louis Stevenson."

An actor, whose most successful impersonation was inferior to Tree in his least successful rôle, once spoke to me of the latter as a showman and a charlatan.

"Can an actor," I enquired, "who essays to run a show, that is to say to become an actor-manager, hope to fill his theatre and to pay his company fair salaries unless he have some gifts as a showman as well as an actor? If Tree were, as you say, a showman as well as a great actor, then all the more versatile Tree he. A charlatan he certainly was not, for he *achieved* that at which he aimed, and not all the charlatanry in the world can do that. Charlatanry only *apes* genius, only *simulates* achievement—it does not *attain* to either."

Had the dinner when Tree told us of his visit to Stevenson at Bournemouth been the only occasion on which I had seen him play a part, I should still esteem him a great actor. The Stevenson reminiscences he had related half-banteringly, and when, ceasing abruptly, he spoke of another matter—all acting, though what followed may have been—the effect was magical, for it was another and different Tree who was the speaker.

He told us that at the British Museum (so at least I understood) there is preserved the " record " of the words which Robert Browning spoke, in his lifetime, into the " receiver " of that wonderful invention of science by which it is now possible to reproduce the voice of the dead. Tree had so heard Browning's voice, and with something of the sense of the incredible and of the awe with which, two thousand years ago, at the grave of Lazarus, men and women had, for the first time in the world's history, listened to the voice of one who had been dead.

His own thoughts and feelings, as he listened to the voice of Browning sounding from the grave, Tree described to us ; but without the magnetism of his personality, the shudder in his voice, even the physical fear which we seemed to see in his eyes, the effect of what he said, and his way of saying it, cannot here be conveyed.

Then, once more, yet another Tree stood before us. As if ashamed of the emotion into which he had been betrayed, or which he had simulated, Tree, with a half-hopeless gesture, dismissed entirely that aspect of the experience. Again he was Tree the banterer.

" Someone at the British Museum, which, I understand, has a unique collection of fossils," he said, " is so antiquated, or he would have known how transient is a mummer's fame, as to suppose that, in years to come, when I have gone hence, a person will here and there be found who will be curious to hear my voice, as I heard the voice of the dead Browning.

" So I was asked to speak two of my parts—one serious, one humorous—into the receiver. For the humorous selection I decided to give Falstaff's drunken words on honour ; for the serious, Hamlet's immortal soliloquy. I so decided because I am persuaded—I made the discovery during my British Museum experience—that both Hamlet and Falstaff are one and the same man, William Shakespeare himself, speaking out of his own

experience, as now something of a fool and a free-lance, now all a sage and a philosopher.

" But, alas ! standing there in the presence of posterity, I became so nervous as to mix the parts—speaking Hamlet's moving soliloquy as one in his cups, and Falstaff's foolery as if it were poetry and philosophy, thus . . ."

Standing gravely at the table, arms easily folded, eyes fixed as in reverie, Tree declaimed Falstaff's drunken words with such intense earnestness and dignity as actually to make them sound like poetry scarcely less noble than Hamlet's soliloquy.

Then, tipsily collapsing into his chair, he lurched forward to grasp an imaginary flagon, and, swaying helplessly, hiccoughed through Hamlet's soliloquy so as to make it sound like the veriest maudlin nonsense of a drunkard.

I heard one earnest student of Shakespeare who has specialised on *Hamlet* express the wish that Tree had chosen some other play and some other selection for the purpose of a burlesque ; but that point of view apart, and remembering that there were no stage-accessories, the impersonations seemed to me as wonderful a piece of acting as I had ever witnessed. Stephen Phillips, no indifferent judge, having himself been an actor, whispered to me across the table, " If Tree acts like that in the next play of mine that he produces, all London will be flocking to see it."

Like Tom Bowling, Tree's " virtues were so rare "—the word " virtues," used thus in the plural, does not necessarily imply the singular—that he could appreciate a joke against himself.

That he was amused at the late Mr. Comyn Carr's joke at his (Tree's) expense, Comyn Carr himself assured me. The story has been told many times, but what was said is generally attributed to Gilbert. Meeting Carr one day, Tree said, " I have had a weird experience. Did not Rossetti paint a picture, ' How They Met Themselves,' in which in a wood two lovers saw their other or astral selves ? Something like that has happened to me. A play in which I appeared has been cinema'd, and I, Herbert Tree, sat in the stalls and saw myself on the boards. I saw myself move and walk and talk. In a word, my dear Carr, I saw myself act."

As told of Gilbert, the story goes that Gilbert replied, " Now you know what those of us who have to see you suffer."

As told me by Comyns Carr, his answer was, " Saw yourself

act ! I congratulate you, for by the living God, you are the only soul in the world who ever did."

One story told of Tree reminds me just a little of Oscar Wilde. " Do you know So-and-so ? " asked Tree of a friend, mentioning a certain writer.

" No, never as much as set eyes on him," was the reply.

" You never as much as set eyes on him ? " said Tree. " Then," taking the other by the collar, " tell me—I particularly want to know" (this very earnestly)—" what is he like ? "

At another time an actor—I tell the story only on hearsay—knowing that Tree was considering the revival of a certain play, said : " If you revive the play, will you give me the first refusal of my old part ? "

" With pleasure," so the story goes, said Tree; " in fact I will give myself the pleasure of refusing you here and now."

I heard one of Tree's detractors say that by nothing was the great actor more gratified than by his intimacy with the then Prime Minister and his family. It was alleged that Tree had for a long time been wire-pulling and intriguing to bring about a " call " upon the Trees by Mr. and Mrs. Asquith. The Asquiths did so call upon the Trees, and it is alleged that, almost as they entered the front door, Tree's messenger went out by the back door with a paragraph for the papers, in which the fact that the Asquiths had called upon the Trees was casually but very adroitly mentioned.

And lastly, it is alleged that, next morning, Tree, looking eagerly for, and finding, the paragraph, struck his forehead with his open palm, and exclaimed tragically :

" My God ! Is there no escape for us actors from the damnable prying of these paragraphists ? Some journalist, for his own purpose tracking down the Prime Minister, followed him and Mrs. Asquith, I suppose, to this house, and, seeing them enter, rushed back to his office that he might earn a few shillings by announcing in his loathly print that two friends of ours, who happen to be the Prime Minister and his wife, called upon my wife and me to-day at our own home. The horrible, the hateful, the damnable vulgarity of it all ! "

The nucleus of solid fact probably is that Tree was not displeased to let the fact be known that Lady Tree and he some-

times lunched with the Asquiths, and the Asquiths with the Trees. All the rest I suspect to be the invention of an enemy.

Of the many stories told about Sir Herbert Tree there is one which concerns him and Sir Henry Irving which may or may not be true. Half the stories told about celebrities are either fathered upon the wrong man, or else have no more than a nucleus of fact, the rest being accretion.

Thus, of the late Dr. Parker, a harmless yarn has often been repeated that when Mrs. Parker and he met a friend, who said, " Here come Beauty and the Beast," Dr. Parker retorted, " How dare you call my wife a beast ! "

Dining with Dr. Parker, I mentioned the yarn to him, and he was able to tell me by whom (not by himself) the answer, " How dare you call my wife a beast ! " had been returned. In this case Dr. Parker was the first to tell the story as happening to someone else. The person to whom he told it probably repeated it as coming from Dr. Parker. As it was passed from mouth to mouth, someone forgot to whom it happened, but so associated the story with Dr. Parker's name that the next person to repeat the yarn gave it as happening to Dr. Parker himself.

The Irving story in question may have a similar origin. As I knew him, he was always a very temperate man. According to the person who told it to me, Irving now and again, if only rarely, made an exception in favour of the wine cup, and is said to have done so once when in the company of Tree, who, seeing how things were, and anxious to get Irving safely home, good-naturedly said :

" I'm going your way. May I give you a lift, and tell my man to put you down at your door ? "—to which Irving agreed.

" It was a little difficult for Tree," said my informant. " He knew, of course, that Irving, the admitted *doyen* of the actor's art, had as much on board as he could carry, but Tree thought he knew his Irving well enough to think it wise to appear to be unaware of the fact. So, apparently considering Irving entirely sober, Tree, while in the cab or carriage, discussed serious matters seriously, and Irving, pulling himself together, as seriously and as soberly answered, all going well till they reached Irving's destination. Tree got out first, and Irving somewhat unsteadily followed. Still affecting ignorance of the fact of Irving's condition, and Irving continuing to pull himself together and to affect

perfect sobriety, they parted. Holding on to the railing, Irving said, ' Good-night, Tree. Thank you for the lift. Keep up the oriflamme. God bless you.' Tree, rightly assuming that Irving had Macaulay's *Battle of Ivry* in mind, responded with an appropriate reference to King Henry, and waved a farewell hand. Irving withdrew his hand from the sustaining railing to wave in return—and promptly fell down the area.

" Again the situation was difficult for Tree," commented the story-teller.

" Rather more so for Irving," I said.

" Perhaps so," he admitted, " but you see, if Tree had gone back, helped Irving up, got him up the steps, propped him up against the door, rung the bell, and told the butler, or whoever came to the door, to get Sir Henry to bed as soon as possible, Irving would have known perfectly well that he (Tree) knew that he (Irving) had been imbibing too freely, and would not soon have forgiven him. So Tree very wisely affected not to see what had happened to Irving, and drove away as if all were well."

(This part of the story I flatly disbelieve. Whatever truth, or no truth, there may be in the other alleged happenings, I am sure that no consideration could have induced Tree thus to desert a friend in such circumstances.)

" But," went on my informant, " Irving had by that time sobered—in head at least—sufficiently to be well aware that Tree was aware of his (Irving's) condition that night, and did not forget or forgive. Only a week or two later, the most influential person—somebody called him an ' impresario '—from America came to England to offer ' star ' engagements to a few English actors, and naturally sought Irving's advice.

" ' What about Tree ? ' said the caller.

" Irving was seated, his back to the visitor, at a writing-table, and was looking meditatively out of a window.

" ' Ah yes—Tree—Tree,' he said. ' Man of astounding energy. . . . Marvellous versatility. . . . Most gifted actor.'

" Then, with a turn of his head over his shoulder to his visitor, he added significantly, and as if reluctantly, a snapped pause between each word:

" ' Pity . . . he . . . drinks ! ' "

I have heard Tree described as a poseur. Perhaps so, but his posing was mostly to himself, and to please only himself.

To the last there was not a little of the boy in him; and what boy does not love to pose by fancying himself as, say, a soldier, or in whatever rôle it may be his life's ambition to fill?

Tree, who never fancied himself in any other rôle than that of an actor, or other than Herbert Tree, sometimes posed to himself as Herbert Tree, and got no small fun out of it. On first nights he was generally supposed by his company to be—and perhaps was—in a flutter of nervous agitation. The anxieties of an actor-manager on a first night are, for a highly-strung man, a martyrdom. Something may go wrong with the "business" behind, on the stage, or in the wings, and, by destroying illusion, may wreck all that, for so many months, and at such infinite pains, has been planned and rehearsed. A fellow-actor may forget his book, or lose his nerve, and so throw out and make nervous the rest of the company, or may do something so ridiculous as to move the gods to laughter—and laughter, in the wrong place, is the death sentence to a play.

Here is a little behind-the-scenes picture of a first night at His Majesty's. Tree, the image of despair, and dressed for his part, is seated—huddled forward like a prisoner in the condemned cell—perhaps upon an upturned box, in which goods for stage purposes have been delivered. He holds his (presumably) burning brow in his two hands, as if the brain within were bursting or his reason going. Or perhaps he thrusts his hands distractedly through his hair, which action seems to indicate that he is so frenzied as to be oblivious to, or to care nothing about, the fact that his hair will be disordered when the moment comes for him to go on the stage. Really, as he is well aware, his disordered hair matters nothing, as he wears a hat in the first act.

Enter to him Mrs., now Lady, Tree, also dressed for her part, to say agitatedly:

"Herbert, I'm feeling very nervous. Do you think that half a glass of champagne would do me any good?"

Tree (wildly, and with a finely dramatic banishing-into-oblivion gesture of his outstretched arm): "A bottle, woman! A bottle! Merciful heavens! These domestic worries, and at such a time! Oh, my God, it can't be—don't tell me—that that's the curtain going up!" And all the time one more than suspects that no one knows better than Tree—who, witless though he seem with nervous agitation, has all his wits very much about

him—that it is not the curtain going up. If it were, Tree would be before the mirror in his dressing-room for a last peep at his get-up before going on. Or he would be at the wings to satisfy himself that others are on to time. Or, more likely still, he would be at the wings, " getting up steam " for his own " walk on," which, as he knows, being his first appearance, will be the signal for an outbreak of applause from his admirers, and so must be done in style and with fitting éclat and aplomb.

In fact one more than suspects that, very real and natural as is his nervous agitation, he has himself much more in hand and under control than appears, and that the little drama which had been enacted on the upturned box was no more than that great big boy—if actor of genius—Herbert Beerbohm Tree, posing and playing the part of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the tragic actor, to himself, very much to his own personal and private enjoyment.

I must not be understood as meaning that this is a picture of Tree on first nights, but only of one particular first night. Possibly on that occasion he was aware of some mental and nervous lethargy, out of which he wished to arouse himself. He may have felt that his nerve was (as we say of a piano) not tuned up to the concert pitch which he thought necessary for the first night of a tragedy, and so (to change the metaphor, and to revert to a phrase already used) he was " getting up steam " for his " walk on."

But the likeliest explanation is, I repeat, that Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the tragic actor—who by the passionate power and nervous intensity of his performance would, at the end of the first act, be bowing his acknowledgments to a roar of applause from all parts of the house—was, just then, no more than a great big boy, permitting himself to pose to himself for his own entertainment as Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the tragic actor.

CHAPTER III

PHILIP MARSTON, THE BLIND POET, AND HIS CIRCLE

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ONE now far-away night, not long before his death, Dante Gabriel Rossetti had chanced to observe how difficult—" well-nigh impossible " were his words—it is to convey a sense of infinite space within a few lines. Among the half dozen present—all of a later generation than Rossetti's—was Philip Marston, who, in his musical, melancholy, slightly drawling voice, in which was just the suspicion of a lisp, replied :

" For you to speak of it as well-nigh impossible is as if one who had himself climbed Mont Blanc were so to speak of the climbing of that mountain." Then his blind but beautiful and widely-opened eyes seeming to be looking into the infinite space of which Rossetti had spoken, Marston repeated the sestette of Rossetti's sonnet, *The Choice :*

> Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
> Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me ;
> Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
> Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
> And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond—
> Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

Later, Rossetti said that though Marston had instanced the sestette of *The Choice,* as successfully conveying a sense of infinite space, there was one line by Marston himself—

> Whose sea conjectures of no farther land

—which was worth all his (Rossetti's) six.

On another occasion, when Marston was not present, mention was made of Arthur O'Shaughnessy, whose work Rossetti admired. (Swinburne, on the contrary, detested it, and I have seen an almost baleful look come into eyes, which were once blue, but in later years faded to pale sea-green, when reference was made to O'Shaughnessy in his presence).

" Yes," said Rossetti, " O'Shaughnessy has done good work, but that Philip Marston stands at the head of all the younger men of to-day is, I think, beyond dispute."

Marston, who survived Rossetti only by five years, has been dead for thirty-five years, but though he was never more than a minor poet, Rossetti's estimate has not been reversed by time. A Collected Edition of all his poems has since been issued, here and in America, as well as a selection (under the title of *Songtide*, the name of his first published volume) in the *Canterbury Poets*. O'Shaughnessy has been less fortunate, but a selection of his poems, at least, has been made and issued on both sides of the Atlantic. Of how many of the minor poets of their day, who died while yet in their " thirties," can that be said ? The bulk of what Marston and O'Shaughnessy wrote is, no doubt rightly, forgotten, and only the student of poetry can point to a set of their volumes upon his shelves. But that Marston continues in favour with the anthology-makers I have reason to know, as, acting as I do as his literary executor, I am constantly receiving requests for permission to include poems of his in some anthology or other projected work, as well as to set lyrics of his to music.

In the literary life of his day he was one of the most prominent and perhaps the most pathetic figure. With the exception of those given by Lady Jeune (now Lady St. Helier) and Lady Duffus Hardy, long since dead, no literary receptions of the time were attended by men and women of greater distinction than the At Homes of Philip's father, Dr. Westland Marston, at his house near Regent's Park. There Dickens, Thackeray, and Browning were to be met, and later, when in less prosperous days the Marstons moved to Chalk Farm, Dante and William Rossetti, Swinburne, William Morris, John Payne, Joaquin Miller, and Henry Irving were among those attending the At Homes. In an obituary notice, the *Athenæum* described Dr. Marston as " not only a man of genius, but one of the best talkers in London." Watts-Dunton told me that when he first came to London, and was asked, " What distinguished man of letters do you most wish to meet ? " his answer was : " Need you ask ? Why, Dr. Westland Marston, of course."

Dr. Marston's dramatic poem, *Gerald*, was dedicated to his friend Charles Dickens. In his play, *Strathmore*, which was produced at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, Charles Kean

appeared; in *Marie de Méranie* (at the Olympic), Helen Faucit, afterwards Lady Theodore Martin; in *Life for Life* (the Lyceum), Miss Neilson and Herman Vezin; in *The Patrician's Daughter* (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane), Phelps, Helen Faucit, and Macready.

But, like my friend Stephen Phillips (grand-nephew of Wordsworth), Dr. Marston (a lineal descendant of John Marston, the sixteenth-century dramatist) lived to see fame pass, and to fall on evil days. Once, in his shabby rooms in Euston Road, a young—now a famous—writer,whom I introduced to Dr. Marston, told the old dramatist that he had just had his first play produced. "It took me only three months to write," he said, "and I cleared £500 by it."

Dr. Marston laid his hand on the young man's shoulder. "I rejoice and I congratulate you on your success," he said, "but don't, my dear boy, for that reason, start living at the rate of £2,000 a year."

I remember saying something to the same effect to Stephen Phillips. All London was thronging to see *Nero* at His Majesty's Theatre, and Phillips showed me a cheque for £120 from Tree as the payment of only one week's royalty. "Yes," I said, "Tree is booming you for all that he and you are worth. But I suspect booms. I suspect, in fact, that 'boom' is only 'boomerang' writ short. Too often it returns upon the thrower to hit him hard, perhaps to knock him out. A boom is like a soap-bubble. Expand it too far and it bursts, shatters into nothing at a breath. You won't always have successful plays running, Stephen. Tastes change. The old public thinks it has taken its favourite's measure, and tires of him. Even if it does not do so, new publics come on that know not Joseph nor Stephen. To-day, the interest centres, the limelight is thrown, upon the last new man. He will think, as you now do, that he will last for ever, but his 'day' may be very brief, and a reputation once on the wane rarely revives. Your next play may fail. Your health may break down and never give you a chance to write another. For heaven's sake—if not for your own sake, at least for little Stephen's—cry a halt to this reckless throwing away of money. Keep back what you need for immediate necessities of that cheque, but bank or invest the rest."

But he brushed my pleading impatiently aside. He was

confident in himself and in his continued popularity, and as I, who was with him to the last, and had his remains brought from Deal, where he died (Sir Sidney Colvin is mistaken in saying, in the article on Phillips in Ward's " English Poets," that Phillips died at Hastings), for burial, have reason to know, he died worth exactly £5, and where more was coming from when that was gone none could say.

Westland Marston never came to such straits as did Stephen Phillips, but he had to leave his house at Chalk Farm and take rooms with his son, whom he survived, in a very different neighbourhood. He would have been poorer but for Irving's characteristic generosity. That great-hearted actor produced Byron's *Werner* at a memorable and crowded (as I can testify, being present) matinée at the Lyceum Theatre, the performance being a " benefit " one, and the proceeds going to Dr. Marston. Irving himself left a considerable sum—£19,000 I think his son, H. B. Irving, told me—and I was surprised to hear it was so large, for his charities were many. Leopold Lewis, in whose dramatisation of *The Bells* Irving made his first great success, told three or four of us one night that, although he had no claim either legal or moral upon Irving, the actor allowed the broken-down dramatist a weekly allowance out of his own pocket, without which Lewis would have been penniless.

Here is the last letter I ever received from Dr. Westland Marston. Who was the friend referred to, and in what form his sympathy manifested itself, I do not now recall, but the reference to my " sketch " was to some Memories of Philip which I had contributed to the New York *Outlook*, and that, being reprinted here in a well-known literary journal, Dr. Marston had chanced to see.

" 15, *Montpelier Street, Brighton.*
" *August* 11, 1887.

" DEAR MR. KERNAHAN,

" Your letter has followed me here. Your friend (and I may add mine) could not have found a kinder or more welcome interpreter of his sympathy for me than yourself. I enclose you a separate note that you may transmit to him.

" I was greatly touched and gratified by your vivid and most interesting sketch of my beloved boy I expect finally to be

at home—191, Euston Road, N.W.—in the course of a fortnight, when I shall be most glad to see you.

"I am almost invariably at home about a quarter past nine, for I am not in good health, and am unable to accept many invitations. Remember me kindly to your sister, and

"Believe me,

"Very sincerely yours,

"WESTLAND MARSTON."

His son Philip was so called because he was the godson of Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*, whom I remember as an old man, then living, I believe, at Nottingham. Even in old age Philip James Bailey was a striking and distinguished personality, somewhat imperious of manner (rumour said that he could on occasion be as irritable and touchy as Walter Savage Landor), with white beard and a mane of white hair, the effect of which was not a little leonine.

Philip Marston's godmother was Dinah Mulock Craik, author of *John Halifax, Gentleman;* and remembering that, though born with perfect sight, he became, as the result of an accident, partly blind at the age of three, and totally blind in the later years which held for him so many sorrows, the poem, *Philip, my King* (treasured in those days in many an album), which she addressed to him as a baby, seems strangely prophetic as well as pathetic :

Look at me with thy large brown eyes,
Philip, my King.
. . . . .
One day,
Philip, my King,
Thou, too, must tread, as we trod, a way,
Thorny and cruel and cold and grey ;
Rebels within thee and rebels without
Will snatch at thy crown, but march on glorious,
Martyr yet monarch, till angels shout,
As thou sit'st at the feet of God, victorious,
Philip, my King.

Philip's reading—his blindness, of course, prevented him from learning to read—was done through the eyes of his mother and his sisters, Eleanor and Cicely, but he learned to write passably, and towards the end of his life came into possession of a typewriter, which he mastered sufficiently to type a letter or a poem.

Blindness notwithstanding, his boyhood was not all unhappy, but scarcely was he out of that boyhood before misfortune after misfortune befell him. He was not twenty when the mother who had made him and his happiness her peculiar care, and to whom he was devoted, died. A year later, the beautiful girl Mary Nesbit (sister of " E. Nesbit," otherwise Mrs. Hubert Bland), to whom he was engaged, died. A pathetic story which appeared in a popular American journal, and was reprinted here, has been circulated concerning the circumstances of Mary Nesbit's death. It is said that Philip, entering the room in which she was resting, called her by name. As she did not answer, he thought her to be asleep, and feeling his way, blind as he was, to her couch, that he might awaken her by a caress, found her dead. Whether the circumstances of her death, and of Philip's first knowledge of her death, were as stated (which I question), the fact remains that the shock of her loss nearly killed him.

But his most marked characteristic was his absolute selflessness. In that respect I have never known his like. He of all men that ever I met, most of all, poets, thought only of others, never of himself. Even in the greatest tragedy of his life, his first thought was not of his own suffering, but of what the woman he loved had been spared. Here is his farewell to her. Has anything more poignant or more self-forgetful been written by mourner ?

It must have been for one of us, my own,
To drink this cup, and eat this bitter bread.
Had not my tears upon thy face been shed,
Thy tears had dropped on mine ; if I alone
Did not walk now, thy spirit would have known
My loneliness ; and did my feet not tread
This weary path and steep, thy feet had bled
For mine, and thy mouth had for mine made moan.

And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain,
To think of thine eternity of sleep ;
To know thine eyes are tearless though mine weep ;
And when this cup's last bitterness I drain,
One thought shall still its primal sweetness keep—
Thou had'st the peace, and I, the undying pain.

What was true of Marston as a lover was true also of him as a friend. Many have said that he had " a genius for friendship."

He had that—and more. Rossetti's words of Watts-Dunton, " a hero of friendship " were equally applicable to Philip Marston. Others might dilate on stories, poems, or plays which they had written or meant to write, but of himself and his own work the blind poet was silent. When last I was in London, in getting on a motor omnibus I encountered a popular writer of the day, who was getting off. We had not met for two years, and I enquired, " How are you, So-and-so ? "

" Going very strong," was the reply. " Knocked off two thousand words of my new novel before coming out. Good-bye," and so we parted. That could never have been said by Philip Marston. Once greetings had been exchanged, he would ask : " Tell me what you have been doing since last we met. I read you " (he always spoke of " reading " or " seeing," as if normal of sight, instead of being totally blind) " on Wordsworth, and pounced on that sonnet of yours on Dickens, in the *Graphic*, directly it caught my eye."

How different from some of us " writing fellows " or " knights of the inkhorn " (a phrase used first, I believe, by Wellington, but adopted afterwards by Watts-Dunton). The veteran novelist, Miss Matilda Betham-Edwards, who was straitened in means at the last, had her little all invested in a certain bank, which closed its doors. She told me that, while she was nearly beside herself with anxiety, a certain novelist who had just brought out a book called to see her. Thinking that one who had come from London, and being well-to-do, with money invested in several quarters, would know something of financial matters, and so would be in a position to advise her, she told him of her trouble, and asked, " What is going to happen ? "

" What's going to happen," was his sprightly and smiling answer, " is that you'll lose every penny. Did I tell you that every copy of my novel was ordered before publication, and that the publishers have put a huge second edition in hand ? Splendid, isn't it ? "

Again, how unlike Philip Marston ! He would have been scarcely less troubled than was the veteran novelist herself about her loss ; would have written to every friend he had in the business world on her behalf ; and would have moved heaven and earth in the effort to retrieve what could be retrieved out of the

bankruptcy. As a poet friend of his and mine, Herbert E. Clarke, wrote of him in the New York *Independent :*

> Thine was the poet's heart, and not alone,
> As hath been seen ere now, the poet's pen.
> Thou, with so many sorrows of thine own,
> Forgot'st them all in those of other men,
> And in their triumphs found thy joy again,
> And thine applause was first and heartiest.
> Thou, of all singers that the world has known,
> Had'st surely least of envy in thy breast,
> And now thou hast what was denied thee when
> We knew thee, peace and rest.

Tragedy followed after tragedy in the darkened life of Philip Marston. I have already said that the loss of his mother was followed, not many months after, by the sudden death of the beautiful girl he was to have married. This was in 1871. In 1874 his most intimate friend, Oliver Maddox Brown, died almost as suddenly. His sister Cicely, who, in the early morning of July 28, 1878, complained of no more than headache, lay dead before noon. His only other sister, Eleanor, died in the following year, and her husband, Philip's intimate friend and brother-poet, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, in less than two years after. This brings us to 1882, in which year his friend, James Thomson, author of *The City of Dreadful Night,* was taken with a seizure in Philip's room, whence he was carried to a hospital to die ; and in the same year the man whom, both as poet and friend, the blind poet held in almost boyish hero-worship, Rossetti, died at Birchington.

I remember Philip saying to me when we first met, " Do you feel, as I feel, that this is the beginning of what is to prove a friendship ? I feel so, and I hope so, but I am afraid for you. My friendship and my love are fatal. I rejoice in such a friendship as ours seems like to be, for it is as if a happy bird from the open, free of wing and of will, had come to companion one that is prisoned, both of wing and will, as in a cage. No, that simile does not carry all my meaning. I ought to say that it is as if a trapped bird were tethered by a cruel string to one limb, that, by its broken-winged and helpless upward-fluttering, it might lure some free and unfettered fellow-singer to its side. My love and my friendship are, as it were, the signal to the Old Snarer to jerk the string which entangles another victim in his meshes. Death is that snarer, and I am Death's decoy. When I think of

what happened to those others, my heart turns to water within me, lest what happened to them shall happen to any new friend I make."

Even at the outset of his journey, and as he was groping his way in his sunless, starless solitude, all Life's signposts seemed to Philip Marston to point in one of two directions—" To Love," or " To Death "; nor was it long, before following the path to Love, he found that it led, and lost itself in the path, to Death.

None the less, in congenial company he could forget his sorrows, and at such times he was not only the gayest but was also the life of the party. At his rooms we met, and there Marston was not to blame if any of us saw bed before daylight. If we chanced to meet elsewhere—like Phil May, who, when his wife said to him in my hearing, " It is past three, Phil, and will soon be daylight, let us be going," replied, " My dear woman, I'll do anything in the world to please you that is reasonable, but, dammit, I *won't* go home ! "—Marston it was who kept us from our bed. Jerome K. Jerome once gave a jolly little supper-party at 33, Tavistock Place. It was a great success, and went with a swing from the first, but " J.," as most of us called him, cannot, or could not then, stand late hours. Seeing between one and two that he was dead-tired, I suggested that if I said good-night (or rather good-morning), it would be a hint to the others to go. Yawning so prodigiously that his head and himself threatened to part company, Jerome replied sadly, " It's no use, old man. Phil Marston felt the whisky-decanter just now, and gave it a shake to satisfy himself that there is plenty in it, and heard me tell C. N. Williamson not to spare the cigars, as there were plenty in the box. So long as there is a drink or a smoke left, and so long as he can persuade some other fellow that it's still early, he won't go home." Nor did he.

At one time in his life at least, and then only out of consideration for others, Philip decided to keep earlier hours. I have already made mention of Oliver Maddox Brown, yet another " marvellous boy " who " perished in his pride " at the age of nineteen. At fifteen, Oliver was an exhibitor at the Royal Academy. At eighteen, he had published that extraordinary novel, *Gabriel Denver*, which was reprinted under its original title of *The Black Swan* two years after his death. He was the

son of Ford Maddox Brown, in whose studio Rossetti had first studied art. To Philip, Oliver once wrote :

" When I see you again, we really *must* arrange some plan by which you will agree to let me go away at twelve o'clock in future when I come to your rooms. I was as ill as possible to-day, owing to sitting up till four last night, and never will I do the like again, though I live to one hundred. Your martyred friend,

" OLIVER."

Distressed to have been the cause of illness to a friend, Philip vowed that, by him at least, Brown should never again be kept out of bed after twelve. He even vowed to reform himself in other matters than late hours. But looking at Philip Marston's beautiful face, the noble forehead, the otherwise finely moulded features, one noted sadly that, under the crisply curling auburn beard, the chin was weak. Such rare and gentle amiability and lovability of nature as his are not often combined with stern self-control and iron will. In men of his type the resolution, thenceforth and for ever, to turn their back upon some besetting sin, is at its strongest—*not* alas ! in the hour of temptation, when such resolution is most needed, but comes too often with that " next morning " feeling, after, for instance, a drinking carouse. The wish, even the intention, to walk guardedly was there, but, to the end, an easy-going procrastination made faltering the feet. How conscious Marston himself was of his weakness is evident in one of the most human and self-revealing of all his self-revealing sonnets :

I said " To-morrow," one bleak, winter day—
" To-morrow I will live my life anew,"
And still " To-morrow," while the winter grew
To spring, and yet I dallied by the way,
And sweet dear sins still held me in their sway.
" To-morrow," I said while summer days wore through ;
" To-morrow," while chill autumn round me drew ;
And so my soul remained the sweet sins' prey.

So pass the years, and still, perpetually,
I cry, " To-morrow will I flee each wile ;—
To-morrow, surely, shall my soul stand free,
Safe from the siren voices that beguile ! "
But Death waits by me with a mocking smile,
And whispers, " Yea ! To-morrow, verily ! "

But if Philip Marston would listen to none who for his own good urged him to be less free with the wine cup or the whisky-decanter by means of which he sought sometimes to forget his tragic lot, let none of us who ourselves postpone To-day to the more convenient To-morrow, or whose lot is less tragic than his, judge the blind poet too harshly.

" When you fellows are here," he once said to me, " or when I am in jolly company elsewhere, it is easy to forget one's sorrows, and that without popping corks, whether of whisky or wine, unwisely. But think of the other times ! Here I sit, night after night, often all alone by the fireside of a dingy room of a more dingy apartment-house of this God-forsaken thoroughfare and harlots' walk of the Euston Road—to think, and to think, and to think, and often to drink, and to drink, and to drink, if only the drinking will drown or will deaden the thinking. You tell me I'm drinking too hard, that I'm injuring my health and shortening my life. Perhaps if you who so talk had to sit here night after night, companioned only by *my* thoughts, *my* loneliness, and *my* darkness—perhaps you, too, might drink more than is quite good for you, if only to escape from thinking. But it won't be for long. Some of you will soon be following me to my last home. There will be a line or two in the daily papers, and the *Athenæum* and the *Academy* will say, as kindly as possible, all there is to say—it isn't much—in their Obituary column. They can't say anything half as true of me, as has been said of just such another as I by Amy Levy :

" This is the end of him, here he lies :
The dust in his throat, the worm in his eyes,
The mould in his mouth, the turf on his breast ;
This is the end of him, this is best.
He will never lie on his couch awake,
Wide-eyed, tearless, till dim daybreak.
Never again will he smile and smile
While his heart is breaking all the while.
He will never stretch out his hands in vain
Groping and groping—never again.
Never ask for bread, get a stone instead,
Never pretend that the stone is bread.
Never sway and sway twixt the false and true,
Weighing and noting the long hours through.
Never ache and ache with the choked-up sighs
This is the end of him, here he lies."

Lest the reader suppose that Philip Marston was given to the self-pity of which Rossetti has written, " And pity of self through all made broken moan," I hasten to add that self-mockery, rather than self-pity, was his prevailing mood. This was, I think, due to the fact that he was, or imagined himself to be, without any religious belief. He was more—perhaps I should say he was less—than an agnostic, whose position is merely negative. Marston went farther. If I may, without seeming irreverence, use Parliamentary terms, I should say that, no matter what Government was in power, he was always in Opposition. His own views he would probably have expressed thus: " If any Executive on high there be, of which I see no proof, I am against that Executive, just as, here below, I am against the existing and executive order of things in the State. My hope is that there is no Administrative Power on high, and no Hereafter, for it will be the same Administration up there as that which I have been under here, and I do not wish to come under that Administration again."

I do not think that I misrepresent Marston in saying that these were his views, and repugnant, even appalling as (to me) they were, in his case, at least, I could find in my heart only pity for the unhappy man who could come so to believe, or to imagine that he so believed.

I have more than one reason for so feeling, but one must suffice. It is that, whatever his own beliefs or disbeliefs, Marston would as soon have thought of wounding other men by assailing their known beliefs, or of parading and thrusting upon other men views of his own which he knew would cause them pain—he would as soon have thought of this as of picking those other men's pockets. For the same reason, brood in solitude as he might over his misfortunes and misery, in the company of his friends he was almost invariably cheerful. That he did so brood in solitude leaves no cause for wonder, for, without belief in God, and holding that Death ends all, Marston came at last to think of human life and effort as unspeakably small, inconsequent, and insignificant. Of himself to others he spoke rarely in any spirit of self-pity, but often, as I have said, in the spirit of self-mockery. A " pagan," in the religious sense, as he was, he bore himself, and in the presence of Death itself, with not a little of the noblest of pagan virtues—fortitude.

Even on the occasion when he showed himself of less stern stuff, and, speaking of his own soon-to-be passing, emphasised the last of the following lines from the poem by Amy Levy, already quoted:

> He will never stretch out his hands in vain
> Groping and groping—never again.
> Never ask for bread, get a stone instead,
> Never pretend that the stone is bread—

even then, it was no more than a poet's impressionability to the mood of the moment, and, for that moment, magnified out of all proportion. Moreover, the mood was gone as swiftly as it came. Before I had myself shaken off the oppressive sorrowfulness (but for his blindness, he might perhaps himself have seen that sorrowfulness upon my face) which his words left upon me, he was, and with smiling lips and eyes, telling me a story about some mad doings of Swinburne's. Here is the story as I recollect it.

Swinburne had promised to attend a certain reception, was, in fact, to be the lion of the evening. Unluckily he had looked upon the wine when it is red, and when he arrived, very late, the discreet man-servant of the house, instead of ushering him, announced as "Mr. Swinburne, m'Lady," into the drawing-room, showed the poet into a deserted library and sent for his mistress. Seeing how things were, she slipped back to her guests, and whispered to a man friend, "Mr. Swinburne is in the library, and . . . does not . . . does not seem . . . quite well. You have some influence over him. Please get him away as quickly and quietly as possible. I suggest a cab, home, and to bed, lest a worse thing happen."

Slipping out, the friend succeeded, as he thought, in inducing Swinburne to return home, but, as they were passing the drawing-room door on the way out, Swinburne, hearing sounds of revelry within, suddenly changed his mind, and refused to budge. The friend, being powerfully, and the poet slightly, built, the former, unwisely, thought to end the matter by lifting the latter bodily in his arms and carrying him to the door, and thence to a cab. This was the very way to turn the already excited poet obstreperous. Naturally he resisted, and his shrill and angry denunciations and the sound of scuffling being heard by the alarmed

guests, the drawing-room door was flung open, those assembled crowded out into the hall, and further concealment of the untoward occurrence was impossible.

But the matter did not end there. When he awoke next morning, Swinburne had not the faintest recollection of what had happened overnight, except that he had forgotten, as he thought, to fulfil his promise to be present at the reception. His inclination, in early life,. towards the wine cup notwithstanding (one remembers to his honour that he overcame it entirely in later life), Swinburne was, by nature, a great gentleman, and punctiliously courteous. To have promised to attend a reception, and then, as the phrase runs, never " to have put in an appearance " (little did he imagine the kind of appearance he *had* put in !), distressed him greatly. Some sort of apology and explanation must, he felt, be made, and instantly. Imagine, then, the surprise of his overnight hostess when—while at breakfast with those of her guests who were staying in the house, and had been present at the overnight scene—Swinburne was ushered in, unblushingly to pitch a preposterous story of how, when on his way to the reception on the preceding evening, his cabman had proved to be so drunk that he had collided with another cab. Swinburne's cab, it seemed, had been overturned, throwing him into the street, and within an ace of having his brains dashed out by the mad kicking of the prostrate and frightened horse. Marston, who was present both at the reception and at the breakfast, added that he did not know which to admire the more —the confiding and child-like truthfulness with which Swinburne told his story and realistically filled in the most remote details, or the horror and alarm with which the lady appeared to listen to the account of the accident, and the fervency of her expression of thankfulness that the life of the poet had been spared.

This story finished, Marston followed it by one of Tennyson, which he may, or may not, have told because—ashamed of his own lapse into a self-pitying mood—he wished to illustrate the swiftness with which, as by some law of chemical mind-reaction, the mood of a great poet, no less than that of a minor one, could react to another and very different mood.

A friend of his who knew Tennyson was, in the early days of their acquaintance, shall I say " taken aback ? " to hear the

poet who had been discoursing divinely on high matters suddenly break into a rumble of laughter on mentioning the name of another poet who had written scarcely less greatly than Tennyson himself concerning the very high and even spiritual matters about which Tennyson had spoken with such feeling. The mention of the name had reminded Tennyson of a comical (Marston's friend's word for it was " coarse ") story about the poet in question. To explain his outburst of what seemed incongruous laughter, and being, that morning, in the mood to unbend, Tennyson told the story. Marston repeated it to me, and if broadly humorous, and very human, I should hesitate to call it " coarse."

Seeing on the other's face what was in his mind, Tennyson said gruffly: " You're surprised to hear the poet of *The Holy Grail* tell that story? H'm " (this more a growl than a note of exclamation). " Shows how little *you* know about the all-compassing, all-comprehending, manifoldness of human personality. Reaction—from cloud to sunshine, from heat to cold, from wet to dry—is the law of nature, and so it is of human nature. Don't you know, man, that when one has been soaring into the Empyrean one needs a demiurgic plunge back to the good—I suppose such Philistines as you would call it ' gross '—old earth, to get back to healthy human relations again? "

In telling this story of Tennyson, as well as that about Swinburne, poets both of whom Marston accounted as gods—he did so smilingly, never sneeringly or spitefully. His stories of great men were told not to show that his idol had feet of clay—on which score, convinced as Marston was that Swinburne, at least, had a heart of gold, he would not have troubled himself—but only that Swinburne's brain was easily excited by alcohol. Swinburne, personally, Marston held in deep affection and reverence. " His life," wrote Louise Chandler Moulton in her Introduction to Marston's *Collected Poems*, " was eventful only in its sorrows and in its friendships. He was but fourteen years old when he was first taken to see Swinburne, and at that time, wonderful as the achievement seems, he actually knew by heart the whole of the First Series of *Poems and Ballads*. The friendship begun on that memorable day was a pride and a joy to Marston for all the rest of his life. Later on he came to know intimately Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and to love him with adoring

enthusiasm. One of Rossetti's latest sonnets was addressed to Marston. Another well-beloved friend was Theodore Watts (afterwards Watts-Dunton), whose work won for him the life-long and intimate friendship of Rossetti, Browning, and Lord Tennyson, and was the first link in that chain of more than brotherly love which binds him to Swinburne, his house-mate at present; William Sharp ('Fiona Macleod') poet and novelist; Herbert E. Clarke, the poet; Coulson Kernahan, the young author of *A Dead Man's Diary;* the Hon. Roden Noel; A. Mary F. Robinson; Olive Schreiner; Iza Duffus Hardy; Mrs. W. K. Clifford; E. Nesbit—these were a few only of the group of literary friends who cheered with their sympathy and appreciation the last sad years of Marston's darkened life."

Marston died on February 14, 1887, on which day, but for the illness which kept him to the house, but was not expected to end fatally, he was to have accompanied me on a visit to my sister. Jerome K. Jerome had called in passing 191, Euston Road to enquire how Philip was, and being aware that the blind poet had accepted an invitation from my sister to spend a few days with her and me in her home in the country, Jerome sent me a telegram, the phrasing of which he knew I should understand:

"Poor Phil Marston has received another invitation—one that he cannot postpone—which will make the acceptance of your sister Mary's impossible."

I was reminded of that telegram many years later, when, after leaving Stephen Phillips in what we hoped was a refreshing sleep, to seek my own bed, I received from his nurse, within a few hours, the message, "Your friend Stephen will wake no more."

"Ah! if only I knew what lies beyond!" were words often on Philip Marston's lips. *He* believed that beyond lay—nothing. I, on the contrary, think as my sister thought, when, after his death, she wrote these lines to his memory:

God's angel, Sorrow, laid her hand on thee,
And drew a deepening shroud across thine eyes,
Shut out the windy sunset's glimmering skies,
And shining stretches of the wide, waste sea.
Then, with slow step, came One who sate, that she
Might hold thine hand, with wan, wet face, and sighs
Innumerable. "Men call me Grief," she cries,
"And I, henceforth, for ever dwell with thee."

Thus desolate days wore on till one drear night,
Another step came nearer. " O long tried ! "
Sudden a voice rang clear, " Receive thy sight ! "
And at a touch thy dim eyes opened wide
To a Great Darkness—and in a Great Light,
Lost faces shining on the farther side.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNERAL SERVICE (SERMON PREACHED BY SIR A. CONAN DOYLE) OF A ONCE-FAMOUS CLUB. INCLUDING "WHEN SARAH BERNHARDT KEPT A DUCHESS AND A PRIME MINISTER WAITING FOR THEIR LUNCH."

CHAPTER IV

SPEAKING at the last and wind-up dinner of the New Vagabond Club, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was in the chair, said (the quotation is from the *Morning Post*): "The club originated thirty years ago in meetings of private friends in the rooms of Philip Marston, the blind poet. Among the group were many famous men. . . . The club did good service in bringing together those interested in literature. There was hardly anyone who was distinguished in literature, art, the stage, or any other walk of life who had not been the guest of the club."

That Sir Arthur claimed for the New Vagabonds no more than their due will, I think, be evident when I say that "The Vagabonds" (so christened by Philip Marston) was not a club but a little fraternity numbering scarcely more than a dozen, but as "The New Vagabonds" the club totalled some five or six hundred members, with Lord Roberts as president, and the Duke of Argyll, Lord Charles Beresford, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling as vice-presidents. Among the members were Sir Hall Caine, Sir Rider Haggard, Sir Anthony Hope, E. W. Hornung, W. W. Jacobs, Henry Arthur Jones, William le Queux, Sir George Alexander, Grant Allen, Arthur Bourchier, Walter Crane, S. R. Crockett, Dr. John Beattie Crozier, Sir A. Conan Doyle, Sir Alfred East, A.R.A., Phil May, Kenneth Grahame, Dudley Hardy, R. S. Hichens, Lewis Hind, Spencer Leigh Hughes, Cutcliffe Hyne, Richard le Gallienne, A. E. W. Mason, Frankfort Moore, Arthur Morrison, Sir David Murray, R.A., Will Owen, Horace Newte, Barry Pain, Sir Gilbert Parker, Bernard Partridge, Percy White, Max Pemberton, Pett Ridge, A. R. Ropes (Adrian Ross), Clement Scott, C. N. Williamson, J. J. Shannon, R.A., William Sharp (Fiona Macleod), Solomon J. Solomon, R.A., E. J. Sullivan, Allen Upward, Louis Wain,

Arnold Bennett, Stanley Weyman, W. J. Locke, Signor Marconi, Bram Stoker, and H. G. Wells, to name only a few.

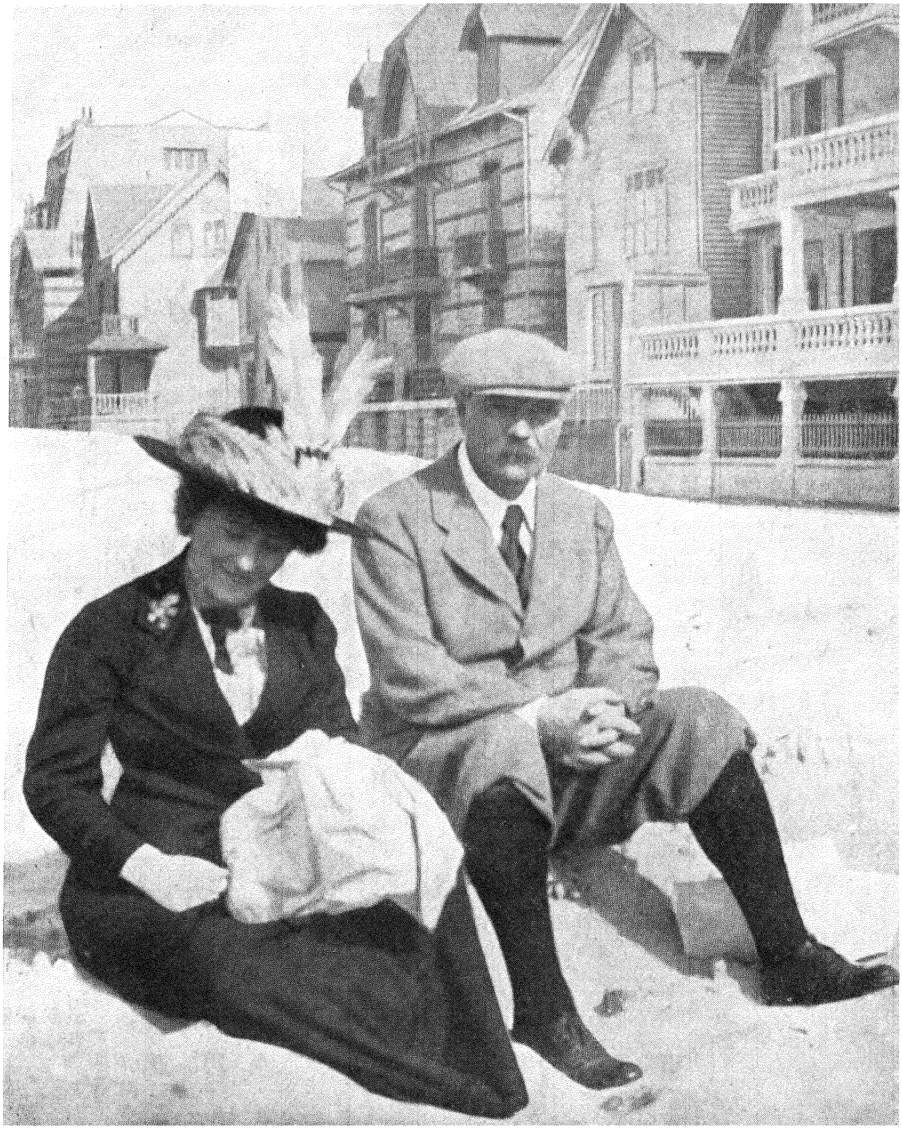
In another chapter I have told the story of the meetings of the original members at Philip Marston's rooms. Here I write of what happened after Marston's death on February 14, 1887. In his lifetime the blind poet was the link which held us together, and for the first few months after his death the gatherings were discontinued. Then someone—I believe J. T Nettleship, the animal painter—proposed that they be resumed. Nettleship, who had studied art under Sir Edward Poynter, P.R.A., was himself an exhibitor at the Royal Academy, and I believe was the designer of the title page and binding of Rossetti's *Poems*, as well as of Arthur O'Shaughnessy's *An Epic of Fair Women* (about the title page of which there was trouble concerning an alleged impropriety), proposed that the name of " The Vagabonds " be changed to that of " The Marston Club." As Dr. Westland Marston survived his son, this was intended as a compliment to him as well as to Philip. I was for continuing the old name of " The Vagabonds," as " Club " seemed to me too pretentious a title for our small fraternity. A one-man, or, as in this case, two-men club (I said) should bear a greater name than that of Marston, unless it were to be a mere mutual admiration society or a clique ; and I remember telling my fellow members of the temporary committee two stories of the Browning Society. Perhaps I may relate these stories here.

Both were at the expense of the cult which at that time was doing Browning a disservice, rather than a service, by exploiting him as the greatest, if not the only, poet of his time, and by refusing to see that any poem or passage from a poem of his was obscure. One of the blindest and most fatuous of the cult, so the story goes, was attending a meeting of the Browning Society. He arrived late, and when he took his seat someone was giving a reading, which the newcomer frequently interrupted by applause, and by exclaiming audibly " Exquisite ! " " Incomparable ! " and the like.

" May I ask you, sir," said the reader, " not to interrupt ? "

" I am sorry," was the reply, " but at a meeting of the Browning Society a member should surely be permitted to express his admiration of the master's work."

" The meeting of the Browning Society," was the answer, " is,



Sir Arthur and Lady Conan Doyle.

[*Facing p.* 64.

I believe, now being held at No. 29 (this is No. 28) on the opposite side of the road. Perhaps you mistook the number, or perhaps our open door and the lighted front-room misled you. This happens to be a drawing-room meeting of those interested in the propagation of the Gospel in China, and as a friend present expressed a wish to hear what Chinese sounded like, I was reading a passage from the Gospel of St. John, as translated into that language."

One hopes that the hero of the second alleged happening was the same person, for to tell two stories in which anyone could make himself, to say nothing of Browning, so ridiculous, is to ask a great deal of the reader. Anyhow, the story goes that a gushful person who posed—it could have been no more than a pose—as a Browning student and devotee remarked that only very dense folk brought against Browning the charge of obscurity; and that, speaking for himself, he had never read a line of Browning's that he found any difficulty in understanding.

His host took down a volume of Browning from the shelf, turned to a piece, the meaning of which could hardly be said to leap to the eye, and, beginning with the last line, following it with the last but one, after that the last line but two, read on thus to the end. Though the poem was read backward, the rhymes of course remained and appeared the one to follow the other in appointed order; and the reader, an eloquent and accomplished elocutionist, did his best to make what was obviously nonsense to sound, at least, as if it were sense.

