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SING HIGH!  
SING  
LOW!

*By Osbert Sitwell*

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1944

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Of the other essays that follow, some are hitherto unpublished, while some, or parts of them, have appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The News Chronicle*, *The Evening Standard*, *The Boston Evening Transcript*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Life and Letters Today*, *Time and Tide*, *Wine and Food*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Lilliput*.

O. S.

RENISHAW, June 29, 1943



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## OLD WORLDS FOR NEW

**Now that all the talk is of new worlds** (whisper to me, you who are with me waking and sleeping, where I have heard such talk before, was it during the Trojan Wars, the Punic or the Wars of the Roses ?), now, I was saying, that all the talk is of new worlds, I feel that I myself am bound for the old, a Columbus in a hurry to reach home. I have caught a glimpse of a new heaven and earth fashioned by Woolworth's and the B.B.C. from the wreckage of tanks and the spidery carcasses of aircraft, and I prefer that which grew out of the fallen porphyry pillars of the Forum and of temples that had been cast down. It is, you will tell me, a matter of taste, or, perhaps, of morality. The Common Man finds Woolworth's convenient, and therefore It Fulfils A Function, therefore the things it sells are not only useful, sometimes, and cheap, but a thousand times more beautiful than the antiquated products and goods—for there are no arts in this world of which I speak, but only products and goods — of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Italy and France in former times.

To which I reply, with rodomontade, that for more than twenty years I have collected and made worlds, both old and new : some that existed, some that existed only as I saw them — and for me alone until I gave to my generation the key —, and some that I created. Of the worlds existing in the past, I saw one in Cambodia, and handed it to you floating upon the wings of kingfishers, another — or part of it — in the swamps and mountains of Guatemala, in those vast churches, dark and cloudy with incense, the floors of which are sprinkled with rose petals and glitter with stars of candlelight. Vast churches built for the Christian chairman of a board of ruthless, obsolete gods, naked heathens — but that world I reserve for another occasion. Then there were the worlds, more familiar, of Spain and Italy, or the particular ancient Mediterranean world which is so difficult to focus, and which you can enter, for instance, through the Lion Gate at Mycenae, a world built momentarily anew by the same

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sky, and the same stream rushing with surly strength through that gully which cuts off every other approach ; a world of vast bronze helmets, gold masks and echoing tombs. . . . But one of the oldest worlds of which for an instant I caught sight was at a garden-party given by Prince Pu-Ru in April 1934. Let me, then, try to catch that moment, though first we must have maps and charts and Chinese pedigrees, and generally become prosaic.

Prince Pu-Ru, a cousin of the former Emperor Hsiiang-Tung — now Emperor of Manchukuo —, was, at the time of which I speak, the only member of the former Imperial Family allowed to reside in the northern capital. This forbearance on the part of the Republican Government and the City Elders was due to the esteem in which he was held throughout the length and breadth — and, in this connection, the phrase cannot be regarded as a cliché — of the whole country, as being the chief modern exponent of the art of calligraphy, the basic art of China, and the leading draughtsman of his day. The smallest fragment of his writing would change hands at public auction for several hundreds of pounds. He and his wife, also a member of the Manchu Royal House, lived in a palace — or rather the portion of one, since their residence had originally formed a wing of the Imperial City, until the Emperor Ch'ien Lung had severed it from the main body, and presented it to one of his younger sons ; from whom the present owner was descended. And you must realise that the word *palace* here always denotes, not a single building, standing by itself, but an organisation of groups of tiled and painted pavilions in a series of gardens, and also that, because Peking is built of houses of one storey, except for the Forbidden City and the Gates, it covers an immense area. It contains huge thoroughfares — planned, it is said, by Kubla Khan — and innumerable small, thronged streets, and then, suddenly, you will come to some backwater ; a broad cul-de-sac, it may be, where it seems as though no one ever passed. The houses are ripe with age in this empty sunshine. The grass grows between the cobbles, there are no stalls for food or tea, no children, in their broad, padded coats, stamping and tumbling in the dust, no piebald dogs, no old gentlemen carrying bird-cages in which their pets are waiting only to be uncovered before they start their song. There are no street sounds, no echo of gong or wooden clapper or bell or tuning-

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fork, no cries of the men who sell the innumerable delicacies or the season, spring chickens, ducks fattened in cellars, dumplings, smoked fish, or the common water-chestnuts or sunflower seeds. . . . It was out of such a broad and stagnant street, or *place*, as this that you entered the palace of Prince Pu-Ru.