When he had ended, he enquired: "Is the meaning of that quite plain to you?"

"Quite plain," was the reply. "From the beginning to the stately end, like the unchecked march to its destination of an irresistible army, I never had a moment's doubt about what the master had in his mind when he thus wrote."

My objection was, however, overruled, and the club was christened "The Marston." To the first meeting I brought, as my guests, Mr. Clement Shorter, Mr. Theodore Watts (afterwards Watts-Dunton), and Sir William Watson—the first and probably the only time that Watts-Dunton and Watson ever met. But the circle of the Marston's friends and admirers was in those days, at least—for Philip was dead, and Dr. Marston had outlived his fame—very small. One member after another dropped

out or ceased to attend, and the Marston Club would have died a natural death had not, first, Douglas Sladen, and, later, G. B. Burgin, come upon the scene as honorary secretaries.

Thenceforward the New Vagabonds (or two Vagabonds, as it might have been called) Club was run by Sladen and Burgin without assistance or interference of the committee, and a huge success they made of it. They put the club, in a metaphorical sense, in the shop window. They invited, and so tactfully that no invitation was to my knowledge declined, the most distinguished men and women (the inclusion of women as members and consequently of women as guests came a little later) of the day as club guests. Thereafter the dinners, with full list of guests and speakers, were reported at length in all the papers from the *Times* down to the (in those days) halfpenny evening newspapers, and on one occasion, at least, royalty came to grace our board.

Little did the dozen or so—then mostly all unknown, and mostly all hard-up young men whom Philip Marston had gathered round himself, as " The Vagabonds " (I am not sure that Jerome, Montgomery Carmichael and myself are not the only original members now living)—imagine that a time would come when, under the stage management of Sladen and Burgin (neither then a member), we should entertain royalty, have a duke, an admiral, and a field marshal as president or vice-president, and number among the New Vagabond Club most of the distinguished authors, artists and actors of the day.

And now for a confession. At one of the full-dress dinners—celebrities, notabilities, some of them glittering with orders, at our table, and after seemingly endless courses had been served and eaten to the popping of champagne corks, followed by coffee, cigars, and rare liqueurs—Jerome whispered to me :

" I say, old man, do you remember when you and I and Phil. Marston, and two or three others of the boys, turned in at some shabby restaurant for a *Maccaroni à la Italienne* with a pint of bitter in a tankard—and then rather thought we were ' going it ? ' Tell me, did you not enjoy that *Maccaroni Italienne* in Fleet Street, or, when we went West, that chop or steak, that plate of hare soup, or that welsh rabbit, a hanged sight more than all this gorgeousness, grandeur, and glitter with great folk, and toast-making and speech-making ? "

And truthfully I made answer, " My dear J., I am sure that I did." Poor we may have been in those days—how poor I was recently reminded by a letter of Swinburne's which ran: " I am almost as much astonished as shocked and sorry to receive such an account of Phil. Marston's circumstances. There are but one or two men, younger than myself, towards whom I feel such cordial goodwill and, indeed, affection. I wish the poor ten pounds I send were better worth offering."

But, poor as we may have been in those days, at least we practised and lived the Bohemianism to which, in the days of the New Vagabonds Club, most of us only pretended. When the club ceased to be, one important literary journal in its obituary notice remarked that the little fraternity which in its early days numbered so many names which had since become famous was, even then, if all unsuspected by its members, " making literary history." I cannot imagine any of us so deficient in humour as then, or now, to take ourselves thus seriously. But if we did not " make literary history," we did at least make for something resembling genuine Bohemianism. The time of the meetings of The Vagabonds at Philip Marston's room in the Euston Road, and, after his death, of the Marston Club in a tavern, was the transitional period between the passing of what *was* Bohemian, and the coming of what only *called* itself so. One of the shrewdest and keenest observers, himself a writer of distinguished English, Mr. Lewis Hind, who came sometimes to the old Vagabonds and the Marston Club in their Bohemian days, recently said that, in London at least, Bohemianism is extinct. Someone suggested to him that it still lingered at the Whitefriar Club, to which Hind retorted crushingly, " The Whitefriar Club!—why Clement Shorter goes there! " and he might have added, " So does the Reverend Silas K. Hocking! " concerning whom I recall a story. For the truth of it I will not answer, for even of my obscure self stories have been told for which there is either no foundation, or of which the facts have been so twisted as to be unrecognisable. Here is an instance. An intimate friend of mine—I remain his friend, the story notwithstanding, for these yarns have to be fathered on somebody, and so long as they are amusing I do not greatly care, nor I think will Mr. Hocking—tells a story about an altercation I am alleged to have had with a London cabman. The London

cabman of twenty years ago (the type is nearly extinct) was what Mr. John Drinkwater calls " a lord of language " and prided himself on the fact. Not even our once far-famed troops in Flanders could consign to everlasting perdition the soul, eyes, body, and limbs of those with whom they fell out as could the London cabman. Compared with the cabman, our troops in Flanders were mere bunglers and amateurs who recklessly hurled oaths and bad language about. The London cabman was, on the contrary, an artist who went to work with all an artist's loving care and skill. In a few master strokes of the vividest crimson he drew a picture of the other man, under which the victim recoiled, scorched and annihilated as by fire. With such a London cabman I was supposed to have had a misunderstanding, and so appalling was my alleged language that, hearing it, the cabman collapsed fainting on the pavement, to exclaim, as with his last breath : " D'yer 'ear 'im, boys ? I'm done ! "

Probably there is as little truth in the story I am about to tell of Mr. Hocking as there is in that about the cabman and myself, but here it is.

The Reverend Silas K. Hocking is, as all the world knows, a writer whose circulation—his books, not his blood—runs into millions. Of the Sunday Schools he is an idol, and the sale of his books, the most popular of which is *Her Benny*, as Sunday School prizes, amounts to many thousands a year. At a dinner he asked to be introduced to a famous wit and novelist—the story goes that it was Pett Ridge. To him, when introduced, Mr. Hocking is supposed to have expressed himself as a very great admirer of Mr. Pett Ridge's novels.

" Oh yes, of course, Mr. Silas Hocking. I am delighted to meet you," was the reply. " To my shame I must confess that I have never read any of your writings, though I am well aware (who isn't ?) of their enormous popularity. But I am so glad to meet you, if only to tell my dear old aunt that I have done so. It will quite excite her, for though she is ninety-four years of age and hasn't a tooth in her head, she simply dotes on your books."

To return to the New Vagabond Club, one of the vice-presidents of which was, as I have said, the Duke of Argyll (husband of Princess Louise). My father knew the eighth duke, his father, whose contributions to science and controversies with Professor Huxley will be remembered. Our vice-president I had

known since the day when he was the Marquis of Lorne, and at the dinner at which he was the guest of the club I was in the vice-chair.

The Duke had literary ambitions, and had published *A Trip to the Tropics, Guido and Lita,* and a *Paraphrase of the Psalms.* I question whether the publication of any of these works gave him half as much pleasure—so far from bringing him money, he was probably out of pocket by all three—as the acceptance of a poem of his (two or three verses only) by a magazine, issued, I think, by the great House of Cassells. For probably the first time in his life the Duke felt himself a " literary man," for whose brain-efforts, even men of business so proverbially close-fisted as publishers—not that Cassells are so, for, on the contrary, I have found them more than generous—were prepared to pay in hard cash. His rent toll might one day, for he was then Marquis of Lorne, come in by the hundred thousand, but here was money, earned by the sweat of his own brow and brain. So delighted was he by the cheque, which as I remember was only for sixteen and ninepence, that nothing would content him but going in person to the bank to cash it. I wish I could add the interesting information upon what—like a schoolboy who, coming in for the unexpected windfall of a " tip," must needs spend part of it lest the donor should repent and recall his gift, or lest it be sequestered to open an account in his name at some loathed Savings Bank—the noble Marquis " blued " the cash. " Bang," somewhere, though where I cannot say, went sixteen and ninepence; but I confess that the thought of a future Duke of Argyll making haste to turn the uncertainty of a scrap of paper into the certainty of hard cash has sometimes sustained me when shyly presenting for payment a cheque for a similarly small sum at my own bank.

In the House of Commons I have heard the late Duke, when Marquis of Lorne, spoken of as " unapproachable." Once dining there I said to my host, Major, afterwards Sir Carne Rasch: " I see the Marquis of Lorne dining in lonely grandeur at a far table."

" Yes," said Rasch, " but he likes to be lonely. I am told that he goes in fear and trembling, all the time, lest some intrusive fellow-member should take the liberty of speaking to him."

Those who told Rasch so were, I think, mistaken. Unapproachable, I did not find the Duke. After he had succeeded to the title, I had to make some reference to him when he was present, but I said little of himself, if a great deal of his father's eminence in science. Later, the Duke said to me, and said it with simple and frank sincerity, " I am so very grateful for your generous words, and all the more so because what you said was not of me, but of my honoured father."

As the husband of a princess of the blood royal, his position was in those Victorian days—all that is now changed—no doubt difficult. Tennyson Cole, the painter, whose full-length portrait of King Edward was the picture of the year when hung in the place of honour at the Academy, and is now in Windsor Castle, told me that he was painting a portrait of a certain noble lord who had held many high offices of state.

" Whose portrait did you paint last, Mr. Cole ? " enquired the sitter.

" His Grace the Duke of Argyll," was the reply.

" Ah ! " said the other. " H'm ! yes, his position is a difficult one. In the various offices I have held in the state, I have come somewhat closely into contact with royalty of every nation. You can take it from me, Mr. Cole, that no one can unbend so graciously and so charmingly as royalty ; but, all the same, if there is one fixed and case-hardened idea in the head of royalty, it is that there are only two classes—royalty and the rest of the world. You may be " (here the noble lord mentioned his own name), " you may even be a Campbell, as Argyll is, and I take it that not even our own reigning House is of more ancient lineage than the Campbells, or you may be Mr. Tennyson Cole, the portrait painter—all that makes small difference. Argyll, myself, and you, Mr. Cole, are not royalties ; and between royalties and the rest of us a yawning and impassable gulf of separation stands."

The New Vagabond Club functions were, with one exception, dinners. Only once do I remember the club giving a lunch. It was to Madame Sarah Bernhardt, to whom I had previously had the honour of being presented by one of America's most eminent women-poets, my friend Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton. The great actress when she entered the room on that occasion was accompanied by a handsome young man. After welcoming

Madame Bernhardt, Mrs. Moulton, who was aware only that her guest was a widow, turned to greet Madame's companion.

"Your son, Madame Bernhardt?" she said tentatively, offering him her hand. Who the young man was—some friend or protégé—I do not now recall, but I remember that Madame's dainty shoulders lifted deprecatingly, that Madame's sensitive hands, more eloquent than words, fluttered apart like startled birds, and that in the wonderful voice which holds men and women spell-bound, as by a golden chain, Madame replied swiftly: "*Pas si bête!*"

The New Vagabonds entertained Madame Bernhardt to lunch, instead of to dinner, to suit the great actress's convenience, as she was appearing, I believe, in the evening at the Comedy Theatre. As hundreds of tickets had been taken, each seat bore the name of the occupant, and, to prevent the confusion which might be caused by guests hunting round the tables to find where they were seated, each person present was asked to ascertain where he or she was seated, and to remain there, so that, when Madame Bernhardt arrived, luncheon could at once be served.

At the time appointed, the company, among whom was the Duchess of Sunderland, with Mr. Arthur Balfour, as he then was, presiding, was decorously seated. Then my wine steward, who, as it happened, had waited on me on previous occasions, and knew that I was good for a not ungenerous tip, whispered in my ear, "Would it not be as well if I opened your wine now, sir? Luncheon is about to commence, and I shall have a lot of tables to see to. Everybody will want to be attended to at once, and you may not wish to keep your guests waiting."

Unfortunately for me, for the wine I was giving my guests was sparkling, I assented.

All round the tables the buzz of conversation was general, but when the clock pointed to a quarter of an hour after the appointed time, with no sign of Madame Bernhardt, conversation began to flag, and those who happened to be hungry to fidget and to look anxious. Anxious too, less because of his empty interior, looked Douglas Sladen, the honorary secretary. The function was, as were all the functions of the club, of his and his colleague George Burgin's arranging. They had invited Madame Bernhardt to be the club's guest; they had made all the arrangements, including the invitation to Mr. Balfour to

take the chair, and to the Duchess of Sunderland and other distinguished persons to be present. Should Madame Bernhardt fail to keep her appointment, they would have reason to be mortified by a fiasco which would make the club, and consequently themselves, the responsible stage managers, look small.

Slipping out of his seat, Sladen was seen to go over to whisper to the chairman, and then left the room, to telephone to the hotel where Madame Bernhardt was staying. She, the person most nearly concerned, was the one person not in the least perturbed. Perhaps she was of opinion that it is only *la Bourgeoisie*, never genius, which is guilty of anything so commonplace as to be punctual. Perhaps she imagined that to keep to time might seem as if it were she who was honoured by the invitation, instead of the club and the company being honoured by her acceptance of the invitation. Certain great singers hold that by accepting an encore, they cheapen themselves in the estimation of the audience. Similarly, Madame Bernhardt, unwilling to do anything to dispel the glamour and the mystery which surround her personality, may have thought that by keeping the company thus tantalised and on tenter-hooks, lest she should fail them altogether, she would but heighten the eagerness and enthusiasm that awaited her entrance ; and that for her to arrive with, and at the same time as, the other guests was unworthy of a great tragedienne. The story goes that when Sladen telephoned to her at her hotel, Madame answered reassuringly but airily that all was well. She was desolated at the thought of keeping so distinguished a company waiting, but a few minutes would surely not matter ? Unhappily she was one of those singular creatures to whom to hurry was constitutionally impossible, but she might be expected directly, as Madame's maid was at that moment engaged in lacing Madame's corsets.

Another quarter of an hour went by, and hungry guests were observed between the talk absent-mindedly to break off small pieces of the roll of bread beside their plate, and as absent-mindedly to convey the same surreptitiously to their mouth. Mr. Balfour, then Prime Minister, was due at the House of Commons early in the afternoon on very urgent and important business. He struck me as looking particularly distrait, and as less concerned, just then, with problems of " Philosophic Doubt," than with doubts about a matter concerning which it is less easy

to be philosophic. "That one, divine, far-off event, to which the whole creation moves"—dinner—seemed very "far off" at two of the clock on a lunchless afternoon. A novelist, with a vivid imagination, who sat near the Premier, asserts that, at one time during the fast which preceded the feast, Mr. Balfour seemed to wander in his talk, and was heard to babble deliriously of beef steaks and mutton chops. For my humble self, I remember (though not hungry) watching—as one watches by the dying—my alas! opened bottles of sparkling wine yielding up, bubble by bubble, the last ghost of a sparkle. I speculated dismally whether, flat as the contents must be by that time, I should not be put to the expense of ordering the removal of the bottles, that they might be replaced by those newly opened, when luncheon at last materialised. Another quarter of an hour passed, and a very corpulent woman seated near by—she might have been the identical lady of whom T. W. H. Crosland said that he had seen the chocolate-greedy eyes of the girl of ten shine out even more greedily in the eyes of the woman of forty, when truffles were put on the table—announced that she was "sinking fast," and that, Madame Bernhardt or no Madame Bernhardt, she, for one, was going to order the waiter to bring her lunch and to begin.

Hearing this, Sladen, most urbane, amiable, and unruffled of honorary secretaries—his steady, kindly, dog-true, dog-brown eyes for once troubled—crossed the room to confer with his trusty co-secretary, Burgin. The Day of Judgment itself would not disturb the smiling serenity of that most beloved and ageless of men and fellow clubmen. I say "ageless" for the reason that, just as I once heard a Roman mother, whom someone was pitying because her child had the measles, remark philosophically: "If he has got to have the measles one day, it is just as well that he should catch them now, get over it, and have done with it"—so Burgin decided to catch and to get over old age when he was twenty-one. I met him first nearly forty years ago, and he does not look a day older now than he did then. The only difference is that he was then an elderly-looking young man, whereas now he is a very young-looking elderly man. And within the compass of those forty years I have never seen him to be other than his suave, friendly, and smiling self.

Unlike Sladen, he looked upon the Bernhardt incident as an

additional and original item and attraction in the programme of what was in effect a matinée performance. Any stodgy and mediocre celebrity could, by consulting a watch or clock, contrive to keep a luncheon engagement at the hour fixed. That sort of dull and uninteresting thing is done every day. But it required a great occasion, a great genius, and a great tragedienne to keep a duchess, a prime minister, and any number of distinguished folk hungry and lunchless, while she toyed with her stay-laces. Burgin's point of view was, that to the morning's entertainment, Madame Bernhardt had graciously and gratuitously added the added item and attraction of herself in the rôle of the "Vanishing Lady." I am not sure that, on the whole, he did not think that her punctual appearance would have been a pity. It would have lacked the element of pleasurable uncertainty which gives edge to appetite when one arrives home without knowing what there is for dinner, or if any dinner to sit down to there be. Even though one has had to wait for it, when the best of fare is put upon the board—and that Madame Bernhardt would in her own good time arrive, and, by her charm of personality, more than compensate the company for the delay, Burgin never had a moment's doubt—when that happens, one settles down to the banquet merrily.

A very hungry guest to whom I had explained matters wanly remarked that perhaps the reason for Burgin's cheeriness and Sladen's gloom was less due to temperamental reasons than to the fact that Burgin had breakfasted heartily, and Sladen, as my guest affirmed he happened to know, had not. Be that as it may, Burgin, chirpy as a cock sparrow, flitted hither and thither, to ask a celebrity if he or she did not think it an excellent discipline for a duchess, for once in her life, to experience the pangs of hunger, as with such intimate knowledge she would, no doubt, double her next subscription for the relief of starving authors, or actors, in distress? Was it not just as well that Mr. Balfour, whom his Free Trade opponents charged with the enormity of "taxing the worker's breakfast," should be faced with the spectre not only of an empty plate, but actually of an empty stomach?—and so on. Meanwhile, Sladen, at whose vitals hunger, according to my guest, was gnawing, had again betaken himself to the telephone. Madame Bernhardt, I understand, blew a kiss to him along it—a sandwich would have been more

acceptable just then—and announced that she was almost ready, was, in fact, at that very moment, fastening her garters. And so, bulletins, which my modesty forbids the recording—Madame, being French by adoption, held different views on the subject—announcing the exact stage which she had then reached in the process of robing, continued to arrive, until, with magnificent aplomb, Madame Bernhardt herself, three-quarters of an hour late, but a vision of immortal youth, eternal beauty, as well as of grace and genius, arrived to be triumphantly escorted to the seat of honour.

Of the lunch I say no more than that except for a feeble joke which someone near me ventured, about the coming of Sarah having transformed our Sahara into an Oasis of plenty—eating and drinking, not talking was the order of the day—which reminds me of my own order to the wine-steward to remove the champagne he had opened, flat now as dish-water or a deflated tyre, and to replace it by newly-opened bottles.

Luncheon over, a reception was held, and never have I admired Mr. Balfour's finesse more than in watching the adroitness with which he extricated himself from Madame Bernhardt's embrace, when (as if to inaugurate the reception) with arms uplifted, and almost falling upon his neck, she exclaimed ecstatically, " Mr. Balfour ! I adore you ! "

Even to us, the rank and file who were presented, she was scarcely less gracious. If, as Rossetti wrote of Lizzie Siddell, " Beauty, like hers, is genius "—only by the word " genius," and Shakespeare's tribute to Cleopatra's " infinite variety," can one hope to convey the enthralling and compelling power of Madame Bernhardt's personality. Under its spell, we forgot and forgave everything ; and as I stooped to lift her fingers to my lips, I forgave—I could not forget : the wine-steward saw to that—the fact that I had to pay for my spoilt, flat, and untouched, as well

CHAPTER V

FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON

CHAPTER V

WHAT is the quality which most endears our friends to us? We recall it, it may be, this man's brilliance, that woman's beauty, another friend's wit, and yet another's wisdom, but there is necessarily no stirring at our hearts. There are friends, on the other hand, to think of whom is like letting in warm sunshine upon the cold corridors of memory. The quality by which we are drawn to a fellow mortal is, I think, not similarity of views, whether on religion or politics (both matters on which many fall out), nor tastes and interests in common, nor admiration of his abilities or moral character, but a certain temperamental receptivity to impressions, and to the moods and temperamental idiosyncrasies of others, by virtue of which he can interest himself in the things, even the seemingly little things, in which they are interested. Most of all, the quality in our friends which endears them to us is a fine sensitiveness, an exquisitely delicate consideration for the feelings of those with whom they are brought into contact.

Just as plant life, so recent research has discovered, instantly and invariably responds to—is depressed or stimulated by—even so incalculably slight a change as is caused by a passing cloud, so some men and women respond, and are mercurially sensitive to, the mood and feelings of the rest of us.

In himself and for others Frederick Locker was thus sensitive. I have seen him shrink and wince under a boisterous greeting; I have seen him, at a reception, turn aside from talking to an exalted personage, or from the most sought-after celebrity in the room, to draw into the conversation some "forlorn young creature" (to use his own words), a shy or diffident young man or woman, playing wallflower, unnoticed, in a corner. On other occasions I have seen him do so to some elderly man or woman, who had fallen out of the running in the race for fame, fortune

or social success, and by a deference, greater and gentler than Mr. Locker would perhaps have accorded to the same persons in the days of their prosperity, so recall to them their former triumphs as to make them forget the ill-fortune which had come in later life.

Nor was it only the elderly "Has-Been" or the youthful "Yet-to-Be" upon whom Frederick Locker turned compassionate eye. Shy and sensitive when himself a child, he possibly remembered the martyrdoms and miseries he had endured when accompanying his parents to call upon "grown ups." One day when he and I happened to be at the same "At Home," there swept into the room, gorgeously gowned, an eminent lady novelist. Her progress from the door, where her name had been announced, to the table, where her hostess was dispensing tea, was as impressive as that of a royal barge in one of the old-time state waterway processions. Even her husband, neither a small nor an altogether unimportant man, had the helpless look of a skiff, swept along by the suction of the larger vessel's wake ; but the sudden letting down of a flowing train had so caught her small son in the unexpected wash of it, that he bobbed hither and thither, like a cork-float on a fisherman's net. Thence the lad had drifted into a social backwater, afforded by the lee of a large mahogany sideboard, where, no one taking the slightest notice of him, he stood, first upon one leg and then upon another, the picture of shy and awkward self-consciousness.

All this I saw out of the tail of an eye while listening to a detailed account by the lady novelist in question of how she came to write her last novel. I had not read it, but my fear lest she should ask me whether I had done so was allayed by the fact that she took for granted that all the world was familiar with the immortal work. Then, still out of the tail of an eye, I saw Mr. Locker retrieve a plate of strawberries from a smiling maid, and bear it off triumphantly to the corner where fidgeted the forgotten boy. Inviting the youngster to share—a mere pretence at sharing—the banquet, Mr. Locker had him in five minutes chatting as merrily and as freely about school, cricket and holidays as if the grizzled but distinguished man of letters who had carried a life-line of rescue to the boy across the social seas had been a schoolmate in the same form.

When, as a young man, I first met Mr. Locker—nearly forty

years my senior as he was—I stood in some awe of him. The intimate friend of Tennyson, then to me a demi-god, as well as of Thackeray, another of my youthful heroes, Locker's head was encircled by something like a halo in my eyes. Moreover, my preconception of him was that of a typical " society " man, languid, supercilious, cynical in speech, cold in manner, quick to boredom by anything that such as I could say to him, and relieved only when, after the interchange of a few conventional phrases, I had made my bow and withdrawn. When, on my being introduced, he fumbled for and fixed a monocle in his eye through which, and leisurely, to survey me, my demoralisation was complete, for, under the eyeglass manner, especially when accompanied by the eyeglass stare, I had, on other occasions, felt myself shrink to the dimensions of an insect upon a microscopic slide. To my wonderment, Locker set me, in the first half minute, almost in the first few seconds, as completely at ease as if we had known each other for years. A man of the world, in the happy sense of the term, he had also the intuitive perception of a woman, and by the gentle sweetness of his disposition could as easily win a smile from a child as he could from a churlish old print-seller, or a society beauty.

I remember remarking on this characteristic of his to someone known to him, who replied off-handedly, " Oh, yes. Locker has the happy knack for that sort of thing, partly inborn and partly acquired. But he is a man of the world who knows that courtesy to others generally pays, and costs nothing to expend."

The saying was as shallow as it was foolish. " You will find," writes John Pulsford, in *Quiet Hours*, " that just in proportion as one is fitted to comfort, is his own liability to overwhelming distress. To be a real comforter, a person must have profound sympathies, but profound sympathies are always in association with keen sensibilities, and keen sensibilities expose their possessor to a depth of anguish, utterly unintelligible to ordinary souls." Locker's singular sensitiveness to the feelings of others may have been, as was said in the remark I have quoted, " partly inborn and partly acquired," but so far from being only " happy," and " costing nothing " it was acquired by experiences the reverse of happy, and at no small cost to a supersensitive nature.

In his early days, at least, Locker was something of a self-torturer. Meeting Thackeray after the publication of the second

or third issue of *The Newcomes*, the novelist enquired: "What do you think of the last number?" "I like it immensely," was the cordial rejoinder. The illustrations, it seems, had been sharply criticised, and Mr. Locker was "tactless idiot enough" —so he worded it himself—to add: "But, my dear fellow, perhaps there may be some kind people who will say that you did the cuts, and Doyle the letterpress."

On this Thackerary's jaw dropped, and he exclaimed bitterly, "Oh! that's your opinion, is it?" "I saw at once what a mistake I had made," adds Locker, "but I could only reply: 'I spoke in fun, pure fun. You know perfectly well how much I admire your writings and also Doyle's cuts.'" But Thackeray would have none of it, according to Mr. Locker, and walked wrathfully away, though when the two met the day after, the novelist was as amiable as ever.

When Locker first told me the story (he has now left it on record for the benefit of, and as a warning to, his descendants) he told me also of the tortures he endured during the twenty-four hours before he again saw Thackeray. It came about in this way. He was warning me against dwelling unduly upon an incident in which I had, if unintentionally, inflicted pain upon a fellow creature; and I am aware that, in telling the story, I may seem to be claiming for myself something of the sensitiveness which I saw in Mr. Locker. In my case, however, the hurt inflicted was so heinous that every reader would have felt as I did. Not to have so felt would write down the narrator as having no heart at all.

I had called to see Mr. Locker one day, and, with his quick insight, he noticed that I was subdued and cast down, "You are not your lively self to-day," he said sympathetically, "I hope you are not unwell or worried about anything?" "I am worried," I replied, "for this reason. This morning, at St. Albans, we passed a hostelry with the queer name of 'The Crossed Keys.' 'The Crossed Keys!' I exclaimed aloud to my companion, and was about to add a word on public-house signs when, to my horror, I saw shambling towards us, not more than a yard away, and within sound of my voice—how it came about that I, who am, by habit, observant, failed to mark him I cannot think—a young fellow whose legs turned inward at so acute an angle as actually to cross at the knees. He caught the words, 'The

Crossed Keys,' as they fell from my lips, and thought they were spoken as a brutal jeer at his misshapen limbs, for he flushed to the forehead, and bent his head to hide the spasm of pain—like that one sees in a wounded animal—which passed over his face and . . ."

Mr. Locker raised a hand to stay me from saying more, and on his face was intensified the pain which I had seen on that of the crippled lad. "Don't pain yourself unnecessarily," he said. "Your misery was, I am sure, more poignant than his—and lest I forget it—there is another matter much more important to you and to me, about which I must rate you as soundly as you deserve." With an assumption of briskness and business-likeness, which sat oddly on the least brisk and least business-like of men, the intention of which was to divert my thoughts from what was distressing, he affected to take me severely to task for being at some small expense in procuring and sending him extra copies of an American publication with an article about himself. He had chanced to express regret that he had no more than one copy, as he wished to send the article to friends, and as I knew where to obtain copies I had done so. For this he took me to task about "wasting my substance," drawing a picture by way of example, in which I figured as a reckless spend-thrift who would come to bankruptcy and he as a penny-saving and parsimonious miser, whereas I was scarcely ever in his company without coming away the richer by the gift of a rare book or a coveted print. Later, when my distress had passed, he reverted to the "Crossed Keys" incident. "Don't torture yourself about that poor fellow at St. Albans," he said. "Much of our vicarious suffering—the pangs we feel, for the pangs we think are endured by others—is a work of supererogation. I am ready to wager, were there any way of making the necessary enquiries, that your crippled friend's sensitiveness has become indurated —Nature is more merciful to her afflicted children than we are —in the course of years, and that he felt less acutely, has now in fact entirely forgotten it, than you. Take an old man's advice and don't be over-sensitive. I am preaching you a sermon which I have no right to preach, for I have been preaching the same sermon to a congregation of one, myself, all my life, and the congregation continues as unedified as ever, and as confirmed in evil ways, my sermon notwithstanding. But—let

me whisper it in your ear—I am glad you felt as you did, for I should heartily have hated you, had you not done so."

Of Locker's books Mr. Birrell says, in *Frederick Locker-Lampson: A Character Sketch*, that " the character of their author and compiler, shy and elusive, and in some aspects complicated, is exhibited, illuminated, and illustrated by them almost to its last recesses, and what is more, was so exhibited, illuminated, and illustrated intentionally."

I agree that Locker's books are the only " Open Sesame " to a right understanding of the man.

In the library of a friend of mine is a work so treasured that a tiny lock, to be opened only by a miniature key, clasps the covers together. Only by use of the golden key, to which Mr. Birrell points us, can the reader hope to come to the heart of Locker or his writings. Apart from his books, not even his intimates knew, from spoken word of his, how deep were the channels of his affections, his reverence, and his resignation to the will of God—how tender and pitiful his feelings for his fellow-mortals.

The fact that other authors have distilled the very essence of their personality, drop by drop, into a book as into a vial, may cause some readers too lightly to agree with Mr. Birrell, and to pass on. That would be entirely to miss his meaning. Generalising about this or that author—Stevenson, for instance—one might say that his books are entirely of his personality. Stevenson drew as much upon his personality in writing them as the artist, in one of Olive Schreiner's parables, painted pictures, the secret of the wonderful colouring of which none could discover, until, after the artist's death, it was found that he had painted in his own heart's blood. What Mr. Birrell says must be read as applying, and in an isolated sense, only to Frederick Locker. I am not sure that I am in entire agreement when Mr. Birrell says that Mr. Locker thus revealed himself in his books " intentionally." In a sense, of course, every artist aims, if unconsciously, at self-expression. But Locker's easy and courtly bearing, his distinction of presence and of manner, his unerring social taste and tact, were what they were, merely because they were *of himself*. They were not " intentional." So with his books. His fine breeding puts self-consciousness (generally an indication either of under-breeding or of lack of social experience) out of

court as a possibility, both in himself and in his books. Moreover, he was so casual and so procrastinating, he so habitually followed the line of least resistance, and so shrank from the strenuous, that one finds it hard to picture him as screwing himself up to anything so determined as an "intention" in writing a book. In any case, not an author's intention, but his achievement is what counts; and in *My Confidences* he has achieved one of the most perfect and delightful books of its kind in all literature. It is indeed so fascinating, and draws us so irresistibly to be constantly dipping into it, that, but for one fact, we should be in danger of doing that which we are told we should beware of doing—forming a habit. That fact is that *My Confidences* is the one and only prose book of Locker's own writing, just as *London Lyrics* is his one and only book of poems. Only that melancholy fact prevents the reader from forming the Locker habit.

As mention has here been made of Mr. Birrell's book on Locker, I venture, not to correct, but to supplement a remark by Mr. Birrell.

In Paris, he says, Mr. Locker "had called upon Paul de Kock, but had forgotten Heine." I believe that the facts are—I had them from Mr. Locker himself—not that he forgot Heine, for Lord Houghton proposed taking him to see the poet, but that Mr. Locker's "backwardness" made him shy of acceptance. Here is a letter which, as it contains nothing private, I may be permitted to print:

"*Rowfant, Crawley Sussex.*
"*January* 3, 1895.

"My Dear Kernahan,

"I ought to have thanked you long ago for your kind gift of 'Sorrow and Song.' Alas! as one gets older one becomes nimbler in skipping one's duties and responsibilities.

"I did not at once thank you, as I wanted to read the book. Heine has interested me on one side, and Robertson on the other. I never saw either, and to my disgrace, for I might have known both but for a constitutional backwardness.

"I did see Marston, I think, at W. M. Rossetti's or Swinburne's. I have met Dante Rossetti and been to see him at Cheyne Walk, and he has been to my house, and lastly both you and I admire

Mrs. Moulton and her poetry. I only tell you all this to show how interesting your book is to me.

"I have been good for nothing lately, and see no one and go nowhere.—Yours,

"F. L. L."

Two portraits of Locker hang before me on my wall as I write. Under one he has inscribed beneath his signature, and in delicately nervous handwriting, the word "Proof." It is the first proof taken from the plate, and is by Millais. The other is by Du Maurier.

Each, in its widely differing way, is like him, but the charm of his elusive, gently-sad, kindly-ironical and lovable personality neither artist has caught. Other portraits known to me are even less successful.

Not a few painters of to-day are content to give us an "impression." They study their subject for a familiar and so easily recognisable pose. If an eyebrow chance to have an upward Mephistophilean twist, a corner of the eyelid or of the mouth to take a downward and melancholy turn ; most of all, if there be a mannerism, say in the angle at which the head is carried, or the trick of adjusting an eyeglass—they snatch at, perhaps strain the peculiarity, to give character to the picture ; and being either trained in, or born with, the knack of catching a resemblance, they achieve something which may indeed be a "speaking" likeness of the outer man, but remains obstinately silent in regard to the man within.

Not by such an "impression"—not by bold, broad strokes, the "slapping-on" of colour, nor by any sort of wash drawing—could Frederick Locker be pictured. Only by the most delicate and deliberate of etchings—every graving-stroke firm and definite but exquisite in fineness as spun silk or floating gossamer—could Locker's frail and sprite-like self, his aloof and elusive personality, be conveyed. Even then the indefinable air of distinction ; the graceful seeming-negligence he affected in dress ; his instant wilting at effusiveness or wincing at under-breeding, and his as-instant sympathy for and readiness to succour the young or the diffident when in social distress ; his delight in bestowing a gift or bringing a pleasure, and the hesitating, bird-shy way in which he half-moved to impart or to invite a confidence, and then,

as if fearing to bore, or to take his casual and procrastinating self too seriously, he drew back—all these were so much a part of the man's personality that no portrait, whether penned or painted, can hope to picture the living Frederick Locker as he was.

As in the preparation of a new edition of one book bearing Mr. Locker's name, *Lyra Elegantiarum*, I was privileged to collaborate with him, I may perhaps be permitted to put on record the facts concerning the reissue of the book, especially as it is by general consent the best collection of Social Verse—is, indeed, almost a classic—and had a chequered history. The next edition may, or may not, be issued in my lifetime. Even so, future editions will be prepared long after I—who have reason to know the inner facts—have passed beyond reach of enquiry, and some future editor or editors may breathe a blessing on my forgotten dust for placing the facts on record.

For reasons of economy, the publishers, into whose hands the book had passed, wished to print the new edition from the old stereotyped plates. This meant, not a thorough revision and enlargement, but no more than the discarding, here and there, of a poem which in the editor's later judgment fell beneath standard, the vacant space being filled by a poem (necessarily, of the same length), and the addition of a few final pages. Had the type been reset, and Mr. Locker given a free hand, he, and incidentally I, would have set about the work in vastly different heart.

Another difficulty was that, in form, the book should have been dainty and attractive, as light in the hand as the contents were light intellectually. Individual in itself, it should have been individual in apparel, but, alas, the publishers had other plans. They were issuing just then their admirable Minerva Library of famous books, and Mr. Locker's little volume—a volunteer, as it were, which had shouldered its haversack of Occasional Verse in the highest spirits—was conscripted, a sullen and unwilling recruit, to serve with the Minerva Library veterans. The publishers' intention was to lend lightness to their somewhat weighty series. Lightness to the series the addition of Mr. Locker's book undoubtedly lent, but to the heavy handicapping of the work itself, and to the editor's dismay.

Had Mr. Locker himself—dangling eyeglass, daintily but carelessly adjusted necktie, and open collar—been clapped and

buttoned up, his neck enclosed in a high stock, in the military uniform of those days, he would scarcely have looked more out of his setting than did his dainty book in the uniform grey green of a Minerva Library octavo. To a connoisseur in Art and Letters, who delighted in perfection of craftsmanship and in beautiful bindings ; to a bibliophile and a collector ; to a writer so fastidious that he could scarcely pen a letter without giving an original or characteristic turn to his sentences—the fact that a book of his must thus go forth to the discerning among his critics and readers left him inconsolable. " I may confide to you, dear collaborateur," he said to me long after, when writing my name in a copy of his book—*Patchwork*—" that patchwork is the best I have made alike of my life and of my books, and would be my most fitting epitaph " ; and I knew by his weary, whimsical smile, and by the gentle pinch he gave to my arm, that he had the patchwork which had been made of his beautiful book in mind as he spoke. It was said reminiscently, not reproachfully, for the arrangement between editor and publisher was effected before I came to his assistance. When I did so come, he explained the circumstances by observing, " As publishers, they have always been most obliging to me ; so much so that I not only could not bring myself to oppose their wishes, but would not so much as make ' terms ' about this new edition, contenting myself with the hope that they will perhaps present me with as many copies as I may wish to send to my friends." Later he wrote : " I quite agree with you in all you say, but as I knew they had great experience in publishing matters, I yielded to their opinion, and am now deservedly punished."

None the less, the book, a makeshift at best, was a great success. Mr. Locker's wonder was that it was everywhere so appreciatively reviewed. I had no such wonder, for into the pages of the first edition he had instilled not a little of the charm, the courtliness, the dilettantism, yet the distinction of his own delightful personality. A mirror, as the book was, of his individuality, and that individuality as original and delicate as it was rare, my task, obviously, was to allow no passing shadow of his assistant to mar the mirror's surface. The book had been in existence, if not before I was born, at least when the height of my ambition was not to write or to edit books, but to play in the School Eleven. My share must be no more, I told myself, than

to carry and fetch ; in a word, to play the hodman to my chief in the renovation of the National Gallery of Light Verse, of which he was both architect and builder. His airy and inconsequent touch gave grace and lightness to the architecture, and no alien handiwork must deface that of the master builder. For this reason, not a single poem was omitted or added by me except by Mr. Locker's sanction. I ought to add that when, a little later, a large-paper edition, vellum bound, beautifully produced upon hand-made paper with uncut edges, and consisting of 250 copies only, each numbered and signed by the editor, was arranged, Mr. Locker's interest in the republication of his book ceased to be languid. One of these large paper copies I sent to Mr. Swinburne, whom at that time I saw not unfrequently. When I told Mr. Locker that on my next visit to The Pines Swinburne had carried me off to his room, and, placing the book upon a table as upon an altar, had first, as it were, prostrated himself before it, as before something almost worthy of worship, if only for the beauty of its production ; then, his whim changing, had pirouetted around it on tiptoe and in glee at the possession of so covetable a piece of bookmaking, and had said that if there was, as he understood, a Minerva edition, this surely must be an edition sacred to Venus, Mr. Locker was not a little heartened. He had two or three specially prepared copies printed upon pink paper for presentation ; and that thenceforward he was not altogether displeased with the reissue of *Lyra Elegantiarum* may be gathered from the following lines which he inscribed in the copy that he presented to me :

To Coulson Kernahan from Frederick Locker

Verse of society,
Filled with variety,
Sentiment, piety,
Lark and ' lurliety,'
Strictest sobriety,
No impropriety—
Here Locker and Kernahan, and Kernahan and Locker
Tie a posy for Beauty, that nothing shall shock her—
That's their anxiety.

Before his death he sent me various notes of what he thought should be omitted in another edition, mentioning other pieces which he wished included, and adding, " If I am gone before

another edition is asked for, you can use these notes for your guidance." When I was last at Rowfant, his widow, of whom I have gracious recollections, was so good as to express the hope that I should be the editor of the next edition. Mr. Locker's notes I have carefully preserved, and were I to set about the task, the new edition should be as wholly of the personality of Mr. Locker as were the first and last. If I have refrained from what would be to me a labour of love, it is because others are better qualified to undertake it. When the wish that I should " carry on " was expressed, neither of Mr. Locker's sons had come to manhood. Since then both have shown that they inherit his gifts and tastes in literature and art. Mr. Godfrey Locker-Lampson has already edited a delightful anthology, and Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson ably assisted his brother-in-law, Mr. Birrell, in the editorial work of *Frederick Locker-Lampson: a Character Sketch.* By one or by both of Mr. Locker's sons the next edition of *Lyra Elegantiarum* should be prepared. Their father's notes, the many letters I received from him on the subject, and my own memoranda in regard to other changes indicated by him, are entirely at their service. The book is, and should be, a family heirloom, and should have association with no other name than that they bear.

CHAPTER VI

THE "LITTLE STORY" ABOUT A "CELEBRITY" (SWINBURNE) WHICH I DID *NOT* WRITE

CHAPTER VI

SOME years ago I received a communication from an editor-proprietor " of sorts." I say " of sorts " for the reason that editor-proprietors of standing, in the country from which he hailed, are no less scrupulous in the matter of taste than are those of like position in this and other countries. There are editor-proprietors " of sorts," and of the sort of which I am speaking, in all parts of the world.

Till then, however, I had met none of them, and when I received an urgent message that this particular hustler, as I had heard him called, wished to see me, I wondered what could have brought my inconspicuous name to his notice, and what it was he wanted. He wasted no time in coming to the point.

" Say, Mr. Kernahan," he began with commendable directness, " you are a very intimate friend of the poet Swinburne ? "

I replied that Mr. Swinburne was my senior by many years ; that his was one of the greatest names in a profession, literature, in which mine was one of the least ; and that though I had the honour and the privilege of his acquaintance, I should as soon think of claiming his intimate friendship as a young and briefless barrister would claim to be the bosom friend of a Lord Chancellor with whom he had some slight acquaintance.

If I remember rightly, the classic remark which fell from my caller's lips was " Shucks ! "

Anyhow, he waved my remonstrance impatiently aside. " You are frequently in the company of Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Watts-Dunton. You lunch and dine with them at their house, and I'm told you are to be seen taking walks with one or the other of them. They talk freely to you. You know their home and their ways from the inside, better, perhaps, than any of the younger men—isn't that so ? " he asked, very much as the clerk

to the magistrates at a police court might read the " charge " to a prisoner in the dock.

I assented.

" Very well ! " he snapped, this time as if he were a cross-examining barrister who had drawn an incriminating admission from a reluctant witness.

" See here, Mr. Kernahan," he went on, " you go home and write me an article on Swinburne at Home. You just lay yourself out about his habits, what he eats and drinks—no, hold on a moment. Don't allude to drinks, except teetotal ones. They object to it in my journal, which is for the home and family. That's one of the faults I've got to find with some of you English authors. You can't write stories about high-class society without making your men-folk call for whiskies-and-sodas at their club, and your ladies sip their champagne at smart society dinners, and you make your low-class people drink beer and visit liquor saloons. I don't hold it proper or right to introduce intoxicants into books for young people to read in the home and family. My editor has to go through all your English authors' stories with a blue pencil to turn whiskies and beers into lemon squashes, and saloon bars and public-houses into coffee-shops or tea-rooms. I've heard that Mr. Swinburne takes no more than a glass of beer with his meals (you had better make it soda-water or lemon squash in your article), and that he doesn't smoke. Make a point of that. It will please some of my anti-tobacco-habit readers. But don't forget to weigh in with any fads he's got, or what you might call picturesque facts about his personal appearance. He used to have a wonderful head of hair—kind of floated out around him, like a lifebelt, when he was swimming (ever seen him in the water ? If so, you might let on what sort of a figure he strips), and red in colour, like the burning bush we read of in the Bible. I'll make you a present of that tag about the Bible. My readers like a Scripture allusion now and then.

" Well, now, you're a busy man. So'm I. You know pretty well what it is I want—plenty of intimate personal details about his taste in ties, and clothes, and the smart society people that call at The Pines. And lots, mind you, about the house itself, the furniture, whether it's ' noble and nude and antique ' (you might work that bit in—it's a quote—his own poems, too), or gimcrack and modern. And don't forget Mrs. Swinburne—

no, I forgot ; there isn't a Mrs. Swinburne. H'm, that's a pity : my readers like to hear about a poet's womankind. We must work in the domestic interest somehow. What's the name of the lady who keeps house—is it Mrs. or Miss Watts-Dunton ? I'm not quite sure. No, I've got it ! His mother's a lady of title, isn't she ? What worries me is that her husband wasn't a lord, but only a ' sir.' Seems to me a woman ought to take rank with her husband, same as it is in other civilised countries, but your English title system always was queer. However, I am quite sure that I read somewhere about his mother being the Lady Something, so you might work her in. My readers will appreciate her being a ladyship. Make it a bit affecting if you can—gifted genius son's attachment to his worshipping lady of title mother. That's the ticket.

" Well, now, I think I've covered the ground, and that we understand each other. You go right home and write that article, and—there's nothing mean about me—I'm going to do the handsome by you, and write you out a draft for one hundred pounds, and I take it you won't turn up your Roman nose at that."

I did not turn up my nose, but did my best to express my feelings by a whistle.

" Yes," he chuckled, " they are tall terms for an article a practised hand like you can turn out in half-an-hour ; but do the thing well and I shan't grumble at the price. We have a very large circulation, and can afford to pay good prices for good stuff when it's exclusive. In fact, there are one or two other celebrities that I'm told are friends of yours that we might fix up an At Home article about later on. When shall I have your copy ? My passage is booked for the 10th, and I'd like to take it with me."

" I'm afraid not at all," I answered. " I'm very much obliged to you, and I very much appreciate your kindness ; but I couldn't think of writing anything of the sort."

He raised his eyebrows. " Well, you are a bit more of a business man than I'd figured on," he said pleasantly. " I thought the terms good ; but I'll spring another ten pounds if you like."

" It isn't a matter of terms," I explained. " It's that one can't go to a man's house, accept his hospitality, and then make money out of him by writing, as you say, about his taste, or want

of taste, in ties, the clothes he wears, what he eats and drinks, or, again, as you say, what sort of a figure he strips, if one has chanced to see him taking a dip in the sea."

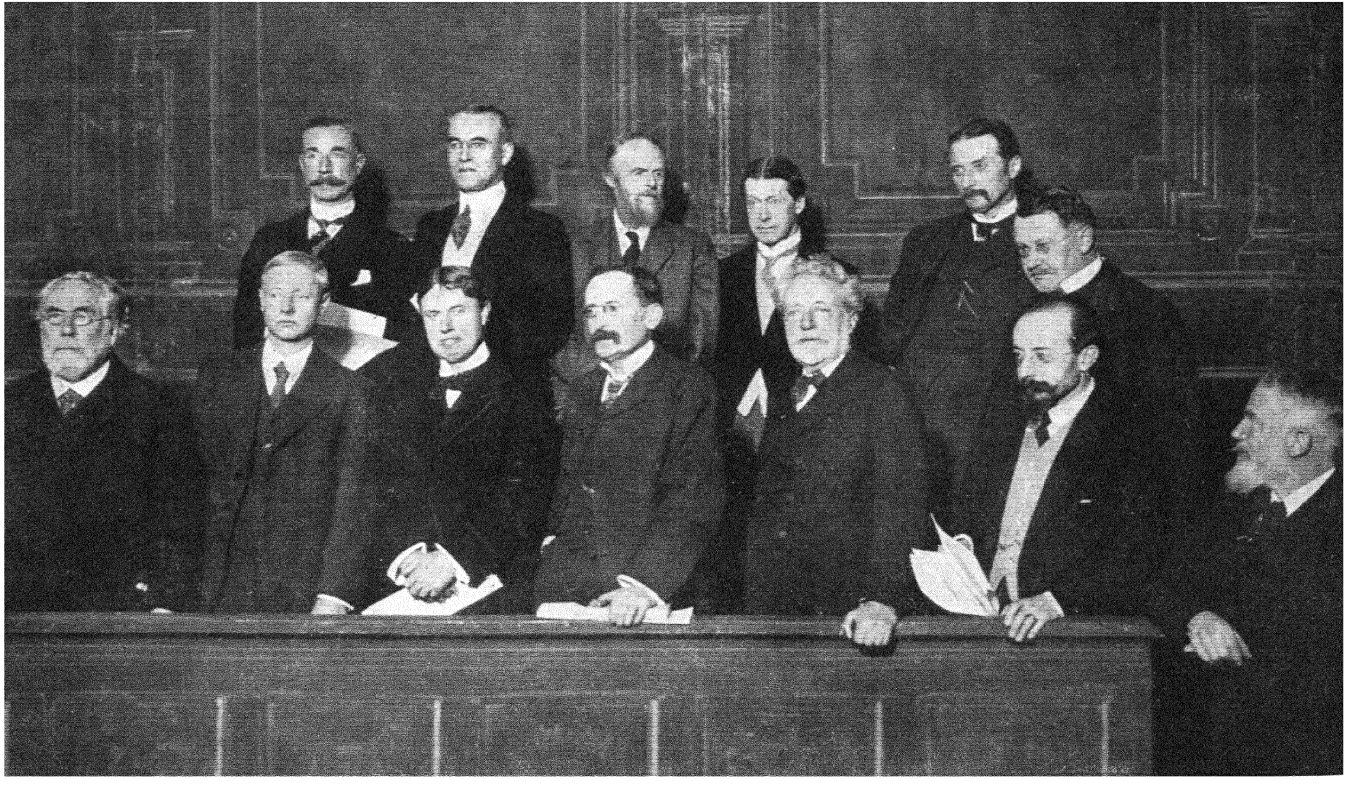
"But why on earth not?" he enquired, as if puzzled to know what I meant. "—— —— did it about Tennyson" (mentioning the name of a well-known poet and man of letters, now dead).

"So I've heard," I answered. "I did not see the article, so don't know what he said; but I do happen to know what Tennyson said about *him*, and I shouldn't like anything of the sort to be said about me. If you want an article on Swinburne's Poems—they are public property—I'd do it gladly, and ask, not a hundred pounds, but a modest fifteen."

"My friend," he said, with commendable frankness, "I wouldn't give as many cents for your opinion about Swinburne's poems. I wouldn't give *him* as many cents as you name pounds for the loveliest, longest poem he ever let loose on the world. My readers don't care a row of pins about poetry; what they want to know is what sort of a man the poet is when he's at home, and what sort of a home it's like when you get inside. They can't get there; I can't, and no one that I know can, except yourself. You've got exclusive information, I admit, and that's got to be paid for, and will generally fetch its price. I thought my terms tall, and I didn't mean to pay another cent. Still, you don't think it's enough, and I've got to have that article out of you. I'm dead set on it. So I'll spring another ten."

There have been other moments in my life when I have felt as hopeless of making myself understood as if I were endeavouring to break through a brick wall by bashing it with my head. But at such times the person to whom I was addressing myself was a woman—against whose immovable determination to see a matter from her standpoint, and only from her standpoint, "the gods themselves," as Heine once said, "contend in vain." In this case I was dealing, not with a dear and right-hearted, if occasionally wrong-headed and illogical woman, but with a hard-headed man of business from one of the shrewdest communities in the world. So I had another try.

"Will—you—please—understand," I said, speaking very clearly, and with a long pause between each word, to let its full effect soak in, "that—it—is—not—a—matter—of—terms—at—all—but—merely—a—question—of——"



Back row, left to right : The Author, Mr. Ridgwell Cullum Mr. William de Morgan, Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, Mr. William Archer, Mr. Thomas Seccombe.

Front row, left to right : Lord Russell of Liverpool, Mr. W. W. Jacobs, Mr. Pett Ridge, Mr. Arthur Morrison, Mr. Francesco Berger, Mr. Tom Gallon, and Mr. Bernard Shaw (Foreman).

By kind permission of the "Daily Mirror."

[*Facing p.* 96.

" Very well," he interrupted curtly, yet triumphantly, as one who has clinched the matter and carried his point. " One hundred and thirty ! " I smiled—weakly, I fear—but shook my head.

I have always admired his countrymen's " short cut " method of " getting there " almost in a word. My caller's way of bidding me good-bye, and, at the same time, of expressing his opinion of me as a Shylock with whom it was impossible for a business man to arrange reasonable terms, was characteristic.

" Guess I've got a hat somewhere," he said—reached for it—and went.

To this day I am convinced that he thinks my refusal was a matter of " terms."

CHAPTER VII

MAINLY ABOUT MR. BERNARD SHAW, WITH SOME INSTANCES OF RETORTS—COURTEOUS OR DISCOURTEOUS

CHAPTER VII

" I SUPPOSE," wrote Mr. Shaw once, " every imaginative boy is a criminal. . . . But very few get caught " ; and he adds, " I never fell into the hands of the police—at least, they did not go on with the case—one of incendiarism."

If, of " time," in the sense of having undergone a term of imprisonment, Mr. Shaw thinks it necessary to mention that he has no knowledge—with *Time*, the magazine of that name, published by Swan, Sonnenschein, and edited by Mr., Mrs., or Miss—I am not sure which—Abdy Williams, he was not without associations. There it was, and in the mid eighties of last century, that I first saw a name which one now rarely opens a newspaper without seeing.

To *Time*—ominously so named, for the " old grey carle " of the long beard, the scythe, and the hourglass many years ago ended its existence—Mr. Shaw was a contributor. So was Mr. George Moore, for, if I remember rightly, it was in *Time* that Mr. Moore's *Confessions of a Young Man* started at scratch in a race, the goal of which was not Time, but Immortality, and so Eternity.

Though no more than a writer " of sorts " myself, I can at least claim to have made my début in good company : in the short-lived and now forgotten *Illustrations* (edited by Francis George Heath), with William Sharp and Richard Jefferies ; in *Home Chimes*, with J. M. Barrie, Jerome K. Jerome, W. H. Hudson, Eden Phillpotts, G. B. Burgin, and many another who has since come to high place ; in the *Fortnightly Review*, my first contribution to which appeared anonymously, side by side with articles by George Meredith, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, and I believe Mr. Hardy ; and in *Time* with Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. George Moore, for to *Time* I contributed a solitary sonnet on Rossetti which I have the effrontery here to reprint :

Haunted of Beauty, him with emulous ire
Art claimed her own, and bade the covenant bow
Stoop that his canvas, affluent-hued, should glow
With Titian's touch, in wasteful wealth afire.
Whereat the Muse, dowered with the deep desire
Of forms more fair than earthly eyes may know,
Sang to his ear such song of exquisite woe
That pleasure passed to poignant pain, and dire.

At last spake Love : " To Love these gifts belong,
O Doubly-Dowered, and thine Love's mystic lore."
Then, of her secrets whence she set such store
Regretful grown,—him, son and seer of Song
Love robbed of love, and sorrowing 'mid the throng,
All lonely left, and loveless evermore.

Neither Mr. Moore nor Mr. Shaw was known to me in those days. The former I met sometimes, later on, at Louise Chandler Moulton's, but Mr. Shaw I cannot claim to know, still less that I am known to him. We have rubbed shoulders now and then, and at the Edwin Drood Trial exchanged a few words, but I question whether Mr. Shaw knew to whom he was speaking, or would have known that such a person existed had he been told.

"The Trial of John Jasper for the Murder of Edwin Drood" was on January 7, 1914, Mr. Shaw being Foreman of the Jury, of which I was a member. From my copy of the Indictment, prepared, I believe, by Mr. Frank S. Johnson, then Hon. Secretary of the Dickens Fellowship, I see that the very admirable Court Arrangements were in the hands of Mr. Frederick T. Harry. Here is a list of those taking part, as it appears on the first inner page of the Indictment :

THE TRIAL OF JOHN JASPER FOR THE MURDER OF EDWIN DROOD

JUDGE - -	MR. G. K. CHESTERTON
COUNSEL FOR THE PROSECUTION	MR. J. CUMING WALTERS and MR. B. W. MATZ
COUNSEL FOR DEFENCE -	MR. CECIL CHESTERTON
JOHN JASPER - -	MR. FREDERICK T. HARRY
(*Lay Precentor at Cloisterham Cathedral*)	
ANTHONY DURDLES	MR. BRANSBY WILLIAMS
(*The Cloisterham Stonemason*)	

The Rev. Septimus Crisparkle (*Minor Canon at Cloisterham Cathedral*)	Mr. Arthur Waugh
Miss Helena Landless (*Ward of Mr. Honeythunder*)	Mrs. Laurence Clay
" 'Er Royal Highness Princess Puffer " (*The Opium Woman*)	Miss J. K. Prothero
[Thomas] Bazzard (*Clerk to Mr. Grewgious*)	Mr. C. Sheridan Jones
The Clerk of Arraigns	Mr. Walter Dexter
The Usher	Mr. A. E. Brookes Cross
Police Officers	Mr. H. H. Pearce and Mr. C. H. Green

The Jury will be chosen from among the following:

Mr. George Bernard Shaw (foreman)	Mr. Coulson Kernahan
Sir Francis C. Burnand	Mr. Edwin Pugh
Sir Edward Russell	Mr. William de Morgan
Dr. W. L. Courtney	Mr. Arthur Morrison
Mr. W. W. Jacobs	Mr. Raymond Paton
Mr. Pett Ridge	Mr. Francesco Berger
Mr. Hilaire Belloc	Mr. Ridgwell Cullum
Mr. Tom Gallon	Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy
Mr. Max Pemberton	Mr. Oscar Browning
Mr. G. S. Street	Mr. Wm. Archer

Barristers, Reporters and Spectators.

As the occasion was interesting and uncommon, I venture to cull some passages from the subsequent (February, 1914) issue of *The Dickensian*, edited by Mr. B. W. Matz. The first quotation is signed " The Editor," and is as follows:

" When the London Branch of the Dickens Fellowship set apart one of its meetings of the season for ' The Trial of John Jasper for the Murder of Edwin Drood,' not one of its most wildly enthusiastic members, it may be safely said, could have

cherished the belief that it would have created the world-wide excitement and interest it actually did. Indeed, no event inspired by the popularity of Dickens, excepting perhaps the novelist's centenary celebrations, has equalled it in public interest and importance from whatever point of view it is approached. Weeks before the now historic seventh of January the Press began to herald the forthcoming trial in glowing paragraphs, and in interviews with the chief actors in the trial, to such an extent that two days before the eventful day the public and dilatory Dickensians not only were clamouring for seats, but were actually offering premiums for them, and begging to be allowed to pay for the privilege of standing, or of a seat on the gallery stairs.

"Consequently the handsome theatre of the National Sporting Club, known as the King's Hall, was packed from floor to ceiling, when the curtain went up, with an eager audience embracing members of almost every profession and of every phase of society. There were lords and ladies, actors and actresses, barristers, solicitors, authors, journalists, dramatists, scientists, city magnates and typists, clerks and office boys, all confident of entertainment and enlightenment. That they were not disappointed is proved by the fact that they remained until the end was reached at shortly before midnight. On the following day scarcely a newspaper throughout the length and breadth of the land but had its report of the proceedings, many of which were appropriately illustrated from photographs of the chief participants in the notable evening.

"Never were so many distinguished authors gathered together at the same time on any stage. And no greater proof can be forthcoming of the universal regard in which the great Victorian writer is held by his fellow-countrymen of every phase and calling, than is exemplified by the great gathering before and behind the footlights. Nor was this enthusiasm confined to our own country; included among the fifty reporters were representatives of almost every European country, as well as others representing Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and America. Whilst we are told that an eager crowd, disappointed at not gaining admission, waited outside the hall to hear the verdict. And so the great event ended with as extraordinary enthusiasm as it started.

"The whole proceedings lasted for four and a half hours, and there were few, very few, who at the end voted it too long. There

were some, of course, who were hypercritical—it is the privilege of the race to be so. Some thought it dull in places, some thought it too serious, some thought it flippant at times. Others had expected to see a play with the parts all well rehearsed, instead of, as was the case, a serious debate wherein almost everything which happened was impromptu. Everybody, of course, expected either a verdict in favour of or against Jasper, or anticipated that the jury would disagree. And no doubt one of these desires would have been achieved had the jury been consulted. But the foreman determined otherwise. Yet in spite of everything, and of the varying whims of the audience, there is the one hard and true fact remaining that 'The Trial of John Jasper for the Murder of Edwin Drood' was one of the most exhilarating, most enjoyable, and most distinguished and historic literary evenings that London has had the opportunity of taking part in for many years."

Following the editorial comments in *The Dickensian* came a description of the trial itself, by Mr. J. W. T. Ley, part of which description I reproduce:

"The result of the trial of John Jasper for the murder of Edwin Drood was disappointing. It is as well to say that at once, and in saying it I am positive that I am expressing the opinion of everyone who was present, or who, not being present, has read the exhaustive reports of the proceedings which appeared in the daily newspapers. The verdict was no less than an outrage. We have to remember this fact: that the trial was taken seriously, not only by members of the Dickens Fellowship, but by the public at large, by every newspaper of any importance at all, and by almost every author and critic of distinction. It is not the custom of the *Morning Post*, for instance, to give three-column reports, with question and answer, of burlesque trials, or of the *Daily Telegraph* to publish leading articles on such subjects. Nor do men like Sir Edward Russell travel specially from Liverpool to take part in such proceedings. He is no unthinking Dickensian; nor is Mr. W. L. Courtney—nor is any one of the distinguished authors who comprised the jury on this occasion.

"From the beginning it was regarded by all concerned as a serious effort to find a logical solution to the mystery. Mr. Cuming Walters and Mr. Cecil Chesterton had gone to very great pains to prepare their cases, and nearly a score of brilliant

men had agreed to attend, listen carefully to the arguments on both sides, and ' a true verdict give according to the evidence.' In that spirit the whole of the proceedings was conducted, and then, right at the very end, everything was spoiled by the impishness of Mr. George Bernard Shaw. He is not likely to agree, I suppose, but I think most people will, that a very high compliment was paid to him when he was asked to act as foreman to a jury of such distinction. That being so, it is a thousand pities that he could not restrain that spirit of mischief by which he is so often actuated. From the beginning of the proceedings it was evident that he was the one man in the building who was not in serious mood. I do not complain of his interpolations during the hearing of the evidence, except in so far as they indicated that he was not entering into the true spirit of the thing. The jokes did not exactly sparkle : they were not of a nature to make one hold one's sides : but they passed muster, and we need not complain of them. But the final outbreak was preposterous, and as the *Pall Mall Gazette* said, brought the trial to a foolish conclusion. Mr. Cecil Chesterton had made a brilliant speech, Mr. Walters had replied in a most able effort marked by an exhaustive analysis of the evidence, and though the judge's summing-up had been Chestertonian, it had indicated that he recognised that the occasion was one of serious debate—legitimate literary debate. For nearly five hours the jury had sat there carefully listening to the evidence and to the arguments of counsel, intending to endeavour to give a verdict in accordance therewith. And then, without having consulted any of his colleagues, and without giving any of them an opportunity of getting in a word, up jumped the foreman and announced that they had decided upon their verdict during the luncheon interval, and that it was one of ' Manslaughter.'

" To readers of *The Dickensian* it is scarcely necessary to point out how this " verdict " simply threw to the winds all the efforts that had been made by everybody else concerned. Be it noted that even the defence had admitted that Jasper was guilty of attempted murder. No one has ever disputed that. Is it any wonder, therefore, that both Mr. Walters and Mr. Chesterton protested, and that everybody was annoyed ? "

My own comment on this is " Not everybody," for Mr. Shaw, at least, thoroughly enjoyed himself. With the exception of

Mr. Edwin Pugh, who, as a member of the jury, made the comment that one question put to a witness was " not fair "—to be told by the Judge that " any question is fair that brings out the truth "—the jury to a man, always excepting their foreman, followed the evidence closely and carefully, but remained silent throughout. Not so Mr. Shaw. At the very commencement of the trial, and before any evidence had been called, he popped up in the box to disport himself after such a typical Shavian manner that a fellow juryman whispered to me: " With Shaw as foreman, he can be trusted to see to it that this show is not the mystery of Edwin, but the booming of Bernard."

Here is Mr. Shaw's first interruption, as recorded in the report:

" THE FOREMAN: My Lord, one word. Did I understand the learned gentleman to say that he was going to call evidence?

" MR. MATZ (*for the prosecution*): Certainly.

" THE FOREMAN: Well, then, all I can say is that if the learned gentleman thinks the convictions of a British jury are going to be influenced by evidence, he little knows his fellow countrymen.

" THE JUDGE: At the same time, in spite of this somewhat intemperate observation—(The remainder of his Lordship's words were inaudible)."

When the Rev. Canon Crisparkle was giving evidence, Mr. Shaw was on his legs again to interrupt. Again I quote the report of the trial:

" THE FOREMAN: May I ask one question, my Lord?

" THE JUDGE: Certainly.

" THE FOREMAN: Do I understand the witness to say that the prisoner was a musician?

" WITNESS: He was, my Lord.

" THE FOREMAN: His case looks black indeed."

These forensic fireworks Mr. Shaw let off while evidence was being heard, and so were necessarily impromptu. Whether the " set piece " of his firework display was impromptu, only Mr. Shaw can say. But as compared with Mr. Shaw, Mr. G. K. Chesterton may, or may not be, deficient in humour. Mr. Shaw may have so thought of Mr. Chesterton, if only for the reason that the latter clearly did not share Mr. Shaw's opinion that the

occasion was one to ridicule by burlesque. By the committee of the Dickens Fellowship, whom Mr. Shaw perhaps also accounted to be lamentably wanting in humour by proposing a trial at all (except to accept the invitation to be a member of the jury, I had nothing to do with the matter), the occasion was intended, as Mr. Chesterton was aware, to be a tribute to the memory of Dickens, and a genuine and serious attempt to elucidate the mystery of the murder. If only, therefore, out of courtesy, as it were, to his hosts, by whose invitation he was there—to say nothing of respect for the memory of Dickens—Mr. Chesterton refrained throughout from saying or doing anything to "guy the show," or unduly to draw attention to himself. As the Judge, he did not deny himself (not all judges do so) an occasional humorous comment, nor in the opinion of many present were Mr. Chesterton's interpolations (if more relevant) less humorous than were those of Mr. Shaw. But Mr. Chesterton's summing-up was (as the committee of the Dickens Fellowship assumed that it would, and intended that it should, be), just such a calm and judicial summing-up as is to be heard in our Courts of Law. Mr. Chesterton did not "let down" those who had invited him to preside, for his presentation of the salient facts was masterly and exhaustive. It ended as usual with the charge: "Gentlemen of the Jury, you will retire and consider your verdict."

Before we could do so, up popped Mr. Shaw to say:

"My Lord,—I am happy to be able to announce to your Lordship that we, following the tradition and practice of British juries, have arranged our verdict in the luncheon interval. I should explain, my Lord, that it undoubtedly presented itself to us as a point of extraordinary difficulty in this case, that a man should disappear absolutely and completely, having cut off all communication with his friends in Cloisterham. But having seen and heard the society and conversation of Cloisterham here in court to-day, we no longer feel the slightest surprise at that. Now, under the influence of that observation, my Lord, the more extreme characters, if they will allow me to say so, in this jury, were at first inclined to find a verdict of Not Guilty, because there was no evidence of a murder having been committed, but, on the other hand, the calmer and more judicious spirits among us felt that to allow a man who had committed a cold-blooded murder of which his own nephew was the victim, to leave the

dock absolutely unpunished, was a proceeding which would probably lead to our all being murdered in our beds. And so you will be glad to learn that the spirit of compromise and moderation prevailed, and we find the prisoner guilty of manslaughter. We recommend him most earnestly to your Lordship's mercy, whilst at the same time begging your Lordship to remember that the protection of the lives of the community is in your hands, and begging you not to allow any sentimental consideration to deter you from applying the law in its utmost rigour."

Having thus played what some thought to be "a monkey trick" upon his hosts by tilting up the table to which he had been invited and scattering what was there spread upon the floor; having thus (in the mixing of metaphors, Irishmen are chartered libertines) played not so much the "bull in the china shop" as the very Dickens and the Bernard Shaw among the crockery of the Dickens Fellowship and the Drood Trial at Covent Garden; having "made hay" in a few minutes of what it had taken others many months to prepare; and having "butchered," to make a Shavian Bank Holiday spree, alike the speeches of Counsel for the Prosecution and for the Defence, as well as the Judge's summing-up—having done all this, Mr. Shaw sat down, possibly not a little pleased with himself.

Less pleased were Mr. J. Cumming Walters, Counsel for the Prosecution, who, like Mr. B. W. Matz and the late Mr. Cecil Chesterton, Counsel for the Defence, had spared nothing in acquainting themselves with the facts, and so had acquitted themselves brilliantly in their respective rôles. They had looked, of course, with anticipation and curiosity for a considered verdict from the Jury, which they hoped might decide the very interesting issues involved. That Mr. Shaw might exploit himself as a certain young poet, whom we will call Tompkyns, exploited himself, by going into a bookseller's shop where he was unknown personally to ask for his own poems, and when told, "We have never heard of such a poet. Who is he?" to reply, "Why, haven't you ever heard of Browning and Tennyson and Tompkyns!" —so, in effect, Mr. Shaw had said, "Never mind Edwin Drood and Dickens! It is much more important that you should hear about Bernard Shaw."

To retrieve the situation Mr. Walters saw was hopeless, but he made a gallant effort, and under conditions so difficult

that he might have been pardoned had he seen nothing for it but tacitly to accept defeat, and to air his own humour and originality by joining in the " beano " and behaving himself after the manner of Mr. Shaw. But Mr. Walters, and as I say gallantly—for after Mr. Shaw's antics, Mr. Walters was aware that his forces as well as the audience were demoralised, and that any attempt to restore order and seriousness might seem to indicate that he was without humour himself—kept up his end to the last.

" I should like," said Mr. Walters in rising to protest, " to urge that the Jury be discharged for not having performed their duties in the proper spirit of the law. We have heard from the Foreman that the verdict was arranged in advance, and I decline to accept that verdict, and ask for your Lordship's ruling."

Again Mr. Shaw popped up.

" The Jury, like all British juries," he said, " will be only too delighted to be discharged at the earliest moment—the sooner, the better."

Seeing that the trial which some had hoped might throw light upon, if not actually elucidate, the mystery of the murder of Edwin Drood had been hopelessly " guyed " by what Mr. J. W. T. Ley has called " the impishness " of Mr. Bernard Shaw, and seeing, too, that any further attempt to restore seriousness was impossible, Mr. G. K. Chesterton accepted the situation (which he, at least, had done nothing to bring about) with characteristic philosophy and humour.

" My decision as Judge," he said, " is that everybody here except myself be committed for Contempt of Court. Off you all go to prison without any trial whatever ! "—and the Court rose.

One other incident in the Drood Trial seems to me worth the telling. My invitation to serve on the jury came September 27, 1913. On December 31 I received the following summons to " fail not at my peril " :

"SUMMONS TO JURY

" SIR,

" You are hereby summoned to appear before Mr. JUSTICE G. K. CHESTERTON, and or other Justices of OYER AND TERMINER, at a Special Sessions to be holden at the

Criminal Court of KING'S HALL, in COVENT GARDEN, on WEDNESDAY, THE SEVENTH DAY OF JANUARY, 1914, by six-fifty-five of the clock in the Evening precisely. Hereof fail not at your peril.

"*Dated the 31st day of December*, 1913.
"FRANK S. JOHNSON.
"*Summoning Officer.*

"To *Coulson Kernahan, Esq.*,
"*Hastings.*

"NOTE.—That if any Juror shall not appear to this Summons the Court will set a fine upon him and devote such fine to the funds of the Dickens Fellowship Charitable Guild, unless some really valid excuse without trifling, shall be proved by OATH or AFFIDAVIT, WHICH MUST BE SWORN IN COURT. No notice will be taken of Medical Certificates or other communications sent to the Summoning Officer."

Accordingly I presented myself at the appointed place, shortly before the appointed hour. The first person I encountered was Sir Edward (afterward Lord) Russell, and I was chatting with him in one of the adjoining dressing-rooms, when an official of the Court, addressing us by our names, said, "The Court will be opening directly. Will you two gentlemen please come with me, as the Jury are about to be ushered into the box."

When we were seated we saw that, possibly in case of absentees, more than the required twelve men had been summoned; and that for those not in the box (among them that gifted novelist and best of good fellows, the late Mr. Tom Gallon) seats were being found in the body of the Court.

Half-way through the trial the Judge announced: "The Court will now adjourn for about ten or fifteen minutes," and those of us in the box had already left or were leaving our seats, when several photographers who had been waiting in an anteroom came hastily forward to say: "Will you gentlemen of the Jury be so kind as at once to return to your seats in the box? We shall not keep you many seconds, but we wish to take the photographs of the members of the Jury, for publication in the morning papers and the illustrated weeklies."

Presumably Mr. Tom Gallon thought, and I agree, that his portrait would look as well in the morning and weekly papers as the portraits of any of the rest of us. Seated where he was, in the body of the Court, he was likely to be—indeed, events

proved, would have been—left out. So with strategy which, inasmuch as he thereby outflanked so subtle a strategist as Mr. Shaw, was to be admired, Mr. Gallon whipped into Mr. Shaw's vacated seat before that gentleman could reoccupy it.

Hence in the picture then taken (of which are production is here given) Mr. Gallon will be seen, evidently well pleased that the readers of the morning papers and illustrated weeklies would be indebted to his strategy, not only for the fact that they were not deprived of a portrait of himself among the jurymen, but would be presented in that same picture with a portrait of Mr. Gallon in the most prominent seat of all, the Foreman's.

" Is Shaw, our Foreman, to be left out ? " we asked ourselves aghast. Our anxiety was however unfounded. With strategy, subtler even than Mr. Gallon's, Mr. Shaw promptly manœuvered for a position by which (different as ever from everyone else) Mr. Shaw's portrait appears not only, as will be seen by referring to the illustration, on a larger scale than that of his fellow jurymen—(no more than just twelve men in a box)—but as the one unordinary and superman, distinguished from all others by *not* being in a box.

And if on Mr. Gallon's face there is to be seen a pleased smile, at the result of his strategy—on the speaking face of Mr. Shaw (again I refer the reader to the illustration), as he looks in undisguised and disgusted astonishment at his interloping supplanter, is to be seen a look which says, as plainly as looks can say, "Well, if that is not the height of calm impudence, I'll be damned ! "

That was to my thinking the most amusing incident of the evening.

" Fizzled out like a damp Fifth of November firework ! " was the comment on the trial by one ardent but grievously disappointed Dickensian. " And why ? " he went on. " Because a clever—oh yes, he is clever : you can call him inspired if you like—literary bill-poster hasn't the decency to understand that there are occasions when consideration for other folk should prevent him from turning everything on earth or in heaven into a hoarding, on which, as it were, to placard his own name in big letters."

" Stuff ! " said another man who overheard the remark. " Shaw has been the success of the evening. If you wanted the trial to be taken seriously, you either should have told Shaw it

was to be a burlesque, in which case he would have been more solemn than if he were attending his best friend's funeral, for he would probably be excruciatingly funny even then; or else you should not have offered him a part. That Shaw would guy anything taken seriously was a foregone conclusion. Besides, you will get double the advertisement for the show by what Shaw did to skit it, than you would had the thing been carried through to the end with the most solemn, decorous, and boring dullness."

Which shows how opinions differ, and in my own mind I am not sure that the last speaker was not right, especially when he said that Shaw was sure to guy anything which others took, as he thought, too seriously. That is so like an Irishman!

Of George Meredith, one often hears the comment, "He is one of the few novelists who understand women." The fact that a novelist, or anyone else, should understand women would not thus surprise an Irishman, if only for the reason that Irishmen understand their own and other women-folk better perhaps than women are understood by the men-folk of any other nation. The reason is that there is in the Irishman himself that touch of the illogical, the wayward, the perverse, and the incomprehensible which, even if it perplex the male mind, makes woman such a delightful, fascinating, and never-wearying because ever-varying problem to the other sex. The workings of a typical Irishman's mind being not a little like those of a woman, he goes by a short cut—trespassing, if you choose so to call it, upon the preserves of womanhood—by taking the arrow-straight footpath of intuition, while the slower Englishman is laboriously trudging the long road of reason, and stopping perplexedly to study the (often misleading) sign-posts by the way.

But if Irishmen understand or think they understand women—in human life it often happens that the very matter concerning which we mortals are most sure is that on which we are entirely mistaken—Englishmen rarely understand Irishmen. Small blame to the Englishmen, for of all nationalities the Irish are the most difficult to comprehend, and an Irishman's brain has often a kink which makes it impossible that he should understand even himself. Rossetti once said that there are some folk whom no amount of brains can keep from being fools. Your Englishman is not less gifted with brains than your Irishman

(the latter is the quicker-brained), but the difference between an Englishman and an Irishman lies in the fact that though many Englishmen are fools occasionally, and most Irishmen are fools very often—the Irishman, at least, knows that he *is* a fool, and the Englishman does not even suspect himself of folly. Only an Englishman would have sent me such a message as that I had from the editor of a widely circulated magazine, when he heard that I was going to lecture for the first time in Scotland.

" Whatever you do," he wrote, " don't attempt anything humorous, for the Scotch are, as we in England know, sadly deficient in humour." As I said of Mr. Shaw's refusal to take the Drood Trial seriously, " That is so like an Irishman ! " so I say of my English editor friend, " That is so like many Englishmen ! " The English are a great race, and with splendid and sterling qualities, but they think they hold the world copyright for most things, outside Scotch or Irish whisky. My friend Dr. A. Stodart-Walker, nephew of that grand old Scot, Professor John Stuart Blackie, tells me that once when the two friends and professors, Huxley and Blackie, were chatting together, Huxley told a good story which Blackie thoroughly enjoyed in his own quiet, undemonstrative way. Stodart-Walker explained that at the stories which his uncle most enjoyed, Blackie did not rock about in, or nearly tumble out of his chair with merriment, but was suffused, inwardly and outwardly (so the old Professor had said) with a light, joyous sense of well-being that wrapped him about like a fur coat on a cold day, and warmed him to the very spine. But because Blackie's laughter was more inward than outward, and because he did not break into a guffaw, vow that the story was the best he had ever heard, and that his companion would be the death of him—Huxley, who was a brilliant raconteur, thought his story had gone unappreciated, and was a little piqued.

" Are you sure you see the point, Blackie ? " he asked. " You know there is a saying in England that you cannot get a joke into a Scotsman's head without performing a surgical operation."

" So I have heard," said Blackie slyly, " but you see, Huxley, *yours was an English joke.*"

My own comment on the anecdote is that if that senseless wheeze about a joke and a surgical operation and a Scotsman's head be a typical instance of English humour, I can only

say of humour, as the English say of whisky, " Give me Scotch, or give me Irish." The English for the most part have a keen and genuine appreciation of humour. They buy the books of the best English humorists—and the best English humour stands second to none—by the hundred thousand. But just as Blackie had to remind Huxley that his was an " English joke," so the English need now and then to be reminded that, like " the sharp, peculiar quince " of which Christopher Smart wrote, the dry and pawky humour of a Scot has a peculiar flavour of its own.

By the English, some Scots, and many Irishmen, Mr. Bernard Shaw among the latter, are often misunderstood. About Mr. Shaw a story was told me in deadly earnestness by an Englishman. He had been reviling Shaw for twenty minutes, and though I am no Shavian (the word might be spelt " Showvian," for Mr. Shaw is surely something of a showman, and I believe that in *Who's Who* he once gave his recreation as " Showing off "), I took the other side, if only for the sake of an argument.

Once at the National Liberal Club, when I was Mr. Joseph Hocking's guest, the talk being dull and uninteresting, I weighed in, if only to liven things, with something outrageous.

" Come, come, Kernahan," remarked my host, " if you are a wild Irishman, you might at least show that you are not entirely without fairness, moderation, and a sense of justice. What you have just said has none of these qualities. Do, my dear man, at least, be reasonable."

" We have all been trying to be reasonable for the last half-hour," I replied, " and anything drearier than our talk, I can't remember. But if after a good lunch, the five of us are going to be equally dull, over our coffee and cigars, I move that we adjourn the meeting to listen to a debate in Parliament. It is all very well for you fellows, but I have been cooped up by myself in the editor's room at Ward, Lock & Co., reading a novel of yours in manuscript, Hocking. The publishers get in cleverer things than the authors in these days. " Because I asked you to write me a ' family ' story," a publisher recently said to an author who had brought him an unsavoury sex novel, " I did not mean that I wanted a story that was ' in the family way.' " And Heinemann's remark, after reading the most pessimistic, despondent, and soul-depressing novel ever penned, Annie Holdsworth's *The Years that the Locust hath Eaten,* was that

the only thing in life left to him was to go out and get blind drunk. I don't propose that course, if only for the reason that you, our host, are a teetotaller. But I have come here to enjoy myself, and have some fun. So, I hope, have the rest of the company, and there has not been much fun thus far in being what you call reasonable. I will be anything else you like, Hocking, I'll be rude, as I am now, or I'll be polite. I'll be quiet as a Quaker or rowdy as a Bank Holiday bargee, but the one thing which I *won't* be is to be reasonable."

Mr. Joseph Hocking's elder brother, Mr. Silas Hocking, whom I believe I was meeting for the first time—James Douglas once spoke of him as " all beard and bones "—grinned in the same beard, but, in his bones, I suspect that he was uneasy about the company he was keeping, and hoping that the luncheon would not end in an adjournment to the Police Court, where as a reverend and the man of most substance, staidness, standing, and respectability of the party, he might be called upon to bail me out. The incident would not read well in any paper which might be publishing in the same issue a report of one of the course of sermons which the Rev. Silas Hocking was then giving at the City Temple.

I admit that my behaviour on the occasion of the lunch at the National Liberal Club was on a par with that of Mr. Shaw at the Edwin Drood Trial ; but just as I weighed in, as I have said, with the first foolish truck which came into my mind, in the hope of shaking us all out of our stiff self-consciousness, and of setting the conversation going—so, when my Englishman friend started to revile Mr. Shaw, I took the other side, if only to make things hum, and interestingly. As the Englishman would admit no good of Mr. Shaw, I—though not caring a pin either way—extolled the object of his execration to the skies. The result was that he not only said his say about Shaw, and said it picturesquely, but was reminded of and moved to tell me a capital story concerning Shaw, about which I might otherwise have failed to draw him. Here is what he said as nearly as I can recall it.

" My opinion of Shaw can be expressed only by the contemptuous expletive, so like his own name—' Pshaw ! ' The first person to exclaim ' Pshaw ! ' contemptuously must have done so in anticipation of the coming of such a man. Out of curiosity, I looked up the word ' Pshaw ' in Skeat's *Philological Dictionary*,

and found it accompanied by a quotation from the old *Spectator*—'A peevish fellow. . . . Disturbs all with his pishes and pshaws.' The *Spectator* man, too, might have had Shaw in his mind when he so wrote, for Shaw pishes and pshaws at the God Who made him; at the country which shelters him, the country of which he is a citizen, and whose soldiers defended his carcase and his vested interests against the Germans, whom he assisted to the best of his powers during the war by writing scurrilously about his own country whenever he got a chance. On that subject there is only one word for the man—he is a skunk."

I knew that my Englishman friend knew my views about Mr. Shaw and the war, and that on that subject at least the Englishman was not to be "trailed." So I started him off again on another track by a well-judged "get in" about Mr. Shaw's sparkling and ready wit.

"Make it 'wits'—in the plural—and I am with you," was the reply. "Not using the word in the shady sense, I should say that Shaw lives upon his wits—and other people's, especially Oscar Wilde's. When another and greater man has set a fashion in the cutting of diamonds, it is not difficult for so cunning and skilful a craftsman as Shaw to turn out a sparkling and tolerable imitation in paste. Wilde's sins were many and scarlet, and he stole other men's sayings, but I prefer him to his parody, Shaw. Why Shaw's very pose of brazen impudence is founded upon Wilde, who posed impudently as a wit, a great dramatist, a genius, and an original to the social world. Shaw does exactly the same before the world of socialists. Even Shaw's so-called paradoxes are pure—I should say 'impure'—Wilde. Was it not W. T. Stead who said that a paradox was a truth standing on its head? Shaw would stand on his head in a public thoroughfare—I'm not sure he wouldn't sit mother-naked in his publisher's window—if he thought it would newly advertise himself and his works."

My Englishman was getting down to vulgar invective and ceased to be interesting.

"When I was living in Essex," I interrupted him, "I met at the house of his nephew, the Rev. Canon Stuart King, the great and saintly Dr. King, Bishop of Lincoln. As the Bishop was preaching at St. Clement's, the Parish Church of Leigh-on-Sea, next day, I went to hear him. His sermon was on the text, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' and was a

sermon which might have won over the most hardened of atheists, but coming out of the church one of the Leigh fishermen said, " He's a wun'erful clever man, the ole Bishop, but he won't persuade me as there isn't no God.' I don't know whether you wish to persuade me that there is no such Shaw, as we fable (slightly to change a saying of Emerson's), but I do know that if I listen to you much longer I shall leave this club a confirmed Shavian. One other anecdote about a sermon (as it has bearing on the matter), and I will say good-bye. When I was a boy, living in a country town, I was taken to hear a famous preacher. To the intense surprise of everybody, the biggest old rip and reprobate in the place also went (out of curiosity one supposes) to hear the great preacher, and afterwards remarked: ' If I went to hear that man preach again, I should be converted, and damme, I couldn't stand that ! ' If I stay to hear more from you, I, too, should be converted to the gospel of Bernard Shaw, and as I, in the same way, ' could not stand that '—I'm off."

The Englishman grabbed at the sleeve of my coat. " Just one minute more," he said, " You haven't heard yet how Shaw once got put into his place, and properly. I must tell it you before you go. Shaw was called upon to speak at a literary dinner, and took the opportunity to advertise himself by comparing himself to Shakespeare—to Shakespeare's detriment. Then up got Sir Francis Carruthers Gould, a man of strong likes and dislikes, and, being a fearless straightforward Englishman of Devon stock, does not mince his words when disgusted, as he was at Shaw's use of the great name of Shakespeare for such purposes.

" ' Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,' said Gould, ' I have heard Mr. Shaw's comparison of himself to our immortal Shakespeare, whose name is received with reverence and honour wherever men of letters—proud to speak the tongue which he spoke—are gathered together, and I'll tell you what Mr. Shaw's comparison reminded me of. It reminded me of the flashing of an advertisement of Beecham's pills upon the glorious old pile of Westminster Abbey.' " Wasn't it great ? Wasn't it a classic instance of putting a man in his place ? " exulted the teller of the story. " Even that smirking Mephistocles, Shaw, was for once silenced, could think of nothing to say in reply, but had to sit there,

squinting down the end of his nose, with an uneasy smile upon his self-conscious face, while he was being laughed out of existence by the roar of merriment and applause which came from those present."

I had to admit that it was a good story, and that the snub, alleged to have been administered, was almost Shakespearian in its annihilating directness. On the training-ship *Worcester*, when a new-comer, with any tendency to the "swank"—so abhorred by the Services—"gasses," by narrating something meant to impress his fellow-cadets with the grandeur of his family or his own gallantry, the concise and contemptuous comment of his fellow-cadets used to be "Yarno!" Since then, "Yarno!" has come to be applied on the training-ship to any unbelievable story. The story about Sir Francis Carruthers Gould and Mr. Bernard Shaw does not strike me as altogether a "Yarno." Some foundation in fact—what, I do not know—there probably is. But that Mr. Shaw was thus silenced, I do not believe. During the war, the Kaiser was reported as having preached an eloquent sermon, and some verses were published which ran:

The Kaiser preached a sermon.
The stars stood still in the sky,
Amazed at such condescension—
That he didn't call God to attention
Leaves me wondering why,

and if the trump were to sound the Day of Judgment to-morrow, I believe that the last note would scarcely have died away before Mr. Shaw would be found upon his legs, after calling all high heaven, Kaiser-wise, to attention, to constitute himself the spokesman and apologist for humanity. I am not even sure that he would not claim that the apology should come from the other side. Anyhow, he would be "in the picture."

Be that as it may, I decline to believe that Mr. Shaw was thus silenced, nonplussed for a reply, and laughed out of existence. If so, it was surely the first time that anything of the sort has happened in all Mr. Shaw's life. Most of my readers know his reply to the one solitary grouser in the gallery who, when every other member of the audience was enthusiastically applauding Mr. Shaw at the close of a great play, booed the brilliant dramatist persistently and viciously. "Quite so," said Mr. Shaw, looking up with a smile to the lonely booer in the gallery,

" I am of your opinion too, my friend, but "—this with a deprecatory shrug of his shoulders and outspread palms—" What are you and I among so many ! "

That story is I can well believe true. The story about Mr. Shaw being silenced by Sir Francis Carruthers Gould's alleged rebuff may be true, so far as it goes, but I suspect a purposely-suppressed sequel.

Mr. Shaw is not likely to be less ready of resource and retort than another Celt, Mr. Edwards, " the Fighting Parson." One story of the Fighting Parson many readers may have heard, and if so must pardon my retelling it for the benefit of those who have not.

When Mr. Edwards was giving a political address, an opponent in the body of the hall demanded a direct " yes " or " no " to a question.

" Not every question can be plainly or lucidly answered by a mere ' yes ' or ' no,' " protested Mr. Edwards.

" Yes it can, except by liars like you," was the reply.

" Can you answer two questions I put to you by a plain ' yes ' or a plain ' no ' ? " asked Mr. Edwards.

" Of course I can, like any other honest man who has not come here to tell lies and throw dust in the eyes of voters," was the answer.

" Very well," said Edwards. " Here is my first question : ' What is the time ? ' "

Nonplussed, the other gaped foolishly ! and then, like a rifleman following up his first shot with " rapid fire," the Fighting Parson went on : " Here is my second question—How long have you been out of quod ? "

One of the cleverest retorts I have ever heard was when I was chairman at an open-air meeting outside the Fish Market at Hastings. It was before the war, and was in support of Lord Roberts' National Defence Campaign. A Mr. Marchmont had come over from Brighton to speak, and being a genuine working-man and a democrat as well as an ardent follower of Lord Roberts, I knew that his warning would carry weight with an Old Town audience of fishermen and workers. But at the very start of the meeting, and the moment that Marchmont began to speak, a leather-lunged man at the back drowned what was said by volleying yells of :

"You tell 'em wot happened in 1899! You tell 'em wot happened in 1899!"

As Chairman, it was my business to keep order.

"Look here, my friend," I said to the interruptor, "we are only too glad to welcome questions. What we dread is apathy and indifference. But first of all I ask you, in common fairness, to let the speaker state his case. We have only just started the meeting, and the audience don't know as yet what it is all about. For all they know we may be conducting a religious service, or advocating votes for women, or holding a meeting of protest against something that the Town Council propose to do, or not to do. By the police regulations we must close down our meeting at nine. It has just turned eight. Let Mr. Marchmont speak for half an hour, and then we will give the whole of the remaining half-hour to answering questions, and if it bears on the subject for which we are here, we will take your question about what happened in 1899 first of all."

Again Mr. Marchmont essayed to speak, and again the other yelled him down by shouting, "You tell 'em wot happened in 1899! You tell 'em wot happened in 1899!"

Unable to be heard because of the noise, Mr. Marchmont stopped.

"Look here, old man," he said, "I'll make you an offer for the sake of peace and quietness. If you will tell me, here and now, what it is that happened in 1899 to which you take objection, and if it's got any bearing whatever on the subject on which I am here to speak—we can't go into outside matters—I will do my best to answer you fair and square. If I haven't got any answer, I'll say so like a man and give you best. Now what is it?"

Instead of acceding to this perfectly fair and reasonable request, the other fellow's reply was: "Garn! None of your kid! You tell 'em wot happened in 1899! You tell 'em wot happened in 1899!"

"About fourteen hundred million things happened in 1899," said Marchmont, "and not being a thought-reader, I can't say which particular one of the fourteen hundred million you have in mind, unless you tell me, as I have asked you to. For all I know your wife may have had twins in 1899, but if you have been nursing a grievance against me all these years on that score, I

am ready to give you my word of honour that I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Such a roar of ridicule and laughter went up from those assembled that the heckler, who had truculently pressed forward to the very front, and under our noses, was glad to slip back into a less prominent place whence, like a card being shuffled to the back of a pack, he gradually and unostentatiously continued to recede till he reached open space, when he disappeared, to trouble us no more, through the swing doors of a public-house.

Perhaps I may be permitted to record a retort, courteous or discourteous, of my own.

I was fishing on Southend pier, and saw, walking toward me, an overdressed young man, sallow and blotchy of complexion, who, for reasons best known to himself, was arrayed in a shiny silk hat. He was smoking a cigar of which my friend Mr. W. W. Jacobs would have said that it " smelt like an escape of gas," and was accompanied (also, in this case, for reasons best known to herself : one wondered what they were) by a very pretty and charming girl.

To the questions often put to fishermen : " Any luck ? " or " What have you caught ? " I invariably return a civil, if bored, answer. But when this young gentleman, possibly to show off his wit before the lady, thought fit to enquire, and without any attempt to disguise a sneer : " What do you catch, he-ah ? Whales ? " I was moved by such insufferable impudence to reply : " Fish in the water—fools on the pier."

A few days later I had just started on my mile and a quarter return-walk from the pier's end to the pierhead, when a sudden gust of wind blew my hat off and out to sea, so I had to walk the length of the pier bare-headed.

If the blowing off, and the chase to recapture, a hat afford amusement to onlookers, the total loss of a hat at sea struck everyone on that pier as screamingly funny. Even what might be called the respectable residents, my neighbours and friends some of them, were hard put to it to conceal a smile as they passed, but, once passed, if I chanced to look back, I saw them doubled up and convulsed with merriment. The East End trippers who patronise Southend were at no such pains to conceal their hilarity. I encountered, I suppose, a dozen or more bean-

feasting parties who, as soon as I hove, hatless, into view, pointed at me with howls of joy and laughter.

"Strike me! if this silly ole geyser ain't lorst 'is bloomin' 'at!" shouted the be-buttoned 'Arries, chi-i-king and deriding me to their companions.

"Mind yer don't catch cold, ducky!" "There's 'air!" "Would yer like ter borrow this 'at of mine with the h'ostrich fevvers, Percy?" shrilled or commented the bedizened 'Arriets, as much to my amusement as their own.

Then along the pier came—still blotchy and sallow of complexion, still wearing the same glossy silk hat, still accompanied by the same pretty girl and still smoking a "gas escape" cigar—the identical young man to whose impudent questions, "What do you catch he-ah? Whales?" I had retorted: "Fish in the water—fools on the pier."

By the grin on his face I knew that he felt that the Lord had delivered me into his hand, and that the young man was not going to lose so excellent a chance of "getting a bit of his own back."

"Where has the silly ass's hat gone?" he jeered as he passed.

I walked back after him and turned, so that we were face to face, at which the grin on his face flickered out and he shrank behind the girl, thinking I was going to strike him.

"My hat has gone," I said, "where any brains that you ever had have long since gone—to water," and passed on.

One of the smartest retorts I ever heard was that of a young fellow at Cambridge who, being in want of money, wrote to his father (a business man, who, not believing in wasting words, as well as being annoyed that his son should get into debt), replied, "I have no time to read your long-winded epistles, in which you try to explain away your unpardonable extravagance. In future when you have anything to ask from me, please do so right out, and briefly." So the son wrote back:

"DEAR FATHER,
"S. O. S.
(This was his "Save our souls" signal.)
"L. S. D.
(This was to say what he wanted.)

" R.S.V.P."

(And this was, by asking for a reply, to see that he got it.)

In a chemist's shop a customer asked for some sulphur. When the amount had been carefully weighed out, packed in white paper with sealed ends and handed over the counter with the words, " Sixpence, please," the customer said indignantly, " Sixpence ! Then I won't have it. Why, I can go to the drug department of Boots, Limited, and get the same amount of sulphur for fourpence-halfpenny ! " " Can you ? " retorted the chemist, with whom what he considered Boots' under-selling was something of a grievance, and was, moreover, not a little annoyed at having his trouble for nothing, " Yes ; and you can go to hell, too, for all I care, and get as much sulphur as you like, and for nothing."

The subject of retorts, courteous or discourteous, reminds me that I once—only once—wrote Mr. Shaw a letter. Some verses of mine about dogs which I had contributed to a volume entitled, *From a Northern Window,* induced the publishers to invite me to collect my scattered " prose—and worse " writings about dogs from *Punch, Chamber's Journal,* the *Windsor Magazine,* the *Saturday Westminster* and other publications into a volume. Of my share of the contents of the book, the less said the better. Of the contributions reprinted from the publications just named I am not ashamed. But there were not enough of these to make a book. Other matter had to be supplied all in a hurry, so that the volume might appear in time for Christmas, and of the stuff I turned out—jingles, limericks, parodies—as a " fill-up," ashamed, I heartily am. But I had better fortune than I deserved in my illustrators. To the volume my old friend Lawson Wood contributed six, and Raven Hill (of *Punch*) one full-page drawing, which were described, and rightly, in the *Daily News* as " Marvels of comic draughtsmanship," in the *Telegraph* as " The funniest pictures we have seen for a long time," and in another journal as " Enough to make a cat laugh."

My skits, political and personal, I prefaced by a note which ran : " The few political allusions are entirely without political intention. Similarly, the personal references and imaginary letters are mere fooling, and in no case is anything uncomplimentary implied."

But that no offence should be given to anyone, I wrote first to the three persons concerned—Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Hall Caine and Mr. Bernard Shaw—enclosing the drawing and the doggerel, and asking whether they objected to the appearance of either. Here is the jingle about Mr. Lloyd George which was entitled, "What My Dog Thought He Saw. With apologies to the memory of Lewis Carroll":

He thought he saw a bur-gu-lar,
From prison newly loosed.
He looked again, and saw Lloyd George,
A-robbing of a roost.
"It's well dogs don't lay eggs!" he said,
"Or we, too, would be 'goosed!'"

Mr. Lloyd George, whom I knew personally, was so good as to write to me himself from 11, Downing Street, as follows:

"DEAR MR. COULSON KERNAHAN.

"I certainly do not object to the publication of the verses and caricature which are to appear in your book, and which you have been good enough to send me.

"May I add that it is very refreshing to find that persons really exist who have scruples as to what they publish concerning the present Chancellor of the Exchequer?

"Yours sincerely,
"D. LLOYD GEORGE."

As Mr. Lloyd George was not unaware that I am a Conservative, it was he, not I, who scored "a hit."

Political skits rarely give offence. In referring to the personal appearance of a celebrity, one is on more dangerous ground, and I was uneasy about my Hall Caine and Bernard Shaw limerick, which ran as follows:

A poodle was charged by the Law
With resembling Hall Caine. With his paw
Pressed close to his forehead,
He sobbed, "Yes—it's horrid!
But, at least, I'm not like Bernard Shaw!"

Sir Hall Caine, an old friend of mine and a man for whom all who know him entertain affection and regard, not only as

being incapable of pettiness, but as having on many occasions shewn generosity and greatheartedness rarely equalled, wrote with similar kindness. His letter I seem to have lost, but it was to the effect that public men are fair game, and that he saw nothing whatever, either in Mr. Lawson Wood's amusing picture or in my limerick, at which to take offence.

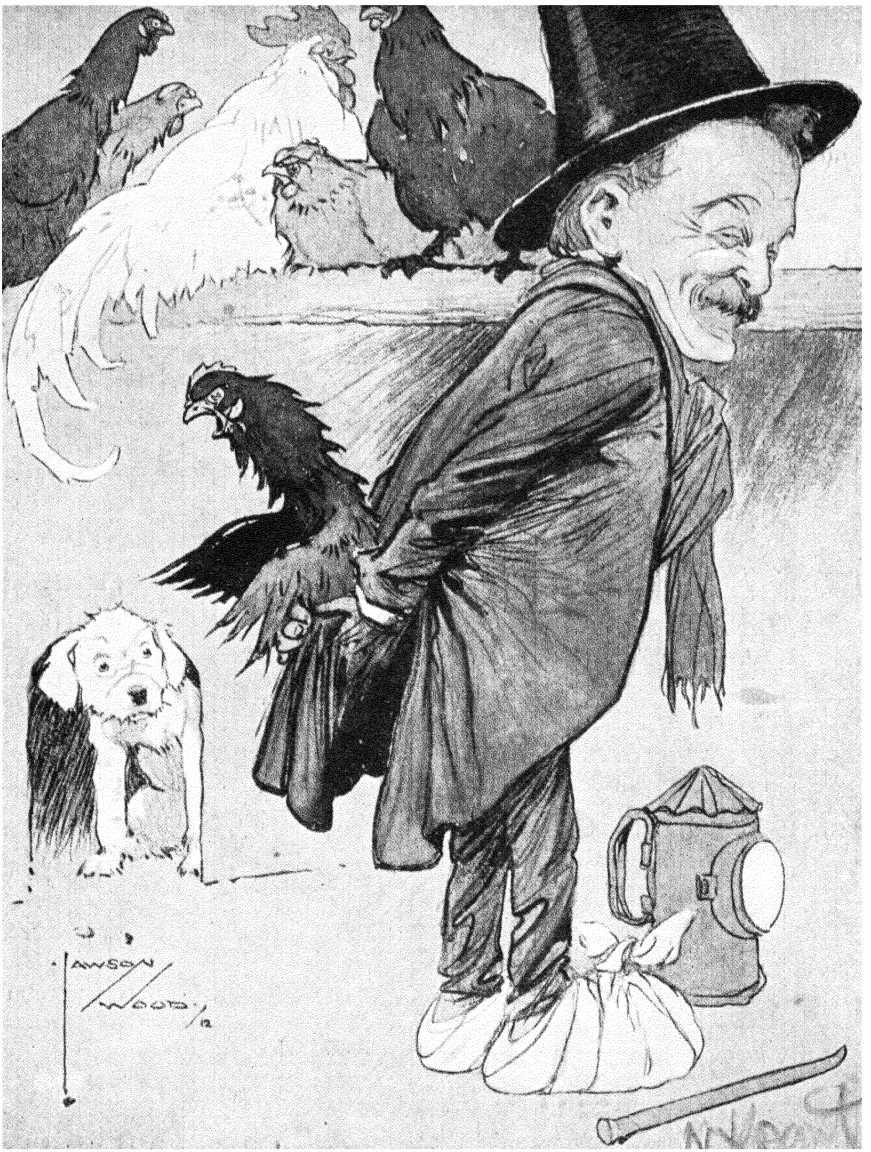
Mr. Shaw was the only one not to reply—small blame to him, for I can well believe that he finds it impossible to answer every uninvited correspondent—so I assumed that silence gives the proverbial consent, and the drawing and the limerick appeared. I do not know whether the smallness of Mr. Shaw's hat, as seen in the picture, compared with the size of his head, also as seen in the picture, has any symbolical meaning—" swelled head," at least, is not, I am sure, intended—nor do I know in honour of whom Mr. Shaw has taken off his hat ; but I take off my hat to Mr. Shaw for many reasons, one of which is as follows :

I have already said that I have not the pleasure of knowing Mr. Shaw personally, and Mrs. Shaw I have never seen. But not long since, someone who knows both was present when a lady expressed the opinion that " Mr. Bernard Shaw has no heart." Then Shaw's friend told us of a friend of his, a young and struggling man of genius who, if he have now come to deserved high place, owes that fact in no small measure to the help, financial and otherwise, and to the warm and generous interest in the young writer and his work, of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shaw.