The Prince was not a rich man — there are few rich men in China, except, it may be, for various atavistic missionaries and their children, or the sons of former statesmen of the Dowager Empress or the relatives of retired palace eunuchs, for graft and favour, not commerce, brought the great fortunes of the East. In consequence — and because the Prince was an artist — the place had remained unspoilt. The bright exterior painting, vermilion and green, of the halls was dry and flaking, and the ceilings and walls showed in places the ingenious, sombre lacquering of the snows of this year and yesteryear, which three times every winter roll a carpet of thick swansdown over the flashing golden tiles of the Forbidden City, and the herring-bone ribbed grey tiles of the Tartar and Chinese cities. In the first room, in which we waited, I remember that two pots, containing diminutive fruit trees in flower, stood between the windows ; those dwarf trees that are grown in Peking for house decoration, with the significant and distorted line of their small, crooked branches, and with blossom — cherry or peach — the precise counterpart of that which you see in a Chinese painting. Soon the Prince came in, and I was presented to him. He was a sturdy figure, in a dark-blue robe, with a face broader than the ordinary Chinese face, and thoughtful and kind in its cast. He talked to me for some time, through the friend who had brought me, and who now interpreted, albeit, indeed, the exquisite courtesy and dignity of his manner needed no translator. Before long the Princess joined her husband and helped him to show us — for my friend was a celebrated connoisseur — some of his treasures ; small bronze vases of great antiquity, and a huge carved emerald which had belonged to that great collector, Ch'ien Lung. This stone had a rippling surface like that of water, green water, containing a lost unfathomable depth of light. Of the purest colour, it was the size of the Princess's foot — remarkably small, though the feet of Manchu ladies had never been bound. . . . All this time, from behind a pane of glass in the wall — the windows, of course, were of oiled

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paper — a very beautiful Chinese girl, her face painted in a florid, extremely stylised manner, and wearing an elaborately embroidered Chinese robe of blue silk, was watching us. But presently, when tea was brought, she came in to wait on the Princess. . . . At the end of the interview, the Prince told us he was giving a garden-party the following week ; and invited us to be present.

The importance, as it turned out, of this function was that it proved to be the first Manchu social event that had taken place since the Marshal Feng Yu-Hsiang's troops, doubtless at their leader's inspiration, had forced their way into the Forbidden City, and the young Emperor had been obliged to escape, some ten years before. And, when the afternoon arrived, it seemed as though, in itself, it might have been worth waiting for through a whole decade. Certainly, in England, it would so have seemed. But in the climate of Northern China, such a day at such a time is to be confidently expected. The seasons are unbelievably regular in the incidence of their weather. Each fall of snow in the winter, each gradation, almost, of temperature can be predicted. Thus, at the winter solstice, it is customary in Peking to make a " Nine-Nines Chart of Lessening Cold ", composed of nine patterns and eighty-one small circles, or else to paint a plum branch in outline, bearing on it nine blossoms with eighty-one petals, so that a circle or a petal can be struck off each day before the fulfilment of the spring. . . . But now the Feast of Excited Insects (on the morning of which day, it is said, the herons return to the moat of the Imperial Palace, leaving for the south again about five months later, on the evening of the Lantern Festival) was long over, spring had come, its Feast of Ching Ming, or Pure Brightness (when all good citizens wear circlets of willow, sweep the graves of their ancestors and burn coloured paper money on their behalf, so that they can purchase little luxuries beyond the tomb), had gone by. Each day seemed finer than the last, and the effervescence of spring was everywhere to be felt, in the fairs held within temple precincts, in the streets, in the broad roads or in the quiet lanes, by the lake of Pei-hai, by the moat, by day and by night.

The advance of the year was so rapid, you could almost hear the branches of apple and quince and wistaria creaking with

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the life within them, almost see the sticky buds first appear, and then unfold and open into their spice-breathing cups and tongues and turrets. And, since the object of this party was to see the crab-apple trees in bloom, no afternoon could have been more fitted, more consecrated by Nature herself, to this purpose. It might have been fashioned solely for men to savour the scent and essence of such trees in flower, and the gay, sheepskin clouds, flecking the blue dome of the sky, were translucent as the clustered petals themselves.

We drove to the palace in our rickshas, and were kept sitting therein for a minute or two in the deserted space outside, while — and this time I noticed them particularly since on the last occasion, too, I had seen them and had asked my friend who they might be — two bands of middle-aged men ran out from a lodge each side to open the stout wooden gates. They stood now, as we passed through, hanging on to the doors in order to have an excuse to scrutinise us minutely, staring at us with a curiosity of so intense a nature as to proclaim that it had not been properly satisfied for many years. The whole troupe consisted of about twenty persons, ten on each side, and they were dressed in long robes of vellum-coloured cloth. They were tall, a few of them inclined to fat, but one thing they all shared in common : their rather colourless faces, on which many lines were deeply incised, bore an oddly weazen look, like that of green and wrinkled apples. I had been sure, when first I set eyes on them, that somewhere, not long before, I had come across beings of this same order. . . . And then the memory had come back, of the tea and gossip — albeit gossip incomprehensible to me — that I had enjoyed with the ancient inmates of the Ancestral Hall of the Exalted Brave, an almshouse for retired eunuchs in the Imperial service which I have described in a chapter in *Escape With Me !* But the youngest of those pensioners had been at least fifteen or twenty years older than these, the last recruited eunuchs of the Forbidden City, who now confronted us. Hither they had fled from impending massacre — although they had first made sure that their young royal master had also eluded it — on that terrible night in 1924 ; here, in this palace that seemed to stand forgotten in its large grounds, off the main ways of the city, they had found a sanctuary with Prince Pu-Ru's father. And, though