I have heard of similar acts of kindness done by Mr. Shaw from a friend of his and mine, Arthur Fifield, brother-in-law to the brothers Hocking (which sounds like a music-hall turn by duettists, contortionists, or gymnasts, but I mean no more than that the brothers in question, who have already been mentioned in this chapter, are both popular novelists.)

Before Mr. Fifield became a successful publisher he was my editorial assistant at Ward, Lock & Co.'s, so I know him well. He is dogmatic, argumentative, a Socialist, and scoffs at much that I hold sacred. But he has genuine love for what is worthy in literature, is sterling and steel-true of character, bluntly honest of speech, and I have never known him to say a word for or against anyone that he not only did not believe but knew to be actually true. From Mr. Fifield I have heard, and on more than one occasion, of acts of almost quixotic generosity done

by Mr. Bernard Shaw to young and struggling authors. This is a side of Mr. Shaw of which the world hears nothing from Mr. Shaw himself; but it is yet another instance of the truth of what Swinburne once said to me that, in his experience, "great hearts go generally with great brains."



"He saw Lloyd George, a-robbing of a roost."

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[*Facing p.* 128.

CHAPTER VIII

A KING'S TACT AND A PRIME MINISTER'S FORGETFULNESS: SOME ANECDOTES OF KING EDWARD AND THE LATE LORD SALISBURY

CHAPTER VIII

LORD SALISBURY, Prime Minister in four Administrations, was spoken of as a "cynic," possibly because when the remark was made that too many of the working-classes spend overmuch of their money in the public-house—the men in beer, the women in gin—he is reported to have made what was considered a cynical reply.

"Humph! think so, do you?" so the story goes, was his comment. "You may be right or you may be wrong, I can't say; but even if you are, it is perhaps as well for the ruling-classes that the working-classes do as you say, so long as the beer and gin keep them out of greater mischief. They'll make short work of our class when they start pulling the constituted order of things about, and without making things better—worse in the long run—for themselves. So perhaps it will be as well to leave them in undisturbed enjoyment of their gin and beer."

If anything of the sort was said by Lord Salisbury, it was not meant as cynically as it sounds. To speak as one sincerely believes, even if with seeming cynicism, was, in his opinion, to be preferred to insincerity and cant. Since Lord Salisbury's day the trend of things has been so markedly what is called "progressive," that politicians, no less Tory at heart than he, accommodate their (professed) opinions to the changing times. So far from believing that rule by the democracy would hasten the millennium, they distrust the democracy no less than did he. Yet ever since Sir William Harcourt averred that "we are all Socialists now," they pay lip-service to that blessed word democracy, and speak of "rule of the people, by the people, and for the people," while all the time believing that the democracy, so far from being fitted to rule, cannot be trusted to govern even themselves. In Lord Salisbury's time the word democracy, instead of being "blessed," had a distinctly

unpleasant sound in many ears, and he was too honest to cant about blessings in which he did not believe.

But so far from being a " cynic," so far from being indifferent about the miserable condition under which so many of the working-classes then lived, no man took those conditions more to heart than he, or was more anxious to see such a state of things alleviated. His charities were, to my personal knowledge, far greater than those of some of his contemporaries whose philanthropy was loudly advertised.

But what Lord Salisbury did in the way of charitable relief was done in secret, never under his own name. I knew a worker among the poor who told me after Lord Salisbury's death that the latter had said to him, " I haven't the opportunities that you have—if only because my time must go to affairs of State —of coming directly into touch with suffering and privation, but I ask you, as a personal favour, never to let one deserving case go unrelieved for want of help. You have only to send me word what you require, and I shall count myself under a deep obligation to you in being privileged to assist."

He, in fact, made my friend his almoner, but on the condition that in no circumstances should the source of the help be made known.

After Lord Salisbury's death I was lunching with my friend, the late Dr. Stevens, the first Bishop of Barking. He it was of whom an East End navvy enquired of his mate, " 'Oo's the toff in the black leggin's and the 'igh 'at ? " to receive the reply : " Garn ! 'e ain't no toff, 'e's the Bishop o' Barkin'." He it was, too, who, so far from being ruffled, was vastly amused when a street urchin, cocking a curious eye on the episcopal shovel hat and gaiters, greeted the bishop with the remark, " 'Ullo, old Quaker oats ! "

The Bishop told me that when the East London Waterside See of Barking was created, Lord Salisbury said to him, " You'll be working and living " (the Bishop lived in East London, not in a " palace," but in a Church house) " in one of the most poverty-stricken of districts, and your comparatively small stipend won't meet half the calls upon your purse. I have paid in £5,000 to your bank, for you to draw on as you need, and there's more when that is gone, but only on the condition that the matter is a secret between you and me." A secret the Bishop

faithfully kept it during Lord Salisbury's life, but when we were talking together after Lord Salisbury's death, and I chanced to mention his alleged "cynicism," the Bishop said he saw no harm in mentioning the incident in disproof.

Now to write of other matters.

Lord Salisbury had a remarkable memory for facts, and made no slip, attributable to faulty memory, in matters of statesmanship. A face or a name he did sometimes forget.

Soon after Dr. Winnington Ingram became Bishop of London, Lord Salisbury and King Edward, so the story goes, were chatting together when the door opened, and the Bishop was shewn into the room by a servant who did not know that the King and the Prime Minister were in consultation there.

The Bishop, who was for instantly retiring, was at once recognised by the King. He was not so recognised by Lord Salisbury, who enquired: "Do you wish to see this young cleric, Sir? I don't know who he is, but . . ."

Leaving the question unanswered, the King walked to the door to bring back the Bishop, with whom he shook hands cordially, calling him by name. Then possibly realising that not to be recognised by the very officer of State who was responsible for the Bishop's translation to the See of London, was a little mortifying for the prelate concerned, the King, after assuring Dr. Ingram how greatly interested Queen Alexandra and himself had always been in the Bishop's work in East London, went on to ease the situation with characteristic tact.

"You must not mind Lord Salisbury's momentary forgetfulness," he said. "I have suffered under it myself only recently. I had had a new portrait taken after being smartened up by having my beard neatly trimmed, and so on, and 'pon my word I think I liked it better than any portrait that has been taken for a long time. It made me look several years younger, for one thing. To you, still comparatively a young man, my lord, that would not much matter; but when you get to be as old as I am you will perhaps be as pleased as I was to have a portrait taken in which you look, at least, to be carrying the burden of years fairly well. The Queen thinks it the best portrait I have ever had done, and I was so pleased with it myself that I showed it to Lord Salisbury here.

"'What do you think of that?' I asked, putting it into his

hand. And what do you think was his reply? Holding it away from him to see it the better, he looked at it critically, and then said: 'Excellent, Sir! Excellent—good old Buller!'"

In tact and consideration the King was unfailing, and though he rarely himself forgot either a face or a name, he could make good-humoured allowance, as the story shows, for a slip of the sort by others. Of clumsiness or of inaccuracy he was impatient. An artist known to me had the honour of being accorded sittings by the King for a portrait, and was so unfortunate, when stepping back and away from his work for a far view, to crash into a small occasional table, and so to break a beautiful vase highly valued by Queen Alexandra. He tells me that when he expressed his sorrow, and was stooping to pick up the pieces, the King said shortly, "It doesn't matter. But the time I can spare for sittings is small. You had better get on with your portrait. A servant can clear away those pieces after."

Then, a magnifying glass in hand, His late Majesty walked to the portrait for a closer inspection, and, already irritated by the clumsy upsetting of the table, was more than irate when he discovered that a precious stone in the insignia of an Order he was wearing was wrongly coloured. An inaccuracy of that sort, a breach of "ceremonial," military or civil, he could not tolerate. I have often thought that he would have been as pleased as was his illustrious son by a small happening when King George was at the front.

A regimental ex-brother officer of mine (we are both out of the Service now) had halted his men on a roadside in France for a rest and a smoke. The command, "Stand easy," had been given, and my friend was crouching in a ditch, his back to the road, trying to get a light for his cigarette. Just then some half-dozen mounted officers trotted by, and one of them, drawing rein, enquired, "What regiment is this?"

My friend turned round, dropped his cigarette and snapped out: "Platoon—Attention—Slope arms—Present arms."

Then—but not till then—he replied, hand to cap, "Fifth Royal Sussex, sir."

Taken thus unawares—for it was the King who had asked the question—some officers would have replied *before* calling the men to attention, to the slope, and to the present, and His

Majesty King George did not fail to notice, and to show that he approved the strict observance of ceremonial which the occasion required. I think that the incident, trivial as it was, would equally have pleased King Edward.

Him, I once saw angry, and at a military tournament. That he was in the best of tempers when he arrived I have reason to know, for I had tickets which entitled me to enter by the vestibule where the royal visitor was to be received, and I chanced to witness his arrival.

Wearing the undress uniform of a field-marshal, the King entered to greet, in the most cordial manner, the officers waiting to receive him, and to express his keen interest in and the pleasure with which he was looking forward to witnessing the tournament. In high good humour he took his place in the royal box, next to which my seat happened to be.

Unfortunately, the first item was a gymnastic display by the boys of the Duke of York's School. It was nothing more exciting than dumb-bell exercises, and of a series of extensive movements, the lads standing with arms uplifted or extended, then stooping to touch their toes, and so on. The exercises were very smartly executed, but were so unduly prolonged that folk began to fidget in their seats. This was not what they had come to see, as the King, quick of perception as he was, soon realised, for he drummed impatiently with his finger-tips on the beflagged rail in front of the royal box.

But still the gymnastic exercises went on, the boys turning to the right or to the left, to swing their arms in this direction or in that, to the evident boring of the spectators, some of whom yawned, while others studied the programme, and a few turned to stare rudely at the occupants of the royal box.

The King's face darkened, and when in the arena below the gymnastic master gave another order which was apparently the commencement of yet another series of arm-stretching and body movement, His Majesty turned round sharply, and said something to the officer standing in attendance at the back of the box which promptly brought those responsible for the tournament's arrangements to the Presence.

Of outworn Great War slang most of us are tired, but for once I may be permitted to say that His Majesty " put the wind up them properly." Seated where I was, I saw and heard all

that happened. The tournament, the King said, served a great purpose. It was an invaluable incentive to recruiting. To show how keen was his own interest he had made a point of being punctual—for the clock had not struck three when he arrived. And to see—what? Why, nothing more than extensive movements which, excellent as they were in their proper place, and if lasting only two or three minutes, simply bored and made restless the spectators if unduly prolonged. Those spectators came expecting to witness a great naval and military spectacle—the exciting sword *versus* bayonet contests, gun-laying, bridge-building with incredible swiftness, to see the horses not only in the beautiful pageant of the musical ride, but leaping obstacles and as so superbly trained as to lie down motionless under fire. These were the features which, by arousing enthusiasm and admiration, stimulated recruiting and set the Services in an attractive light before great masses of the people who, in a non-military and non-conscription country, knew all too little about the navy and the army.

Very plainly the King intimated that he would tolerate nothing which stood in the way of making the tournament the success which he intended it to be. Angry he clearly was, and the officers left the royal box as nearly in a flutter as it is possible for British officers to be.

Within a few seconds the order was given in the arena, "About turn, double march." The boys were hurried out, and the combatants in an exciting contest were hurried in. Thenceforward more exciting contests and splendid pageants followed in quick succession. Anxious not again to incur the King's displeasure, the authorities "got a move on" to good purpose, for no sooner had one set of combatants retired and one pageant ended, than another took the field with the least possible delay. I had attended every preceding tournament, and never had one gone with greater swing or aroused greater enthusiasm, and I attribute the fact in no small measure to His Majesty's wise interposition. His displeasure was short-lived, for the effect of his criticism was so evident that his geniality was soon restored, and when he left (not until the last item had ended) he was in high good humour, and congratulated those concerned upon as successful a naval and military tournament as he had ever witnessed.

Now for my concluding story of Lord Salisbury, which is also about his occasional forgetfulness—this time of the name—of someone well-known to him. When he was Premier he had as one of his private secretaries a gentleman whom, for my present purpose, I will call Mr. Fanshawe. Lord Salisbury was dining out one night. His host being a widower, the eldest daughter, a shy young debutante, only "out" that season, played hostess. She had the Premier on her right, and the poor girl—this being the first dinner at which she had presided at one end of the table—was not a little nervous, especially of Lord Salisbury. Engrossed as he would probably be in affairs of State far beyond her understanding, and said sometimes to be gruff and difficult in conversation, she wondered what she could find to talk about that would interest so great a man. Nor were her fears ungrounded. Her stock of small talk soon petered out. There were long and awkward lapses into silence during which Lord Salisbury occupied himself with his own thoughts and with a very businesslike attention to an excellent dinner; and she, in cudgelling her brains for another topic of conversation. When she ventured a remark she was conscious, by the absent-minded start with which he turned to her, that the Premier's thoughts were elsewhere, and that he took no more than a perfunctory interest in what she said. Then she remembered his private secretary, Mr. Fanshawe, whom she happened to know very well, and glad at last to have discovered a subject for conversation, she ventured shyly to say, "I think I know someone whom you know very well, Lord Salisbury."

He, engaged just then in skilfully dissecting a quail, and thinking perhaps of many things, or possibly of nothing at all, contented himself with a gruff, "That's very likely."

Then, after a pause, he spoke again, but with small show of interest, "Well, who may it be?"

"Mr. Fanshawe," she replied.

He turned his head, brows knitted, eyes looking from under them and before him, as if trying to recall anyone whom he knew of that name. Then he shook his head.

"Never heard of him. Don't know the man from Adam," he said.

Seeing the poor girl's look of distress, another guest, a colleague

of Lord Salisbury's, who was sitting near and had heard the remark, came to her rescue.

"Forgive me, Lord Salisbury," he interpolated. "I couldn't help hearing what our hostess said. She means Mr. Fanshawe who has been so long your private secretary, and with whom you were closeted this morning in my room at the Foreign Office, discussing an important affair of State."

"O-h-h-h!" (a long-drawn "oh") replied Lord Salisbury, a light breaking in upon him at last. "Of course. Of course. I beg your pardon, young lady. Glad you know him. Estimable fellow. Invaluable secretary. Don't know what I should do without him now."

Then he added darkly, and as if with a grievance against the absent Fanshawe in his choice of a name, "Always thought the man was called Foster."

CHAPTER IX

GEORGE GROSSMITH FOUNDS A CLUB, AND OTHER GROSSMITH STORIES

CHAPTER IX

THE George Grossmiths number three. The first was a prominent member of the Savage Club, and was in the chair, not for the first time, at one of the Saturday house dinners described by Sir J. M. Barrie in his novel, *When a Man's Single.* The author of *Peter Pan,* who thinly disguises the Savage under the name of " The Wigram," thus writes :

" ' I always thought it was considered the pleasantest club in London,' Rob said.

" ' So it is,' said Simms, who was a member of half a dozen, ' most of the others are only meant for sitting in on padded chairs, and calling out sh-sh when any other body speaks.'

" At The Wigram there is a special dinner every Saturday evening, but it was over before Simms and Rob arrived, and the members were crowding into the room where great poets have sat beating time with churchwardens, while great artists or coming cabinet ministers sang songs which were not of the drawing-room . . . At this point the applause became so deafening that Simms and Rob, who had been on their way to another room, turned back. An aged man with a magnificent head was on his feet to describe his first meeting with Carlyle.

" ' Who is it ? ' asked Rob, and Simms mentioned the name of a celebrity only a little less renowned than Carlyle himself."

Sir J. M. Barrie's chapter on The Wigram runs to seventeen pages, and I must quote no more here, but it was at one of those, not Arabian but Bohemian nights' entertainments that George Grossmith the first was, as I have said, in the chair. He was in great form, recited a poem by Andrew Halliday, and then told some reminiscences of Judge Talfourd, the friend and biographer of Charles Lamb.

His reminiscences ended, Grossmith sat down, soon to rise again and to thump the table with the huge war club with which

the chairman enforces tribal order. Addressing the company, as is the Savage custom, be the chairman the very humblest and youngest member or the future King of England—for King Edward and King George were both members, as is the present Prince of Wales—as " Brother Savages," he announced the name of the next contributor to the always-impromptu entertainment.

Meanwhile someone had observed to Weedon Grossmith that his father was looking ill. Walking uncertainly, Grossmith senior left the chair—to collapse, and soon after to die of apoplexy, in an ante-room.

His son, George Grossmith the second, of whom I am writing, told me that even as a boy he ran a magazine in manuscript, dabbled in private theatricals and attempted sketch-impersonations. Incidentally when dining with me not very long before his death, and when he was hopelessly an invalid—to entertain my wife, a friend of his and ours, and myself—he stood up with his back to the mantelpiece, ledged his right elbow in his left palm, and with his right palm pressed to his brow, gave an imitation of Tree, mimicking so marvellously that actor's semi-lisp, his mouthing of the words, and his tendency to let his voice rise into a nasal whine, that, had I closed my eyes, I could have sworn that it was Tree himself to whom we were listening.

Of George Grossmith the second's career I need not here speak, except to say that the final turn in his fortune came when Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote to him : " Are you inclined to go on the stage for a time ? There is a part in the new play I am doing with Gilbert which I think you will play admirably. I can't find a good man for it."

George Grossmith the third, still in the prime of life, and at the height of his fame, is so well-known to-day that of him I need not here write, especially as my reminiscences are only of George Grossmith the second.

" I want you," he said to me one day, " to join a little private club that I am founding, and am calling ' The W.O.G.T. Club.' Don't you think it a good name ? "

" ' The W.O.G.T. Club ! ' " I repeated. " That is a curious title. What do the initials stand for—Worshipful Order of Good Templars ? "

Grossmith had his back to me while he looked at a calendar on the wall, which he was consulting for the day of the week and

of the month on which the club was next to meet. Without turning, he thrust out a hand behind him and towards me, palms upward, fingers splayed open, waggling it viciously in my direction as if to bid me to get off the earth, and ejaculated contemptuously: "Worshipful Order of Good Templars indeed! One might think you had never heard the hoary story of the painter who had taken a new house at Chelsea, and was very proud of a carved and curved, I should say, spiral staircase in the hall. At the house-warming dinner which he gave, one of his guests, a famous artist, did himself very well in the way of liquid sustenance, but after dinner recollected that he ought to have written and posted an important letter that night. He explained matters to his host, and asked permission to write the letter.

"'By all means,' was the reply. 'At the top, and to the left of the staircase in the hall is a cosy little writing-room. You will find pens, paper and ink, as well as stamps, there. When you have written your letter, ring the bell, and the butler will see that it is taken to the post.'

"Coming down after writing the letter, the artist, who had about two bottles of good wine on board, missed his footing and had a nasty fall. His distressed host hastened to help him up, and said anxiously: 'I do hope you are not hurt?'

"'No, I am not hurt,' was the reply, 'but, tell me, who built that staircase of yours?'

"'Why, so-and-so, a famous man. It is a lovely design, and I am very proud of it.'

"'He did, did he?' said the other, ruefully rubbing the small of his back with his hand. Then, with extraordinary and vindictive ferocity he added, '—— the damned teetotaller!'"

I had heard the story, and so probably has the reader, but it was worth rehearing then, if only for the inimitable way in which Grossmith not only told but acted what had happened.

"Worshipful Order of Good Templars!" he snarled, so setting and snapping his teeth at me that I was struck by and wondered that I had never noticed before his resemblance when angry or simulating anger to an angry terrier. "Why didn't you say right out, as the other fellow did, 'the damned teetotaller!' W.O.G.T. stands for We Often Get Tight—now will you join, dear boy?"

Before me as I write lies the last notice I had of the club's meeting. Here it is :

"55, Russell Square, W.C.
"ANCIENT ORDER OF W.O.G.T.

"A meeting will take place to-day at 1.15 p.m. at the Club's premises for debate.

"Subject : "Should drink be put down ? "

"GEORGE GROGSMITH, D.T.,
"*President.*
"KENDALL JORUM,
"*Vice-President.*"

The signature of the vice-president, I may add, stands for Major Kendall Oram, of whom at that time Grossmith saw a good deal.

The "George Grogsmith," the self-chosen title of "D.T." and the alcoholic name of the club, notwithstanding, the meetings were anything but Bacchanalian, for, under doctor's orders, G.G.'s chief drink was then soda-water, which I have heard Sir Francis Carruthers Gould describe as "a drink without a soul."

But I remember an occasion when, if only out of bravado, Grossmith reverted to alcohol. He and I were staying at the same seaside resort, and feeling ill he consulted a local doctor, who prescribed for him, and added, "And, by the by, no wine or spirits." One night the doctor asked us to dine, and when the wine came round Grossmith nobly declined it. But when, at the dinner's end, the port was put upon the table, he said persuasively, "Do you think that one glass of port would hurt me, doctor, dear ? "

The doctor, something of a martinet to his patients, expecting them strictly to follow his directions, pursed his lips.

"As your host," he said, "nothing would please me better than to say 'Help yourself.' As your doctor, I am compelled to tell you that, in my opinion, port is the last thing in the world that you should take."

Grossmith pouted like a spoilt child, but said no more. Later, he contrived to get the doctor out of the way by asking him to show the company something which he knew was not in the room. Directly the doctor's back was turned, Grossmith snatched up

" A poodle was charged by the law with resembling Hall Caine.

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[*Facing p.* 144.

the port decanter, poured himself out and tossed off three glasses, one after the other—the worst possible way to drink port—and then hid the glass so carefully that its whereabouts was not discovered till three months after.

Whether he played off the wheeze of the W.O.G.T. Club, George Grogsmith, D.T., President, on others than myself, I cannot say, but that—I suspect, unwittingly—he did play the same trick more than once I have reason to know. He and I were staying at the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton. I remember the occasion particularly because he was very scornful about "Guy Thorne," whose book, *When it was Dark*, was just then at the height of its popularity. G. G. had been in the bar for a brandy-and-soda, and the barmaid, to whom as a visitor to the hotel he was well known, observed, "We have another great man staying in the house. He came on Saturday night and I did not know who he was, but he told me he was the famous Mr. Guy Thorne, and gave me his book, *When it was Dark.*

"And would you believe it," said G. G., "the fellow had inscribed this gift to a barmaid whom he had never seen before:

"'To You.
"'From Me.
"'GUY THORNE.'"

In his anger, genuine or simulated, Grossmith made a scornful gesture, and in doing so the stick he was holding slipped out of his grasp. The handle was a wonderfully skilful and life-like carving of a human head. Fearful lest the carving should be broken by the fall, Grossmith dived, very much as I once saw a sea-bird, called the skua-gull, dive for and catch—before the fish had reached the water—a herring which the skua-gull had bullied a gull into letting fall from his beak. In the same way, and with skill which I suspect savoured of long practice, Grossmith dived for and retrieved his stick before it struck the pavement. Then holding the stick with the carved head turned to and almost on a level with his own face he said:

"Ah! would you—you little devil!" shaking his finger at and chiding the inanimate thing, very much as a woman chides a naughty child.

And what was so strange was that for the moment—between

Grossmith's face and the face on the stick—there seemed an extraordinary likeness. The face on the stick looked back at him as if it were human and alive, and with the same expression on the carved features that was on Grossmith's features. So extraordinary was the likeness, and so human the face on the stick, that I asked myself whether what I thought I saw was some sleight-of-hand faking of the stick's head, or whether it was a case of what occulists call "suggestion," by which Grossmith had made me imagine a likeness that did not exist, especially as at other times I saw no likeness to him on the carved face.

Now comes the sequel. Some time after, when he had the same stick in his hand and was talking to a friend of his and mine, exactly the same thing happened.

By accident, or make-believe to be accident, he let the stick slip, dived for and retrieved it before it reached the ground, held it up, the face near and turned to his own, lifted the same chiding finger, repeated the same scolding words, and once again the head on the stick seemed to come alive and to bear a likeness to Grossmith himself.

Evidently the thing was a pose—George Grossmith "featuring" for once as George Posesmith—a carefully rehearsed effect, intended to be taken as an impromptu. Had not the fact that he had once before played it upon me slipped his memory, I might still be wondering whether hypnotism and "suggestion" accounted for what was what I now imagine to be no more than very clever mimicry on Grossmith's part of the features and the expression on the face on the stick.

Here are other Grossmith stories.

At a dinner, when Lord Roberts was present, Grossmith had to speak, and began by saying enquiringly: "Roberts? Roberts? I seem to have heard that name before. Oh yes! let me see! There are two men of mark called Roberts. One has made his mark, and is always on the mark as a great gunner; the other—equally on the mark—at billiards. But then, I'm forgetting Arthur Roberts, and if he isn't the cleverest, I am very sure that he's very much the funniest man of the three."

On another occasion at the annual dinner of a club of which Grossmith and I were fellow-members and fellow-committeemen, one noticed in looking through the list of those proposing or responding to the different toasts that every name was eminent

—with a single exception. To the toast of " The Ladies " Mr. John Bugglesworth was down to respond.

" Who, on earth, is Bugglesworth ? " said one member of the club, " and what were you fellows who constitute the committee thinking of in putting up such a person on a special occasion, when every other speaker is someone of distinction ? I suppose that Bugglesworth, whoever the fellow is—and I never so much as heard of him—is a personal pal of someone's, but that sort of thing lets the club down. We ought not to be a log-rolling fraternity."

Other enquiries to the same effect came my way and the way of other members of the committee who either said nothing or defended the choice of a speaker on the ground that the club existed as much to discover and to bring out new talent as to exploit the famous.

" The Ladies " was humorously proposed by Grossmith, who began by saying that he was painfully aware of his unfitness for the task. So twisting and distorting his features as to make himself look comically hideous, he remarked that the toast was one which should be proposed by a man of classic beauty—an Apollo, a Greek god, for choice. Among the many compliments that had been paid him, he did not once recall being likened to a Greek god—the only approximation to such a compliment which had ever come his way was when his attention was directed at the British Museum to a South Sea Island deity, the head of which was carved out of a coco-nut, and was said to bear a striking likeness to himself. Yes, the proposer of the toast of " The Ladies " should, he felt, be a handsome man, and so far from ever being told that he was handsome, he had on one or two occasions been given to understand—" it is not the word I should myself have used, but here it is—' plain, positively plain.' "

Again, the toast of " The Ladies " should be proposed, Grossmith said, by a fine figure of a man (here he made pretence to throw back his puny shoulders, to throw out his contracted chest) ; in point of fact by a Hercules in build, with great Vulcan-like and massive limbs. So saying, Grossmith flung out his right hand in such a way that his coat-sleeve and his shirt-sleeve, the links of which he had no doubt previously unfastened, slid back, displaying a gaunt and naked arm, skinny, scraggy, and stick-like in proportions.

Then suddenly turning serious, he proposed " The Ladies " in a happy little speech, as charmingly complimentary to what one of Mr. W. W. Jacob's bargee characters calls " The Sects," as I have ever heard.

The toast duly honoured, the members and guests settled comfortably in their seats, and the toastmaster announced importantly : " My lords, ladies and gentlemen, pray silence, for Mr. John Bugglesworth." .

No response of any sort being made, an awkward pause—the sense of strain which falls upon an assembled company when first conscious that something has gone wrong—followed.

Mr. Knightsmith, the toastmaster, less magnificent by reason of his scarlet coat than by his magnificent deportment, again stepped forward, his urbanity for once a trifle ruffled, perhaps even a trifle scandalised, to repeat in a stentorian and peremptory voice :

" Mr. John Bugglesworth."

Still no response, and the company began to look blankly and enquiringly at each other. Clearly it was, once more, a case of " someone had blundered." The man who had previously groused—I suspect because he was annoyed at not being himself asked to speak—said audibly, " Disgraceful, I call it ! The committee, for some reason of private favouritism, put up an unknown outsider to respond to an important toast, and the bounder either forgets or ignores his engagement ! "

Then Grossmith ducked his head for a moment out of sight below the table's level, and came up—somebody else. I had seen many " quick-change " artists in my time, but none by whom the change was more quickly or more cleverly wrought. By arranging or rather by disarranging his hair, by turning his coat collar and coat lapel up and across in some comical way known only to himself, by giving his dress-tie a comical twist, and by screwing up his comical features more comically than I had ever seen him screw them before, he stood there, bowing to the right and to the left, as the mysterious and missing John Bugglesworth.

Speaking as Mr. John Bugglesworth, his first word must be, he said, to compliment the proposer of the toast, Mr. George Grossmith, on his brilliant speech. In all that great assembly he (Bugglesworth) could confidently say that there was only one

man present from whose lips such a speech as that just made by Mr. Grossmith could have fallen, and of the name of that one man, modesty forbade the mention.

As John Bugglesworth, he wished to say to Mr. Grossmith that he was gravely mistaken about his personal appearance. So far from being of poor physique, he, Bugglesworth, asked where, as Mr. Eugene Sandow was not present, was a finer figure of a man than Mr. Grossmith? So far from being plain, he, Bugglesworth, so admired Mr. Grossmith's particular type of manly beauty that had he not been Bugglesworth he would unhesitatingly have chosen to be Grossmith; and so far from being unsuitable to propose the toast of "The Ladies," the toast was, surely, one after Mr. Grossmith's own heart, for Mr. Grossmith's heart was well-known by everyone to be always after the ladies—finishing up with a graceful compliment to whom, and returning thanks in their name, John George Bugglesworth Grossmith sat down to become again George Grossmith's inimitable self.

One of Grossmith's greatest friends—they called each other "George" and "Bertie"—was Mr. Herbert Hardinge, between whom and that magical interpreter of poetry accompanied by music, the late Clifford Harrison, existed a very beautiful friendship, equalled only by that between Watts-Dunton and Swinburne.

Clifford Harrison was the brother-in-law of "Lucas Malet," daughter of Charles Kingsley, and for many years he and Hardinge were rarely out of each other's company, travelling on the Continent together and elsewhere, and, when in England, living together till Clifford Harrison died. The latter's last published book was inscribed thus:

TO
WILLIAM HARRISON
AND
HERBERT HARDINGE,
MY FRIEND-BROTHER, AND MY BROTHER-FRIEND,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

Clifford Harrison had, and Bertie Hardinge has—for he is very much alive to-day, though living in retirement—what has been called "a genius for friendship." Those who remember Clifford Harrison's recitals account him a man of genius as an

interpreter of poetry. Ruskin, whom I had the honour to meet and from whom I have letters, accounted him a genius in art, declaring once that " Clifford began where he (Ruskin) left off."

To Clifford Harrison, Ruskin wrote :

" Brentwood,
" Coniston,
" Lancashire.
" *November*, 1885.

" DEAR CLIFFORD,

" I am ashamed to have kept your drawings so long. . . . The drawings of Alpine wooded mountains are a pleasure to me such as no man ever gave me beforehand, the light and shade is a lesson to me in the management of half-tints such as I never got before. . . .

" Ever marvellingly yours,
" J. RUSKIN."

In another letter Ruskin wrote :

" Brentwood,
" Coniston,
" Lancashire.

" DEAR CLIFFORD,

" I am not allowed to write after my day's work now, except the merest scraps to my best friends. But I must hope to get power of petition into this scrap to get me a loan of some more drawings. You must not send them about to people—not to anybody but me. And you must take great care in handling them yourself, which I know you won't do . . . and this summer you must paint, nothing but paint.

" Your loving
" J. R."

Bertie Hardinge was in my house recently, and looking together at a picture by Clifford Harrison, which hangs on my wall, we agreed that we did not wonder at the extravagance of Ruskin's praise. The only wonder is (or would be were it not for the fact that so many of Clifford Harrison's pictures are in private collections : Mr. Hardinge's has many, and nothing will induce him to part with them), that Clifford Harrison is not represented

in our great art galleries. Some pictures are in the possession of Her Majesty Queen Mary, by whose command Clifford Harrison accompanied the Princess, as she then was, while she inspected the pictures exhibited at a private view, and selected those she most liked and wished to possess. King Edward and Queen Alexandra also owned pictures by Clifford Harrison, but whether the works in question are now at Buckingham Palace, or in the Queen Mother's possession, I do not know.

One day when Hardinge and I, who are of the same age, have gone hence, Clifford Harrison's paintings and etchings (by passing out of private possession) may newly come under the notice of art critics and art lovers, and find their way into museums and art galleries.

The intimate friendship between George Grossmith and Bertie Hardinge was continued after Clifford Harrison's death, and until that of Grossmith. I recall a little dinner which Hardinge gave at an hotel in honour of his actor friend. The other guests were for the most part meeting Grossmith for the first time, and were hoping that he might volunteer an item from his repertoire for their entertainment, but knowing that entertainers have more than enough of that sort of thing in their professional work, Hardinge scouted any such notion.

Towards the dinner's end, however, Grossmith rose importantly in his chair, and loudly clearing his throat, took up a table knife and rapped the table with it sharply, as if to call the attention of those present to the fact that he was about to address them.

Naturally his appearance on his legs was greeted with applause, and delighted everybody, including the host, who had not expected this additional attraction to the entertainment. Then, perfect silence reigning in anticipation of a speech or a recitation, Grossmith said peremptorily, "Waiter, bread please!"—and sat down.

On that occasion it was the guests, their hopes thus raised, only rudely to be dashed, who were discomfited, though I am not sure that the laughter which followed the first blank moment of disillusionment, when they realised that they had been tricked, was not as hearty as that which would have followed a speech.

I remember Hardinge telling us of an incident which more greatly discomfited—not a company, but an actor, and he none

other than Macready, father, I believe, of the late Commander-in-Chief of the troops in Ireland. The incident happened in the presence of Clifford Harrison's mother, Ellen Clifford, herself an actress, who related it to Hardinge.

She and Macready were waiting to " go on " in a dark corner behind the scenes, and overheard the stage carpenter (who had not noticed Mrs. Harrison or Macready) telling two scene-shifters of a conversation he had had with Macready that morning.

" I says to Macready," I says, " that won't do for me, and Macready, he says to me," and so on.

Then Macready stepped out of the corner to say sharply to the fellow : " That will do ! You have no right to be gossiping here at all, but if you have occasion to mention me again, I will trouble you, my man, to be so good as to speak of me as ' Mr. Macready.' "

" I dunno about that," said the unabashed carpenter. " You talk about ' Nelson ' and ' Wellington ' and ' Napoleon ' ; and wot's good enough for a h'emperor, a dook, and a h'admiral ought to be good enough for a h'actor."

And the, for once, disconcerted Macready admitted afterwards to Mrs. Harrison, " By gad ! the rascal had me there."

If Grossmith could chaff his friends, he could also compliment them prettily. At the same dinner Hardinge gave Grossmith a glass of port, sampling which and smacking his lips over it appreciatively, Grossmith remarked : " The last pleasant little dinner at which I had the honour to be a guest was at Sandringham, and " raising his glass while bowing to and beaming on the other guests, " I am not prepared to say that, even then, I had a better glass of port, or found the company more delightful."

He confessed, too, that night that he was always highly nervous when either acting or entertaining, which those who remember how entirely self-possessed he seemed to be when on the boards, and that when, at the piano, he appeared to be enjoying himself equally with the audience, would not have suspected.

I remember an occasion, the last time I saw George Grossmith, indeed, when somebody else had cause to feel nervous and embarrassed. The meeting was at a railway station. I was at the time in barracks with my regiment. Returning from some parade, I had alighted from the train and was leaving the station, when I was touched on the arm by Bertie Hardinge. " George

Grossmith is in the train which is not leaving for London for another five minutes," he said. " He saw you go by, and asked me to run after you and say wouldn't you come back to shake hands."

" Well, Grossmith," I said when outside the carriage in which the actor was sitting, " and how are you, and what has brought you to this part of the world ? "

He started as if taken entirely by surprise, turned in his seat, as I once saw a very testy judge turn to stare (as if at an unknown animal) at a young and unknown counsel who had flatly contradicted the bench. Then G. G. cocked his head, parrot-wise, to peer the closer at me, and as if satisfied that he had made no mistake, he thundered—if George Grossmith's piping voice can be said ever to have thundered—" What the devil has that got to do with you, sir ? I can only say, in the words of the late Charles Brookfield, that if I happened to know your damned name, which I don't, I would address you with equally damned familiarity. Are you General Booth ? I see by your uniform that you are an officer in the Salvation Army."

I was in undress uniform—blue patrol jacket and flat leather-peaked cap of blue cloth, with the scarlet band around it which, with blue facings, denotes a Royal regiment. As this undoubtedly has some resemblance to the Salvation Army, or rather, as the Salvation Army uniform has some resemblance to the undress uniform of Royal regiments, the hit was evident. Though " General " Booth I was not, the grin, at least, was " general " on the faces of the bystanders.

" Probably the only uniform in the Service which *you* would recognise," I said feebly, " is that of the Grenadier Guards, so called because of the towering height of a certain George Grossmith who once ' led ' them—in laughter—at an entertainment, since when the rank and file bear the initials ' G. G.' on their shoulder-straps. But—ah ! there's the whistle. The train is starting. Tell me, Grossmith, when is the next meeting of the W.O.G.T. ? "

" The date of the next meeting," he replied, " will be duly announced—in the *War Cry*, which, as a Salvation Army officer, is probably the only paper you read ; and to sell a copy of which, I presume, you had the effrontery thus to force your

objectionable presence upon me. Go away! I tell you I *won't* buy a *War Cry*."

Then, as the train moved out of the station, Grossmith's head was popped out and cocked round the window to look at me—for all the world as if it were the head of a dummy figure, manipulated by a ventriloquist, as with his wizened face puckered up in a grin, he called me by my Christian name and waved good-bye for the last time.

This world has less of drollery, banter and fun now he is gone; and the next world should be all the pleasanter place because he is in it.

CHAPTER X

LORD NORTHCLIFFE

CHAPTER X

I

OPPOSITE to me at the luncheon table, thirty odd years ago, sat a boyish-looking, clear-skinned and clean-shaven young man of twenty-four or twenty-five, with regular, finely-moulded, and so, handsome features.

A caricaturist, looking at my host for the first time, would have noted, and seized, for his purpose, upon the fact that the smooth straw-coloured hair, parted on the left, was evenly brushed in a diagonal direction across the forehead and toward the right ear.

This was the only affectation, if an affectation it can be called, of one who, in dress and manner, was singularly unaffected, and, especially when he smiled, had the rare gift of "charm." The absence of warm colouring—for his cheeks had as little of ruddiness as had his forehead—gave one the impression of delicacy, but the features, though not large or marked, were purposeful, the chin was strong, and the mouth closed firmly—at times, even, with a touch of finality, as of one who was not long in coming to a decision, and once having made up his mind, was adamant.

The brilliant and searching but kindly eyes of a greyish-blue were steady, notwithstanding a trick which he then had of darting a glance, almost birdlike in its quickness, at the face of the person whose measure he was taking, or whose motives he was seeking to fathom.

We had reached the coffee and cigarette stage, and he said, quietly but earnestly and very convincingly:

"I intend to be a power in the country before I die, and when I have power, I shall use it for the country's good. But, to be a power, one must have money. First of all, Kernahan,

I am going to make money, not for money's sake, but for the sake of the power it gives, and that, later on, I shall use in the best interests of the country. You say you mean to go on writing books. Compared with what is to be made in other walks of life, not a great deal of money is made by books—a competence for the moderately successful, a fortune, perhaps for the very successful, but not enough of a fortune to mean power. And to make a fortune by book-writing takes time. I am a young man, as well as a believer in the Young Man, and as I may not live to make old bones, I can't afford to wait; for the trouble which I see in store for England may not be long in coming, and I want to do what one man may to warn folk, and so if possible to avert trouble, or if trouble come, to do what can be done in that hour.

"Money *is* to be made and quickly by running periodicals, and to run periodicals, I intend. My early ventures, those I have already started, and those I mean to start soon, won't appeal to you, for they are, and will be, frankly, popular. One child can't help another child to learn to walk, till the first child has first of all learned, and is strong enough, to walk by himself. Till he is sure of his own footing—in my case, till I am in a position to follow my own inclinations, my own ideas and ideals—he can't hold out the helping hand. My personal tastes are all for the writing which has distinction of manner, and is at one and the same time 'Literature' and 'Life.' But at first, and until I have made the money which is so necessary for power, I have to remember that among the good folk who buy periodicals, there are not many thousand who care for literature, and that there is a round million which doesn't so care. Until I have made money, I am going dead for the million."

"You mean," I interrupted banteringly, "that, bearing in mind what Carlyle said about the population of this country being 'mostly fools'; and as the wise man's penny won't count a pin's worth more in reckoning twelve pence to a shilling, and twenty shillings to a pound—won't, in fact, buy as much as one extra pin more than the fool's, in the next penny packet of pins that you may purchase—you are going dead for the fool."

He made a quick gesture of impatience.

"So far from thinking the majority of my fellow-countrymen, Carlyle or no Carlyle, to be fools," he said, "I regard the average

Briton as uncommonly shrewd and hard to fool. The man who sets out to fool his fellow Britons may do so for a time, but won't do so for long, and in the end will succeed only in fooling the biggest fool of all—himself. I have the fullest faith in the high existing average of fairness, judgment and shrewd common sense among the great majority of Britons. Common sense is infinitely more widely diffused among our fellow-countrymen and countrywomen than the literary sense. The literary sense does not always and necessarily imply common sense (I can give you not a few instances to the contrary) any more than shrewd common sense necessarily implies a taste for what is best in literature. It is so in other matters. There are diversities of gifts. You know my brother, Harold?" I nodded, for I knew Mr. Harold Harmsworth, now Lord Rothermere, but only slightly.

"He's a marvel! I've got ideas—so has he—but Harold has brains for finance and for business management, compared to which, in his own line, mine are small. Any success that I have made thus far at Tudor House is due as much to Harold as to me. If he were not doing what he is doing in the counting-house, I should not be able to do what I am doing in the editor's room. Only those inside the house know what I owe to Harold. One day he will do big things in the world. But as I was saying, there are not many thousands who are gifted with the literary sense; but, upon the common sense, fair-play-sense, and justice-sense of the million, one can rely. The million wants News—news which is really new, and is real news, ascertained on the spot, sifted, substantiated, and so carefully verified as to be always dependable.

"But to come to the point. Once I have made the money which means power—power which, I repeat, I intend to use in the interests of the country—I can afford to indulge my own tastes, and to make my publications a power in literature as well as in other spheres. Join me, Kernahan. You and I could pull well together. I would like to have someone like yourself to look after the literary side of my publications, while I am looking after the organising side, and between us, I think, we could make things hum. I don't know what salary you are getting as Literary Advisor to Ward, Lock and Co., but you should not have cause to complain on that score. Come to me and you will soon be in a position to retire, if you wish to, for my surmise

is that you hanker after the independence and the quiet of country life, and to give your whole time to your own writing. I hope, and think you may be disposed to stay on for the term of your active life. You would find the work fascinating, dealing with big issues, as it ultimately will. It is possible that you have heard that I suck a man's brains, and then fire him. That has been set about Fleet Street by one or two Incompetents whom I was compelled to discharge. Incompetents, I don't pretend that I keep. We have more than enough Incompetents in public life. The retaining of proved Incompetents in office —the idea that, once a man has got a Government, or even a governing job, he must remain so long as he likes, is one of the greatest handicaps to this country. In the concerns I run, and am going to run, everyone has, and shall have, a fair chance of proving his worth. If he turns out incompetent, he will go ; and that is why the two or three Incompetents whom I have been compelled to discharge say that I am ruthless. The other sort, the Competents, I will keep on just as long as they will stay. They are too hard to find, for me to be ready to let them go, and most of all the man who is most hard to find is the Man of Ideas. Give me a Man of Ideas, and I will start a new journal any day, I had almost said every day. It was to ask you to come to me that I proposed we should lunch together to-day. What do you say ? "

My reason for not accepting so complimentary and attractive an offer, I need not at length state, as it is of Lord Northcliffe, not of me, that the reader wishes to hear. What I said, briefly put, was what, some years later, I said to Sir Wemyss Reid, when he sent for me to offer me the Chief Editorship of Cassells. It was to the effect that I did not feel free to leave my old firm, Ward, Lock and Co., who had given me my first editorial post, and had treated me with generosity and consideration ever since. And I added that for temperamental reasons, I should be happier in the humdrum work of reading manuscripts in the quiet of their Editor's Room, than in the strenuous hustle and bustle which, rightly or wrongly, I associated with the editorial work of the Harmsworth Press, or in the greater responsibility of so huge a concern as Cassells.

But I record our conversation, as nearly as I recall it after so long a lapse of time (the gist of it, at least, is correct), because

The late Mr. George Grossmith

[*Facing p.* 160.

I was convinced at the time, and have never had cause to change my conviction, that all that Northcliffe then said about his intention being—once he was in a position, sufficiently independent to allow him to choose his own line of action—to devote his energies to what he believed to be the best interests of his country, was absolutely sincere. Ambitious, especially of power, he no doubt was, possibly, too, of personal advancement—and to the man in public life to-day who can truly say he is entirely without either ambition, I leave it to cast the stone. But these were secondary aims, and I believe that to Lord Northcliffe, at least—if less so in the case of Alfred Harmsworth who first of all had to make his own way—the safety and welfare of his country and his fellows was his greatest consideration.

That is all I propose, in these Recollections, which are only of the man, to say of the great part which Lord Northcliffe played in National and World affairs. Not all approved his views or his methods, and some who differed from him maintain that he made errors, and of the gravest. Except to remark that, remembering how many and how great were the issues with which he was concerned, the wonder seems to me that he made so few, for which after events afforded no justification—I express no opinion, but that he was sincere and well-intentioned, I repeat, that I am convinced.

II

" Be pitiful, for everyone is fighting a hard battle," said Ian Maclaren once. Of Lord Northcliffe's pitifulness for life's derelicts, his friend and mine, Sir George Sutton could give innumerable instances of kindnesses and charities which went all unadvertised. One morning when Northcliffe was to lunch with me, the arrangement being that I should call for him at his office, I was a few minutes late, and found him, meanwhile, turning over the pages of a newspaper. He had chanced upon a paragraph about a man who had been convicted of some not very serious offence, was out on ticket of leave, and had, for the second time lost his employment because the fact that he was a ticket-of-leave man had come, I believe by way of the police, to the knowledge of his employers. " This poor fellow seems to have been trying hard to run straight," said Northcliffe

to Sutton, " and I believe that there are many like him who would try to get back to an honest life were they given the chance. Send a thousand pounds " (that, to the best of my belief, was the sum named, and at a time when Northcliffe had not yet come to great wealth) " to the Discharged Prisoners' Aid society, but not in my name or the name of the firm. For want of a little help, a man who might come to be a respectable member of society, is forced in despair back to crime."

To someone known to me, whom the very mention even of the name of Northcliffe enrages, and had spoken of him as " heartless," I related the incident.

" Mere pose on the part of an inordinately vain man who was cleverly trading upon your credulity" was the reply.

Personally, I detected neither vanity nor any tendency to pose on the part of either Alfred Harmsworth or Lord Northcliffe ; but, that question apart, why (I ask) should a man of his power and importance wish to pose to a comparatively unimportant and uninfluential person, by expressing sympathy and pitifulness for one of life's bottom dogs, when such sympathy and pitifulness were insincere—and at the cost of a round thousand pounds ?

Had I, hoping thereby to win for myself the good opinion and good-will of a great newspaper proprietor who was in a position to give books of mine a lift, or to put well-paid work in my way, thus posed as a man of pitifulness and sympathy—some reason to doubt my sincerity there may have been. In Northcliffe's case there was none. Nor, were I seeking a favour from him, should I thus have gone to work. For pose, sycophancy and insincerity he had the keenest of eyes, and would instantly have detected the motive which lay behind the insincerity. Had I wanted aught from him I should have asked for it straight out, and with small likelihood of being refused, for he never forgot old friends, and sent me the kindest of messages on the eve of his start for his last world tour.

As a matter of fact, I never once asked favour nor sought work from him. When, in 1908, I was giving all my energies to the promotion of recruiting for the Territorial Army, I wrote a series of articles, the aim of which was, by describing life in camp, in the drill hall and in barracks, to set the Service in an attractive light. The series I decided to offer to the *Daily*

Mail. But rather than seem to be taking advantage of an old friendship by making the proposal to Lord Northcliffe, I addressed my letter and sent the manuscript to Mr. Thomas Marlowe. Possibly because he knew how keen was Lord Northcliffe's interest in National Defence, Mr. Marlowe sent them to his chief, then at Geneva. Here is Lord Northcliffe's reply:

"*March* 13, 1908.

"MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

"I return this manuscript with the greatest reluctance because the articles are extremely good, and would be of great service to the cause of National Defence. But the fact is that I am tied up with one series for the *Daily Mail*, and cannot embark upon another. We have only twelve articles a week, and the topical ones which occur from day to day must naturally have preference.

"I am so glad to see your handwriting again. I have always such very pleasant recollections of you.

"Yours sincerely,

"NORTHCLIFFE.

"P.S.—Later. Thinking over the matter again, it occurs to me that you might be able to reduce the articles to a series of *three* of 1,250 words each. In that case I should be very glad to print them."

The articles were thus reduced and appeared in the *Daily Mail*, and were there seen by Lord Roberts, who sent me a long and appreciative letter, and later wrote an introduction to the articles when they appeared in book form. Northcliffe's allusion to "such very pleasant recollections," reminds me how seldom I saw him in later life, for, knowing upon what great enterprises he was engaged and how strenuous was the pressure upon his time—knowing, too, how many sought him out with an axe to grind—I thought it more considerate to keep away. Up to March, 1905, when I was with Ward, Lock & Co., and so was his near neighbour, we met not infrequently, sometimes at dinner at his house, sometimes at a reception by Lady Northcliffe, but generally to lunch together near Fleet Street or the Strand. After I resigned my readership, and went to live in the country, our meetings were rare and generally casual. The

last time I saw him was just before the war and on the first night of a play. Lady Northcliffe and he were in a box, and I in the stalls, and, seeing me, they bowed and smiled. In the interval after the first act, he beckoned me to the box, where I joined them. When greetings had been exchanged, he said, " You never come to see me now, Kernahan. Why ? " The reason I gave was very much the same as I have already given to the reader, but he said a little impatiently, even testily, " Yes, yes. I know all that and it is quite true, but can't I sometimes have the pleasure of seeing an old friend who comes to see me for myself, and not to ask me to do something for him ? "

None the less I kept away, and rightly, for a very old friend of his was at my house not long ago, and when I enquired, " How is Northcliffe ? " he replied, " Very much overdone, and worried as ever by the well-meaning folk who won't realise how rushed he is, and let an overdriven man alone. The last time I saw him, he put his hand on my shoulder, and said, ' So and so, you are the best friend I've got. *You never come to see me.*' "

At the beginning of his career he was willing to see—seemed, indeed, to like himself to see—anyone who called to make a suggestion or a proposal. Two minutes, rarely more, sufficed to turn the proposal down, and politely to dismiss the caller, or to decide to give the proposal further and full consideration. He made up his mind with astonishing quickness. Once—at that time he did not know the late Mr. Stead—he said, " Stead is by way of being a friend of yours, I think. Take me round to his office and introduce me. I want to take shares in the daily paper he is about to produce."

I did not believe in the success of Stead's paper, and said so. But at that particular time, Northcliffe seemed (I have noticed something of the sort in others who, from being comparatively poor, have come to sudden affluence) to have an uneasy feeling that wealth which had quickly come, might as quickly go, and that it would be well to have some proverbial " eggs " in other " baskets " than his own. Be that as it may, he repeated his wish to take shares in Stead's venture, and so to be introduced to the latter, who, when we arrived at Mowbray House, we were told was not in London. But my card being taken into Stead's able lieutenant, Mr. Grant Richards, now a successful publisher, whom I had known since 1889 when Sir

William Watson brought him to my house in Essex, and with whom I had recently spent a week-end as the fellow-guest of his uncle, Grant Allen, at Hindhead, Richards asked us into his office, and I introduced him to Northcliffe.

Coming away, the latter said in his quick decisive way, " I like that young man. The only thing against him is that he looks so much younger than he is (as I do) that folk won't take him seriously, and will want to be calling him ' Granty,' just as they call me ' Young Alfred Harmsworth.' "

III

Since his death much has been written of Northcliffe as the most lovable, loyal, large-hearted and inspiring of friends and companion, but of his sunny sense of humour not many have laid stress. Like a friend of mine who, during the war commanded a battalion, in which his son was a subaltern, Northcliffe could enjoy a joke against himself. The colonel in question said to his adjutant, " Every commanding officer is known by a nickname, often ' the old man ' among the rank and file. What do they call me in the regiment ? "

" Well, sir," said the adjutant, " if you insist upon knowing, they call you ' Big '—and your son—' Little Willie.' "

In the same way, Northcliffe once said to me, " What are they saying of me in the literary clubs, and up and down Fleet Street ? "

" Telling a ridiculous story about you having fourteen brothers, all in the business," I replied.

" What is it ? " he asked.

" That you were coming down your stairs in Tudor Street one dark afternoon before the lights were on, and when a man, who was coming up, lurched clumsily against you, and you told him he should be more careful, he replied, ' All right, Alfred.'

" ' You address me as Alfred ! What is your name ? I think you must have been drinking,' you are supposed to have said, to receive the reply, ' I know it is a bit dark on these stairs to-day, but don't you know me, Alfred ? I am your fourteenth and youngest brother, Plantagenet, just down from Oxford to take over the interviewing job for *Answers*.' "

Another story is told of Northcliffe, as happening in later

life. He was said then to be very irritable, which is quite likely. Irritable he was by temperament, as are many men of highly-strung nerves under over-pressure and many responsibilities. But this story was put about by those who wished to picture him as a hectoring and unscrupulous bully, which he assuredly never was.

Going up the lift at Carmelite House, he was irritated by the whistling of a boy in the same lift. Ordered peremptorily to stop whistling, the lad was impudent, at which Northcliffe said sharply :

" What is your name ? "

" Smith."

" I don't know what department you are in, Smith," Northcliffe is supposed to have said, " but you are discharged."

The boy laughed in his face. " You can't discharge me. When I said my name was Smith, I meant that I work for W. H. Smith & Son."

" What wages do you get ? " was the next question.

" Fifteen bob a week."

" Would you like to get twenty-five ? "

Scenting a better job, the boy replied less disrespectfully, " Rather."

" Oh, you would, would you ? Well, I shall be here on Saturday, and will leave word below that if a boy calls, he is to come up."

On Saturday morning the lad is pictured as presenting himself, all smiles.

" What do you want ? " Northcliffe is supposed to have asked sharply.

" That twenty-five shillings a week job, sir."

" Have you left Smith's ? "

" Yes, this morning."

" Very well. So you are in my employ now, are you ? "

" Yes, sir."

" You said I couldn't discharge you. Now you will see that I can. You are discharged. Get out of the place."

The story, as told, ends there. Had it gone on to say that, the lesson administered, and amused by the cocksureness of a lad whom Northcliffe thought might be trained into usefulness, he added, " Now go and tell Mr. So-and-So that I said you are

to work under him at twenty-five shillings a week, but that if you cheek those older than yourself again, you will be discharged in earnest," I should be less incredulous. As it stands, I disbelieve the story entirely.

A story about himself at which Northcliffe smiled, he might, his sense of humour notwithstanding, have resented, for the thing was clearly the concoction of an enemy, and was intended to impute to Northcliffe a "smartness" which amounted to sharp practice. To the man who had tried to trick or to take advantage of him, he might have shown small consideration, but, himself, to take advantage of or to go behind the back of one who had done him a kindness and a courtesy, Northcliffe, always a generous as well as a grateful man, was incapable. In chivalrous appreciation towards other newspaper proprietors and other journalists, even his formidable rivals, he has left great traditions and precedents behind him. There was a time when few editors would allow in their columns a reference, still less a tribute, to a rival journal. From those columns, at least, one would never learn of the existence even of a rival journal, for in those columns all mention of a rival was tabooed. For that sort of smallness, Northcliffe had supreme contempt. Nowhere has such tribute to the enterprise, energy and ability of fellow proprietors, fellow journalists, and their journals been paid—I may instance Lord Burnham and the *Daily Telegraph*—as in the journals which Lord Northcliffe controlled. I do not happen to be, or ever to have been a journalist, but I have been an occasional contributor, on subjects on which I have specialised, to many journals, and I recall cases when even the mention by me of a rival journal has been sternly expunged. I recall, indeed, in a book of mine, a casual mention of a certain publisher as a visitor at the house of a celebrity of whom I was writing, and when I received the proofs I found that the name of that rival publisher had been removed.

To return to the story that I once told Lord Northcliffe, and by which he was amused. The cleverness of it lay in the fact that it was a distortion of something that had really happened. When he was in America, he called—no secret was made of it—on a certain great newspaper proprietor. In the story—it has not to my knowledge found its way into print—the name of that proprietor is given, as if in substantiation of the alleged facts. Here is how the yarn goes. In New York, Northcliffe

said to the great newspaper owner, and said frankly, " I am here to learn about anything you do better in America than we can do in England. So anything that is new to me in your methods, and that I think suitable for England, I shall copy. Do you mind ? "

" Not in the least. You are quite welcome," was the reply. " My papers and your papers, my public and your public, Lord Northcliffe, don't clash in interests or come into any rivalry. Copy what you like."

So Northcliffe was made free of the place, and was allowed behind the scenes in the editorial, the printing, distributing and advertising departments. Later he called again upon the American newspaper proprietor, thanked him for his great courtesy, and admitted that he had learned not a little that he meant to copy.

" Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery," was the reply, " and for any wrinkle of mine to be copied by Lord Northcliffe, I take to be a compliment."

" One other matter," Northcliffe is supposed to have said. " I am frank and above board about it, you see. It is that I want to take one of your men back with me."

The American newspaper proprietor's face fell. " That is another matter," he said. " My methods you are welcome to, but my men have taken me a long time to find, and parting with them is a very different story."

He thought the matter over for a few minutes. Then he said: " Well, guess you will be bidding any man you want a price I should not see my way to pay, and stand in my men's light, I never have, nor shall. So as long as you don't take Jackson, who is the best man I've got and an Indispensable, you can go ahead."

The same night, Northcliffe is supposed to have seen Jackson and to have asked him what pay he was getting. Told the amount, he said, " Come to me, and I'll give you double. What's your arrangement with your present employer ? Are you bound by any time contract ? "

" Fortunately, that is all right," was Jackson's reply. " When my present boss got me away from my previous boss, I was in a safe and good job, and I wasn't going to leave a safe job with the chance of losing that other and new job when I'd taught

all I knew. At the same time, I wasn't going to tie myself up against the chance of closing with such a good offer as yours coming along. So as I saw that my present boss wanted me badly, I got a contract out of him, by which he can't fire me for ten years, while leaving it open to me, if anything better turned up, to be free of him at a week's notice. He kicked against it, but he had to give in. You won't blame me, I hope, for looking after my own interests first, and if I come to you I shall require the same contract—a ten years' engagement—though I am willing to waive the point about being free to leave you at a week's notice, and will sign on to stay for ten years."

To this, Northcliffe is supposed to have agreed, a lawyer was then and there called in, and the contract drawn up and signed.

Next morning, the American newspaper proprietor received a letter from Jackson, giving "notice."

He turned to his confidential clerk. "Say, Thompson," he said sadly, "we are losing Jackson! You know the conditions on which he came here. He was said to be the best man for his job in the States, so I bought him out over the head of the other fellow. But Jackson wasn't taking any chances, and tied me down to a ten-year agreement, though he was cute enough to stand out for a week's notice on his own part. He has got a better job now. Our pay was tall, but Northcliffe has offered to double it."

Then the great newspaper proprietor smiled.

"Guess," he said, "that the great reputation Jackson had, when we bought him out, was of his own boosting. Guess he hadn't been here a week, before I found out that it was all hot air, that he couldn't deliver the goods, and wasn't worth a tenth of the tall price we paid him. Guess I've wanted bad to get rid of him ever since, but, tied up as he had tied me, couldn't see how. Guess I've worked it all right on that greenhorn, Northcliffe—' Jackson, my Indispensable, and I don't care whom you take, so long as you leave him,' and all the rest of it: I thought that would do the trick, and guess that at last I have found another buyer for the pup I was sold."

As fiction, and on the lines of Mr. W. W. Jacobs' "the biter bit," or "diamond cut diamond" yarns, the story will pass; but told as true, and of Lord Northcliffe, it is no more than a very ingenious and cleverly constructed lie.

IV

Of humorous stories told me by or concerned with Lord Northcliffe—most of the latter concocted—I have a store, but there are other matters on which I wish to write, so pass on to testify to his generosity.

One day he said to me, " I want a serial for one of my publications. Have you one by you ? "

" I haven't," I replied.

" Has your wife ? "

(My wife, I may interpolate, is the grand-niece of W. H. Prescott, author of *The Conquest of Mexico*. She was to have been a doctor, and was the first woman to attend Medical Lectures at Cambridge, but was persuaded by Mrs. Henry Wood to try her hand at fiction in the pages of *The Argosy*, of which the author of *East Lynne* was editor. Since then my wife has published some forty novels.)

" She has nothing new," I said, " but *Lippincott's Magazine*, in which Kipling's *The Light that Failed*, first appeared, printed a story of hers as one of their complete-in-one number novels. It is short, some 25,000 words, too short to be of any use for a book. Would its appearance in *Lippincott's* spoil it for use in your journal ? "

" I don't think so," was the reply. " Not many persons see *Lippincott's* here, and the two publications appeal to very different readers. Let me see it."

He saw, and liked it. Then, " How about terms ? " he asked. " Since it is too short for a book, and so no use to your wife, I prefer to buy it right out, as then I can handle it as I like. I may one day—though a man who succeeds in publishing periodicals won't necessarily succeed in publishing books, and is well advised in sticking, like the cobbler, to his last—try my hand at publishing books, and short as the story is, it would make a readable volume. What does your wife ask for copyright ? "

I named a price with which he instantly closed, adding, " Come along to the office and I will write you a cheque."

The story appeared in the Harmsworth publication, where it was seen by Mr. John Long, the publisher, who approached my wife with an offer to bring it out as a book, if she could

lengthen it by the addition of some chapters. When next I saw Northcliffe, I told him of the publisher's offer, and asked whether, now the story had finished running in his periodical, he would re-sell the book rights. He refused.

"I'm sorry," I said, "for the publisher's offer is satisfactory, and she could afford a fair price for the repurchase."

"Reselling is out of the question," he said decisively, and I was about to let the matter drop when he added with a smile, "But I will, and with pleasure, give it to her."

"I am not asking for that," was my reply. "Fair do is fair do. I did not hesitate to take your cheque, so why should you hesitate to take mine? I am not proposing to give as much as you paid, for you have had the serial use, but tell me what you think serial use was worth to you, and I will give you a cheque for the difference."

"I have told you I won't resell," he said with finality, "but the story is your wife's copyright again, and that's the end of the matter. Now I want to talk to you about something else, so come along to Sweeting's and we'll have a dozen of plovers' eggs by way of a quick lunch."

At another time when I had called for him at Tudor Street to take him to lunch with me at the Savage Club, where Max Pemberton—my long friendship with whom I owe to Northcliffe, who first brought us together—was to join us, I noticed that his mantel-piece was gay with pieces of choice and quaint pottery, of a design and make that I had never seen before.

"Where did you get them?" I asked. "Do tell me. I should like to buy a few pieces for my own den."

His radiant boyishness, even more than his unaffected naturalness, was one of Northcliffe's greatest charms; and he was as pleased as a boy over a new toy that I thus admired his pottery.

"They are my 'find,'" he said gleefully. "I was the first to whom they were shown, just as you are the first friend to see them. I liked them so much that I have bought the whole boiling or baking, or whatever they call it, for every connoisseur takes a pride in a piece of ware, a copy of which no other connoisseur possesses. So I am certainly not going to give away the show by telling you where more are to be had, but . . "

"Dog in the manger!" I interrupted. "As if my humble

little 'Thrums'" (the name of the house in which I then lived at Westcliff-on-Sea), "next door to a meat salesman, could ever come into competition with your big house, next door to Lord Rosebery, in Berkeley Square!"

"But," he went on, disregarding the interruption, "I'll send you some pieces for your den."

"My dear Harmsworth," I protested, "you are like the Spaniards. Say to a Spaniard that you admire his house, his horse, his—anything that is his—and he replies, 'Señor, it is yours,' with the difference that you mean to be taken seriously, and the Spaniard does not. But I beg you to do nothing of the sort, for I shall feel as if, by admiring your pottery, and asking where it was to be had, I was 'spelling' for a gift, and cadging of that sort I abhor."

But a few days later came not the few pieces of which he had spoken, but a case of the pottery, with his card enclosed on which, under, "To C. K. with A. C. H.'s regards" he had written, a line from Omar Khayyám, "Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

Like Frederick Locker-Lampson, whose home one rarely left without carrying away some precious book, picture or vase that was pressed upon one's acceptance, not the least of Lord Northcliffe's pleasures lay in discovering the something that would most please a friend, and sending that something along.

Of his sense of fairness and justice, I recall a typical instance. A man known to me, whose honesty and sincerity I do not doubt, but whose politics and whose views I do not share, has something like a detestation for the Northcliffe Press, the *National Review* and the *Morning Post*, two, if not all three of which have had occasion to fall foul of him, concerning his Imperial policy. By voice and pen he has for years denounced Lord Northcliffe as "a national danger," and when, in the *Times*, he was the subject of a severe criticism (it concerned his views on Germany), he attributed what was said to Lord Northcliffe's influence or instigation. I told him that I believed Lord Northcliffe had as little to do with the article as I had, but the reply was, "The man is my enemy. He knows me to be his, and if he did not personally pen the article, he was behind it. It is monstrous that I should be misrepresented thus to the *Times'* readers, without being given an opportunity to reply."

"But why not reply?" I asked, "if you consider, and can prove, that you have been misrepresented?"

"Reply!" he said contemptuously, "don't I know the *Times*, and Lord Northcliffe? Nothing in the world would induce either to print anything which showed them to be wrong."

"No," I said, "you very clearly do NOT know either Northcliffe or the *Times*. I don't suppose the former would see your letter till it was in print, but if, as you assert, you have been misrepresented, and you send a brief, moderately-worded letter, stating your case, I have every confidence that it will go in. If you have not been misrepresented, an editorial note to your letter may be appended, justifying their action, but a fair hearing in your own defence you will be allowed."

"It is you who don't know the man Northcliffe," he said. "I don't bet, or I would give you a thousand pounds to a penny that any letter I sent doesn't go in. Just to show you how misplaced is your confidence, and to open your eyes to the real nature of the man and the paper, I will send the letter, and address it to Northcliffe himself, but it is a wicked waste of time."

This was said in a train when I was starting on a holiday, and I did not see the *Times* for some weeks, but when next I met the man in question, he was not a little shamefaced.

"You were right, and I was wrong, and misjudged Northcliffe and the *Times*, for my letter went in just as written, and without any such editorial note as you threatened. I will make what amends I can by telling the story in full, when I write my Recollections of Public and Political Life, and I'll say, if you will allow me, that you are the man (and I am sincerely obliged to you) who assured me that my letter would go in."

I have stolen a march upon him by telling the story here, for his Recollections have not yet appeared. But I have no qualms of conscience in doing so, for the writing of the letter was due more to me than to him, and I have told briefly, and without a name, what he will tell in full under his own. Possibly, too, for politicians have conveniently short memories, what is here said will leave him no excuse for omitting the story.

v

My concluding memory of Lord Northcliffe is of almost the last long talk I had with him. It was after his papers were already a power in the land.

To those who have asked me, especially since his death, " Was he a man of religious belief ? " the only honest answer I could return was, " I do not know," for I never heard him say one word—for or against—on religious matters. In his heart I believe that he was, but as I can say nothing from knowledge on that score, I should like at least to put on record what he once said to me.

" Early the other morning," he said, " I was walking southward across London Bridge. Cityward, an unending stream—a vast tide of humanity, toiling for its daily bread for the most part—poured restlessly and continually by me ; and I don't pretend not to be so human as not to have felt something of the joy of power when I saw how many held in their hand or under an arm the papers which I control, and when I remembered that I, the unknown man whom they passed, or perhaps in their haste, hustled, was doing not a little to mould their opinions and to influence their actions. But I had other and very pitiful thoughts as I looked at them. Here was an old clerk, warehouseman or shop-assistant, in shabby but carefully-brushed clothes, anxiety written on his face lest, perhaps, advancing years might lose him his job, and with small hope at his age of getting another. Here, too, were men and women of middle age, not a few with care at their hearts, lest any Saturday morning might bring the ' notice ' which meant that a younger man or woman could do their work equally well for less pay. Here, too, were eager-eyed young fellows, some of them with success before them, but many more with disillusionment and disappointment in store. Most of all I noticed how many young women, even girls of tender age, there were, who, in our father's time would have lived care-free at home, but in these days, when life is harder, must go out into the world and compete with the other sex in the struggle to make a living. Many of them, it is true, were bright faced and happy, but not a few of the girls were tired and thin, perhaps because—to save the money for some fancied bit of finery, which they hoped might make them attractive in the

eyes of the other sex, and secure for them a husband and a home —they lunched on no more than a bun and a glass of milk. And as I looked on the faces of the very young boys and girls, little more than children some of them, and on the faces of the middle-aged and the very old, and thought of the drabness of their lives and the hardness of their lot ; and of how infinitely harder would be that lot, in the face of the troubles—industrial troubles, as well as the coming of a great war—which I saw ahead, I newly resolved that any power I possess (you can believe or disbelieve me as you like) should be used to the best of my judgment in their best interests."

That was the only time that Lord Northcliffe, and with earnestness in his eyes and in his voice, spoke thus seriously to me, for he rarely showed his deeper feelings. But I believed him then ; I have so believed of him since, and shall so believe of him while I live.

The morning after his funeral came a letter from a woman friend of mine. She did not know Northcliffe personally, but was present at the service in Westminster Abbey.

" I believe him to have been one of England's greatest assets in wide-spread patriotism," she wrote, " and I sincerely mourn his loss. . . . The Abbey was crowded, mainly, it seemed to me, with men, but my seat was between two women, who were broken-hearted and in tears all the time. . . . I must stop now, for I am very tired, and have to call presently on one of those grieving women. She was on his staff for twenty years, she tells me, and says he was the very kindest and very dearest man —or woman—she has ever known."

Clifford Harrison (*standing*) and Herbert Hardinge.

[*Facing p.* 176.

CHAPTER XI

HOW BART KENNEDY CAME TO HAVE HIS PORTRAIT IN *THE CANDID FRIEND*

(As Told by Robert Barr)

CHAPTER XI

"THE story goes that Bart Kennedy said one day to Frank Harris: 'Look here, Harris, I want my portrait in your paper, *The Candid Friend*. I'm not like another "candied," rather than candid, friend and author known to you and me, who when he wants his portrait in a paper, has a new one taken, and sends it, under some excuse, to the editor, with his "love," in the hope and on the likely chance that the editor will stick it in. I don't go that way to work. When I want to buck up the public by a sight of my bonny face, I go straight along to the editor of the paper in question and say so. I say to you, Harris, here and now, that I want my portrait in *The Candid Friend*, and I guess that you have jolly well got to have it.'

"'You're too powerfully built a man for me to argue with, Bart,' said Harris, 'and if you say that a portrait of you I have got to have, a portrait of you must, I suppose, go in. So toddle along to the photographer who "takes" for us, get a new portrait, that's to your liking, done, have it charged to this office, and send along.'

"Bart's small, deep-set and steely blue eyes twinkled pleasantly under his rugged brows—I seem to have heard 'rugged' used before about 'brows,' but it is the right word in this case," said Robert Barr, who told me the story, "and his face glowed benevolently upon Harris like a rubicund full moon.

"'But none of your damned carte-de-visite for me,' he added. 'Mine is what you may call a full face, and can't be done justice to on a small canvas. What I want is a full-page portrait of myself in *The Candid Friend*. Do you understand?'

"Harris nodded, went back to his office, and Bart went then and there to the photographer, whom he warned on peril of his (the photographer's) life not to fail to make him (Bart) as handsome and as imposing as was photographically possible.

" ' To you (adjective) photographers, as to Him who made you,' said the irreverent Bart, ' all things are possible. The picture of me that you have got to take should have the intellectuality of Bradlaugh (whom I have always admired), but with a dash of rollicking geniality and joviality. It should have Father Bernard Vaughan's fine eyes and features, without his asceticism (you might not think it to look at me, but I am not an ascete), and if my face doesn't come out well in the portrait you are going to take, I'll come round and put such (adjective) face on you that you'll be ashamed to come out of your (adjective) dark room for a whole (adjective) fortnight.'

" By the build of him," interpolated Barr, " you'd take Bart for a prize fighter, which is perhaps the reason why no one takes offence at his outspokenness, and makes believe to think him just a jolly humorist. Bart puts the fact down to what he calls his persuasively-figurative command of language, but I put it down to his persuasive figure, and even more persuasive, because very evident, fighting weight. I am not sure it isn't a factor in getting his stuff accepted by editors. When a man of Bart's burly figure and fighting weight forces his way into an editor's office, and bangs down a manuscript upon the table under a fist at the end of an arm as thick as a bullock's hind leg, and tells you you have got to accept it and soon, or he'll know the reason why, you don't feel like providing him with a reason of your own. Anyhow, the photographer wasn't fond enough of his dark room to give Bart any cause to find fault with Bart's face, as shewn in the portrait, which was to Bart's satisfaction.

" Along it went to *The Candid Friend*, on the next issue of which Bart expended sixpence, expecting to find his portrait in the place of honour. He felt like asking for his money back when he found that the portrait was not there—that fact he attributed to the making of a block—and impatiently waited for the next issue. But the next issue had no portrait of Bart Kennedy ; and this time it must be due, he thought, not to the absence of a block, but to the presence of a blockhead on the editorial staff.

" Bart is one of the most generous men alive with his money," explained Barr, " but those were days when a sixpence meant more to him than a sovereign does to-day, and he wasn't going to squander his capital, and transfer hard-earned coin from his pocket into Harris's by buying copies of *The Candid Friend* that

were unadorned by a portrait of Bart Kennedy, the gifted author. The thing wanted looking into, and Bart resolved then and there to interview Harris.

" As he walked for that purpose up Southampton Street—I believe that is where the paper then hung out—he caught sight of Harris hurrying on in front of him, and saw him disappear through the door which led to *The Candid Friend* offices, Bart following hot-foot and up the stairs.

" Just as he opened the door of the general office, Harris disappeared through the door of the inner room where he worked. Behind a table in a corner of the general office sat a small and unmistakable young Jew.

" ' Mr. Harris ? ' enquired Bart of this gentleman, presumably the sub-editor.

" ' Bister 'Arris id nod in, was the reply.

" ' And you are a (highly-coloured adjective) liar. I saw him go into that inner room with my own eyes, and only a moment or two ago,' countered Bart.

" ' I tell you Bister 'Arris id nod in, and that id enough vor you,' said the other sharply.

" Bart is a good fellow, but reverence for things sacred is not his strong point," commented Barr. " His reply was :

" ' You Jews killed Christ. He put up with what you did—but I won't.'

" He leaned over the table, seized the sub-editor by the coat collar and hauled him, wriggling, squirming and shouting for help, over the manuscript-littered table, and then, grasping him by the feet, Bart held him, head downwards, and shook him till the coins in his pockets fell out and scattered or rolled all over the floor.

" Then the door of the inner room opened, and Harris, who had heard the shouting and scuffling in the outer office, came out to know the cause.

" ' Morning, Harris,' said Bart cheerily. ' Don't let me disturb you. It is all right. I have only looked in to know why my portrait isn't in *The Candid Friend* yet, and am hurrying this young gentleman up for an answer.'

" I will say for Harris that he has presence of mind," drawled Barr. " He knew that when Bart turns cool and sarcastic, he is at his nastiest, and is most dangerous, so Harris said readily :

" ' Oh yes. That portrait of you in *The Candid Friend.* It ought to have gone in before, but was held back because I didn't think that what had been written by way of the accompanying letterpress was sufficiently flattering.'

" ' I'll see to the accompanying letterpress, and that it is sufficiently flattering,' responded Bart.

" He lifted up that little sub-editor (who was shaking all over), very much as Fifth of November boys lift a straw-stuffed guy, and sat him up in his own chair again.

" ' Take down the letterpress to accompany the portrait from my dictation,' he said.

" Then Bart dictated just the things that he, not Harris nor the sub-editor, wanted to be said about him and his books, and when he had it all down entirely to his satisfaction, he put a brawny fist under the nose of the sub-editor, and added :

" ' Alter or leave out a single word, you (adjective) little (noun), and there will be a vacancy for a sub-editor in this office, and a newly-made grave in the Jews' Cemetery, where the rest of your family are gathered to their fathers.'

" And that," said Barr, " is the story, as I heard it, of how Bart Kennedy came to have a portrait, with very flattering accompanying letterpress, in *The Candid Friend ;* and between you and me, I prefer Bart's method to that of some other eminent authors."

As the story was told me by Robert Barr, this is a not unsuitable place to tell two stories of Barr himself.

He was at that time co-editor with Jerome K. Jerome of *The Idler,* and had written several popular novels. One of these reached me by post, with no indication who was the sender. Passing Barr the same night as he was going out of a club which I was entering, I called after him :

" By the way, Barr, a book of yours came to-day. Am I to thank you or the publisher for sending it ? "

" Neither, I should think," he replied cryptically, and vanished.

Next morning came a letter :

" FRIEND K.,

" It was not my fault. Chatto & Windus are the

villains. They told me to send them a list of those I wanted the book sent to. There is a deep design in this. C. & W. get the credit of sending the book, and I call round later on the unfortunate victim, and put my name in the book, thus getting a free drink. I bet you don't go thirsty out where you live, so I leave the way open to go there and sample your cellars.

" Your friend,

" ROBERT BARR."

Barr had a house and a large grape-farm in Canada on the banks of the Detroit River (he it was who brought out the British edition of *The Detroit Free Press*, in which he wrote under the name of " Luke Sharp ") ; a house in which to winter in Florida and, at one time, a house on the Thames, with lawns sloping down to the water's edge. To his annoyance parties of Cockneys constantly chose the spot directly under Barr's lawn—he admitted that it seemed intended by Nature for the purpose, for it was so sheltered by trees as to be almost invisible from the river, was well out of the current, and could not be seen from the house—to make fast their boat. If a couple—courting was perhaps the order of the day. If a party, the members enjoyed an alfresco lunch or tea, followed by a smoke, a game of bridge, or a snooze. The annoying part of it was, Barr said, that so long as they remained within the boat he had no power to order them away. He cursed them roundly for throwing cigarette- and match-ends, and empty cigarette cases, paper or cardboard, into the water, where, there being practically no current at the spot, the débris floated for days. But when, as now and again happened, parties of Cockneys clambered from the boat upon the bank and so upon Barr's grounds, there to picnic, and there often to leave an untidy litter of sandwich wrappings and orange-peel behind, Barr's sense of grievance and his determination to stop the nuisance became almost an obsession, and he spent whole Sundays, as well as Saturday afternoons, lying in wait concealed behind a bush, that he might catch the trespassers red-handed.

One Sunday morning he saw a miniature but smart and well-appointed launch heading for his grounds. The occupants were so evidently of an entirely different class from the Cockney trippers, who were the chief offenders, that he did not anticipate

they would do more than shelter for a time beneath the natural arbour under his bank, and then continue their journey.

To his surprise and fury, he saw them from his watching-place, make fast the boat and then land—not one or two, but the whole party—upon his property.

Barr was half-minded, he said, to cut off their retreat by himself leaping into the launch and taking it out into mid-stream —had it been a skiff, he declared he would have scuttled it—but he restrained himself until the last of the trespassers had landed, and then he burst out to vent upon them the long pent-up torrent of his fury.

Previous offenders seeing him coming took generally and hastily to their boat and made off, so that all Barr could do was to yell his opinion of their soul, eyes and limbs after a fast-receding boat. From that course, if only because of its impotency to do more than abuse, Barr said he derived small satisfaction. This party (it included daintily-gowned women as well as men) did not attempt flight, but listened with silent, if seemingly bored, surprise (which exasperated Barr even more than had they " answered back " or indulged in recriminations) to his opinion of them. Not only their souls, eyes and limbs, but their forebears, their past, their present and their very far-distant future were reviewed by Barr, and with a completeness and a choice of epithet which, as he afterward said—not without a touch of fond if sad pride—was his high-water-mark as an artist in expression, and so he feared never to be attained again.

Then a tall man, elegant but bored of manner, who appeared to be the spokesman of the party, carefully screwed a glass into his eye, and regarding Barr fixedly through it, drawled :

" I gather, sir, from your very interesting remarks, that we have inadvertently trespassed where we have no right nor excuse to be. Only by the misdirection of someone, from whom we enquired our way, are we here, and we offer our sincere apologies. Those apologies we cannot, for your satisfaction (and I may add, for ours) more effectively put to purpose than by removing our offensive selves from your property, and with all speed. Again, pray forgive us, and good day to you."

" I had behaved like a boor, and was feeling pretty ashamed of myself," said Barr, when telling the story. " But week after week, month after month, I had watched and waited and fumed,

in the hope of catching the despoilers of my property red-handed —but all in vain. When I did, at last, as I thought, catch the rascals in the act—especially when they turned out to be, not Cockney bounders, but of a class which ought to know better—upon their heads was outpoured all the long-accumulated vials of my wrath. To them, who did not know how heavy a score there was to pay, my outburst and my language may have seemed unpardonable. Perhaps had they been in my place, and endured what I had endured, they would have forgiven me. What happened, however, was that when the bored and elegant person had reshipped his party, and the launch was about to move off, he said politely: 'Perhaps, sir, as one gathers you are a resident in these parts, and we have been misdirected once already, you can tell us, and would be so good as to tell us, where Mr. Robert Barr lives?'

Not a little taken aback by the question, and wondering what it meant, the repentant and now meekly-mannered Barr replied shamefacedly:

"He lives here, and that is my name."

The bored and elegant one for once so far forgot his boredom and his manners as to whistle.

"Is it really? This is most interesting," he said.

"Then," explained Barr to me, "he mentioned the name of a man whose good-will and friendship I had particular reason just then for wishing to cultivate—the one man of all others whom I would least have liked to offend."

"He is a particular friend of ours," went on the elegant one, "and was so kind as to lend us his launch for a jaunt up the river. Hearing we were coming in this direction, he said, 'Do call upon one of the most genial and delightful of men known to me, and a wonderful talker, Mr. Robert Barr, the novelist. Make yourselves known to Mr. Barr as friends of mine, and I am sure he will give you the warmest of welcomes.'

"We *have* called upon Mr. Robert Barr," concluded the elegant one. "We agree that he *is*, indeed, a very wonderful talker, and we agree, too, about the warmth of his welcomes. It has been a most interesting experience, I am sure. Good afternoon, Mr. Barr."

The scene of the other story is also laid in Barr's garden. He was very much annoyed because various courting couples

came on Sunday afternoons, and sometimes on week-day evenings —the spot being sheltered and out of sight of passers—to conduct their amours under, but on the other side of, the hedge which divided Barr's garden from a field beyond.

When they behaved and were tolerably quiet, Barr, no spoil-sport, troubled himself not at all; but at times he was disturbed when at his work (for his writing-table was by a window, quite near to the hedge) by exclamations of "Go along, do!" "Leave off, I tell you!" by girl-gigglings and boy-whistling, or by scuffling when a kiss-raid was in progress on the part of a gallant raider, and resistance, or pretence at resistance, was coyly offered by the raided. Sometimes, even, Barr was disturbed by screams or threats to scream.

One Sunday afternoon when a story Barr was writing against time had got itself tied up into a knot, which he had vainly tried to unravel, and his temper, always short, was distinctly "nasty," he was disturbed by the sound of voices which he recognised as having often before heard coming from behind the hedge.

Looking out of the window he saw a banana skin that had been jerked from the other side fall upon his neatly-swept gravel path. Barr picked up his fowling-piece, opened one end of a cartridge and took out the shot, slipped the cartridge back into the breach, which he snapped, and, fowling-piece in hand, walked noiselessly, for he was wearing tennis shoes, towards the hedge.

Peeping through he saw a girl smoking a cigarette, and what he heard of her talk was anything but nice. Her loutish male companion was eating a second banana, and as Barr looked the fellow jerked the discarded skin over his shoulder and so into Barr's garden.

Silently Barr slipped the barrel of his fowling-piece through a place where the hedge was thin, so that the muzzle of the gun was behind and between the courting couple who just then were sitting a little way apart.

Then Barr let fly.

"You never saw two folk come over so homesick all of a sudden," he said, "as that loving couple did when I pulled the trigger They didn't leap to their feet and bolt as if the devil were after them. That would be a fool-way to describe what happened. They sort of rocketed, one to the right, the other to the left, just as if they had been a couple of rockets ready placed in

position, and fired in an instant by the discharge of my gun. One moment they were there, the next moment they were not there, but already half-way home, and they couldn't have disappeared off the face of the earth more quickly if they had been blown, as perhaps they thought had happened, from the cannon's mouth. Guess I got a move on that couple, and that they won't come courting under my hedge any more."

CHAPTER XII

IAN MACLAREN

CHAPTER XII

WHEN the late S. R. Crockett's story, *Joan of the Sword Hand*, was running through the *Windsor Magazine*, and had neared the end, the editor received the following letter:

"DEAR SIR,

"I observe, though I have not read the story, that the death of 'Joan of the Sword Hand' is recorded in this month's issue of your magazine. That is something to be thankful for! And when the man who wrote the story is dead, too, you can put me down for a wreath."

As I remember, the letter was—most spiteful, even if not unamusing, letters of the type are so—anonymous. The story I did not read, so cannot say whether the gibe was deserved; but Crockett I knew, and always associate Jerome K. Jerome's words of Conan Doyle—"big-bodied, big-hearted, big-brained"—with him in my own mind. I regretted the sneer at his story at the time, and have never told the anecdote of him by name before; for not only was Crockett himself the last man to sneer at others, but was one of the most generous of men in his appreciation of his fellow authors—the obscure as well as the famous.

It was to Crockett that R.L.S. wrote:

"Do you know where the road crosses the burn under Glencorse Church? Go there, and say a prayer for me: *morituru*s *salutat.* See that it is a sunny day. I would like it to be a Sunday."

Stevenson once called Crockett to account for addressing a letter "N.B." instead of "Scotland," and for his illegible handwriting; but as my own handwriting is much more atrocious

than Crockett's ever was, I stand in the dock beside him on that charge. Nor can I hope for acquittal, my old friend Harry de Windt having already returned a verdict of " Guilty " against me in his autobiography, *My Restless Life.* Perhaps I shall be allowed to interpolate the passage here :

" It was through the well-known writer Coulson Kernahan that I came to know the hero of the above adventure. Kernahan is famed for his handwriting, which is as cryptic and indecipherable as a papyrus scroll (I am told mine is not much better), and he once showed me the following note received from a well-known publisher :—

" ' My Dear K.,

' Thanks for your letter. The part I can make out is splendid. The other, I find useful as a railway pass, for the collector has to take my word for it, life being too short to prove it isn't one.' "

The only writer known to me whose penmanship is worse than mine is that brilliantly gifted ex-medico writer of romance, Mr. Warwick Deeping. He was at one time in the Territorial Army (serving with distinction in the war), and when I was writing a little book on the Territorial Army I asked him whether he recalled any stories of happenings in camp, drill hall, or on the range which I could use.

" I'll think it over," he said, " and if anything occurs to me worth the telling, I'll jot it down."

" My dear Warwick," I replied, " your father and I were like brothers, and I have known you since you were a little fellow in knickerbockers, so I have some claim on your kindness. Call me up on the telephone, telegraph any story you have to tell—I'll pay the damages, or I'd gladly pay, if need be, the damages for an Atlantic cable ; but as you love me, I beg you, I beseech you, I implore you—don't, don't, for the love of heaven, ' jot it down ' ! "

This discursive screed is about Ian Maclaren, mention of whom recalls Crockett, for two reasons. Both were authors of what was dubbed at the time " The Kailyard School," and both were ministers—Ian Maclaren at Liverpool, and Crockett at Penicuik.

Clifford Harrison.

[*Facing p.* 192.

Between the two, as authors, I propose no further comparison, but, as ministers, Ian Maclaren was the more mindful of his high calling. An American humourist once shrewdly said :

" I can do with a middlin' good lawyer, a middlin' good soldier, a middlin' good man o' business, or a middlin' good man o' anything else—but what I *can't* do with is a middlin' good man o' God."

As a minister, from all I have heard of Crockett, he was more than a middling good man of God, and was beloved by his congregation ; but when literary success came, off went the cleric's cravat—possibly because, like Sir Leslie Stephen, he knew what it was to be " throttled by a white choker," possibly because he held that the pen was more powerful, not only than the sword, but also than the sermon. Thereafter the Manse and the Kirk knew the Rev. S. R. Crockett as a preacher no more.

Not because I blame Crockett, who was the best judge concerning the sphere in which his abilities could be best employed, but because I honour Ian Maclaren the more do I write of the matter here.

How resolutely and unconditionally he put his sacred calling before everything else I have personal reason to know. First, to speak of how he came to write *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush ;* and here I am not sure of the source of my information—it may have been from Ian Maclaren himself, or it may have been from someone else—but the facts as I have always understood them are as follows :

When in Liverpool, Sir William Robertson Nicoll went to hear Ian Maclaren, or perhaps I should say the Rev. Dr. Watson, preach. Convinced that the man who could so preach could, if he so chose, write a tender and poignant human idyll, Nicoll wrote to Watson asking him to write and to send to him a story for publication in the *British Weekly.* Naturally, Watson was pleased that such a compliment should come from such a quarter —but the story remained unwritten. Watson did not know his Nicoll as he came to know him thereafter. What Sir William Robertson Nicoll wants, that, sooner or later, he gets—of which fact I can give an interesting illustration.

At Finchley station I met a man known to me, who remarked : " I am on my way to see your friend Robertson Nicoll. He says he particularly wants to see me, and writes so pressingly

that I can't—for he has done me more than one good turn before now—refuse. He knows that I know the facts about a certain literary happening, and he intends by hook or crook to get them out of me. *He won't.* Forewarned is forearmed, and no power on earth will induce me, for the present at least, to tell what I know."

A few days later I met the same man, again at Finchley station.

"Are you going to Bay Tree Lodge, to play the shut oyster again to the editor of the *Bookman* and the *British Weekly*"? I enquired.

"Oysters be damned!" was the reply. "The very thing that I went there determined not to tell—that thing I told him, every word, as I'm a sinner, though how and why I came to do it I don't know."

When Nicoll wrote Ian Maclaren that he wanted a story from him, the latter might just as well have succumbed first as last. No story materialising, Nicoll wrote again, and yet again, until at last, ashamed of being thus importuned to no purpose, Ian Maclaren wrote a story and sent it along. It came back, and promptly, with a letter saying that this was not the sort of thing that was wanted, and would Dr. Watson be so good as to try again.

Even though the sort of thing that *was* wanted was exactly and explicitly stated, Watson was not minded to a second attempt. Again, and yet again, came an importunate letter, and again Sir William Robertson Nicoll succeeded, as he always does succeed, in getting what he wanted. Watson wrote a second story, this time on the lines indicated—to receive a congratulatory letter, commissioning other stories on the same lines; and so *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* was written, and, by Nicoll's good offices, was afterwards published as a book.

So at least—I am open to correction if this version of the facts be inaccurate—I have always understood. Now for the matter in which I was personally concerned, and so speak from my own knowledge.

After the huge success of *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*, a publisher who is a great friend of mine, Mr. James Bowden, asked me to give him an opportunity to meet Ian Maclaren, whom, as he was aware, I knew.

" By all means," I said. " I will ask him to lunch—just we three."

Then Mr. Bowden, who was managing director of Messrs. Ward, Lock and Bowden, went on to say that he wished to make Ian Maclaren an offer for a book.

" In that case," I replied, " I will make clear to him that it is a business meeting. One doesn't ask a friend to make one of a luncheon party, presumably for the pleasure of his company, and then spring a business deal upon him."

The luncheon was arranged on this understanding, and Mr. Bowden made his offer.'

" If you accept," he said, " I am prepared to write you a cheque in advance of royalties, here and now, and for four figures."

" I am practically a poor man," was Ian Maclaren's reply, " for I have several sons, and the cost of their education and start in life will be heavy. I chanced to make something of a success with a book which I wrote in my leisure, but my life's work, Mr. Bowden, is that of a minister. If I accepted your generous offer I should be tempted sometimes to think of my literary work when I ought to be thinking of my work for God and Christ among my people. Thank you very, very much for your tempting and handsome offer, but I fear I must say no."

Mention of Ian Maclaren's sons reminds me that I have read books by a son of his, Mr. Frederick Watson, which seem to me among the most brilliant, gifted, and distinguished work which has been produced by the younger generation. In his novel, *The Voice of the Turtle,* are passages which, in irony and humour, are worthy of George Meredith, and though, like Meredith, Mr. Frederick Watson may not come to the high and foremost place to which he is entitled, " with a rush," that he will, sooner or later, come to such place, I have small doubt.

Whether he be the hero of a story which his father once told me I do not know, but here it is :

" My schoolboy son," said Ian Maclaren, " had vainly been trying to read some of my books, and in a confidential mood remarked : ' I say, father, why don't you write a *proper* sort of book—one of those Sherlock Holmes stories, like Conan Doyle, or Jack Harkaway, or something of that sort, and *not so much Scotch rot?* ' "

To be dull in Ian Maclaren's company was impossible. I

recall a story told of him by the late Sir Joseph Compton-Rickett. Sir Joseph prefaced the anecdote, when telling it to me, by observing that so compelling was Ian Maclaren's sense of humour that humorous suggestions occurred to him even concerning serious subjects. Here is the anecdote :

" ' Enoch walked with God,' so we read in the Scriptures," said Ian Maclaren meditatively. " A great and holy man was Enoch, beyond a doubt."

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he went on : " But I find myself wondering sometimes whether there was a Mrs. Enoch, and, if so, what like she was. I have known good women before now, the wives of saintly men, who grudged the time their husbands gave to others and to their devotions.

" ' Enoch walked with God.' Aye, as I say, a great and holy man was Enoch. But I would like to know Mrs. Enoch's views of her husband, missing his company now and then, and whether she ever fashed herself about being a wee bit neglectit ? "

Ian Maclaren had not only the humour which makes for the world's gaiety, but also the good humour by which one can join in the laugh against oneself.

He was my guest at the New Vagabond Club—some five or six hundred persons being present—and was chatting with his friend Miss Beatrice Harraden, when the announcement, " Dinner is served," was made. As he took his seat, he was reminded, by something which Miss Harraden had said, of a funny story, and began to tell it to my other guests. Ian Maclaren was a born actor, as well as a born raconteur. I have known him, at the breakfast table, when telling a story about a Scotch fishwife, to forget his unfinished bacon, eggs, and coffee, to fling aside his table-napkin, and to rise from his chair and walk across the room, as if with a fishwife's heavy basket upon his shoulder, acting and personating the character of whom he was speaking to the life. I have known him, after a hard day's work that finished with a lecture before a huge audience—and when any other man's longings would have been set upon perfect quiet and a pipe—to entertain two or three friends with his wonderful impersonations and stories, and more brilliantly even than he had entertained his audience of perhaps five thousand. This was at two in the morning. On one such occasion I said to him :

" You are flogging exhausted energies to new effort, and drain-

ing nerve-power to the very dregs, for the entertainment of two or three of us here, and at a time when, physically and mentally, you are worn out, and so ought to let us all go hang, and yourself go straight to bed. If you continue in this sort of thing, you will kill yourself ! "

And as seriously, but very quietly, he said :

" That is quite true. I know it. But it is in me to do it. I can't help myself. I must go on, even if, as you warn me, it kill me."

I believe it did.

On the occasion of the New Vagabond dinner, he was acting as well as telling the story, when I was suddenly conscious of something strained, almost electric, in the atmosphere. A curious hush seemed to have come over the company—a hush which Ian Maclaren, intent on his story, was the only person present not to notice.

Then, just as he was at the story's climax, and was imitating the gestures of an excited and exasperated Frenchman, a waiter touched him on the shoulder.

" Excuse me, sir," he asked, " but are you the Reverend Dr. John Watson ? "

" I am. Why ? " replied Ian Maclaren.

" Because," said the waiter, " the chairman called on you, sir, to say Grace, quite two minutes ago, and the company has been waiting and wondering why you don't."

Just as he was, for he had ruffled his hair and turned up the collar of his coat, to " dress " the part he was playing, Ian Maclaren shot to his feet, and rattled off something that sounded to me like " B-r-r-r-r-r-r-r, Amen." Then, with no show of embarrassment, he resumed his seat and took up the interrupted tale just where he had left it, and to the end, after which he turned to me and said, " I am afraid that was the most hurried and irreverent Grace on record, but I hadn't a ghost of an idea that they were going to call upon me, and so I hope to be forgiven in this world and the next."

Reminded by the mishap of other " Grace " stories, he told us two, the first of which I had already heard (so perhaps has the reader), but the second was new to me.

The first concerns a cleric who has a weakness for the good things of the table, including a bottle of wine. When asked to

return thanks, he casts an appraising eye along the board, and if the repast be simple and homely, washed down only by cider, beer, or mineral waters, he murmurs resignedly : " For the least of these Thy mercies, Lord, grant us thankful hearts." But when the spread is generous, and a bottle of good wine flanks the board, he rolls out an ampler and more lordly Grace, by saying gratefully : " Bountiful Giver of all good things, we thank Thee with all our hearts for the abundance of Thy blessings, which give us grace truly to enjoy."

The second story was that at a certain naval college, when the company sit down to mess, the Mess President rises to enquire :

" Is any clergyman present, Mr. Vice ? "

" None, sir," answers the vice-president.

" Thank God ! " says the Mess President, and the company fall to.

Then my wife contributed an anecdote which amused Ian Maclaren. It was about that eminent Wesleyan scholar and divine whose surname happens to be both pronounced and spelt as one pronounces and spells that of a product of the kitchen garden—Professor the Rev. Agar Beet.

In introducing the Professor to a meeting, his chairman had a momentary lapse of memory. " Ladies and gentlemen," he said, " I have now the pleasure to call upon a distinguished and learned theologian, Professor . . . Professor . . ." He stopped, and that he had momentarily forgotten the Professor's name, and was fumbling in his memory in search of it, was plain from his face. One eye went toward the agenda paper on the table in front of him, but that he could not read without his glasses was evident, for his hand fluttered up to his waistcoat pocket in search of them, when suddenly his face cleared, as if he had just recalled the name. He went on with palpable relief : " I have the pleasure, as I say, of calling now upon that distinguished and learned theologian, Professor *Root*, to address us."

My wife had, during her girlhood, stayed in the same house with Professor Agar Beet, and described to us his method of saying Grace, which was to speak two words at a time, each pair of words delivered staccato, with a sort of breathing-space pause between each pair of words, thus :

" O Lord . . . for all . . . Thy mercies . . . grant us . . . thankful hearts . . . Amen."

I had not met Professor Agar Beet—I had almost written Professor Root—when she told us the story, but not long after I had the honour and pleasure, as I counted it, of doing so, at the house of my old friend the Rev. Nehemiah Curnock, then editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, and author of *The Life of John Wesley;* and the Professor was asked to say Grace.

Thirty years or more must have passed since my wife had heard him do so, but when he delivered himself exactly as she had described—a pair of words (staccato) at a time, with a sharp pause between each pair—I am afraid that, remembering her story as told to Ian Maclaren, I found it hard to repress a smile, so exact had been her description.

I admit to being of two minds about cutting out what I have told about so distinguished and revered a scholar and divine as Professor Agar Beet, for one hesitates to speak of the mannerisms of others, and some folk are " touchy " (I am not) when any word-play is made with their name. One of my own personal defects—far worse than a mere mannerism—is a lisp, of which much fun is made, and I do not mind in the least. Once I had occasion to read, and before a large audience, a passage from a book in which occur the words, " Love is the divinest, sweetest language which human lips can lisp," and caused some amusement among those present by interpolating deprecatingly, " Lisp a little myself, unfortunately." The interpolation took, I fear, any poetry out of a sugary passage, which the writer perhaps thought and intended to be " pretty " writing, but, judging by the smile that went round, it appeared to give the pleasure that a cynic says we all find in the misfortunes of others. And touching the objection which some folk take to any play upon their name, I may perhaps be allowed to tell one more anecdote before going on to write again of Ian Maclaren.

A man once said to me : " Yours is such a cornery and crack-jaw name, that I can neither pronounce nor remember it. Now, there is a bird called the ptarmigan—which is the nearest I can get to your damned name, and ptarmigan I *can* remember. Do you mind if I call you Ptarmigan ? "

" Not in the least," I made reply, and though this happened more than forty years ago, when my name was even more obscure, if that be possible, than it is to-day, whenever he and I meet, he enquires : " How are you, Ptarmigan, old boy ? " and I reply,

" How are you, my dear Robinson ? " and we are and remain the best of good friends.

In A History of English Literature I observe that Dr. Arthur Compton-Rickett writes of " the facile sentiment " of Ian Maclaren. Here I am not dealing with the latter's books, so say nothing about the sentimentality (" sobstuff," it would be called in America to-day) which other critics of *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* than Dr. Compton-Rickett lay to that volume's charge. But if for that reason they suppose that Ian Maclaren himself was given over to sentimentality, " that odious onion " (the phrase is Mr. Birrell's), they are vastly mistaken. Were it possible to conceive of one, by temperament, so profoundly religious, as entirely without religion, the result, in Ian Maclaren's case, would have been a somewhat cynically inclined man of the world. Warm of heart it is true he was, but he was also singularly cool of head ; and he had as keen and shrewd an eye for the failings of his fellow creatures as he had ready and generous appreciation for their virtues. Had he been so minded, he could have made many a victim writhe under the lash of his wit, his satire, and his irony ; but this side of " the natural man " he had broken in, as it were, in obedience to the dictates of the Christianity that he not only preached but practised. Few men more habitually controlled a caustic tongue and a gift for invective rivalling that of his poet-namesake, Sir William Watson, than did Ian Maclaren

Some tendency to irritability Ian Maclaren may have had, but, if so, he rarely showed it. That it was there, one suspected rather than saw. The tendency was manifest, if at all, by means of the outlet it found, which more often than not was by some splenetic jibe or thrust, directed generally against himself. He had, I am told, " a temper," and being a whole-natured, warm-blooded man, human of passion and strong of feeling, with nothing of the listlessness and indifference of the anæmic in his makings, " a temper " I can believe he had. But it was the temper which tempers anger, even if somewhat grimly, with humour ; and even if temper get the better of a man—so long as humour get the better of temper, his temper, he cannot be held altogether to have lost. Being a Celt, he was easily moved to generous emotion, though something of a Scot's caution stepped in to hold emotion in check.