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now they could discover no means, as formerly, of making great fortunes, though now they were not living in the lavish grandeur in which for so long the people of China had been obliged to keep them, this curious and artificial sept perpetually recruited from the ranks, nevertheless they at present constituted its only living representatives in the whole of China ; anomalous beings who were actually still pursuing their duties, which were the same as those of the eunuchs who had guarded the divine thrones, ever since they were set up, of Babylon and Ur, the Indies and China, Byzantium and Turkey.

The gardens seemed immense, as we got out of our rickshas and began to walk. Inside the boundaries of their walls, crowned with yellow tiles, were groves of old cypresses, the frond-like arrangements of their leaves lying upon the air as though they were layers of blue-green smoke, there were eighteenth-century water-gardens, now dry but full of wild flowers, and there were the sunk gardens wherein flourished, with gnarled, rough trunks, the crooked and ancient fruit trees which constituted the chief pride of their owner. As we approached the pavilions, we noticed how many guests had already arrived. And although there was nothing political about this gathering in intention, the atmosphere was heavy and strange, laden with feeling for the old regime, for here, today, within this green domain, walking slowly as tortoises, hobbling, waddling, trudging, a few of them almost crawling, were all those who had come through from one world into another. Most of them, indeed, appeared to be very old. Some had been in hiding ever since the death of the Dowager Empress, some since the first Revolution, some merely since the flight of the young Emperor ; none, you would have pronounced with certainty, had ventured out for at least a decade.

Looking at them, it was at once possible to see that these Manchu nobles, in spite of their infirmity, and though very different from their ancestors, the simple warriors, with their outlandish ways, and barbarous foods<sup>1</sup> — that belonged more

<sup>1</sup> These foods survived in perhaps a modified and more civilised form until lately. A Manchu civil servant, who wrote just before 1900, has left in a book he wrote (*Annual Customs and Festivals of Peking*, by Tun Lich'en, translated and annotated by Dr. Derk Bodde. Henri Vetch, Peking, 1936), an account, for example, of a delicacy called Manchu Cakes, made of sugar and koumiss, this last being a fermented liquor made of mare's milk and a typical food of the

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to the tents of tribes wandering through the vast plains of Manchuria and Mongolia, and over the wild mountain ranges, than to the inhabitants of palaces, —were yet incontestably the members of a ruling caste. Though they approximated now to the Chinese, in the same manner, let us say, that the English families settled in Ireland came to resemble the Irish — nevertheless, their faces were heavier, their noses more emphatic, they had all the air of those in whose blood existed the capacity and inclination to command. Old, old men, their beards thin, their benign but resolute faces wrinkled round the corners of their eyes by the hot suns of the Chinese summers and by their bland smiling through several scores of years, they had, since the collapse of the Imperial power, remained in the discreet seclusion of their households and ancestral temples. Today they had come out, and their famous names and titles, now forgotten in the city outside, had been announced with a renewed flourish. Many of them supported their weight on sticks, many leant on the arms of younger relatives, and a few were so frail that they had to be aided, or even carried, by two men. But they had come out, and they all wore proudly the robes of maroon and mulberry and puce that belonged to their race, and — though this last was an indictable offence in modern China — some of them, or of those who supported them, boldly paraded pigtails.

The Princess was the only woman to be seen, and as she and the Prince went the round of the guests, obeisances were low. A certain feeling of sadness, it is true, permeated this almost ghostly congregation. The very welcome, even, which the eunuchs at the gate had accorded to each guest well known to them, the shrill cries of recognition and enthusiastic squeaks of welcome, contained, too, something of a nostalgic quality. In this enclosure, this oasis of the past, a lost world revived. The hoarse, ritual shouts of the Eight Banners as they greeted the Son of Heaven, moving through the courts of the Palace as the sun moved — so it was held — through the sky, seemed to be audible again in the distance to sentient ears. These old men could recall so vividly the nomads of Northern Asia. These cakes, he tells us, "are cooked during the night, when the weather has become extremely cold. Their pure whiteness is like frost, and when one has them in one's mouth, it is as if one were crunching on snow. They have a special flavour of the north. They are made into the shapes of plum flowers, or that of squares joined at the corners. . . ."