Once at a dinner of the Authors' Club, my friend the late Charles Boyd Robertson, only surviving son of Robertson of Brighton, the great preacher, left his seat to come over to where I was sitting. Robertson of Brighton, Ian Maclaren held in profound reverence, even deep affection, though the two never, of course, met, as the latter was only three years old when Robertson died. I introduced Ian Maclaren and Charles Robertson merely by name: "Dr. John Watson; Mr. Charles Robertson," and the three of us fell to chatting together.

Robertson is not an uncommon name, and Ian Maclaren had no inkling who the newcomer was, until a chance allusion to "one of my father's sermons" caused Ian Maclaren to give a sudden and startled gasp, and to lay his hand on the other's coat-sleeve, exclaiming as if he could not believe his own ears:

"You are not the son of the great Frederick Robertson of Brighton?"

"I am," was the reply.

For a moment Ian Maclaren was almost overcome.

"Mr. Robertson," he said, "what it means to me to meet one who has in his veins the blood of one of the noblest of men, one of the greatest preachers that ever lived, and to whom I owe what I owe to your father, I find it difficult to say."

There were tears in his eyes as he spoke, seeing which, I turned away, and left the two to talk together. Later, when Charles Boyd Robertson sought my advice about an Introduction to *The People's Edition* of the *Sermons*—he was even so good as to propose that I should be the writer—I replied:

"My dear Robertson, your father's sermons need no introduction, least of all from me. If by a layman, such Introduction should bear a great name. If by a famous preacher—I mentioned several in the Anglican and Free Churches—why not Ian Maclaren, whom you heard say that your father had been the greatest human religious influence in his life?"

When, by Robertson's wish, I spoke to Ian Maclaren on the matter, the latter said, and in all sincerity, that the magnitude of the task was beyond him; that only one of like genius and like greatness to Robertson could compass such a subject. In the end, he consented to write the Introduction, in which, as the reader may see for himself by referring to it, Ian Maclaren likens the work which Robertson did, in his day, to that done by John

the Baptist in the past. "The very face of preaching was changed in half the pulpits of the land," Ian Maclaren writes. "With him passed from earth one of the bravest soldiers of the Cross, and the most inspiring preacher of the century."

The Introduction was an admirable piece of work, but so great were Ian Maclaren's diffidence and modesty that, when Robertson sent me the Introduction in manuscript, and in writing to Ian Maclaren on the subject I chanced to say with Robertson's permission that I had seen it and how much I liked it, he wrote to me as follows (his letter, I ought to interpolate, was in reply to a dinner invitation) :

"DEAR KERNAHAN,

"Best thanks for your kind note and invitation. Unfortunately, on the 27th our Synod meets here, and on the 28th I am to be tried (or something of the kind) for heresy! No feasting for me, alas! even with such good company. My respects—the humble greeting of a 'suspect'—to the company. I am so glad you like the Introduction. This relieves me much, as I have small confidence in my own work.

"That meeting at Southend was a brook by the way.

"Kindest regards.

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN WATSON."

That Ian Maclaren should have cause to speak of himself as a "suspect" was due, it seems to me, not from any latitudinarianism in the matter of doctrine, but to the breadth and the intense humanity of his sympathies. He was once in a Roman Catholic church in Italy. Before the altar to the Virgin knelt a woman of the working classes, her lips moving in devout prayer. As she was making her way to the door after ending her devotions, Ian Maclaren asked her in Italian some question about points of interest in the building. By-and-bye the conversation turned upon the difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant religions, especially in regard to the fact that Protestants do not address prayers to the Virgin.

"Don't you ever pray to the Mother of God?" the woman asked.

"No," said Ian Maclaren, "for it seems to me that all you

find which is holy and helpful and adorable in the character of that holiest and most revered of all women who ever lived—all that, and infinitely more, I find in Her Divine Son."

" Ah, sir," said the woman wistfully, " I understand that, but you are a man, and you don't know how a woman needs a woman to pray to ! "

" My dear, good soul," said Ian Maclaren very, very gently, " yes, yes, I understand. I think I know something of a woman's heart, of a woman's needs. I take back all I said. Forgive it ! Forget it ! Do not let any word of mine stand between you and your prayers to the Mother of our Blessed Saviour and Lord ! "

CHAPTER XIII

MISS MATILDA BETHAM-EDWARDS AT HIGH WICKHAM, HASTINGS, AND MISS SHEILA KAYE-SMITH AT ST. LEONARDS-ON-SEA

CHAPTER XIII

WHERE, within fifty, or even a hundred, miles from London, is a view equal in grandeur to that from the East Hill of Hastings, "The Home of Sunshine," as the historic and beautiful town has been called?

Below, eastward and southward, one looks down, on a summer day, upon a blue and seemingly illimitable sea; and, westward, upon the ancient town and the Castle, with St. Leonards beyond, and the spacious Bay of Pevensey curving round to Eastbourne and Beachy Head. Hastings is a place of great hills and green valleys, even though, in the hollows between the hills, the old town and the new town—monster twin octopods, as it were—sprawl long lines of houses, like giant tentacles, up the hillsides and even to the hill-tops.

Roughly speaking, Hastings, as seen from the Castle Hill, is, on the one side, cold, on the other, warm, in colouring. On the right we have, for the most part, grey houses and slate roofs; on the left, red brick with red tiling and brown or black tarred sheds. On the left, too, the old town plays at hide-and-seek with itself—here zigzagging up hill, there darting diagonally downward, and twisting itself into lanes that lose themselves on their way and are not sure at the last whether, when they set out, they meant to be lanes, terraces rising, tier on tier, against the red-valerian-dotted rock; or spaces set apart for the drying of ochre-hued nets and the hanging out of lines of the many-coloured linen and wearing apparel of fisher-folk and cottagers.

Looking again to the left, one sees steep hill-gardens which make splashes of colour, gay as settled butterflies, against the hillside. Under the Castle Hill, the houses huddle together like children crowding under the lee-side of a wall during a shower. Yet, for all the crowding, there is always room for a clump of

trees or for a stretch of grass. In other towns, brick and mortar invade upon the green ; in Hastings, grass and green trees invade upon the brick and mortar.

From the East Cliff, one sees the old town ducking down its head between the sheltering shoulders of the East and West Hills ; and the gaunt right arm of the harbour, crooked at the elbow as if in self-defence against that old bruiser, the sea. It is no strong right arm, but a senile, shrunken, and now broken limb, that is thus stretched ; and one " knock-out " blow may end the combat.

The literary stronghold of Hastings is High Wickham, which, like a corporal's guard, holding a height against the enemy, stands, an isolated row of some fifteen houses, looking down, as if upon an encamped army, upon the crowded houses of the old town.

In the end house on the left, with Mr. Harry Furniss, Mr. Tom Parkin, the eminent naturalist, and, at one time, " Mark Rutherford " for neighbours, lived for very many years one of the last of the mid-Victorians, Matilda Betham-Edwards.

Two or three of her High Wickham neighbours, especially Mrs. Dannreuther, Miss Betham-Edwards' kindest and most intimate friend in Hastings (with the rest of her immediate neighbours the novelist preferred, for the sake of seclusion, to have not so much as a nodding acquaintance), were often in and out of Villa Julia. Below, not a couple of hundred yards away at the foot of the hill, lived her friend Coventry Patmore and George MacDonald.

A few, very few, other friends she had in Hastings and St. Leonards, to none of whom she owed more than to Dr. Dodson Hessey and Mr. A. E. Young, both of whom—the former as her medical attendant, the latter as her legal and business advisor, as well as her executor—counted themselves privileged to do all that lay in their power (as friends, and so in an honorary sense) for one whom they held in affection and esteem.

Her literary executor is Mr. Clement Shorter, who has never resided in the neighbourhood ; but Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith did so then (as she does now), and was a visitor to Villa Julia. Miss Betham-Edwards was keenly interested in the work of the young novelist, and agreed with me when I told her that, after reading Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith's first published novel, I had

The late Miss M. Betham-Edwards (taken between 1855-1860).

By kind permission of Messrs Blomfield & Co., Hastings.] [*Facing p.* 208.

written to the author to say that, one day, she would be acclaimed "a genius."

I remember a long-ago afternoon spent with Miss Betham-Edwards. On her table when I arrived lay a copy of *The Bookman* in which was a review from my pen of one of Miss Kaye-Smith's early volumes. Taking up *The Bookman*, Miss Betham-Edwards read:

"Miss Kaye-Smith may have to wait for full recognition at the hands of the public, for she seems to me to have something of genius, and though Oscar Wilde did not mean to be taken too seriously when he said that genius is the only quality which the public will not forgive, it is nevertheless a fact that talent is a commercial traveller who calls upon his friend and customer, the public, many times in the course of a year, and so, being readily recognised, is assured of welcome and applause. Genius, on the other hand, is a rare and angel visitor, strangely unfamiliar of face. The big, bustling public is at first all too ill at ease with her, looks at her askance as something of a disturbing element, wonders why she has come, and until her station and quality have been acknowledged, is slow to press upon her the welcome that should be accorded to so honoured a guest."

"That," said Miss Betham-Edwards, "is a bold statement to make over your own name in a publication of the standing of *The Bookman*, and I wish that someone had thus written of me when my laurels were to win; but if our young friend goes on as she has begun, I believe you will prove to be right."

I ended my review by describing Miss Kaye-Smith's novel as "The most remarkable work of fiction, by a young writer, which has been published for years."

She was indeed so young, scarcely more than a girl in years, when she wrote her first novel, and looking even younger than her years, that a schoolfellow, who had been a senior when Miss Kaye-Smith was a junior scholar, said to me, after my review had appeared, and had been reprinted in a local paper: "Do you really ask me to believe that that little insignificant Sheila has it in her to write a book which would be worth anyone's while to read?" The questioner now speaks of Miss Kaye-Smith (though the two never meet) as her very dearest friend who had always turned to her for sympathy, understanding and advice in literary efforts when they were "such chums" at school together.

The question I left unanswered except to remark that " insignificant " was the last word I should use of Sheila Kaye-Smith. Little, in the sense of being petite and dainty, the author of *Joanna Godden* may be ; and though fourteen years and a great war, the horror of which none felt more profoundly than she (as witness the poignant-to-heartbreak picture of England in wartime in her novel, *Little England*), she still looks, partly perhaps because of bobbed hair, scarcely more than a girl.

In her company I sometimes ask myself whether it be possible that this graceful and girlish figure can really be that of the author of books which lay bare the hearts of women and men with such insight and knowledge as we might expect from the matured genius of George Meredith or Mr. Hardy ?

I was recently asked, " Where does your friend Miss Kaye-Smith get her marvellously accurate knowledge of a class so entirely different from her own ? How comes it that—her father a distinguished medical practitioner and a magistrate, her mother and herself gentlewomen by birth and breeding, and singularly refined—how comes it that Miss Kaye-Smith knows the inside of a public-house, can record the actual talk there, and can picture the frequenters, whether they be sometimes drunk, or never other than sober, as if she were one of them, and herself a frequenter of taverns ? A man-novelist can make the excuse of wanting a glass of beer to drop into an inn, that he may keep his eyes and ears open to what is going on. A girl or a woman of Miss Kaye-Smith's class, at least, obviously cannot. Yet she knows the lives, the language, the inner soul of the public-house lounger, the agricultural labourer, the gipsy and the tramp as if she had spent her life among them ! Book-knowledge, most of it, isn't it ? What ? I suppose she has read widely on the subject, and can cleverly reproduce what she reads, so as to make it seem like her own. Fielding, for instance—that she knows her Fielding is evident—and other writers of that sort ? What is your explanation of the facts ? "

" One is," I replied, " that Miss Kaye-Smith is country-born and country-bred—was born, in fact, in the very room, then a bedroom, of Battle Lodge, in which she now writes her books. In her country-side ramblings with a friend, or with friends, there is no earthly reason, especially if a man be of the party, why the ramblers should not refresh themselves with a cup of tea or even

an innocent shandygaff, in the little parlour of a way-side inn. They would have to do so, or go without, for away from the beaten track of the char-à-banc tripper, 'teas' are not often to be had. In the inn parlour, generally off the bar, or separated by a wooden partition, she would no doubt hear the yokel vernacular, sometimes would hear the yokel, the tramp and the gipsy in their cups. Apart from inns, every roamer of the country-side has sometimes *nolens-volens* to hear what agricultural labourers, tramps and gipsies say to each other in the fields or on the roadside. One visit (I have paid many) to the hopfields around Brede, of which village Miss Kaye-Smith often writes, where old, middle-aged, and young men and women, to say nothing of boys and girls and little children, all picnic, sometimes 'pig it' together, for weeks at a time, would supply an observant novelist with plenty of character-studies and plots for stories. She knows the hopfields, and she knows the Sussex country-side as few ordnance-map surveyors know the latter. She would have made a fine cartographer. A phrenologist, examining her dainty little head for 'bumps,' would record: 'Sense of locality, remarkable.' I have had to explore this part of Sussex with map and compass in hand, when out with the battalion on field day operations, but Miss Kaye-Smith not only knows the lie of the country, but could name you every hill, road, or river as well as most lanes, wells, bridge-heads, inns and farms. I attribute this to the keenness of her observation. She notes, and what is more remembers, the relative position of one town, village, or hamlet to another, and seems to carry in her head as exact a map of her loved Sussex as if she had flown it in an aeroplane, and so had seen it spreading beneath her, in perspective, as on a map.

"Then there is another factor, remembering which I do not attribute, as you do, Miss Kaye-Smith's knowledge of human nature to books, whether Fielding's or anyone else's. Hers is not what you call book-knowledge, nor what you call clever reproduction, for "cleverness" is no word to apply to Sheila Kaye-Smith. Her knowledge of human life, and of the human heart, is all her own, her very own, and came to her, much of it, intuitively, as it came to Charlotte Brontë, by what I can describe only as the God-given quality of genius. It is on record that another author of genius wrote a description of a certain scene

on which he had never set eyes. Then he went to see the place, and penned a second description. The second was a good description of what he saw, but the first made every reader see the place for himself, as by magic. We cannot account for genius, at least, until we know more about the mystery of human personality. With our present knowledge all we can do is to accept genius as a fact, and to thank God that He has bestowed so great a gift upon a fellow-mortal."

Lecturing before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh I had occasion to say that there are two literary maladies—"writer's cramp" and "swelled head." And I added: "The worst of writer's cramp is that it is never cured. The worst of swelled head is that it never kills." While still a young woman, Miss Kaye-Smith has seen a collected edition of her novels, issued by Cassell's. That is surely a record. Such a distinction comes to few novelists, and, when it does come, as in the case of Mr. Hardy and George Meredith, only with advancing years. In Stevenson's case, it did not do so until he was middle-aged. If Miss Betham-Edwards had cause, as she said, to be proud that when she was an old woman one of her earliest novels was reissued by Collins, Miss Kaye-Smith has surely greater cause for pride that, while, as I say, she is still young, her novels have been collected into a uniform edition. Some women- and some men-novelists I have known can talk of little except their own work. Miss Kaye-Smith will tell you of her admiration for the work of Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Chesterton, Miss Clemence Dane, Mr. W. L. George, Miss May Sinclair, Mr. Hugh Walpole, and many another of her contemporaries, but the one author about whom and about whose work Miss Kaye-Smith is disinclined to talk is Sheila Kaye-Smith. I do not mean, for the contrary is the case, that she self-consciously affects modesty. She is too free of everything approaching self-consciousness to affect any pose. I mean that the charm of her personality is of modesty, naturalness and frankness compact.

On the rare occasions when she lectures—I have heard her do so on Mr. Chesterton—excepting for the fact that she is, for once, doing all the talking, it is exactly as if she were continuing on a platform the conversation one had just had with her in her own home. In ordinary conversation, albeit, not in the least a blue stocking but always singularly womanly, she can talk brilliantly

on many subjects, not even excepting politics, but with graceful deference to those older than herself; and to those of her own age, or younger, as "one of themselves." Only the other day I was shewn, unknown to Miss Kaye-Smith, a letter of hers to a young and unknown writer who, I understood, had sent her work of his own; and from the way that Miss Kaye-Smith wrote, one would never gather that she is the most successful and famous of the younger novelists of the day.

Walking and talking with Miss Kaye-Smith, or discussing all sorts of subjects with her in her own home or in mine, I have been no less interested in herself than in what she writes. In chatting with those she accounts her friends—with the others she is easy and natural, but quietly observant and reticent—whether women or men, she is the most "comradely" of companions. When directly asked for an opinion she gives it readily, sincerely, and in few words. But no one ever heard Sheila Kaye-Smith "hold forth," even on the subject she has most closely studied and on which one most wishes to hear her, as is the manner of some men and women of eminence known to me. I imagine that if such a thing could happen (I do not think it could) that she chanced to find herself monopolising the conversation, or at a dinner as it were "holding the table," she would break off, not abruptly, but naturally, and say no more for a time. Give and take are, with her, essentials in conversation. Of the two, she would rather be the giver than the taker, the listener than the talker. What she says when she does talk is always considered. She pays one the compliment of thinking before she answers a question. Some brilliant talkers are at their best, and most brilliant, when they seem least to think about, and least to consider what they are saying. Like a certain type of sportsman, they let fly at every bird that is put up, and because they have the luck to secure a few hits, they get credit—by those who have not counted the "misses"—of being good shots. There are no "misses" in what Sheila Kaye-Smith says. She may hesitate before replying to a question, but rarely for more than a couple of seconds. So quick-brained is she that she might be as Irish as her Christian name. Within those two seconds she has so correlated her thoughts that she has always a considered and reasoned reply to make. One knows by the almost imperceptible pursing of the short upper lip over the lower, and by the set

and intent look in the Irish-grey eyes, as well as by the momentary contraction (under thought) of the pupils, that she is weighing her words before replying, and that when a reply comes it will go straight to the heart of the matter.

Hastings and St. Leonards are justly proud of the celebrities who have either lived or, for a time, made their home in the neighbourhood. Dante Gabriel Rossetti was married to Lizzie Siddell at St. Clement's Church, which is not many hundred yards from and well within view of Villa Julia. On the opposite hill stood at one time Halton Barracks to which Wellington brought his young bride. My friend Mr. G. R. Butterworth tells me that he has seen at Carlyle's home at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, a box writing-desk, with an inscription to the effect that on this improvised writing-table Carlyle, who had taken a furnished house at St. Leonards, penned the greater part of his *Life of Frederick the Great.* Herbert Spencer lived at one time at 5, The Mount, St. Leonards. I was present and I believe either proposed or seconded the vote of thanks to Professor Sylvanus Thompson, F.R.S., who unveiled a tablet recording the fact that Spencer had once resided there. This was in June, 1914, during the Hastings Pageant Week (initiated by Mr. C. A. Farmer), and I remember wondering at the time whether I had been well or ill-advised when, as a young man, just " beginning author " as they say in America, I was asked whether I would care to accept the post of private secretary to Mr. Herbert Spencer, but decided that I was not qualified for such highly specialised work. Incidentally, I had the honour of opening the Hastings Pageant Week by unveiling, on the first day, a similar tablet on the house where George MacDonald is said to have lived.

Tom Hood was a frequent visitor to Hastings, and has celebrated in verse the virtues of old Tom Woodgate who taught him to swim. Not a few of Robertson of Brighton's letters are dated from Hastings. Charles Lamb stayed often in the Cinque Port town, and has written of the Old Church in the Wood at Hollington. Holman Hunt is said to have painted " The Light of the World " at Clive Vale, Hastings. Edmund Waller, the poet, was Mayor of Hastings, and both Clifford Harrison and Stephen Phillips lived and are buried there. Warwick Deeping, now removed to Weybridge, was there for many years at Oaklands, St. Helen's, near Edward Noble, whose fine novels of the sea won

the appreciation of his friend Mr. Joseph Conrad (a frequent visitor to Rye, not far away). Swinburne was the son of Lady Jane Ashburnham, and some of his letters, included in *Swinburne's Letters*, edited by Mr. Gosse and Mr. Wise, are dated from Ashburnham Place, Battle, near by. Sir Rider and Lady Haggard spend the summer at Ditchingham, Norfolk, but return to North Gate, Maze Hill, St. Leonards, for the late autumn, the winter, and the early spring. Soon after Sir Rider and Lady Haggard came here, and before they and my wife and I had forgathered, someone known to Sir Rider and myself mentioned me as living at Fairlight.

"Yes, I have known him on and off for years," was the reply. "But" (Sir Rider slapped one hand on the extreme left of the table, and the other hand on the table's extreme right) "he lives outside the town at one end, and I live far away at the other end. The man who lives some distance away, in the same town as yourself, is generally the one whom, by some strange chance, you are most likely to meet only in London, or perhaps a hundred or a thousand miles from his home and yours."

That is often the case, but was not the case with Miss Betham-Edwards and ourselves. Every three or four weeks she would send the one or the other of us a line to say that she would be at home, and expecting us for tea at a certain hour on a certain day. My wife used to call these invitations "Holding out the sceptre," for Miss Betham-Edwards, the acknowledged literary châtelaine of Hastings, attached to such invitations the importance of a royal command. The few friends residing in the district were given to understand that the little lady who (her democratic views notwithstanding) was by nature an autocrat must not be disturbed when she had work on hand—and work, whether the revising of old books or the writing of new articles or stories, she had on hand almost to the very end.

The visitors to Villa Julia who did not live in Hastings were, if few, distinguished—Mr. Frederick Harrison, Henry James, Miss Braddon, Miss Rhoda Broughton, Mrs. Humphry Ward and Madame Sarah Grand being among them. Some of these I met there, but in later years our hostess's failing strength prevented her from seeing more than one, at most two, friends at a time.

The friends of whom she most affectionately spoke were Mr.

Frederick Harrison, Madame Sarah Grand, Miss Rachel Mary Tindall and Mr. Clement Shorter.

Mention of Madame Grand reminds me of Miss Betham-Edwards' last and posthumous work, *Mid-Victorian Memories*, published by Mr. John Murray. The memories in question include Lord Kitchener, George Eliot, Herbert Spencer, Madame Bodichon, Coventry Patmore, Mr. Frederick Harrison, Lord John Russell and Lord Morley. They are prefaced by a personal sketch of the author from the graceful pen of Madame Sarah Grand. To readers interested in Miss Betham-Edwards' books or her personality I commend Madame Grand's sketch as an intimate, revealing, and lifelike picture, drawn with the charm and delicacy of touch which render it a model of what such a memorial tribute should be. Here let me interpolate a few words about the writer of the tribute.

In a recent dedication, a novelist says to another :

> " How the years have fled behind us!
> Locks have greyed that once were brown,"

and, only the other day, Madame Grand reminded me that, silver-haired as we both now are, our friendship dates back to the time when grey, in our locks, there was none. In those days I had the impression, as I have since laughingly confessed to her, that she regarded all men-folk with suspicion. Her inward comment then seemed to be : " H'm ! you seem to be a not unagreeably mannered young man, but, like the rest of your sex, I am not sure—if one knew all—that your moral character would bear investigation." Those were the days when Mrs. Hodgson Burnett was playfully inviting her friends to join a " Society for the Suppression of the Viper, Man." Readers in whose mind remains the impression that Madame Grand, both in her books and in herself, is severe upon the viper, man, will have that impression for once and for ever removed after reading two short stories in her last-published book, *Variety*. I have a reason for referring here to my long friendship with Madame Grand. It is that only those who are privileged to know her personally, entirely realise what depths of womanly tenderness underlie the artistic restraint with which she writes, and underlie, too, the habitual reserve of her personality. Pitiful tenderness, and something like a passion for truth, are of the essence of her

being. Some readers may think her dissection of more than one woman's soul, in the stories in question is cruel. Of cruelty, she is incapable, but her passion for truth would not permit her to change the facts. She lays bare the secret soul of the woman, known in social circles as " The Jobb," as if seen in the light of the Day of Judgment.

Here is a " story " about Madame Grand and George Meredith. He had just learned that the most-talked-of novel of the day, *The Heavenly Twins*, had been rejected by him, when " reader " for Chapman & Hall. Madame Grand was at that time a stranger to him, and Meredith possibly being a little nettled to be informed that he had mistaken what I have heard publishers describe as " a plum " (the " rare and refreshing fruit " of a best seller) for a potato, or other uninteresting vegetable, enquired acidly, " *Madame* Sarah Grand! Why Madame? Did a Frenchman intervene? "

Madame Grand, to whom my friends among what, twenty years ago, was called the Woman Movement, assure me that a statue should one day be erected, was born in Ireland of English parents, and has no French blood in her veins. Possibly, in the preface to the forthcoming new edition of *The Heavenly Twins*, she will tell us how she came to adopt her *nom de plume;* and as, later on, she and Meredith became intimate friends, will perhaps also inform us how he excused himself to the publishers for whom he read in letting such a prize slip through his fingers.

Madame Grand is so closely associated with my memories of Miss Betham-Edwards—for the latter's first question nearly always was : " Tell me, my dear Jack, when did you last see our grand Sarah? "—that I hope to be pardoned this digression. There is yet another friend of hers of whom I must not forget to speak, Sir Arthur Spurgeon, who, years ago, promoted the testimonial which not only eased her declining years, but newly reminded the reading public of her distinguished record.

Victor Hugo, whom Miss Betham-Edwards knew, impressed her more, she said, by the genius of his personality than anyone she had ever met, while Gambetta impressed her most by the astounding brilliance of his talk.

She was always keenly interested in literary matters. Hearing that Mr. G. K. Chesterton had been in Hastings, and that I had had a talk with him, she said : " If he is here again, do try

to persuade him to come to see me ; but you will take him away after half an hour, won't you ? For you know how soon I tire."

Proud as she was of the success of her books on French life, her French decoration and the medal awarded by the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908, she felt that it was by her novels she stood or fell. " It is something of a record, I think," she said, " that my novel, *The White House by the Sea*, published in 1857, has been added, when I am an old woman, to Messrs. Collins's Popular Novels, and that I have already had a cheque."

Lord Morley, whom she met first at the house of Professor Beesly (also a resident in Hastings), she held in vast respect, and was pleased to remember that she had held a long conversation in French with Lord Kitchener, who professed himself her admirer.

An uncompromising Radical and Nonconformist, she stipulated, early in our long friendship, knowing me to be a Conservative and Churchman, that politics and religion should never be mentioned. The compact was kept, but when things went wrong with my political party she affected slyly to be concerned to find her friend in such poor spirits. When the pendulum swung the other way, sympathetic enquiry after her own health and spirits were met by a horrified " No politics ! " and once in sending me her " love " she added : " I do so across a bottomless gulf of disagreement."

The fact that her cousin, Amelia Blandford Edwards, was also an author led to some confusion, and the cousins were advised that one should drop the " B " from her name. Both refused to do so, which caused Frances Power Cobbe to remark that each had a " B " in her bonnet.

Browning she pretended never to have forgiven because, meeting him after she had just returned from Athens, she thought that he would be interested to hear her impressions. But he had eyes and ears only for a very pretty girl, and so, as Miss Betham-Edwards said, he unkindly " shelved " the " literary lady."

Perhaps it was out of consideration for a Nonconformist upbringing that Miss Betham-Edwards used to preface one story of George Eliot with " I hope you won't be shocked." She was staying in France with George Eliot at the time of the Franco-Prussian war, when there was much talk among French Catholics

of the need of prayer. Coming into the room where Miss Betham-Edwards was arranging a bowl of beautiful white flowers, George Eliot said: "Why should we not pray to them?"

By one saying of George Eliot she was, I think, a little hurt. "I had just produced perhaps my best and most successful novel," she said, "when George Eliot remarked to me: 'Mrs. Oliphant there *is* something in. But, with that exception, there isn't a woman novelist who has produced anything of worth.'"

"I have always felt a little spiteful to her since—and I *can* be spiteful," Miss Betham-Edwards added smilingly. A keen observer, a shrewd judge of men and women, she could on occasions be caustic, and was always outspoken. She was too human not to resent either a slight or studied neglect, and too honest to pretend otherwise. But of spite, meanness or malice she was incapable.

To the last her activity was retained. Only a week or two before the "stroke" which ended in death my wife and I had tea with her, and she talked as animatedly, as shrewdly and as wittily as ever. When we threatened to report her to the Food Controller for the sumptuousness of her table, she retorted: "When I can't afford to ask old friends to tea I'll invite them to morning prayers." The only sign of failing powers was that she repeated herself. I think she knew that the end was near. "More and more now," she said, "my thoughts turn to the dead. Mark Rutherford said to me the last time he was here, 'I would rather spend half an hour with Emily Brontë than with all the writing women and men now alive.'"

CHAPTER XIV

CELEBRITIES—AND OYSTERS

WHAT HAPPENED GOING TO, AT, AND AFTER ONE OF COLCHESTER'S FAMOUS OYSTER FEASTS

CHAPTER XIV

ONCE a year, about the time that oysters are coming into season, the Municipal rulers of the ancient Roman town of Colchester give an Oyster Feast to which they invite celebrities in all walks of life. They also extend their hospitality to a few who are not celebrities, or I should not now be writing of one of the two or three occasions on which I was privileged to be present.

Among the celebrities and non-celebrities travelling down by train together from London to Colchester were Clement Shorter, editor of *The Sphere*, Mostyn Piggott, playwright, poet and journalist, whose *All Fletcher's Fault* was then running at the Avenue Theatre, and myself. A little imaginative religious booklet of mine called *God and the Ant* had not long been published, and Piggott, who delights in leg-pulling, remarked to Shorter : " Those Colchester people have something to answer for by including Kernahan among the guests ! A nice sort of enormity they are letting the public in for ! He will go home and write another dull and dreadful booklet, and call it ' God and the Oyster.' "

I remember an occasion when the ebullient Piggott met his match. On leg-pulling intent, he singled out, one night at a certain club, a notoriously shy and nervous new member who, living in retirement in the country, and rarely to be seen in clubs or in society, is at a loss for small talk, and still more at a loss for repartee when subjected to club banter.

For half an hour, Piggott chaffed " the silent man " as the other is known unmercifully. " The silent man," true to his name, made no reply, other than to smile uneasily, as if to convey that he took the roasting in good part ; but his heightened colour and nervous shuffling in his seat, showed that he was not a little embarrassed at being thus pilloried before his fellow-

members. Then the worm " turned," and showed that it carried a sting in its tail.

" I have a grudge against you, Piggott," the silent man said.

" Holy Balaam, and the miracle of the talking ass ! " ejaculated Piggott. " The silent man has spoken. The dear thing *isn't* dumb, after all. It has opened its mouth at last, and appears to have a tongue in its head. A grudge against me ? Why ? "

" I have been to see your play, *All Fletcher's Fault,* at the Avenue," was the reply.

" Well ? "

" And I liked it very much, but I caught the most infernal cold I ever had in my life."

" Well, that was not my fault, nor Fletcher's," said Piggott.

" Yes, it was."

" How do you make that out ? "

" An empty house ! " was the significant answer, " and the two or three persons who formed the audience found it most damnably chilly ! "

As Piggott's play was notoriously a failure, the hit went home.

The next person to come under fire, during our train journey to Colchester, was Shorter. He had written an introduction to George Meredith's novel, *The Tragic Comedians,* and someone in the carriage remarked : " How are the mighty fallen ! Poor Meredith ! To think he should come to that ! Than that Meredith's *Tragic Comedians* should stand in need of an introduction by Clement Shorter, nothing could be more ' comic '—or more ' tragic ' ! "

C. K. S. might have retorted that the disapproval of such folk as the person who was chipping him counted for little, and the approval of such a writer as Meredith for much. The chipper was a novelist whose books have attained some popularity. Shorter makes no bid for popularity, nor for posterity, but he has made enduring contributions to Biography. A hundred years hence, students of the Brontës, Borrow, or Napoleon, are likely to consult his volumes, whereas ninety-nine-hundredths of the fiction-writers of to-day will then be forgotten. But chaff, C. K. S. takes in good part. I have heard this attributed to the fact that he is " thick-skinned." The true explanation is that of all writing-men he has least vanity. So far from being " thick-skinned," though outwardly presenting the imperturb-

Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith and the Italian sculptor, Signor La Monaca, at work on a bust of the novelist.

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[*Facing p.* 224.

ability of his East Anglian stock, inwardly he is a sensitive man, and more responsive to sympathy and appreciation, more hurt by misunderstanding or malice, than he would confess. He once said that he was "constitutionally incapable of geniality," whereas he is as genial as he is warm-hearted and generous, though to enemies he is implacable. No man of pronounced opinions can avoid making enemies, and C. K. S. lays down the law dogmatically, without fear or favouritism. If (as I think) prejudiced on some points and mistaken on others, his blunt and fearless outspokenness, most of all his sturdy and sterling honesty, have won the respect of innumerable readers on both sides of the Atlantic, just as his lovable qualities endear him to his many friends.

How entirely C.K.S. can enjoy a joke against himself, let the facts concerning the following lines testify. Though, I understand that the doggerel was never published, it was shewn by the writer to Mr. Shorter, who was not only amused, but even asked for a copy. He had just published his *Life of Charlotte Brontë.*

THE SORROWS OF CHARLOTTE.

(A long way after Thackerary's ballad, *The Sorrows of Werther,* beginning, "Werther had a love for Charlotte, such as words could never utter.")

Clement had a love for Charlotte,
Such as words could never utter.
Should you ask when first he read her—
He was eating bread and butter.

He was eating bread and butter,
Sandwiched in with apples scarlet.
Clement, after twenty pages,
Up, and asked for Apple Charlotte.

Up and asked for Apple Charlotte,
Vowed no other food should feed him;
Said he meant to write her Life, and
All the listening "Sphere" should read him.

So he loved, and lived laborious
Days, and shunned delight with utter
Scorn—to pore o'er Charlotte's pages
(Salt with tears, and smeared with butter).

Pointed out that Mrs. Gaskell,
Most remiss ! but dear old lady
(Out of date, too), never told us
Charlotte's washerwoman's pay day.

Said 'twas facts like these that cast a
Lurid light on Charlotte's soul ;
Vowed that, if he lived, the world should
Hear from him the unbroken Whole ;

Advertised for Charlotte's nursemaid,
Advertised for Charlotte's cook,
Took their affidavits down, and
Made them bulwarks of his book.

" Did she love more—beef or mutton ?
Cook, oh ! Cookie ! hear my cry !
Were her boots lace-up or button ?
Hearken, nursemaid, ere I die."

Thus was built the immortal classic,
Thus was brought to birth the " Life,"
Based on these tremendous facts, with
Shorter, father, and midwife.

Will " C. K. S." meet his Charlotte
In some other Sphere of bliss ?
Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, gather,
Whispering, " This is Shorter—this ? "

Please don't ask me. I can't tell you,
Th'Hereafter is with mystery rife :
She, at least, will be in heaven,
All forgiven—*he wrote her Life.*

Arrived at Colchester, we made our way to the Town Hall—Moot Hall, I believe it is called. Of the Oyster Feast, I do not propose to write, except to say that Field Marshal Lord Grenfell told us that he had solemnly promised his wife not to touch a single oyster, about which there had recently been an enteric scare. " I didn't touch a single oyster," he added hastily, " I ate four dozen, and the second two dozen went down better than the first "—thereby reminding me of what Jerome K. Jerome once said, when invited to drink a friend's health in a bumper of champagne, " We drink other people's health—and ruin our own." That's true," said his friend gravely. Then, with " Well, here's another ruin," he nodded to Jerome and tossed off the whole tumblerful.

In a London illustrated daily a photograph of the guests seated

at or near the high table appeared the next morning. The editor was so good as to send me a fine reproduction of the photograph, and inspecting it I recognise Mr. Jerome himself, Mr. Rudolph Lehmann, Lord Cowdray, General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Japanese Ambassador, the Mayor (Mr. Gurney Benham), The Duke of Marlborough, Sir Francis Carruthers Gould, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, Sir Henry Lucy ("Toby, M.P."), Mr. Richard Whiteing, and myself.

Only of the Defender of Mafeking do I propose here to write. A few days before the Oyster Feast, I had received a letter from Lieut.-General Sir Edmond Elles, K.C.B., G.C.I.E., Chief Commissioner of the Boy Scouts, to say that he wrote by the request of the Chief Scout, who was aware that I was interested in, and a supporter of the movement, to ask me to allow myself to be nominated for a certain vacant commissionership. I was heart and soul with the Boy Scouts Movement, and in my small way was doing what I could to forward it. But Lord Roberts, whom I had first met some twenty years before, and from whom I had received many kindnesses—he even did me the honour of writing an introduction to a book of mine—had, not by my seeking, for the advance came from him, sought me out and conscripted me, as it were, under his command. He was then more than ever convinced of the coming of war, and told me certain facts known to him by which, having recently myself returned from Germany, I was not surprised. All pointed to 1914 or 1915 as the year of England's ordeal. Perhaps the most wonderful instance of Lord Roberts' prescience, almost superhuman prescience, is to be found in the words he spoke publicly in Quebec, at the opening of the Plains of Abraham as a park. That General Wolfe fell after scaling the cliffs by which he and his troops gained access to the Plains or Heights of Abraham, and fell in the hour of the victory so momentous in the History of Canada, is known to all. What we owe to that victory—for who shall say the fate which might not have befallen England, had not Canada poured her heroes into Belgium and France in the hour of England's greatest need?—many of us imperfectly realise. That Lord Roberts' words should have been spoken on the Plains of Abraham is remarkable. More remarkable is what he said of Foch, who, even in 1914, was known only as the Commandant of, and lecturer at, the *École Supérieure de Guerre*, in Paris, and as

the author of some military books. Even in 1916, Foch was held in such little account in France that, reaching the prescribed military age, he was accorded the military medal, and though his name was retained on the active list, he was not retained in any command. How little Foch was known in England will be evident when I say that the editors of the issue of *Who's Who* for 1916 either did not know his name at all, or else did not think it of sufficient importance to be included among *Who's Who's* many thousand notabilities.

But Lord Roberts, the "Man Who Knew," was not only a great soldier, but also the keenest of observers, the shrewdest judge of character, and took a man's measure for himself, all uninfluenced by what was, or was not, written or said of that man. He had his own opinion of Foch. Speaking on the occasion of which I write, he said (I quote his words exactly as reported at the time) :

"They refuse to believe me, and we sleep under a false security, for I do not hesitate to affirm that we shall have a frightful war in Europe, and that England and France will have the hardest experience of their existence. They will, in fact, see defeat very near, but the war will finally be won by the genius of a French general, named Ferdinand Foch, Professor at the Military School in Paris."

Thus, almost exactly six years before the war (July 29, 1908), Lord Roberts predicted precisely what would happen in the war when it came. That in itself was a memorable prophecy. But that he should thus have marked out a professor and lecturer in the schools, who was a second lieutenant in 1874, between which time and 1908 he had had no opportunity of proving his military abilities by commanding troops in actions of any importance, if in any action at all, as the man who was to lead the Allied Cause to victory—is surely one of the most remarkable forecasts in all history, and is proof in itself of Lord Roberts' own military genius, and of his genius in judging character.

All this is a digression, but as it concerns a great soldier the reader may think it not without interest. I have, moreover, another reason for writing of the matter, which is to say that I was unable to accept the Scouts Commissionership, by the offer of which from General Baden-Powell I was honoured, for the reason that I was already serving as it were under the command

of Lord Roberts. My chief had again and again charged me, as I loved my country, not only to relax no effort, but to devote every ounce of energy to the cause. When, later, Mr. Asquith received a few of Lord Roberts' friends and supporters, of whom by the Field Marshal's wish I was one, at 10, Downing Street, to discuss the subject, Lord Roberts spoke of that cause to the Prime Minister as " affecting the safety of every man, woman and child in the Empire." " I have spoken," Lord Roberts said, " as plainly as an old man has the right to speak in the face of contingencies which would be far less terrible to him personally than to generations of Britons yet unborn." And that was said in the same year as, and only a few months before the outbreak of war, and the great soldier's own death " on service " in France.

When, after the Oyster Feast, I explained my position to the Chief Scout, he—no less a patriot than " the Chief," as Mr. Kipling spoke of Lord Roberts to me—instantly understood, and bade me continue in the work I was doing.

Here I may perhaps interpolate a similar reply which I had from Captain Scott, the Arctic explorer. When he asked me whether I had any new book coming out, and I replied, " No. I am neglecting my scribbling to work for Lord Roberts and National Defence," Scott's hearty comment was: " Good! I am with you there! " Speaking of Scott reminds me of an occasion when he was to have sat next to me at dinner. Never have I known so dense a fog as there was in London that night. He did not arrive, and later I was shewn a telegram: " Captain Scott, of the *Discovery*, hung up in the fog, somewhere near Willesden, and cannot ' discover ' himself! "

Not soon shall I forget the Chief Scout's kindness and cordiality on the occasion of which I write. My one regret in looking back on my association with Lord Roberts is that I was thereby prevented from serving under that other great and gallant soldier, the Hero of Mafeking, to whom not only England and the Empire, but the world stands for all time indebted as the Founder and Creator of the Boy Scouts Movement. In Baden-Powell, boyhood has found its ideal leader. I admit to smiling when a maiden lady, an enthusiast in the scouts cause, who, when I knew her, was not only a patron, but constituted or, at least, considered herself a patrol-leader, and took her scouts for a holiday to France, went so far as to say that the Chief Scout

should be installed as boyhood's Patron Saint. Seeing my lifted eyebrows (I can imagine how the Chief Scout's would have lifted, and the little network of humorous wrinkles around his eyes would have all run together at the picture of himself as "Saint Robert"), she went on: "Why not? Saint George was a soldier, too, and what Saint George did for England, Sir Robert has done for England's boyhood."

There I agreed. To speak too highly of the Scouts Movement is scarcely possible.

When, at the reception before the Oyster Feast, I was presented to the Mayor, he said: "General Baden-Powell has arrived, and would like to have a talk with you. I have proposed that he and you stay on to dine with me—no one else there except my brother-in-law, Geoffrey Elwes—in time for you and the General to catch the evening train to town."

Naturally I replied that I should be honoured indeed, thus to have an opportunity of meeting and talking with the great soldier—and so the matter was arranged. After the Feast I was presented to General Baden-Powell, and he, Mr.—now the Right Hon. L. Worthington Evans, late Secretary of State for War, and, unless I am mistaken, the same General Sir Thomas Snow, K.C.B., who commanded the famous 4th Division in Belgium and France, and executed the brilliantly successful "covering" movement when the historic retreat from Le Cateau was carried out, and my humble self had tea with the Mayor, before going on together to a Scouts Inspection in the Corn Exchange. There, I remember, that General Snow told the company he had just been reading *Scouting for Boys*, which he took leave to call "The Book of Common Sense." The inspection and the dinner with the Mayor, General Baden-Powell, and Mr. Geoffrey Elwes, I pass over to speak of the time when the Chief Scout and I returned in a first-class and reserved smoking compartment to London together.

He was not a smoker, he told me, but generally carried smokes for his friends, in proof of which he produced a small case full of excellent cigarettes, which, when I had taken one and lit up, he bade me to keep. (I have it to-day in company with a corn cob pipe given to me by Mark Twain.)

Naturally our talk at first was about the Scouts Movement which he was anxious to disassociate from everything militarian.

I agreed in the wisdom of so doing, and told him of a paragraph in the *British Weekly* from the pen of my friend Miss Jane Stoddart. It was to the effect that an extremely high-minded and well-intentioned, but ill-informed, pacifist lady, with a violent antipathy to everything which she considered militarian, had angrily remarked, when a troop of bright-faced scouts marched by, "Little murderers!" *Punch*, too, had just then published one or two comical scouts pictures. One was of a scout who took the movement and himself so very seriously as to suppose that, outside the Scouts, no one was likely to know anything of First Aid. A man had fallen, fainting, or in a fit, in the street, and a doctor who happened to be passing was kneeling at his side, when a scout, who had just arrived on the scene, rushed in to push the doctor aside with a peremptory, "Stand away! *I'll* see to this!"

Another was of a scout who appeared to be under the impression that his organisation was a unit of the Regular Army. So intensely military was he that when the attention of one of the lads whom he was drilling wandered to a group of cloth-capped or billycocked loungers who were looking on, he exclaimed severely: "Attend to what I am saying, please, and never mind those" (this with infinite scorn) "civilians!"

But it was when the General fell to talking of other matters than scouting that I began to realise how wonderful and versatile a personality is that of the Chief Scout. I have in my time met many distinguished soldiers, many distinguished artists, many distinguished actors, and many gifted raconteurs; but here, under one hat, was a man who was all four at one and the same time, and, what was more, was his own brilliant self to boot. He told stories inimitably—acting as well as speaking the parts; he pulled out a letter from an inside pocket, on the back of which he dashed off a rough but admirable sketch to illustrate a point he was making; and never had a long railway journey seemed so short to me, for never, on a railway journey, had I been so interested and entertained. Before I had realised that we were halfway from Colchester, the train was running into Liverpool Street.

"Which way are you going?" asked the General. "If we can, let us go on together."

"My destination is the Savage Club, sir," I said, "I am sleeping there to-night."

" Capital ! I'm going to Kensington, so we shall still be travelling the same way. Come along. I can drop you at Charing Cross for the Savage, and journey on myself to Kensington. Follow me—I will go first and take the tickets, for I know this line and the different platforms, and it will save time. Meanwhile, do you mind laying hold of my bag ? "

Secure under the leadership of the Chief Scout, to say nothing of a General in the Regular Army, who had commanded a brigade, perhaps a division, in war, whereas I had commanded no more than a company in the Territorial Force at peace-time manœuvres, I obeyed.

Soon he returned with the tickets. " Here is our train," he said. " In you get," and again I obeyed orders. Again he fell to talking brilliantly and again the time passed all too quickly for me. Looking casually out of the window, when the train stopped at a station, I chanced to see the name of the station on the lamp.

" I beg your pardon, General," I said, " but are you sure we are going the right way, sir ? This station, surely, should not be on our route ? "

He flashed a glance at the lamp. " You are right," he said, " we are in the wrong train. Quick as you can, man, it's just starting—slip out."

Holding, as I did, the Defender of Mafeking in awe as a soldier, and as incapable of an error in strategy, which is concerned with the moving of one's command to its destination in the theatre of operations—or to use non-military terms, in " getting there " —this was something of a shock to me. Another illusion gone ! Another long-cherished ideal shattered ! None the less, I obeyed orders, and tumbled out. General Baden-Powell followed me, and remembering that he was not only a soldier, but also the Chief Scout, my confidence returned. When he again looked at the name on the lamp, I expected him to say : " This is such and such a station." Then tapping his forehead, " Let me see. *Scouting for Boys*, page so and so. Yes. You want Charing Cross for the Savage Club. Your platform is No. 4. Your train comes in at 9.40, and you will be at Charing Cross at 9.53. My platform for Kensington is No. 5. My train comes in at 9.45, and I shall be at Kensington at 10.17."

He did nothing of the sort, but, instead, sought the assistance of a porter. What an historic picture it would have made

(I could not help thinking) if Verestchagin, Lady Butler, of *The Roll Call* fame, or some other painter of great scenes in warfare and in history, had been present to put it on record—" General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, lost hopelessly on the Underground Railway, sends out an S.O.S. to a porter." Such a picture should be worthy of hanging side by side with the burning of the cakes by King Alfred, or Napoleon in Retreat from Moscow. But worse was to follow, for the General so muddled the unhappy porter, who, by the time that the other had quite done with him, was in such a condition that I was not sure it was not my duty to call the stationmaster's attention to the man, lest there should be an accident on the line in consequence of the porter's befogged, collapsed and distraught state of mind.

Whether my travelling companion ever got home at all that night I have no information. But for myself, the result was that I reached the Savage Club, where I had an appointment, three-quarters of an hour late, the reason being that the one and only occasion in my life in which I went wrong, and got hopelessly lost on the Underground Railway, was when I was under the leadership and command of the one man whom, as a guide, I most trusted as more than competent to pilot me from John O' Groats to Land's End—and that with his eyes shut and without once asking his way—the Chief Scout.

CHAPTER XV

W. H. HUDSON: A MEMORY

CHAPTER XV

MANY years ago I met at a friend's house a man by whom I was so singularly attracted that, though more than a quarter of a century has passed since then, and I have never seen him since, I could, were I an artist, draw his portrait exactly as he then was.

Not for the reason that he was tall, spare and bearded, with a touch of the Spanish hidalgo about him, nor because when I once spoke of a contemplated holiday in Spain, he revealed an unexpected (for I had never heard him mention the subject before) and intimate knowledge of the literature of that country, but because of the gentle courtesy of his bearing I associated him in my own mind with the hero of Cervantes' great romance. This courtesy was manifested to all, but noticeably to our hostess, and to every woman, even to the maidservant who waited at dinner or brought in tea. Perhaps I ought to say " especially," rather than " noticeably," for his courtesy was as natural and as unnoticeable as the indrawing and expiration of his breath. It was a quiet, unobtrusive courtesy—the silent rising from his seat if he saw that someone, not necessarily a woman, was standing; the placing of a cushion, or the pushing forward, without a word, of a footstool; most of all, the instant checking on the very tip of his tongue of a remark that he was about, and wished, to make when he saw that another person would like to speak—which sometimes escaped notice because so natural, so taken for granted, whereas the more tradesmanlike quality of mere politeness did not pass thus unnoticed and unacknowledged.

His thick, dark hair and beard were just beginning to be streaked with grey, and I remember thinking to myself, on our first meeting, that, whereas thinning and falling hair detracts

from a man's looks, this slight threading with grey of plentiful dark hair seemed, in some indefinable way, to make only for distinction. That his kindly but melancholy and deep-set eyes missed nothing of what was happening, I discovered in my first talk with him, which was at a crowded " At Home," where I knew most of those present, and he, very few. He asked no single personal or curious question about anyone, but when enquiring the name of fellow-guests he refrained from directing my attention to them, or even himself looking in their direction as he spoke, but mentioned this or that characteristic which only a very observant man would have noticed. His observation, like his courtesy, came so naturally to him as to be almost unobservable.

In conversation his eyes met yours frankly and with a kindly, keen, human interest which had nothing of impertinent curiosity. Shy men (and as not without a streak of shyness he struck me) are generally self-conscious, but self-conscious this man never was. A lonely figure as he seemed even in congenial society—so lonely that I could not help wondering whether some sorrow or tragedy had darkened his life—he talked just as he wrote. As I pen these lines I seem to hear his voice, low-pitched, pleasant, never raised above a conversational tone, even when most in earnest, sometimes gently-gay, humorous, or bantering, sometimes tenderly-sad.

He was always friendly in company, but behind his friendliness was a reserve which only the impertinent would have sought to penetrate. Of himself, other than of his interests in life, I noticed that he never spoke, nor indeed in my hearing dropped one word from which to infer whether he were married or single, or that he was by profession a writer. If a man choose to volunteer anything about himself that is evidently meant to be a confidence—his wish that it be so considered is, of course, respected. If, on the other hand, his wish appears to be to withhold information about himself—that wish is even more to be respected, and one makes no personal enquiries, either directly or indirectly. All that I knew of this man was that his name was Hudson, but, perhaps because of his evident knowledge of geology, I thought he might be by profession a mining engineer whose work took him much abroad. By temperament, I knew him for an observer, a naturalist, and so loving a student of

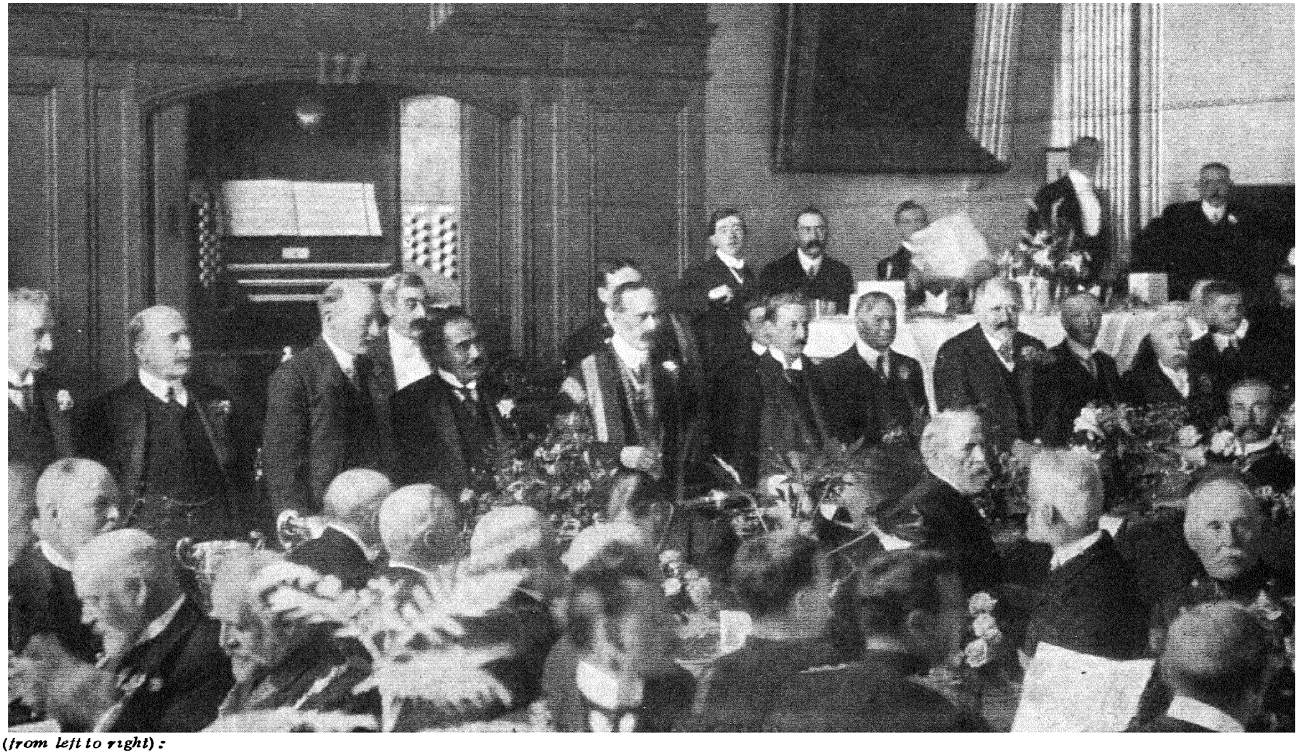
men, women and children, animals, trees and flowers, as to find all life, and the very fact of being alive, wonderful and fascinating.

When I was introduced to him, he mentioned that our hostess had shewn or lent him an article of mine in which I had chanced to say that I often thought of the first snowdrop as little children who had crept too early from bed, and stood with bare feet and inclined head, listening for the step of old Nurse Nature, and ready, should she scold, to scamper back and hide beneath their coverlet of snow. The fancy had pleased him, and led to a talk and to other talks on flowers and birds. My reason for welcoming such talks was the singular fascination which his personality, no less than his conversation held for me. His reason for continuing these talks on subsequent meetings was probably our common interest in flowers, birds, poetry, long Down-ramblings, and nature lore. For all his social ease and naturalness of bearing, Hudson struck me as something of a recluse, and out of his setting at a social function. Another reason why he so often gravitated in my direction on these occasions was that his friend, our hostess, had other guests to entertain, and Hudson preferred to talk to someone whom he already knew, rather than to form new acquaintances. Once, when he asked me, "Who is that?" and I mentioned a well-known name, one indeed of which Hudson had made mention, and I offered to introduce him, he replied (almost hastily, for a man who was never in haste): "No, please don't. I am interested to know it is he, and to see him, but there we will leave it."

Possibly he "took stock" (as, without appearing to do so, he undoubtedly did) of the man in whom he was interested, and more effectively, while seemingly engaged in talking, and while the man was not aware that he was being thus observed, than in directly talking to the man himself. The cultivation of "celebrities" he consistently avoided, just as, later on, when success came, he shrank from every sort of advertisement, or from coming forward himself, as a celebrity, to "take the salute." That is probably the reason why recognition was slow, and why even to-day his fame is so much less than his deserts. If advertisement of every sort, books as well as soap and blacking, were forbidden by Act of Parliament—if intellectual as well as industrial creations and inventions won their way into estima-

tion solely and only on their merits—the public would be immeasurably the gainer. As things are, in the intellectual as well as in the industrial world, it is too often not the best, but only the best advertised, which comes to the knowledge of the public. But advertise himself, and thus, indirectly, his books, W. H. Hudson would not. Never, within my knowledge, was he " interviewed " or present at a club dinner or literary gathering of which reports appeared in the Press. He must have been the despair of the editor of *Who's Who*, in which are recorded the birthplace, birthdate, parentage, and other personal particulars concerning celebrities. For such particulars, except in the case of those persons, the facts of whose career are common knowledge and easily ascertainable, the editor depends upon the celebrities in question, to each of whom a courteously-worded application for information is made. To do these celebrities justice they do not appear to be unduly coy—with the exception of Hudson, of whom the only information given is his name and a list of his books, obviously compiled from the publishers' catalogues in the office of *Who's Who*.

My meetings with W. H. Hudson, some seven or eight times at most, were in either the very early 'nineties or the close of the 'eighties, and all in the course of one summer, for our hostess died not long after, and I never had the good fortune to find myself in his company again. I read the other day that he was " the master of a style." To me the charm of Hudson's talk (and this is equally true of his writings) was that, listening to him, as in reading him, one was as little conscious of a " style," as one is conscious of anything of the sort in the air one breathes. All of which one was conscious was that Hudson said what he had to say in the simplest, most lucid, and most illuminating way, with never a touch of rhetoric, never an attempt at brilliance or " fine talk," and yet so characteristically that, in his company, one could never imagine oneself to be in other company than that of W. H. Hudson.



Standing (from left to right):

Mr. R. C. Lehmann. Lord Cowdray. General Sir R. Baden-Powell. The Japanese Ambassador. The Mayor (Mr. W. Gurney Benham). The Duke of Marlborough. Mr. Jerome K. Jerome. Sir F. Carruthers Gould. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. Sir Henry Lucy ("Toby, M.P.")

(Seated below Mr. Jerome to the right) Mr. Richard Whiteing.

(Below Sir H. Lucy to the right) The Author.

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[*Facing p.* 240.

CHAPTER XVI

ABOUT JEROME K. JEROME

CHAPTER XVI

I BEGIN with a story which the reader may, or may not, have heard. A doctor, not exactly a teetotaller, was consulted by a friend who was also a patient.

"I suffer from a constant and unquenchable thirst," said the patient. "What would you take for it?"

"Take for it!" ejaculated the other. "Why, my dear chap, in your place, I wouldn't take a hundred thousand pounds."

I do not happen to have a hundred thousand pounds to spare at the moment, but if I had, and the exchange were possible, I should count the money well-spent, could I swop it for Mr. Jerome's gift of happy humour. Yet he would have us to forget that he ever wrote *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* and *Three Men in a Boat*; and that when he edited *The Idler*, he was the Christopher Columbus of "that new world which is the old"—the little world of what was then generally called "The New Humour." It was a jolly little world in Jerome's time, for when he discovered and annexed those happy hunting grounds, he "discovered" also not a few humorists, Jacobs, Barry Pain, Zangwill, Burgin, Eden Phillpotts and others who rallied round his flag, and accepted him as the chieftain of the clan of The New Humour. That he was no mere funny man, who subordinated literature to laughter, we know from his first and fine novel, *Paul Kelver*, which has been said to stand to the rest of Jerome's writings as *David Copperfield* stands to other works of Dickens. To the standard which Jerome set as an editor, the fact that Mr. Kipling, Bret Harte, and R. L. Stevenson were among his contributors testifies.

To-day Mr. Jerome challenges criticism—and as readers of his *All Roads lead to Calvary* are aware, does so successfully

—as a " serious " writer. He is a politician, as well as a thinker and worker, who occupies himself with great matters—less from what he accounts the " narrow " standpoint of patriotism, than on broadly human lines. I may not, and, indeed, do not, share all his views, but Mr. Jerome himself I hold in abiding affection, and in deep respect personally and intellectually. Thirty to forty years ago, when certain " superior " persons affected to " sniff "—if one may come betwixt the wind and their superiority by the use of so homely a word—at him I wrote of Jerome, and over my own signature in a great London paper : " He has probed, and deeply, problems with which some of those who sneer at him have only played."

He sent me a front-row stall for the first night of his *The Passing of the Third Floor Back.* That night, within half an hour of the fall of the curtain, I wrote him a letter of congratulation. " To-morrow morning's papers," I said (as nearly as I can remember), " will, some of them, speak disparagingly of *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* and will talk about an attempt to adapt a mediæval miracle play to the modern drama. But what you have written will make folk think, as all that you have written, even humorously, does, and will, moreover, appeal to huge and to discriminating audiences, here and in America." Some of the critics did so disparage *The Passing of the Third Floor Back,* but as all the world now knows, it has been one of the greatest stage successes of our time.

My seat in the stalls was next to my friend Archdeacon Wilberforce, Chaplain of the two Houses of Parliament, who, though he admired the play, was uncertain of its success. In our talk between the acts, I reminded him of an incident which, as it amused him, I may be allowed to record here.

At a meeting at St. James's Hall, my seat on the platform was beside Sir Wilfred Lawson and the Archdeacon (both strenuous teetotallers). The hall was packed, and the heat—the meeting was in the Dog Days—unendurable. With the sweat trickling down his face, his tongue, metaphorically, lolling out, Lawson turned to Wilberforce to exclaim : " I say, old man, I *must* have a drink ! " His drink meant no more than soda water or ginger beer ; but what he said set my unregenerate soul panting—we have the Psalmist's word for it that souls can pant—for the

Savage Club lounge, before the bar closes, and when fellow-unregenerates are popping corks of Bass or Pilsener, or thrusting long whiskeys and sodas into each other's not unwilling hands.

" Sir Wilfred's ' I say, old man, I *must* have a drink ! " I said to the Archdeacon, " sounded so human, so creaturely, and so natural, that I felt like enquiring : ' What is your poison, Mr. Archdeacon ? ' and ' Is yours a Guinness, or a Bass in a tankard, Sir Wilfred ? ' "

Jerome tried his hand at more than one calling before finally adopting literature. One day he mentioned that a certain event happened at the time when he was a schoolmaster. " A schoolmaster ! " I said. " I knew, of course, that you have played many parts in life—that you had been a journalist, that you had at another time something to do with the Law, that you have been an actor and an editor, as well as a playwright and an author, but I did not know that you had ever been a schoolmaster. How did you get on at it ? "

" Not at all—*nor did the boys,*" was the significant reply.

Once during a conversation at a club, someone attempted a definition of humour as that which had an element of surprise. Jerome's comment was : " If you found another fellow with his arm around your sweetheart's waist, there might be a ' surprise ' for the other fellow, and the discovery might come as a ' surprise ' to you, but it would not for that reason be humorous."

Then another member, a well-known author, remarked that, in his opinion, humour depended less upon a surprise than upon some element which was incongruous, to which Jerome replied :

" If you sent an article to an editor expecting a cheque for ten guineas, and received only a post office order for ten shillings —you might think the amount incongruous, but you would fail to find any humour in the incident."

Jerome, Guy Boothby, and Major Rasch, M.P., afterwards Sir Carne Rasch, were dining with me about the time that Deeming had been convicted of murdering the women he had married, and of burying their bodies in the cement or concrete with which kitchens or sculleries are sometimes floored. The conversation

turning upon the murderer and his method of disposing of the evidence of his crimes, Jerome enquired (parodying the well-known proverb about marrying) : " Is not that a case of marrying in haste, and cementing in leisure ? "

" Hardly," commented Boothby, " I should say that the scoundrel objected to wives in the abstract, but did not object to them in the concrete."

Jerome is, or was, when I knew him well and met him often, a wonderful man to sleep. " I put my head on the pillow," he said once, " and then someone knocks at the door, and says, ' Your shaving water, sir.' "

Once when he was staying at a little hostelry in the country, he told the landlord that he wished to be called at seven the next morning.

" Very good, sir," said the host, " I will call you myself."

" But how are you going to do so ? " enquired Jerome.

" Well, sir, I generally knock at the gentleman's door," was the reply.

" Knock at my door ! " said Jerome scornfully. " That would never get me up, I'm such a heavy sleeper. You will have to come in and pull me out of bed."

The landlord grinned. " Very well, sir," he said. " If you don't mind, I am sure I don't. Pull you out of bed it shall be. Good night, sir, good night."

" Here, wait a moment," said Jerome. " Now, to prevent any mistake, just tell me what you are going to do at seven to-morrow."

" First, I am going to knock at your door, and then I am coming in to pull you out of bed," replied the amused landlord. " That's all right, sir, isn't it ? "

" It is all right so far as it goes," replied Jerome, " but it doesn't go far enough. You must stay in the room awhile to see that I don't get back into bed."

" Very good, sir," answered the landlord. " I'll do as you say. You can depend upon me. Good night, sir."

But Jerome called him back. " Do stop a moment, my good man. You are an Irishman, are you not, or you would not be so impetuous ? For goodness' sake don't let us have any mistake about this calling business. I want particularly to catch an

early train to town. Would you mind just once more running over what you are going to do ? "

The landlord returned to the middle of the room, and like a schoolboy repeating a lesson ran through the proposed programme.

" First, I'm to knock at the door."

Jerome nodded.

" Then I'm to come in and pull you out of bed."

Jerome assented gravely.

" And then," with a note of triumph in his voice, " I am to see that you don't get back into bed. How'll that do, sir ? "

" It won't do at all," said Jerome wearily, " if that is all that you propose doing. You'll have to stop in the room, my good man, to see that I don't go to sleep on the floor."

In the days of which I am writing, Jerome was, as humorists —in their youth, at least—often are, shy and unassertive. But his quiet and unassuming bearing notwithstanding, he is not a man with whom to take liberties, or to be bounced, as those who have attempted either course have found to their cost. On a long railway journey—this was before the days of restaurant cars—the train was scheduled to stop for some ten or twelve minutes at a certain important station, and passengers availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the buffet for a couple of sandwiches or something else in the nature of a " snack."

Being hungry, Jerome decided that a pork pie, of which there were some on view, would be as substantial as anything, and was served with that article, and a glass of bitter, by a barmaid of imposing appearance, and not a little hauteur of manner.

Jerome thanked her in his quiet way, and to make room for other hungry or thirsty passengers, he carried the pork pie—together with the knife, fork, and mustard-pot which, without deigning to look at him, she had pushed in his direction across the bar—to a side table. On cutting the pie, he found the outside dry and hard, and the inside so mouldy as to be absolutely green.

As if it were he who had to apologise for troubling her, instead of her apologising to him for the ptomaine-poisonous condition of the pie, he gently directed her attention to the article.

" If you have got any complaint to make about the food in

this buffet, young man, " she said shrilly and loftily, " you make them to the manager, not to me. I am not here to be bullied."

The last man in the world to bully a waiter, still less a waitress or barmaid, Jerome, somewhat nettled by her tone and general haughtiness, enquired: " Very well, where is he, then ? " and a boy was dispatched to find the manager.

Bustling up importantly, that worthy began by saying :

" This young lady sends me word that you are making complaints about the quality of the pork pies sold here. Let me tell you that these pies are made under my personal supervision ; and let me tell you, too, sir, that I made pork pies before you were born or thought of."

" Yes," countered Jerome quietly, " *And this is one of them.*"

To keep the laws of my country means to me, I fear, no more than to do nothing which would put the country to the cost of my " keep." Twice only have I appeared in a law court, and then only as a witness.

When Jerome brought out his paper, *To-Day*, my portrait appeared in the first number. Jerome was once shown a medallion-portrait of himself—I think it was afterwards exhibited at the Royal Academy—a profile done in " relief," with the head cut off, bare-necked above the shoulders, as in the case of the King's head upon a postage stamp. With his own head on one side, Jerome looked at it critically.

" When I see a thing like that," he said, " I want to go off and be a Roman Emperor."

When I saw my portrait in *To-Day*, I wanted to go off and be a murderer. Handsome I may not be, but when I saw myself —not so much because of the villainous aspect of face and features as because of the smudgy printing of that first number— depicted to the public as a vicious, sinister, and scowling monster of infamy, I sought out Jerome at the office of the paper to favour him with my views.

" When there was a shaving competition for barbers, I think at the Crystal Palace," I said, " and a prize was awarded to the barber who could shave the greatest number of customers in the shortest space of time, I remember your remarking: ' A barber shaved three men in five minutes, did he ? It takes me three-quarters of an hour to shave one, and when I have done

with him he is a gory object. The last time I shaved him was when he was going to a wedding, and the bride fainted on catching sight of him. She said it seemed like a warning.' "

" The picture you have published of me," I went on, " though the fault seems to me to be due to the printing, is not a ' warning,' it is a wickedness, and I have half a mind to sue you for ' defamation of countenance.' "

In observing that time went on, I am not hoping to impart information or a new discovery to the reader, who would be more interested if I could tell him that time went back, but I mention the matter here because time, in its whirligig, often reverses the wheel of fortune. The next occasion on which I saw Jerome, he came to see me, instead of my going to see him—and he, too, came with a grievance.

" Do you remember that portrait of you which I had published in the first number of *To-day?* " he asked.

With some bitterness I replied that I was not so accustomed to being held up to public execration, as a cross between a burglar and a blackmailer, as entirely to have forgotten the incident; and that if I were given the chance of having an alleged portrait of myself again published in *To-Day*, or having my portrait pasted up, with a description of my personal appearance, outside the police stations of the country, as among the " Wanteds," I preferred the police stations to the periodical as less damaging to one's reputation.

Jerome seemed pleased instead of penitent, judging by his comment which was, " Good! "

" May I ask why? " I enquired coldly.

" It is this way," he said. " The public will always buy the first number of a new paper, if only from curiosity to see what it is like. If the contents are fresh and interesting, the printing good, the illustrations well-produced, the public will buy the second and following numbers, and will go on buying regularly. If the first number is bad, the contents poor, the printing indistinct, the pictures smudgy, the public feels that it has been ' had,' and never looks at another number of the same paper. In fact, it is easier to start and to make a success with an entirely new venture, than to live down the impression left on the public mind by a bad first number.

" So there is a double law-suit on. I am suing the printers for the injury done to my paper by what I contend was their bad printing of my first number ; and they are suing me for the printing bill, which I have refused to pay until I am compensated for the damages sustained by their printing. If, when my case comes on, you will go into the witness box and repeat (you can leave out the bad language) what you said to me about the reproduction of your portrait, it should weigh with the judge and jury."

I agreed, and the case came on for hearing. Jerome's claim to damages for what he accounted the unsatisfactory printing of his first number was stated first.

Before one-half of what his counsel had to say was put before the court, the case looked so much like going against the printers, that they instructed their counsel, so I understood, to propose a settlement out of court. If Jerome (they said) would withdraw his claim for damages, they were prepared, in return, to waive their claim for the amount due to them on the printing bill. Jerome refused, and decided to go on, with the result—so great is the uncertainty of findings at law—that he lost. Since then, I would rather decide a dispute—even if to lose were a moral impossibility—on the uncertain spin of a coin, than to put my fortunes and my money on the equally uncertain decision of the law courts.

That Jerome has been both a plaintiff and a defendant in the law courts has already been shown. Now to tell of his appearance in a police court.

Soon after a Muzzling Order had been issued, a dog, belonging to him, chanced, unnoticed, to get out without a muzzle and when a policeman was passing. I was Mr. Jerome's guest at his country house at the time, and was present at the subsequent happenings, but the incident I am about to record I did not witness, and write only of what I was told by a fellow-guest.

The policeman was, I gather, a young and inexperienced officer. That he had so recently joined the force as (to use a cricketing phrase) not yet to have " broken his duck," by securing the conviction of an offender, my information does not show, but his eagerness to make " a case " of the innocent escapade of Jerome's dog renders such a supposition likely.

I have a theory that, could we trace the history of the dog family to its beginnings, we should find that some far-back progenitor once lost half a sovereign, since when, the entire dog-tribe, his descendants, spend no small amount of time in exploring every corner and cranny for the missing gold piece. Perhaps Jerome's dog may have been looking for the lost half-sovereign. Perhaps he was under the impression that he had been appointed sanitary inspector, or buildings inspector, by the Rural District Council, for he was harmlessly engaged in satisfying himself that a drain pipe which ran down the road was in hygienic working order, and that the foundations of a wall on the other side were well and truly laid, when he was seized and impounded by the policeman, who demanded to know whether Jerome was the owner, and, if so, why the animal was at large, unmuzzled.

The dog being a particularly inoffensive, even timid, beast, and, like the policeman, very young, Jerome did not take the enormity of the offence, or the majesty of the law, as represented by the policeman, sufficiently seriously for the latter's liking. When Jerome admitted ownership, and expressed regret that, by somebody's inadvertence, the dog had slipped out without a muzzle—possibly because, Jerome mildly explained, " being of tender years, the poor thing was missing its mother badly "—the policeman cut him short with, " That won't do for me ! " and producing the stump-end of a lead pencil, which, like postage stamps, required moistening before use, demanded Jerome's name and address.

The taking of these was, I understand, a lengthy business, by reason of the officer's inability to grasp the fact that the famous author's Christian name and surname were the same. When told that the former was " Jerome " he remarked sourly, " Christian name first, please," thereby implying that a Christian name " Jerome " was not, nor could be. Presumably, too, he was unaware that he was casting reflection upon the religious sincerity of an earlier Jerome, to whose name, as if with a premonition that others, less worthy so to be called (no reflection upon the life and character of the later Jerome) might come after, the Church has prefixed the title " Saint." I do not know whether the constable elicited the fact that the second name of

the Jerome who—again without reflection upon his morals—is *not* a saint, is Klapka. If so, the policeman may have thought the Klapka all the more significant for being suppressed, and cunningly—may I for once say "camouflaged?"—under a seemingly innocent "K." If neither the first nor the third name of the celebrated writer rings "English"—"Klapka" suggests bombs, Bolshevism (fortunately not then invented) and anarchy. Not even in Mr. William le Queux's Nihilist novels could a name so annihilatingly-inimical to law and order be found as "Klapka." Small wonder that a summons was the result. I accompanied Mr. Jerome to the police court. We drove up in a dogcart with a groom perched up behind, and being taken for a couple of newly-appointed magistrates, were about to be shewn to a seat on the bench, until Jerome explained to the astonished usher that his place was "in the dock with the criminals."

Jerome's case came on first, and the constable told his story. And such a story! Hearing him one might have supposed that, until he came upon the scene, to seize the beast by the collar, a ferocious monster had been at large, unmuzzled, to the imminent danger of the public.

When the officer had ended his evidence, the presiding magistrate said to Jerome: "You have heard what the constable has told us. You admit, the Bench understands, to being owner of the dog. Have you anything to say upon the matter?"

"No, sir," said Jerome penitently, "I plead guilty, and throw myself upon the mercy of the court. It is quite true that I am the owner of two puppies, one of which got out and frightened your policeman."

"Puppies! puppies!" snapped the magistrate. "How old are they?"

"I can't say their age to a day, sir," replied Jerome conversationally, "but one is cutting its milk teeth, and we are bringing the other up with a bottle."

As Jerome was leaving the box, the magistrate remarked smilingly, "By the way, Mr. Jerome, this is not a case of 'Three Men in a Boat—to say nothing of the Dog,' is it?"

"No, sir," said Jerome, "it is a case of two puppies and a peeler, and if I wanted my life and property guarded, I'd rather trust the job to the puppies than to the peeler."

At lunch that day I told my fellow-guests the story. Jerome, cracking walnuts, said never a word until I had done. Then he looked up in his quiet way to say: "H'm! the next time I'm run in or locked up, I shan't take *you* with me to the trial. Why, you are a bigger liar than the policeman."

CHAPTER XVII

A MEREDITH-MEMORY

CHAPTER XVII

"I REMEMBER your words: 'Observation is the most enduring of the pleasures of life.'"

It is Diana of The Crossways who is speaking, and to Mr. Redworth; but as Meredith said exactly the same thing in a slightly shortened version: "Observation is the most lasting of our pleasures," to a woman friend of his and mine, he was speaking for himself as well as for Diana, when plumping for observation as the one pleasure which never palls. That being so, it may interest the reader if I recall an occasion when Meredith closely, coldly, almost cruelly "observed" a fellow-creature.

A woman novelist, of whom I will say no more than that her novels are "popular" in the very worst sense of the word, had the honour of being presented to Meredith, who, a very chevalier of courtesy and gallantry, was graciousness itself.

Shall I be believed when I tell the reader that she said with what perhaps she intended for engaging archness: "Ah, Mr. Meredith, you may write for fame, but my books *sell*"?

The incident—what amusement it must have afforded the author of *The Tragic Comedians, The Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit*—seems to me, in a literary sense, epic.

If there were a Jan Steen among us to-day, in what delightful Meredithian interpretation of the Comic Spirit would he not execute such a work? As the reader will remember, Jan Steen, who was not exactly a teetotaller, had a wife who was. Heine, who lodged at Leyden in the very house where the Jan Steens, had lived, tells us that, in order to revenge himself upon his wife for scolding him for drinking, Jan Steen painted her portrait in his great picture, *The Bean Feast.* But the merry rascal represented her not as she was, but with the eyes of a bacchante and hugging a huge wine-cup to her bosom, thus, as Heine says,

revenging himself for her naggings by sending " the frugally inclined and somewhat sullen housewife down to the remotest posterity as being tipsy."

Elsewhere, in a privately printed record, I have set down some impressions of Meredith's self. Perhaps I may be permitted to reproduce part of the passage here.

" His portraits—I had well-nigh written the word in the singular, for the one man, every aspect of whose face we all wish to know, is the one man who has most set his face against letting his face be known to us—give one no idea of his personality. They are likenesses it is true. The noble shaping and carriage of the head, the commanding presence, the stern beauty of the features, the touch of hauteur, and even of what I may paradoxically call ' gentle severity ' are all to be seen in his portraits. But compared with Mr. Meredith himself, the best of his portraits is but a beautiful mask. Rarely before have I seen a face at once so strong and so sensitive. It seemed carved in cold steel, but nerved like the nostrils of a racehorse. In moments of repose it struck me as strangely melancholy. Then something was said which brought back the smile—a smile which seemed caused by a light upon the face, rather than by the play of the features. The lines which an instant before had been set and severe were now all tenderness—stern tenderness, it is true—as of one who has infinite compassion for humanity, but in whose pity no element of weak laxity could enter. Judgment, self-control and humour, these are the characteristics which to me seemed most plainly written upon the face of George Meredith. Humour I take to be of the very essence of his being, humour which is touched with gaiety, and humour which deepens into sadness."

To return to the lady novelist.

For one instant Meredith flashed a glance at her, and there was a look in his eye, rather than face which, I should choose a pistol at four paces, but in another instant the look was gone, and Meredith was his courtly self again. When she went on (and to George Meredith !) to boast of her " sales " (the word suggests the drapery trade, but the only novel of the lady's which I have read seemed to me to trade chiefly in the undraped), he answered, smilingly but gravely, none the less : " Those fortunate authors whose works attain a great sale are to be

envied. There can be no more material and undeniable proof of a book's success than a thumping cheque."

" Yes," supplemented the lady, who combined trustful, dark eyes and a dark skin, with anything but trustful golden hair of the lightest possible and just then most fashionable shade, " and when I tell you the sum they paid me down in advance of royalties, I am sure you won't believe it ! "

" On the contrary," said Meredith, in his most courtly manner —and I will go bail for the fact that he never let so much as an eye's flick rest upon the wonderful golden hair—" I could believe anything told me by a lady with such " (a moment's pause,) then " with such eyes as yours ! "

But there was a twinkle in his own eye, as if he were not ill-pleased that to his own satisfaction, and without the other's knowledge, he had thus delivered himself of his delayed, but deserved, repartee.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NIGHT KING EDWARD DIED: A MEMORY

CHAPTER XVIII

THAT the King was seriously ill was known on the morning of the day of his death ; that he was worse, we heard in the late afternoon ; but not until evening was it whispered that the end was near. Otherwise the dinner from which I was returning that night would not have been held. It was a ladies' night at a literary club of which I am a member, and had been arranged long beforehand. Hearing in the morning that the King was worse, a message was sent to Buckingham Palace, asking whether the gathering should be postponed. A reply came back : " By no means : His Majesty would not wish it," and though I make the statement with reservation, as a very proper reticence is maintained concerning the private life of royalty, I was given to understand at the time that the question had been submitted to the King himself, and that the command that the arrangements should stand came from His Majesty.

If that, as I have every reason to believe, were the case, the incident is so characteristic of King Edward, that it should be recorded and made known.

Time enough, should the shadow fall, and when it had fallen, for subjects of his to be plunged into mourning. Till then, and as the issues of life or death are in God's hand, and to human knowledge are uncertain, the King and father of his people, would have none to sorrow prematurely. Meanwhile, a dying man as he no doubt knew himself to be, even then his thought was only for others. Yet in death as in life, kings are, of all mortals, most lonely. We, his people, have our peers to whom to turn for human companionship in sorrow. But in all his kingdom, the King is without his peer. Even wife and child are in a sense his subjects, and, in his kingship, he stands aloof and alone.

If, as I say, it was by His Majesty's own wish that the

arrangements for the dinner of which I am writing should stand, that wish was probably the last of the sort that he ever expressed, just as our singing of the National Anthem that night was probably the last occasion that *God Save the King* was sung by an assembly of his subjects in the King's lifetime.

Late in the evening, the word went round, brought in by somebody from the palace, that His Majesty was very much worse, was, it was feared, dying. The company at once rose to disperse, but first of all to join in singing that great anthem, at the opening note of which—because both a hymn and a prayer—every soldier springs to attention, every loyal citizen stands with reverently bared head. Remembering that in the most momentous crises in our history, that hymn-prayer has been the expression not only of loyalty to a loved sovereign, but also of the fact that the nation's first trust is in God; remembering that Englishmen, even Englishwomen, have faced death with that hymn on their lips; that British ships have gone down with British sailors and soldiers drawn up as on parade ground at attention to the singing of that hymn—remembering all this, one fails to understand how any loyal Briton can hear that stately anthem of sacred memories unmoved, even on ordinary occasions.

Of what the hymn meant to us that night, as we stood heavy of heart with bowed heads, some with tears in our eyes, I will not attempt to write.

Very quietly, almost silently, the company dispersed, but though so dark a shadow had fallen upon us, my duties as a host were not ended. One of my woman-guests, and I, had promised —the arrangement had been made before the King's illness had taken a serious turn—to go from the dinner to a friend's house in Buckingham Gate, where Harry Irving was to join us for a late supper. Some explanation why we did not propose to stay to sup was due to our hostess, so I suggested that my woman-guest and I should motor to Buckingham Gate, should tell our hostess of the grave news, and that I should escort my guest to her home near by.

We had barely arrived at the house before Harry Irving, evidently very deeply distressed, was shewn into the room. He had profound regard for King Edward whom he knew well, and from whom he had received more than one mark of royal favour. Very quietly, but without any greeting, Irving said to

our hostess, " I have come direct from the palace. It is not known outside yet, but the King is dead."

Very little more was said, and except to drop my guest at her door, I motored straight to the Savage Club where I was sleeping that night. The news had not then come through, but was not unexpected, for I remember that, as I walked up the stairs, the stillness of that generally lively and sometimes noisy home of Bohemianism was uncanny. No peal of laughter nor clinking of glasses came from the lounge at the top of the landing, no faint click of ivory ball against ivory ball filtered downstairs with the opening of the door of the billiard-room above ; and except for the fact that, from the large room overlooking the Embankment, the sound of subdued voices was to be heard, I should have thought the club-house to be empty.

Almost as I entered, a member of the committee came quietly in from the telephone to say : " Brother Savages, it is as we feared. With the utmost grief I have to say that word has just come through that His Majesty King Edward, our one-time well-beloved Brother Savage, is dead."

Instantly every member present rose, to stand with bowed head. Then " God Save the King ! " someone said ; and with deep feeling " God Save the King ! " was echoed by all, for His Majesty King George had, until that evening, when, on coming to the Throne his membership automatically ceased, been a member of the club, and not very long before had been in the chair at a dinner.

The next morning I went to hear the Death of King Edward and the Accession of King George officially proclaimed by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal, at Saint James's Palace.

When I reached the palace, the ceremony had commenced ; and rather than try to wedge my way in among the thronging thousands in front of the palace, I stayed where I was on the fringe of the crowd, which overflowed towards the park. Those of us thereabouts were unfortunately placed, for a Red Flag agitator kept up, in a raucous voice, a running fire of comment, in which he expressed himself derisively not only about the ceremony we were attending (that did not greatly trouble us), but (and this did) about King George of whom he used foul and offensive language.

A murmur of the heartiest acquiescence was general when

someone said : " If you do not approve of the purpose for which we are here, why did you not keep away ? "

" Mind your own —— business," replied the fellow. " I have as much right to be here as you." Then he went on to make gross and disgusting remarks against certain members of the Royal Family.

" Look here ! " said the other. " You have no doubt a right to hold the opinions you do, but if you wish to express them, we shall be obliged if you will choose some other time and place. Those of us here are loyal subjects of His Majesty, assembled for a loyal purpose, and . . . "

" To hell with the Royal Family ! " interrupted the agitator. " It is a free country, and I shall —— well say what I —— well like."

" No, you won't," said the other. " I give you fair warning. We want no brawling or disturbance on so solemn an occasion as this, but we are here to show honour to our dead king, and our loyalty to His present Majesty, and . . . "

" D—— the dead king, and the living one, too ! " shouted the agitator.

Then things happened—I am recording only actual happenings here—for without another word the man who had protested struck. What strength was in the blow only the gentleman who acknowledged receipt of the same by promptly going to grass can say. All I know is that the fellow's words were warm upon his lips, and his feet upon the ground one second, and that the next second he was taking astronomical observations—seeing stars probably—upon his back. I know, too, that the man who had struck the blow was staring stupidly, as if surprised, at the bruised knuckles which obtruded from a right-hand glove that was split right across.

Heavily the other man rose, and I expected that he would make—for he was no weakling—a mad rush at his assailant. Instead, not, I think, because he was a coward, for he had a strong chin and a grimly-set mouth, but because he was still dazed by the blow, he stood swaying unsteadily on his feet, looking around him foolishly, while his hand went up gingerly to the side of his jaw where a red and livid lump was to be seen of all. Perhaps, too, the cries of " Serve him right ! " " The blackguard got what he deserved," and even of " Well done,

sir!" to his assailant, upon whose arm a gentle-faced woman laid a hand to say, "It is intolerable that loyal subjects should have to listen to such language, at this time of all others. Yours was the only way to silence his foul tongue. Thank you, for us women!" warned the fellow that public feeling was against him.

Then a policeman pushed his way towards the centre of the group, and the man who had struck the blow looked uneasy. To be summoned for brawling is not pleasant, especially as some uncharitable folk attribute everything of the sort to a drinking bout. But he took what was no doubt the only right course. "It was I who struck this man, officer," he said. "He insisted, against the wish of all here, in publicly reviling His Majesty. When I warned him to desist, he used such disgusting language about King George and King Edward that I knocked him down. I am deeply sorry to have caused a breach of the peace, but I express no regret for the blow, and, in the same circumstances, should do the same again. Here is my card with my name and address. I am prepared to take the consequences."

The policeman made no reply, but pushed past the speaker to where the other man was standing.

"I wasn't so far off that I didn't hear what you said," he remarked, hustling the fellow through and out of the crowd. "You be off."

Nothing loth, the man, still fingering the livid and unholy lump on his jaw, slunk away; while, from the courtyard of the palace, rang out the words: "God Save the King!" followed by a fanfare of trumpets, and "God Save the King!" was the heartfelt cry of us all.

From Saint James's I went straight to the railway station, and, catching an express, was soon at my South-Coast home and away out on the hills for a walk.

Three miles or more from the town, from the direction of which the wind was blowing, I stopped short, my ear arrested suddenly by strains of music borne faintly upon the breeze. The Death of His Majesty King Edward and the Accession of His Majesty King George were, I assumed, being formally proclaimed by the mayor. And I remember that, being then in the Service, on recognising that the music to which I was listening was the opening bar of *God Save the King*—so strong is

the force of habit, that I came instantly, instinctively, automatically, to "attention."

Except for the fact that the music should have travelled so far as to be plainly discernible, there was nothing remarkable in the incident, and but for the strain of the previous day, and the shock of the King's unexpected death, I should not have been thus moved. But accustomed as I had always been to hearing *God Save the King* when others, sometimes in great numbers, were present — to hear the anthem thus for the first time in my life, alone (on my right, the sea ; on my left, the great hills ; around me, the wheeling gulls ; above me, the skylark), affected me strangely.

In imagination, I saw what I supposed was happening whence the music came. I saw the chief magistrate, arrayed in robes of office, the civic dignitaries and officials, the mace-bearer, the awed and massed assembly of the people, my fellow-townsmen and townswomen, crowding and pressing in to hear the Proclamation, some silently and unable to repress their emotion at thought of the loved monarch who lay dead ; others—the younger, because more light at heart : the older, because under reaction, and perhaps to hide their deeper feelings—cheering loyally for the King whose accession was being proclaimed. It is true that no sound of cheering was distinguishable ; but that, in my far place, miles away, I should thus hear the National Anthem, and should take part, as it were, with my fellows in their sorrowing and rejoicing, made me feel as if I were already a disembodied spirit, aware of what was happening, yet strangely cut-off from the world of living women and men.

I had stood the night before, heavy of heart, to join in the National Anthem when it was played as King Edward lay dying ; I had at other times heard the hymn rendered by massed bands of the Guards, King Edward himself present on horseback, at the Trooping of the Colours ; and I have heard great music, sometimes on memorable occasions, in this and other countries. But I have never heard such far-away and fairy music (as from another world) as when the strains of *God Save the King* were faintly borne to me upon the breeze on the hillside that afternoon following King Edward's death.

And remembering the darkened front of Buckingham Palace as I had passed by the previous evening ; seeing, in imagination,

the immobile and marble-cold face of the dead monarch ; remembering how heavy would be the burden which our young and untried King would have to bear—and never has King of England borne heavier burden, and borne that burden more nobly than King George—remembering all this, and alone out there on that Sussex hillside, I joined as never before in the fervent and heartfelt prayer, *GOD SAVE THE KING.*

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN MR. BIRRELL WAS "BORED"

(TOLD BY THE "BORE")

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN, a shy and diffident young man, I first met the Right Honourable Augustine Birrell, I stood in no little awe of him, perhaps because I imagined that in the company of someone of the "legal" temperament (and being non-legal of temperament myself) I should feel ill at ease. Possibly the fault was partly Mr. Birrell's, for did he not alarm the young, the shy, and the diffident by writing of "the forbidding accents of the lawyer"? —whereas lawyers, more often than not, are courtly, considerate and, so far from being "forbidding," whether in accents or in anything else, I have found them to be quite the reverse. Forbidding in appearance they certainly are not. Studying the features—clear cut as a cameo, and often seeming to bespeak high breeding as well as high thought—of the bewigged barristers in a Court of Law, I coined a word, compounded of "barrister" and "aristocrat," to describe the type, "barristercrat."

So far from himself being forbidding in appearance, Mr. Birrell, broad-browed—so broad-browed that I think of him as Beethoven with a good-tempered, if shrewd, instead of a shrewish mouth; as Beethoven with a whimsical smile instead of a lowering scowl—and, in fact, as Benignity itself in a morning-coat and on two legs.

Every time I meet him and mark how, with the silvering of his hair, he comes more and more to resemble Thackeray who, because caustic of tongue and pen and ready of wit, as Mr. Birrell himself can be, was by foolish folk accounted cynical, whereas Thackeray was in reality the tenderest-hearted of men —I picture Benignity to myself, just as we picture Truth blinded, as big-browed, burly of frame, silverhaired and bespectacled.

There is as little of "the forbidding accents of the lawyer" about Mr. Birrell as there is (again I quote himself) of the "ugly pedantry of the bookman." The unkindest word that can be said of him is that he is a Privy Councillor, and that word also was said by himself. In *Res Judicatae* he imagines Cardinal Newman as leading "the secular life and adopting a Parliamentary career," and Mr. Birrell goes on to say: "The pompous high-placed imbecile mouthing his platitudes, the windy sophister with his oven full of half-baked thoughts, the ill-bred rhetorician with his tawdry aphorisms, the heartless hate-producing satirist, would have gone down before his sword and spear. But God was merciful to these sinners: Newman became a priest, and they Privy Councillors."

"When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think that I should live till I were married," are the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Benedict. I will not put, into Mr. Birrell's mouth, the words he possibly said of himself, when confronted, after he had become Privy Councillor, with this passage from his earlier writings.

My first meeting with Mr. Birrell was at a dinner, where I was seated opposite to him. What happened I pass over, except to say that if something of the awe in which I held him remained, my alarm, at least, was soon dispelled. Perhaps the fact that I had the good fortune to know his father-in-law, Mr. Frederick Locker, afterwards Locker-Lampson, by affording a subject for conversation, in which we were both interested, made me forget my nervousness. Perhaps as a lawyer, Mr. Birrell is an adept no less in drawing out a shy if friendly witness, than in luring a hostile witness to destruction. In any case, he at once led me to talk, by a question or two concerning when I had last seen Mr. Locker; and for a shy and nervous man, the launching of his craft on the waters of conversation is everything. If his boat survives the first five minutes without being swamped, he can manage to keep afloat for the remainder of the enterprise. Writing to me recently about a book of his own penning, *Frederick Locker-Lampson: a Character Sketch*, Mr. Birrell said: "I was especially glad to hear that *you* liked the book, for it was only intended to please those who loved or liked the man

with whose character it deals. As for the rest of mankind—let them go hang."

Even in those days, and before I knew him well, I had come to love Frederick Locker, seeing which—instead of the pursed lips, the intent look from under the brows and over the spectacles, with which I had once seen Mr. Birrell regard a stranger who accosted him in the law courts—the author of *Obiter Dicta* listened with an occasional nod, if also with a half-whimsical, half-quizzical, but always friendly smile playing about the corners of his mouth and behind his spectacles, to what I had to say of Mr. Locker.

The next morning I encountered Mr. Birrell in the Temple Gardens (on his way probably to his chambers), and when he hailed me and halted, his friendliness of the preceding night made me, for a shy man, incontinently bold. I had read not once but many times everything that Augustine Birrell (his friends speak of him as Austin) had written. My first attempts in prose were all in essay form, and would never have been written but for *Obiter Dicta*. After we had exchanged a few words about the overnight dinner, I said:

"Do you know, Mr. Birrell, that you have much to answer for? I read your *Obiter Dicta* when it was first published by Eliott Stock. I have read it a score of times since, and was so influenced by it that I said to myself . . ."

Already badly bored, Mr. Birrell abruptly finished my sentence for me. "You said to yourself," he broke in testily, "that you could write a hanged sight better book."

Without another word he turned and walked off at a great rate. When he was about the length of a cricket pitch away, perhaps relenting, he stopped, and threw at me, growled at me, bearwise (a loud growl: I hesitate to call it a roar) over his disappearing shoulder: "So you could! So you could! Goodbye"—and was gone.

Were it possible to reproduce Mr. Birrell's bluff, gruff, but genial bearing, the bored but humoursome way in which he spoke, and then broke off to walk on and to throw the words, "So you could! So you could!" over his shoulder, the incident would be better worth the telling. I set it down here, not so

far as I figure (a sorry figure) in it, but as illustrating how deft is the author of *Obiter Dicta* in the art of suppressing a bore.

In his time Mr. Birrell has played many parts—barrister and K.C., essayist, biographer and bookman, after dinner speaker, President of the Board of Education, and Secretary of State for Ireland. Of his many-sidedness as Birrell the lawyer, Birrell the educationalist, and Birrell the Cabinet Minister, I have nothing to say except that it is not such many-sidedness as that of which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once spoke.

"I have to take the chair at a dinner to Dr. Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London," he said, "and have never handled a bishop before—they are a bit out of my line. Sitting by and talking to a man, as his host, for a whole evening, conversation is helped if one knows something about him. You have met Creighton, I think. What sort of a man is he?"

"A great scholar and historian—he is editor of the *English Historical Review*—for one thing," I said. "Than Swinburne, no one knows Elizabethan literature better, and he once said to me that Mandell Creighton's *Life of Queen Elizabeth* is the finest book on the subject ever written. Then there is Creighton the preacher. When he is in the pulpit at Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, you will see statesmen, men of science, and eminent men of all sorts among the congregation. About Creighton the courtier and diplomat, I speak only from hearsay, but I am told he was a brilliant success, when, in some official rôle, he represented the Court of Saint James at the wedding of the Czar. In fact, he is a many-sided man."

"Thank you very much," said Doyle. Then, shaking his burly shoulders and in his somewhat throaty voice, he added, "The more sides a man has, the better, so long as he puts no 'side' on."

His many-sidedness notwithstanding, Mr. Birrell, so far from being given to "side," meets men of all classes, high and low, rich or poor, the failures among his own craft, no less than the famous, with equal and native good-humour, and a friendly, almost

benevolent frankness—excepting always, of course, a bore, whom, as I have shewn, he can, in his own whimsical way, suppress. One story told of him should, I think, be attributed to someone else.

Birrell, as the yarn goes, was walking down Fleet Street with a friend. Approaching them, on the opposite pavement, was a man wearing a slouch hat with a high, cone-shaped crown, a wide brim that rolled up slightly on one side and in front, and down on the other. Picturesquely flung back from his shoulders was a cape which revealed a mahogany-coloured velvet jacket, dyed apparently to match the wearer's mahogany-coloured hair, that was disposed, as in the pictures of Shakespeare, about his ears and flopped over his coat-collar. He had an open Shakespeare collar, a flowing tie, and his beard was cut to a point, as shewn in the portraits of Shakespeare.

"Is not that Hall Caine on the other side of the road?" Birrell is alleged to have asked, peering short-sightedly through his spectacles.

"No," said the other, himself a Fleet Street man, "that is a well-known figure in Fleet Street, and one of the astutest advertising agents in the country."

"Exactly!—are you sure it is *not* Hall Caine?" is supposed to have been Mr. Birrell's reply.

Oscar Wilde once told me the same story, the only difference being that he filled the rôle attributed to Mr. Birrell, and that his reply, when told that the man in question was "one of the astutest advertising agents in the country," was: "What else is Hall Caine?"

I do not contend that Wilde was above adapting, conveying, or plagiarising other men's words and passing them off as his own, but I heard the yarn from him years before I heard the words attributed to Mr. Birrell, and I believe that Wilde spoke them. They sound much more like a saying by the hero of Mr. R. S. Hichen's *Green Carnation* (that Oscarnation of Wilde in a novel) than by the Augustine, now said to be engaged in writing Recollections for which he is scarcely likely to choose the title "Confessions." Internal evidence that Wilde was the speaker is supplied by the fact that at Sir Hall Caine he frequently levelled a shaft, whereas I do not recall so much as a mention of

the author of *The Manxman* by Mr. Birrell. The story was told me of Birrell at a dinner of the Authors' Society at which Sir Hall Caine was not present. Mr. Birrell had just been presented to a lady-novelist, widely trumpeted (some said self-trumpeted) as with " the largest circulation," and by the semi-bored but grimly-amused expression on his face, while the lady dilated on the circulation of her novels, I did not gather that he was at one with the public in being attracted, either to a book or to its author, on the score of its circulation ; or that the fact of a book having a large, or no circulation at all, interested him in the least. Indeed, on that occasion, he looked, as he does not at other times, the lawyer, his jaw hardening, as if, except for the fact that personally he did not care one straw, he was disposed —were she in the witness-box, and he, cross-examining counsel— to dispute, not only any certificate she might "put in " as evidence to her sales, but also any claim to a place in literature which she might found on the said sales.

If, of Birrell the lawyer, and Birrell the statesman, I know nothing, I have at least the fortune to know Birrell the essayist and the after-dinner speaker. He is not often to be heard to-day, for as he wrote me last summer : " You cannot live a more out-of-the-way life than I now do." When he emerges from his seclusion, it is not to come into the limelight, for of all public men, most of all, politicians, none abhors limelighting—and I need scarcely add " Limehousing "—more whole-heartedly than he, but to assist some good cause or to pay a tribute to an old friend. Such an old friend of his, and mine, is John Henderson, the secretary of the National Liberal and honorary secretary of the Omar Khayyâm Clubs. Henderson and Birrell, known more to his friends and fellow-clubmen than to the outside public, as is the former, and known to all the world as is the latter, have in common, apart from all questions of intellectual ability, the unassuming bearing, the forthrightness in good fellowship which come only of natural kindliness of heart and cannot be forced or assumed ; and they have also a certain sterling sincerity which commands not only the respect but the affection of their friends.

Some six months ago, a few of John Henderson's old associates presented him with a token of their regard at a gathering

where Birrell spoke. Had it been a limelight function, to be reported (with a portrait) in the papers, I suspect that, only in the rays of a reading-lamp, or possibly a nightlight, would Mr. Birrell's features have been illuminated that evening. Had it been a snap division in the House, engineered in the interests of party politics, I think it likely that the Whips would have needed a neck-encircling lasso, long enough to have been thrown from Westminster to Chelsea, to have dragged him into the Lobby. But to do honour to an old friend who, all his life had shunned not sought honours, was a different matter. Mr. Birrell spoke, I need not say with the humour which is also good-humoured, for your true humorist is humorous by nature, but never by ill-nature. He spoke with all and more than the old "birrelliance," but with a depth of feeling which he rarely betrays, and with such simple dignity as to make the speech memorable. "Beautiful" is not the word I should use of any other speech I have heard from him, but beautiful, in the sense that certain of Burns' homeliest songs are beautiful, that speech very markedly was. It was the homeliest word that any of us had ever heard from his lips. Perhaps it was the word of a man who feels that he grows old, is ending his public life, and is not likely to make many more speeches of the sort, and perhaps the same thought was present in the minds of his hearers, and lent something of pathos to what he said, when—the last man in England to wear his heart upon his sleeve—he could not, for all his banter and drollery, quite conceal the fact that a very human and kindly heart was beating under his vest. For once I had to ask myself whether a certain shining, not entirely to be hidden, in the eyes of two or three present, was all attributable to delighted laughter at a Birrellism—or to something else.

Years ago I lectured at Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, of which Mr. Birrell's father was, at one time, minister. In the ante-room or vestry hung a life-sized portrait of the Rev. Charles Birrell. He was a Nonconformist, a Dissenter, which I am not, though I do not forget George Meredith's saying that "Dissent rings out finely." Meredith was not, of course, speaking of dissent in connection with the churches, but within my lifetime of some sixty years I do not know where to look for a nobler type of Christian manhood, of Christian intellect, and of Christian

character, than was to be found among some of the great preachers of Charles Birrell's generation. Two, at least, George MacDonald and John Pulsford, both of whom I heard preach in Nonconformist Chapels, I count among the profoundest spiritual teachers of their time.

Twice only have I seen Augustine Birrell when he was manifestly not all unmoved—at the funeral of his father-in-law, Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, and when he spoke of his old friend John Henderson. But on each occasion, if only then, the likeness to his father was remarkable. Sitting, as I was, nearly opposite to him on the latter occasion, I seemed once again to be waiting, not without trepidation, for the clock to strike eight in the vestry of Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, and looking, with the intentness which comes with moments of nervous tension, at the gold-framed painting of Birrell's father upon the vestry wall. I should be laughed at, not that it would matter, were I to ask whether, in the Cabinet Minister—a minister who would have taken high rank in the churches was lost ? But those who think of Mr. Birrell as an essayist of the school of Matthew Arnold—as a kindlier Arnold, with the light touch and the genial humour which Arnold lacked ; for there is only one Arnold to some of us, and that is the poet—are, if I mistake not, wide of the mark. Arnold, like Mr. Edmund Gosse, was always something of a sceptic, but, again like Mr. Gosse, was too well mannered to sneer or to scoff. Even when writing of so holy a spirit as Newman, so passionate a believer as Cowper (both hymn writers), Mr. Birrell studiously refrains from committing himself to a word in indication of his own religious or non-religious views. About Newman and Cowper as poets, bookmen, letter-writers and as themselves, he has many brilliantly illuminating comments to make ; but of those two very human fellow-creatures he writes as one who is himself very human as well as a man of letters and of the world. Of other-worldly things he has never a word to say.

For the sake of those professional teachers and leaders of religion who, accidentally or intentionally, are to be found on the spot where the limelight (abhorred of Mr. Birrell) focuses, it is well that it is so. In a company, we are told, to beware of the silent man. Should so keen an observer, so shrewd a judge, who, if

he must speak out, is too sterling-honest and sincere to speak other than, and stoutly to stand by, the truth, break his self-imposed vow of silence, scathing things might be said—never of " pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father "—but of the this-worldliness, the inconsistency, uncharitableness, and the spiritual smallness of some of those who elect to lead and to enlighten others in the spiritual life. As studiously indifferent to the approbation of those on his own side in politics, as to the opprobrium of those on the other side, and with no small contempt for mob-clamour, Mr. Birrell maintains as enigmatically philosophic a front when out of office, and so presumably out of public favour, as when in office and power. Detesting sentimentality and expansiveness, he so effectually disguises his deeper feelings that he might be supposed by some persons to have none; just as, by his maintained silence upon the subject, he might by other persons be supposed to have no religious beliefs. In either case, and speaking as one who makes no claim to be in his confidence, or to write with more than ordinary knowledge, I am strongly of opinion that those who so suppose are mistaken.

From this, as it were, cryptic aspect and attitude of Mr. Birrell's personality, I turn to speak of him as an after-dinner speaker. He can, on occasion, be pungent, pawky (as becomes a Scot), witty and whimsical, with quaint quips and turns of speech, illuminated by the flashlight of fresh, apt, but always unexpected quotation. Of Lord Rosebery, Mr. T. W. H. Crosland, author of *The Unspeakable Scot*, once said (I admit the smartness but strenuously deny the truth of the saying) that he was " half-Scotch and half-soda."

Were I to use of Mr. Birrell the figurative language used by Mr. Crosland of Lord Rosebery, I should say that, as an after-dinner speaker, he is " all champagne—and of the best and dryest brand." But just as champagne must be drunk sparkling and while fresh from the bottle, so Mr. Birrell's after-dinner speeches must come direct from Mr. Birrell. As exhilarating and effervescing as champagne—like champagne, the flavour and the sparkle are evanescent. To record Mr. Birrell's words in cold print long after they are spoken is as if one offered a guest stale champagne, out of which the soul and the sparkle have

evaporated. The occasional Pucklike look of whimsicality upon his face, the portentous pursing of his lips, the magisterial knitting of the brows, as if speaking his most serious word of all, when that word is his most frivolous and irresponsible; the bland and childlike assumption of innocent inoffensiveness, when most "on the offensive" and when speaking the unkindest word of all, the *coup de grâce* which leaves the enemy writhing under the words as under a rapier-thrust—all these, and the surprised almost pained expression with which he looks around upon the company, as if wondering what on earth there was in anything he had said at which to laugh, are lost upon those who do no more than read about Mr. Birrell as an after-dinner speaker.

I recall a speech of his which began, seemingly, on as high a note as Matthew Arnold's sonnet, *East London*, in which we read that, coming through Bethnal Green,

> I met a preacher there I knew, and said,
> "Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in these scenes?"

Similarly, Mr. Birrell told us how, on his way to the dinner, he had passed through a district so squalid as to depress his sensitive spirits correspondingly. Pondering how such things could be, he had been newly afflicted and perplexed in mind to read on the placard of an evening paper: "Suicide of a Mayor."

"Suicide of a Mayor!" repeated Mr. Birrell blankly, his voice curving as he spoke into a vocal note of interrogation, his face elongating into a human note of exclamation, as if the possibility of a mayor—cocked-hatted, crimson-robed, a gold chain of office around his neck, attended by an obsequious beadle, and elevated at last to the giddiest height of civic ambition—committing suicide was so utterly incongruous and so irreconcilable with our presupposed conception of mayoral dignity and importance, as to pass the bounds of human comprehension.

Told as I tell it the thing seems unworthy of repetition. Only were it possible to project upon the page on which these words are printed, as pictures are projected upon a cinema screen, Mr. Birrell's face as he spoke, could the reader understand the situation. Then he turned to other matters. He had to propose the toast of the guests among whom were Lord Wolseley, Mr. Asquith

and other persons of eminence. He said that when he was at Cambridge he had an intimate friend whom since their Varsity days he had never encountered.

"I met him," Mr. Birrell went on, "the other night at a great ecclesiastical function. An undergraduate when I saw him last, he is now a full-fledged bishop, and upon him, as upon me to-night, had fallen the honour of proposing the toast of 'The Guests,' among whom, in his case, were such dignitaries as the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Going into the hall to our place on the platform, he took my arm as in our undergraduate days, and speaking not as the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop, but only as my old college chum, he whispered: 'I say, Birrell, old chap, I'm not the Johnny for the job.'" Then, premising that neither was he, Mr. Birrell, the Johnny for the job of proposing the toast of such distinguished guests as he saw before him, Birrell disproved his own words by proposing the toast in a speech in his best vein.

At a club dinner when the name of each member present and the name of each member's guest were printed on a plan of the tables, one name only was unspecified. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had either forgotten to notify the name of his guest, or had done so too late for inclusion. Hence, against the seat which the unnamed visitor was to occupy, appeared the words: "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's guest." When Birrell was called upon to speak, he rose with unusual gravity of manner. Some of us had, on other occasions, seen him stand as jovial and genial-eyed as a bespectacled and unfrocked Friar Tuck, to cast a roving, almost a rollicking glance around the company whom he was about to address. On this occasion he seemed to rise unwillingly, and stood there, his jaw so thrust forward as to give him a heavy-jowled appearance, his brows knitted, and his eyes set as if in deep and uneasy thought. He stood there so long silent, as if not knowing how or where to begin, that my guest who had never heard Birrell before whispered: "Is he nervous when he gets upon his legs?"

Here I may interpolate that though nervous in the sense of "stage fright," I do not think Mr. Birrell ever is, he is probably more highly strung when speaking than his hearers suppose.

Once when I sat beside him at a rather closely-packed table,

as he rose to speak I pushed back my chair to allow him greater freedom. Most speakers dislike being crowded when on their legs. Some—Mr. Lloyd George is one—are given to gesture and to arm play. When putting a " poser " the ex-Prime Minister sometimes steps back a pace and so away from those sitting beside him on the platform as if to say : " I take full responsibility for this ! " and to draw all eyes upon himself, as well as himself to see everyone present. Then, as if, having nothing to conceal, and so willing to submit himself to every eye, he steps forward again when propounding the answer to the said poser.

Sitting no longer beside, but directly behind Mr. Birrell, on the evening of which I write, I observed that his hands—clasped for the most part behind him—were working and interworking nervously, and—or so it seemed to me—that his knees were trembling.

To the enemy—his audience—he presented a front as unbroken by the least sign of nervousness as a British square. Only by meanly, if unwittingly, as in my case, taking observations from the rear, could the keenest of intelligence officers have acquainted himself with the fact that nerve strain of any sort there was. Yet horribly nervous as I always am when addressing an audience, I confess to being so small of nature as to have been not a little consoled by thus learning that one of the coolest and most self-possessed of public speakers, a barrister, and a Member of Parliament, to boot, and so with lifelong practice and proficiency in addressing audiences of all sorts, shared something of my nervous tension.

When I was asked : " Is he nervous when he gets upon his legs ? " I replied, perhaps because I was taking only front-line observations : " He does not strike me as nervous. He is probably thinking out on his legs, instead of beforehand, what he is going to say. He once tacitly admitted to preparing his speeches. When Minister of Education, he told the House that, getting up a speech on the subject while walking in Battersea Park, the train of his thought was thrown off the rails by the very future citizens with whose education his speech was concerned. He said that the number of small boys who appeared to have engagements of such pressing importance that it was imperative they should know " the right time " was amazing.

Perhaps something that one of the previous speakers said suggested a point with which Birrell wishes to deal, and perhaps, to his prepared speech, he is adding an impromptu."

Holding up the plan of the tables, and pointing to the unspecified name, he said sternly: "I demand to know, and my fellow-members, when they hear what I have to say, will, I believe, also demand to know, who is the person whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has thought fit to bring among us to-night, not openly, as in accordance with the honoured traditions of this club, but cunningly smuggled in as 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's guest.' Sir Arthur hoped, no doubt, that we should unsuspectingly take for granted the fact that his guest is some fellow-author or fellow-medico, whose acceptance of Sir Arthur's invitation arrived too late for the name to be printed on the list of guests. *But is he?*"

Then in words that cleverly parodied Sir Arthur's own style in his stories about the detection of crime by the deductive method, Birrell went on:

"This man is none other than Sherlock Holmes, smuggled in among us under the seemingly innocent disguise of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's guest. *And for what purpose?*"

He paused to look darkly around, and then with well-feigned agitation and alarm, continued:

"Have you, have I, nothing in our past, perhaps in our far-back youth, which we would willingly forget, which we would not shrink to see brought into the full light of day? Standing here before you, your fellow-sinner, I dare not say as much. This man, this Sherlock Holmes is here to-night to lure us unsuspectingly to talk—perhaps when in our cups—in the hope that we may drop something which will afford him a clue to ferret out and to lay bare the dark and guilty secrets of our past, perhaps the dark and guilty double-life which, speaking as a lawyer, and judging by certain faces that I see around me, some of us here are leading. Then, with the assistance of his accomplice, Doyle, this man, Sherlock Holmes, proposes to publish the awful facts to the world in the pages of the *Strand Magazine*."

Concerning one dark and guilty secret in my own past, I am not quite sure whether Mr. Birrell can or cannot be accounted an accomplice, in the sense of being an accessory after the fact.

I had been invited to dine with the Eighty Club, of which, by reason of my own political views, I was not, nor am, a member. The club is so named from the year in which it was founded, not because the number of members is restricted to eighty. Were that so, and were I ever to change my political views and to seek election, what I am now about to relate would probably secure me—a record in blackballing—the casting of every vote against my election. Lord Rosebery, then Prime Minister, was to make an important declaration of policy, to hear which I came up from the country in the morning, bringing my dress-clothes in my bag. Changing into war paint (appropriately at the Savage Club) I packed my day-clothes into the bag, which, as I was returning to the country the same night, I took with me to the Holborn Restaurant, in the large upstairs dining-hall of which dinner was laid.

Of the dinner and of the speeches, Lord Rosebery's being a great, almost a historic pronouncement, I say nothing here, but pass on to the evening's end. The clock pointed to eleven, and as the company had risen from the tables, though many lingered for the chance of a word with the Prime Minister, or to chat together in groups, I took the opportunity to slip away to catch my train. After retrieving my bag from the cloak-room, I had, on my way out, to pass the bottom of the stairs leading to the dining-hall. Mr. Birrell was standing at the stair-top, and, catching sight of me, he called my name, adding : " Come up and speak to my wife."

Mrs. Birrell, I need scarcely remind the reader, was the daughter of Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, author of *London Lyrics*, of whom I have already spoken, and of his first wife, Lady Charlotte, sister of Lady Augusta Bruce, who afterward became the wife of Dean Stanley. Mrs. Birrell's first husband was Lionel Tennyson, after whose death she married the author of *Obiter Dicta*. When Lionel Tennyson and Miss Locker became engaged, Lord Tennyson wrote to the Duke of Argyll, " Tell the duchess, if she do not know, that Lionel, my youngest son, is engaged to Miss Eleanor Locker, who is half a Bruce and half a London Lyric. The Queen has been most kind about it." The marriage was celebrated in Westminster Abbey, and among those present were three such remarkable men as Tennyson, Gladstone, and the Duke of Argyll.

The Eighty Club dinner at the Holborn Restaurant numbered some hundreds of guests, and I had neither seen Mrs. Birrell, nor was aware that she was present. But there was no more distinguished, accomplished, gifted and gracious woman-personality in England than she, and, even hurriedly, to proffer my homage, and to exchange a few words with her, was an opportunity not to be lost.

Bag in hand I reclimbed the stairs to where, just outside the door of the dining-hall, Mr. and Mrs. Birrell were standing. To shake hands with them—I had my hat in my left hand—I set down the bag. We chatted, perhaps for half a minute, and I had already made my adieux, and was about to snatch up my belongings and bolt for my train when Lord Rosebery came out of the door from the dining-hall. He had placed his hand on the arm of Mr., now Sir William Watson, whom he was meeting for the first time; and was so animatedly engaged in conversation with the poet that, to my horror, he tripped over my bag, which he had not seen, and was within an ace of pitching head first down the stairs, perhaps to his serious injury.

Small wonder that he was indignant, and demanded to know whose was the bag? Conscience told me that I should say "Mine," should tender my humblest apologies, should, figuratively, exchange festive attire for the penitent sheet, and stand forth, candle in hand, self-confessed as a sinner, or what is less forgivable, a careless and clumsy clown.

Moral cowardice trying to pass itself off for social tact, whispered: "It will be less unpleasant for everybody if you say nothing. Why make 'a scene'—always in bad 'form'—now that the threatened mischief has been happily averted? Even when arresting a prisoner, the police warn him that he is not called upon to say anything to incriminate himself. Had you not been called back when starting, bag in hand, to catch your train, the thing would never have happened—which reminds me, also, to warn you that in this matter you have no option. You must bow to the necessity which knows no law. To explain and adequately to apologise will take time, and meanwhile you will miss your only train home."

This last and unanswerable argument settled matters. Conscience herself threw down her brief. Even for the easing of

the guiltiest and most hardened conscience, the trains on the London, Brighton, and South-Coast Railway refuse to wait.

What was to be done ? Retreat honourably from a menaced position, a soldier can, but not by leaving his guns and ammunition column, as represented by my bag, in the hands of the enemy, nor was an ignominious flight to my liking. Altogether to keep silence—since for the immediate present I must remain where I was—seemed in accordance with tactics, but absolute silence might arouse the suspicion that I was the owner of the bag. To prevaricate or to equivocate I could not stoop. If I spoke at all, I must speak the truth—and did.

"There ought to be a chucker-out in this establishment," I said, "to deal, and by the scruff of his neck, with the fool who left that bag there."

I said more, and in the same strain, but, compared with which, Lord Rosebery's protest seemed so mild as to be almost a neglect of a public duty.

All the world knows that he is a great gentleman, as well as a great intellect. In his own charming way he made light of the matter, and, appeased by such fervour of zeal and anxiety for his safety, he bade me a smiling good night and disappeared down the stairs, feet foremost, instead of head first—no thanks to me—on his way to the cloak-room.

So lost to my surroundings by mortification was I that I did not and do not know whether Mr. Birrell was an eye-witness of what happened, or whether he had just missed it by turning back into the dining-room or departing by way of the stairs. But as soon as Lord Rosebery was safely round the corner I snatched up the offending bag and incontinently fled.

I tell the story here, not because there is anything humorous in a Prime Minister, who is also a peer of the realm, coming near to being pitched head first down stairs by such loutish carelessness as mine, but because of the sequel. The bag, over which Lord Rosebery came physically to grief, was what is known as "a Gladstone." Within a very short time of the happening, Lord Rosebery came politically to grief by reason of a certain, utterance by the very Mr. Gladstone whose name that particular kind of bag bore. What Mr. Gladstone then said I have heard described as "upsetting the Government's apple cart," and as

The Right Hon.
Augustine Birrell.

Mr. Clement
K. Shorter.

[*Facing p.* 288.

playing no small part in bringing about the downfall of Lord Rosebery and his Cabinet.

Thus are great events foreshadowed by the smallest of happenings, and that is why I ask whether it is possible that the subsequent uptripping of the then Prime Minister by words coming from an ex-Prime Minister may not have been presaged and symbolised by the uptripping of Lord Rosebery by my "Gladstone" bag?

CHAPTER XX

STEPHEN PHILLIPS, POET AND DRAMATIST, TELLS A "STORY"

(A Dinner with Royalty, and the Disaster which befell a Dress-tie)

CHAPTER XX

If it has not been my lot to be among the few privileged persons, the observed of all beholders, taking prominent part in a great national rite, nor to stand in the glare of the footlights, bowing the author's acknowledgments to the reception accorded to his play, mine, at least, has been the curious experience of being represented at the funeral of a great poet, and at the reception accorded to a dramatist at the end of his play—by my wardrobe, or by certain parts of my wardrobe.

A friend of mine who was one of the chief mourners at Tennyson's funeral, discovered, at the last moment, that he had no dark trousers suitable for wearing on such an occasion. He would have felt garbed, he rightly said, "like an undertaker"—to say nothing of the incongruity of wearing festive attire at a funeral—had he fallen back upon the black broadcloth breeches of his evening suit; and, in his extremity, he came to me for the loan of a pair of dark trousers.

When Stephen Phillips, the author of *Paolo and Francesca* produced by Sir George Alexander; of *Ulysses, Herod, Nero,* and other plays produced by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree; and of *The Sin of David* and *Armageddon* produced by Mr. H. B. Irving, came forward to take the "call" on the first night of one of the plays mentioned, he was wearing my dress-coat.

To lend a friend either cash or clothes in an emergency has this in common with kissing—that though it be done one does not "tell." Nor should I do so in the ordinary way. But I mention no name in one case, and, since Stephen Phillips died, unkinder things have been said of him than that he once wore somebody else's coat, so I go on with the story.

"That's an uncommonly well-cut coat of yours," he said, an evening or two before one of his first nights. "The new dress-suit I ordered came home the other day, and I am

discontented with it. It is much too late to get measured for another, but if there is a call for the author, and I have to come before the footlights, I shall feel uneasy in mine. What one wears in the daytime matters nothing, but to be immaculate—correct cut, and fitting the figure as yours does—in evening-dress is *de rigueur*. I think I must change my tailor and go to yours. We are very much of the same height and figure. Do you mind if I try your coat on to see whether it looks as well on me as on you ? "

He tried it on, and liked it better on himself than on me.

" Why not wear it ? " I said. " I am dining in a dinner-jacket at the club on your first night and "—to cut the story short, he accepted my offer ; so my dress-coat acknowledged the call on the dramatist's first night, just as my mourning trousers followed a great poet to his last resting-place.

Perhaps only by the trivial-minded could incidents so trivial be recorded, but as they constitute my only claim to participating (even if represented by no more than portions of my wardrobe) in great events, I record them here.

Then Phillips looked at me uneasily. He cared little whether his day-clothes were in or out of the fashion, but, even in day-clothes, he disliked anything which might be accounted not in " good form." Though never in the army, he was, for a time after leaving Cambridge, an army tutor, had many friends in the Service, and knew far more about military history and plans of campaigns than is known by some soldiers. Even on such minor matters as Dress Regulations, he was by no means ill-informed. Thus, when a battalion of Territorials was marching by in Review Order on an Empire Day Parade, Phillips instantly spotted an officer whose blue infantry breeches (a thin red stripe down the side of the leg) were strapped over ordinary toe-capped boots, instead of over Wellingtons, and Phillips shook his head gravely about it as " irregular." The phrase, " The thing isn't done," was often on his lips, and it was a phrase he would not have liked to hear used of his own dress.

" By the by," he continued, on the occasion when he borrowed my dress-coat, " what tie do you wear in evening-dress ? "

He said it casually, and as if he had only the smallest interest in the answer ; but, actor though he had been, the note of indifference in his voice was belied by the uneasy look on his face.

"If you mean," I replied, "do I buy, at a hosier's, one of those made-up contrivances, that fasten behind the neck with a buckle and are stitched together in front, in the shape of a bow, I must reply that I don't.—I tie my own bow. Oscar Wilde once said to me:

"'A gentleman is known by his dress—but most of all by his dress-tie. He may be dressed from tip to toe by his valet, but he ties his dress-bow himself. He would as soon think of letting anyone else do so, least of all, of going to a tradesman to buy a ready-made tie, as of going to another tradesman to buy a ready-made suit of clothes, or of going to a clergyman for a ready-made (and slop, as ready-made things generally are) suit of religion; or even as of going to someone else for his morals or his manners. The latter are generally a matter of birth, but, even so, one moulds one's manners as one moulds one's morals, and as one shapes the tying of one's dress-bow, in harmony with the lines of one's own character. A dress-tie should be careless, but correct: correct, yet careless. Of all articles of attire a gentleman's dress-bow is the most important. Not 'by their fruits', as the Bible tells us, but by their dress-bows 'shall ye know them.'"

Phillips, like one whose punishment is greater than he can bear, flung out an arm melodramatically, as if to implore me to say no more.

"Yes, I know. I know. I have always known it," he groaned. "It is too terrible to think of. Oscar Wilde said that, did he? And Somerset Maugham said he would not be found dead in a made-up tie—to wear which somebody else called 'the height of bounderdom.' It is true. It is too true, and I have always known it; but were the alternative to be stoned to death like the other Stephen, and—awful thought—by a whole mob of Oscar Wildes and Somerset Maughams, all howling like dervishes for my bounder's blood, I could not to save my life tie my own dress-bow. I have spent hours, and spoilt a whole hosier's shop-ful of ties, in trying to do so—with the result that if I had gone out of doors with the ghastly hangman's noose about my neck, which is all that I achieve, I should get run in. The first police-man that I met would think that I was an attempted suicide who had bungled the job. So you see I have no choice in the matter. One of three things I must do." He told them off on

his fingers : " One, never appear in evening-dress. Two, don't wear any tie at all. Three, go to a hosier's to buy a made-up tie and wear it like any common bounder. And the last is what I have to do. Well may Henry James write, as he often does, about ' the long humiliation of life.' "

Then, like an evil angel gloating over the fall of another evil angel to darker depths than his own, Phillips smiled wickedly.

" There is always my brother Harold's dress-tie to remember by way of consolation," he said. " If my attempts with a dress-tie result in something ghastly—Harold's are too awful for human eye to see, and have to be buried at dead of night in the back garden. When the mess I have made is cleared away, and I am seen without a tie of any sort, I am merely suspected of no more than of trying to commit suicide. After Harold has been engaged in mortal combat with a dress-bow for an hour and a half, those who have seen him, wild-eyed and panting, shirt torn open, collar hanging dishevelled, and have heard his language, imagine that he has just committed a murder. I am not sure myself that at such times he is not homicidal. Anyhow, it would not do for the fellow who writes on ' Men's Wear ' in the papers, and about only bounders wearing made-up ties, to be about just then. However, that danger is over. Harold decided long ago that it is better to be a bounder than to shed a fellow-creature's blood. So if he is offered theatre tickets, or asked to dine, he prepares folk for the blow which is about to fall by warning them beforehand that he can't, for the life of him, tie a dress-bow, and will be compelled to come in a made-up one.

" Harold is in America now, but was organist at one of our great cathedrals, If I am a passable poet, Harold, I am told by experts, is a great musician, a genius, in fact. Anyhow, his musical genius so impressed the Duchess of Albany, that Her Royal Highness invited him to dinner at Claremont, Esher. The tie he wore on the occasion he must have picked up at some dreadful cheap-tie shop at Peckham or Pimlico. It had two tabs on either side to slip under the collar ; but as turn-down-all-round collars are not worn with evening-dress, and the effect of the tabs was not decorative, I don't see what good they were. The whole bag of tricks fastened to the collar-stud by an elastic loop.

" Harold got through the *hors d'œuvres* safely, was talking

well (he can talk) and was entertaining the Duchess and her guests; but, just as he was taking his first spoonful, his tie fell off and into the soup. Had Harold fallen into the soup himself, were that possible, the effect could not have been more demoralising. He said that, for the moment, his first instinct—like that of one who sees a fellow-creature drowning—was to fling off his coat, to leap into his own soup plate, and to strike out for the drowning tie before it went down for the third time. Then his presence of mind returned. He remembered how Eden Phillpotts' presence of mind once saved three lives. Phillpotts saw a man drowning, and was about to leap in to the rescue, but retained his presence of mind and reminded himself that he could not swim. 'If I jump in,' he said, 'there will be two drowning men, instead of one. Someone will try to save them, and—it often happens so—that particular someone is as likely as not to be drowned too. So I waited till a man who was a good swimmer came along. Having only one person to save he managed it. If I had lost my presence of mind and gone in, there would have been three of us struggling in the water, and all three might well have been drowned. So, as I figure it out, my presence of mind probably saved three lives that day.'

"Harold so far, however, lost his presence of mind and his manners as to forget that—though fingers were made before forks—forks are used in preference to fingers at the dinner-table. Without hesitating a moment, he dived in gallantly with his fingers and brought the drowning tie safely to the bank of the plate's edge. Only his presence of mind saved him from trying (dripping as the thing was) to put it on again. He told me after that I might be a poet, and he might or might not be a musician; 'but, for presence of mind, self-possession, and urbanity of manner,' Harold said, 'Give me a butler.'

"'Almost before I knew what had happened,' said Harold, 'the butler was at my elbow. I should not have blamed him, in the circumstances, if he had come hurrying up, as if he were in command of a stretcher-bearer party come to remove the wounded. Not a bit of it. I have often noticed that men-servants (and also masters who have the menial attitude of mind) subordinate even their walk, to quick, short, subdued and respectful steps—you never see them stride—and that butler glided to my side as if on wheels. As quietly and unconcernedly as if

for dress-ties to fall into the soup were everyday occurrences at dinner, he enquired, indicating the accursed thing, but with the tact not to pain me by even mentioning it by name, " Have you quite done with this, sir ? " just as he might have said, " Will you be requiring any more bread ? " When, too crushed to speak, I nodded, he unobtrusively slid the—I was going to say blood-soaked, but I should say soup-soaked—evidence of my crime into the mediatorial folds of a table napkin, asked soothingly : " Will you take another plate of soup, sir ? " (I nearly fell off my seat at the bare suggestion), and when, with a shudder, I gasped " No, thank you," he thanked me as respectfully as if I had slipped a five-pound note into his hand, bowed magnificently, and retired.

" ' The Duchess's demeanour throughout the painful scene was, I need hardly say, as perfect as one would expect from royalty, and her guests conducted themselves with like consideration ; but my own opinion is that the honours of the evening, just as the dishonours were all mine, were with the butler. Every effort was made by those present to set me at ease, but to no purpose. Dining with a duchess, and that duchess a royalty, is something of an ordeal to a nervous man, even under the happiest conditions, and when he feels that he is acquitting himself creditably. But, remembering the " hash " which, with no reflection on the cook, I had made of Her Royal Highness's excellent dinner —my uninvited contribution to the *menu* being " Ragout of Dress Tie "—my efforts to appear at ease were not very successful, and, as soon as I decently could, I came away."

Then Stephen Phillips took up the tale of his brother's doings after that distressful and undressful dinner.

" Harold seems to have lost his head pretty badly," he said. " Hardly knowing whether he had a head to lose, or, if so, whether he were standing on it or on his heels, he blundered out blindly from the front door and into the night, meaning to cool what was left of his head by walking through the grounds to the gates. Of course, he lost himself—Harold is always losing himself even in familiar surroundings—got off the carriage drive and into some private part of the grounds. A policeman, either outside in the road or on night duty near the gates, heard someone stumbling about, falling over tree-stumps and bashing his way through bushes. Judging by that someone's language, he

was not a devout member of the Duchess's house-party who had slipped out for a few minutes' communion with his Maker, or to say his prayers before retiring to bed. He may have been someone meditating on his sins, for Harold tells me that he was cursing the darkness, his luck, and his dress-tie—with digressions in favour of the fiend who invented that particular form of tie devilry, the she-devil who tacked it together and the he-devil who had sold it to Harold in a shop—hell-deep if not sky-high, when the policeman, who had crept upon his prey softly and unobserved, suddenly pounced upon my brother, and enquiring, 'Wot's your little game?' seized Harold by the coat-collar, and flashed the bull's-eye on his face.

"Harold says that the glare 'took his breath away,' though how a light, even if suddenly flashed in one's eyes, can take one's breath away, I don't know. I expect that he meant it took away his sight, temporarily blinded him, but then Harold is always more or less incoherent when describing the events of that evening. When a respectable and law-abiding citizen is suddenly sprung upon, as if he were a criminal, by a policeman, who screws a bony fist in between collar and neck, and so tightly as to half strangle his victim; when that happens to a man who is doing and has done no wrong, but has already cause, and from no fault of his own, to be in anything but a happy frame of mind—nine men out of ten would lose what was left of their temper and strike out at the assailant, policeman or no policeman. A less peace-loving man than my brother might have been forgiven if he had offered violence in return for violence. But Harold has great respect for the representatives of law and order, and instead of struggling and resisting, he remained quietly in the policeman's grip.

"'It is all right, officer,' he explained, 'and there is nothing wrong, I assure you. I have been dining with the Duchess, and managed, in the dark, to miss my way from the house to the gate, so i'ts as well that you have turned up to set me right. Do you mind taking your hand from my collar—your knuckles are hurting badly?'

"'Ho!' said the policeman, who, finding that he had a very chicken-hearted burglar to deal with, was disposed to be heavily humorous and mockly sympathetic, 'Ho! So that's it, is it? I am sure I beg your Royal Highness's pardon. I suppose your

Royal Highness is waiting for the penny bus back to Buckingham Palace—it *does* run through these grounds—or perhaps your Highness left his gloves or handkerchief on the piano, and thought of slipping back, and by way of a side window, somewhere near the place where they keep the silver forks and spoons, and thoughtful-like, so as not to disturb anyone in their beauty-sleep.'

" Harold, the soul of respectability, was so alarmed at being taken for a burglar that, except for the fact that the policeman had him tightly by the coat-collar, he would have fallen over himself in his haste to clear his character from such an aspersion.

" No, no, I assure you that you are quite mistaken, officer," he said earnestly. " I don't blame you in the least for doing your duty. In these unsettled times, it is highly necessary that members of the Royal Family should be protected from all possible harm, and I am thankful that so efficient an officer is on duty here. But, believe me, you have made a very grave mistake. Do I look like a burglar ? Flash your light over me and you will see that I'm in evening-dress.'

" Harold contends that though he may have lost his head inside the house, he kept it perfectly when in the grounds, and that this was his one and only mistake in tactics during the encounter. He says that when the policeman flashed the light over the supposed burglar's clothes—muddied by more than one fall, and torn by brambles—Harold saw at once what a false move he had made, and that the constable's suspicions, instead of being allayed, were intensified.

" ' Try the bounce on me about being in evening-dress, would you ? ' the constable said. ' Seems to me I have got hold of old Raffles himself, who did most of his burgling in a starched shirt-front and swallow-tailed coat. I have heard about you swell-mobsmen before.'

" I have heard Harold tell the story several times," commented Stephen Phillips, " and though he sometimes forgets, and leaves out a bit, and sometimes remembers a new part, that he hadn't told before and puts it in, he never leaves out that bit about the swell-mobsmen. We are a queer lot, we mortals, and this human nature of ours is curiously inconsistent. Not a few of us yearn to appear the reverse of what we really are.

You can't please a timid man more than to take him to be physically brave; and Harold is so very mild-mannered and inoffensive that I suspect he was secretly flattered at being mistaken for once in his life for something so dashing as a swell-mobsman, for he never leaves that part of the story out. He says that when the policeman called him a swell-mobsman, the fellow so tightened his grip—'there is such a thing as brutal Zabernism among English, as well as among Prussian officialdom,' Harold declares —that he felt bound to remonstrate.

"'If you don't let go of my collar I shall report you to the Duchess, with whom I have been dining," he said.

"'You'll report me, will you, my fine fellow?' retorted the policeman, giving Harold a shake. Then, sarcastically: 'You a-dining with her Royal Highness. Likely, ain't it? Where's your dress-tie?'

"'The fact is, officer,' said Harold confidentially and apologetically, 'that it fell off and into the soup.'

"'Yes, and you'll fall into a police station,' was the answer. 'You come along o' me, young man.'

"At the police station Harold shewed how well he could keep his head, and there, at least, he nobly retrieved his reputation for *savoir-faire* and resourcefulness.

"There was a telephone from the station to the house, and, warning the inspector in charge that a grave mistake had been made, for which someone would be held responsible, Harold declined to add anything to what he had already explained to the constable until the Duchess was communicated with, and asked whether Mr. Harold Phillips had, or had not, dined with her that evening.

"Harold so asserted himself, and spoke so dictatorially that the inspector, though hesitating to disturb Her Royal Highness at that late hour, and about someone whom he, the inspector, believed to be, not a burglar, but a wandering lunatic—some of whom entertain delusions about their relations with royalty—decided to accede to the request. He rang up the house and asked that the Duchess's secretary would come to the telephone for a minute—his communication having the final result of bringing the greatly-concerned Duchess herself to the telephone. What she said, Harold could not hear, and had to surmise from the replies of the inspector, but from what that worthy

afterwards told my brother I imagine that Harold's surmise is not far out.

" ' Is Mr. Phillips a friend of mine, and did he dine here to-night ? Why, of course he did. What about it ? '

" Then, when she heard what had happened, ' One of your constables has arrested Mr. Phillips, my guest, and taken him to the station on suspicion of being a burglar ? Perfectly monstrous. Is he mad ? '

" ' He seemed a bit wild-eyed and excited when he came in, but he is more collected now, your Royal Highness,' answered the inspector.

" ' Wild-eyed and excited ! That doesn't sound well for a policeman, though it may explain his extraordinary conduct. Has he been drinking ? '

" ' I beg your Royal Highness's pardon,' put in the inspector, ' but whom did you mean when you said ' Is the man mad ? ' "

" ' Why, the policeman, of course. Whom did you think I meant ? '

" ' Oh ! ' said the inspector, his morale collapsing. ' I beg your Royal Highness's and the gentleman's pardon, but when the officer found the gentleman, he didn't look very tidy, and he wasn't wearing any dress-tie.' "

Stephen Phillips stopped to take up, to charge, and to light his pipe, and then, between the puffs, he said :

" The story began with and is all about Harold's dress-tie, and now that we have got back to the dress-tie again there is no more worth telling to tell. What the Duchess and the inspector went on to say to each other, and to Harold, and what Harold said to them, doesn't matter. But when Harold left that police station, metaphorically with flags flying, drums beating—for they, so to speak, ' turned out the guard '—the honours accorded to him were almost royal. I am told by those who know that Harold will come to a high place in his profession. He is steady (they have never brought that charge against me) and dwells in the odour of sanctity, passing, as he does, as a cathedral organist, so much of his time within sacred walls. He is highly esteemed by Church dignitaries, as becomes the nephew of a bishop, Christopher Wordsworth of Lincoln, though I prefer to remember that another Wordsworth, the Poet Laureate, was Harold's and my great uncle. But whatever

honours, and deserved honours, Harold comes to, he is not likely to see such strange reversal of fortune as when, after being run in for a suspected burglar, he passed out, the recipient of almost royal honours, and as I say with flags flying and drums beating, between saluting policemen, anxious to atone by the respect they paid him, for an unfortunate mistake.

"About the one thing, however, that I would most like to know, of the events of that eventful night, I am still in the dark. It is this: When, over the telephone, and with no one there to see, the Duchess was reminded of what had happened by hearing that a strange man, who, though claiming to have been her guest that night, was without a tie, had been arrested on suspicion, and taken to the station—did she, recalling what I am sure was the comically-tragic dismay on poor Harold's face, when his tie fell into the soup—did she still behave like royalty and a duchess, or did she, just like any ordinary being, put down the telephone receiver to enjoy a harmless laugh? Duchesses, even royal duchesses, are only human after all. And I'd bet all the royalties I am getting from Tree for my play *Herod*, now running at His Majesty's Theatre, that Harold's face, when that weird made-up dress-tie of his fell off, and into the soup, was more comical than any cinema picture of Charlie Chaplin."

CHAPTER XXI
AUSTIN DOBSON

CHAPTER XXI

OF the late Mr. Austin Dobson I write here only to record his singular kindness to a young fellow-craftsman. As the kindnesses concern only myself, and early editorial work of mine, I have some hesitation in doing so. One's hope is, however, that as sons and daughters of his have inherited no small share of their father's gifts, both in light verse and distinguished prose, one of them may give us in volume form the main facts of the poet's literary career (Austin Dobson's life in a Government office at the Board of Trade was uneventful), together with as many of the letters as can be collected. In such case, even these pages by one who knew the subject of such memoir may serve a purpose, and may, indeed, suggest a chapter concerning similar kindnesses done to others.

When first I met Austin Dobson he was at the height of his fame, and I the youngest of three editors on the staff of a great publishing house. My two colleagues, both well-known scholars, had published many books, whereas I had published only one, and that anonymously. By Mr. Frederick Locker (later Locker-Lampson) I had just then been invited to assist in the editorial work of the new edition of his volume of Social and Occasional Verse, *Lyra Elegantiarum*. On the question of the rejection or inclusion of certain poems, Mr. Locker said, "Let us consult Dobson. Now that Tennyson" (whose son, Lionel, was Locker's son-in-law) "is over eighty and must not be troubled on such matters, I set as much store on Dobson's judgment as an arbiter of taste in letters as on that of anyone now alive. I think you told me you had never met him. Come and spend next week-end at Rowfant to do so."

I was unable to accept the invitation, but Mr. Locker, who, by reason of his temperamental languidness and backwardness, would procrastinate, *sine die*, the writing of a letter or the paying

of a call that would further only his own interests, personal, literary, or otherwise, spared himself in nothing that would further the interests of others. He saw that I was shy and shrank from, even dreaded, rather than sought introductions to the great of my own craft whom, thus far, I had worshipped only at a distance, and in gentle fashion he took me to task on the matter. " I felt very much as you do, at your age," he said. " Perhaps, grizzled, cynical, and case-hardened old campaigner as I now am, I feel very much the same to-day. But you must overcome it, as I tried—as I am still trying—to overcome that sort of backwardness."

Less, I suspect, because he was anxious to obtain Mr. Dobson's advice about *Lyra Elegantiarum*, than because he knew it would be to my advantage to meet the author of *Old World Idylls* and *At the Sign of the Lyre*, Mr. Locker was determined that I should do so. What happened I cannot positively say, as I never put the question to either, but I am convinced that he wrote to Mr. Dobson, for within two days I had a letter from the latter. It began with the formal " My dear Sir," but otherwise was the most cordial and friendly invitation to the effect that as Ealing, where he lived, was some way out of town, he would be so glad if I would give him the pleasure of making my acquaintance by coming to have tea with him at the Board of Trade, any afternoon convenient to me, between three and five.

When I called he happened to be in another room, and I sat nervously awaiting the entrance of one whom as a society poet I had imagined (why, I have often wondered since) as tall of person, something of an " exquisite " in dress, courteous, but possibly cold, even cynical of speech, and as likely to be not a little bored at having, even, by a friend's wish, to do the " agreeable " to one so entirely outside the world of fashion as myself.

Instead, with a cheery, " Here you are then, Mr. Kernahan ! Keeping my seat warm for me ? I am delighted to see you," there entered, with outstretched hand—except for the unmistakable distinction which I had expected—the very reverse of the Austin Dobson I had pictured. He was shortish, plumpish, pinkish (in those days) of complexion, and almost Quakerlike in the quiet simplicity of his dress. I had only to look into the grave, steadfast, but kindly and sometimes smiling eyes that met mine so frankly and so shrewdly-observantly, but which

even a shy man could meet without feeling that he was being critically scrutinised and summed up, to know that I was in the presence of one of the friendliest, kindest, and most modest of men.

Next to the eyes, the noticeable feature was the nose, which was strongly marked, and with an aquiline, almost a Jewish downward hook or turn. Very plentiful brown hair, slightly greying, and brushed off the broad, high forehead, on the side of the parting, but allowed to droop slightly towards the ear on the opposite side; a thick moustache, almost entirely covering the mouth; a firm chin, and you have an impression at least of Austin Dobson as he seemed to me in those far-back days. I am forgetting his voice. Low-pitched, cultivated, but never self-consciously so, it was singularly pleasant to hear, not only for its clarity and musical quality, but because in Austin Dobson's voice was a cordiality which warmed the heart responsively.

Early the following morning, on his way to the Board of Trade, which was some distance from the office in the publishing house where I was a junior editor, he called to see me. Already the heat was sweltering, and I remember that the perspiration was trickling from his forehead into his eyes, for he was literally staggering under a load of books which he thought would assist me in my revision of *Lyra Elegantiarum*. Nor was it only because my chief, Mr. Locker, was a friend of his that Mr. Dobson was at this trouble, for later, when I was engaged on other work, he was equally willing to accord help and advice.

Then, one morning, came a volume of his poems with his name, signed in a clear, almost clerkly hand, under a kind inscription in the even more clearly-written print in which most of his letters were penned. I have received other books from him with even kinder inscriptions since then, as well as signed portraits, but this volume—the very first presentation copy to come my way from a distinguished poet—brought me that joy of "the first time" which, F. W. Robertson says, "never comes back."

Alas for the response which I made for such kindness! I know better than to do so now, but in those, my salad days, I had no more consideration for his time than to inflict upon him a copy of my first and only published book. I remember quoting to Swinburne the saying that to send a man of letters either a

book of one's own or an unnecessary letter, requiring acknowledgment, is like putting a postman to the trouble of a five-mile walk after he has his boots off ; and Swinburne's shrill and gymnastic—for he indulged in something like a war-whoop and war-dance of invective against the whole tribe of uninvited letter-writers and book-senders—endorsement of the indictment.

Austin Dobson packed into one man's life the work and the career of two. He was too conscientious to take his Government work as some in Government offices are said to take theirs. I have reason to know that his official duties were faithfully fulfilled, and that with them his work in letters was never allowed to interfere. That after he left his office he could start work all over again (most of all, work with pen and ink, or which required strain upon the eyes, for work of another sort might have offered a not unwelcome relaxation) leaves the less energetic of us wondering. Yet in his scant leisure he wrote as many if not more books than are penned by some whose only occupation is that of writing. Scholarly as his books were, the amount of reading entailed was prodigious. To say that he had time to read only the books concerned with the subject in hand would be far from the facts. In his office days, he once told me that his trouble was that he was unable to find time to read half of the books which he ought to read for the right understanding of his subject. Yet he found or made time to read the immature and amateur first work which, to my shame, I inflicted upon him, and time even to write me a kind letter :

" Dear Mr. Kernahan.

" I did not like to acknowledge your book until I had read it. Hence what must seem an unpardonable neglect on my part. I am not surprised at its success. It seems to me to be very eloquent, and at times extremely vivid in its presentment of its theme. I hope it is only the preface to still greater triumphs on your part, and I feel complimented that you quote my *Rosina*. I return Locker's ' copy.' If I can be of any service, pray command me.

" With kind regards,

" Yours faithfully,

" Austin Dobson."

Lyra Elegantiarum completed and published, the least I could do was to send Mr. Dobson a copy of the "large paper" or "*de luxe*" edition. Here is his reply:

"My dear Mr. Kernahan,

"I am extremely obliged to Messrs. Ward and Lock, and to you in particular, for the handsome large paper edition of the *Lyra*. I heard from Locker that it was coming. I can understand what your trouble has been, having passed myself under those Caudine Forks of stereotyped plates. But the book ought to have a wide sale. It is, I think, quite the best collection of light miscellaneous verse that I know, and it is always a pleasure to dip into it. If only one had more time for dipping! I shall watch your critical flight with interest. I saw at the Club but have not yet read carefully your *Fortnightly Review* article on Rossetti. Philip Marston (*vidi tantum!*) is a promising subject. With very many thanks, believe me,

"Faithfully yours,

"Austin Dobson."

After the publication of *Lyra Elegantiarum*, I met Mr. Dobson only occasionally. But when Mr. Locker died, four years later, we were invited to the funeral, and Dobson expressed the wish that we should walk together from the carriage to the grave. Returning to London in his company I mentioned that I was to write an article on Locker's work for *The Nineteenth Century*. Later at a dinner of the Omar Khayyâm Club, of which he and I were members, he spoke of the article, and when I said that it had since been reprinted in a book he expressed a wish to see the volume, which I sent him. Here is his reply:

"My dear Kernahan,

"I have not yet read all your book, but I have read a good deal of it with great pleasure. I like the Brontë and the Stevenson papers much, and greatly approve what you say of style and sense and form.

"'Sei die Braut das Wort,
Brautigam der Geist.'

I tried to work it into a little fable once, *The Toyman*. You are no doubt right about Locker's *Rotten Row* But I know

the late Lord Bowen praised it, and I suppose that influenced me. On the other hand, I have never really cared for *A Human Skull.* Separately, the stanzas are good, but they don't cohere or progress to anything. Then the bad rhymes—'coffin' and 'often,' 'praises' and 'daisies.' It is extremely kind of you to give me the book, and I shall put it next *Sorrow and Song.* With kind regards,

"Yours sincerely,
"AUSTIN DOBSON."

This refers to the fact that in my article on Locker I said that I ventured to differ from Mr. Austin Dobson concerning the respective merits of *Rotten Row* and *A Human Skull.* Dobson's (or Lord Bowen's) favourable opinion of the former, and Dobson's as unfavourable opinion of the latter (which Thackeray accepted for the *Cornhill,* and to which he makes complimentary allusion in *The Adventures of Philip on His Way Through the World*), notwithstanding, my humble opinion of the two poems remains unchanged.

With the exception taken to certain rhymes in *A Human Skull* one must agree. The late Mr. Washington Moon, author of *The Dean's English,* and editor of *Men and Women of the Time,* told me that he could not sufficiently regret having distressed Mr. Locker (who had sent him a copy of *London Lyrics*) by observing jokingly that "In *London Lyrics* one is not surprised to find a Cockney rhyme." Yet though one may take exception to certain rhymes in *A Human Skull,* and take none to those in *Rotten Row,* the fact remains that, compared with the originality of *motif,* the playful but pitiful humanity, and the graceful fancy of *A Human Skull* (I wish it had ended with the fifth verse), *Rotten Row* is commonplace.

How far charm and originality of conception may be set against some imperfection of technique; or perfection of technique against charm and originality of conception, I must not here discuss. Points of view, worthy at least of consideration, may be urged on either side. Austin Dobson's point of view was that of one who was a master of technique, and he held, rightly, that in no form of verse is faulty execution less admissible than in Occasional Poems. One admits that he practised what he preached, for in all his verse I recall only one word which I

would willingly alter. In *A Flower Song of Angiola* we read:

Flowers, ye are bright of hue,
Delicate, sweet,
Flowers, and the sight of you
Lightens men's feet.

To me, not only the use of the same vowel and consonant in "lightens men's feet," but the repetition of the two "s's," in words, the one following directly after the other, jar. The two "s's" in fact, after the hard "n," set my teeth on edge. As there is no reason why flowers should not lighten the feet of women as well as of men, I have wondered sometimes why he did not write:

Lightens our feet.

To-day, when one sometimes hears the word "Victorian" used in other than a complimentary sense, it is of interest to note that a Victorian, Dobson always accounted himself, and was proud to do so.

The very last letter I had from him has bearing on the matter. I had sent him a copy of a Review in which was an article about a friend of his and mine, with a passing reference to himself. Here is the acknowledgment:

17. vii. 17.

"My dear Kernahan,

"Many thanks for the Review, and particularly for the kind reference to me. It is pleasant to think that the despised Victorians have still their defenders, and speaking for one of them, I can honestly say that no commendation would be more grateful to him than that of devotion to the best traditions of his calling. I have no great admiration for Dickens's Pumblechook, but I always regard Joe Gorgery's 'As were a corn and seedsman in his past' as a most enviable form of epitaph.

"I cannot think which of my sons you met. I have five of those 'commodities.' I fancy it must be the one now, alas! in France.

"With kind regards,

"Yours sincerely,
"Austin Dobson."

So far back as November, 1896, more than four years before Queen Victoria's death, Dobson was conscious—so I imagine from a passage in another letter, that in literature, as well as in other matters, tastes were changing. Below is his letter. To have cut out—as I was at first minded—the too-kind reference to a book of my own would have lent seeming abruptness to what is, in this case, no more than a brief letter, and would have left less clear the circumstances in which the book of his own writing was sent me.

"My dear Kernahan,

"Many thanks for your eloquent and beautiful allegory with its kind inscription. I hope it 'may find him who a sermon flies,' and do its mission.

"I am sending you, to-morrow, a volume of my own for your acceptance. It is not, I know, much in the modern taste, but your good-will may perhaps find something in it to interest you.

"Sincerely yours,
"Austin Dobson."

I neither saw nor heard from Dobson after 1918; but in 1920, his son, the Rev. Cyril Dobson, conveyed the following message in a letter: 'My father bids me send his kindest remembrances to you, and to say that he is very infirm now, with failing sight. It is a very great effort to write, but he recalls your visits and letters with appreciation." To this was added an invitation that when next I was in town I would call for Mr. Cyril Dobson at St. Peter's Vicarage, Paddington, and journey out to Ealing to see his father. Later the invitation was repeated; but, alas, no opportunity for acceptance came. During, and since the war, pressure of work prevents many of us who live in the country from going to London, except when some urgent business matter which can be transacted only personally compels the journey; and, the business transacted, I for one take the first train home and to my work. But that autumn I purposed going to London for the express and only purpose of seeing Mr. Austin Dobson; not because I supposed that by doing so I should be affording pleasure to him, but because I counted it a privilege to meet once more a poet and man of letters whose work I hold in the

highest admiration, and for whom personally I entertain a feeling of deep gratitude and affectionate regard. The visit was never to be. On August 22 I received a letter from Mr. Cyril Dobson, one passage of which I transcribe:

"I know you will be sorry to hear of my father's long and serious illness, which began as far back as April. It is simply heart failure through old age. The doctors say that his heart is just worn out and the walls are very thin. For the last two months he has been so weak as to be unable even to turn in bed, and more than once the doctors did not expect him to live the night, but by God's grace he has rallied. For forty-eight hours it may be said that his heart did not beat once of its own accord, but only by artificial means. He has, I am glad to say, suffered little, except extreme weakness, and his mind has been for the most part clear and alert, so much so that, touched by the care and devotion of those gathered around him, he actually dictated a charming little three-stanza poem, 'To My Nurses.'"

In less than a fortnight I received news of the distinguished poet's death; he passed away peacefully, and conscious almost to the very end.

Readers who remember his lines, *The Sundial*, may be interested to know that in connection with that poem he erected many years ago in his garden a sundial made out of one of the columns from old Kew Bridge, and by his wish the sundial will be placed on his grave. Here are the first two verses of the poem:

'Tis an old sundial, dark with many a stain:
  In summer crowned with drifting orchard bloom.
Tricked in the autumn with the yellow rain,
  And white in winter like a marble tomb.

And round about its grey, time-eaten brow
  Lean letters speak—a worn and shattered row:
I am a Shade: a Shadow, too, arte thou:
  I mark the Time: saye, Gossip, dost thou soe?

To what I have written of Austin Dobson's generosity and greatness of heart, and of the kindness he accorded to a young writer, I will add only what James Payn says in his *Literary Recollections*: "My experience of men of letters is that for

kindness of heart they have no equal. I contrast their behaviour to the young and struggling with the harshness of the lawyer, the hardness of the man of business, the contempt of the man of the world, and am proud to belong to their calling."

THE END

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