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precise unique walk, a kind of conventional totter, as though upon stilts, decreed by the usages of antiquity for the Emperor of China, and the unique Imperial voice, inhuman — and so, godlike —, loud and high, of which the very recollection was dead (though once I was fortunate enough to hear an imitation of it, given by a Russian who had been received in audience by the Dowager Empress — but he was rather drunk at the time, and nobody except myself would listen). Outside, each man was a stranger : outside, each man was a shadow belonging to the past. Now, it was only within the compass of these walls that there existed yet a sense of relative importance, that everyone could chart with exactitude the identity and position of each man present. Outside, there was nobody to whom to talk, nobody who remembered *anything*. . . . And, kindling in this new warmth, the guests, after greeting their host and hostess, passed on, beyond the pavilions, in the direction of the orchards.

Perhaps they could scarcely be termed orchards, because the trees, being grown for their blossom rather than their fruit, were irregularly disposed, and were fewer to the given area than is our custom. Bent, contorted with age as the old men who were now on their way to inspect them, they must have been planted some two centuries before. Each of them might have been shaped by the green fingers of a Chinese God of Growth, each was as exquisitely placed upon the green turf as any figure upon a scroll by the hand of a great artist. Perfect in their balance and grotesque posture, some inclined, at the precise angle best calculated to display their unexpected and singular grace, while one tree, even, lay on its side and blossomed on the ground.

Slowly, painfully, the old men hobbled along the crooked, paved paths that zigzagged to these trees. When they reached them, they were conducted up small flights of stone steps, so fashioned that, saving where the steps showed, they seemed natural rocks that had cropped up through the turf or had fallen from the sky. These flights, their tops level with the tops of the trees, are thus placed near apple and pear and peach and quince and cherry, so that the connoisseur can obtain a perfect view of the blossom. Even to a newcomer, inexpert in the flowery lore of the Chinese, from each different plane, the particular view of the tree for which the step had been constructed offered a revela-

tion of a new world ; of the same kind as when first you fly in an aircraft above the clouds, and look down upon their fleecy humps, white and golden — except that clouds disperse, are opaque, and do not favour an ordered development.

To the Chinese amateurs of the garden, however, these steps offer even more than to someone, like myself, who was fresh to them. In consequence, the old gentlemen persevered — for it was difficult for them to ascend such crags. Many of them took a long while over the process, and only gained the summits by the help, as it were, of guides. Next year, one felt, they would require ropes as well.

Once there, they would remain for a full hour, matching in their minds the complexion and fragrance of the blossom of previous years with that before them. Then, after the general examination of the crop, came the more intimate tallying of one branch, one flower, one bud, with another, and finally it was necessary again to consider the entire grouping and design. But the bees, inordinately busy and managing, behaving as though they were old women in a market, got in the way, and even the less industrious butterflies obscured the view with their gaudily decorated sails or dragged down a petal too heavily when suddenly they perched upon it. . . . Critical appreciation of this high order could not be hurried. After all, it was better fully to use now the powers of judgement with which the years had enriched them, and to apply their trained abilities in this direction, for, in the order of things, they could scarcely hope to see many more of these flowery harvests.

So, they stayed on. . . . But, alas, it was time for us to go. We said good-bye to our host and hostess, and turned away towards the gates, towards the new world of Salvation Army shelters and American Mother's Days, of corrugated iron and cocoa. But, as I looked back, I could distinguish in the distance the tops of the trees, so old, yet so intensely alive, producing these living hives of fragrance, living translucent clouds of snow and roses, dusted with powdered gold, and on the top of every flight of steps I could see, too, a decrepit dignitary of the extinct Empire, his robes of maroon or burnet causing the blue of the sky to vibrate more intensely. Each old man stood, outlined, motionless above the blossom, staring down at its frothy intricacies, waiting

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there with a certain solemnity, it seemed, and a proper sense of the occasion — for even tomorrow this perfection would be tarnished and it would be too late to form a considered opinion, even one day would have made all the difference ; each old man waited, thus quietly under the immense blue dome, as though he were a watcher on a tower, or the guardian of an ancient shrine calling the faithful to worship.

## THE CONSPIRACY OF DWARFS

**H**HEIGHT, like beauty, resides, I suppose, in the eye of the beholder. Sculptors, for example, invariably present Queen Victoria to us as a seated giantess, albeit the whole charm and dignity of her appearance consisted in her being so small. Every author, again, is imagined by the non-writing world as essentially tiny and insect-like. The height of Mr. Bernard Shaw comes as a perpetual shock to those members of the public who have not seen him before : for his stature, together with that of his work, has been consistently minimised and misrepresented for over half a century. Again, caricaturists have always shown the writer of this essay as a thin, black dwarf, whereas, unless my mirror lies, I am not by any means either as short or as black as I am drawn. The tape-measure supports the testimony of my mirror ; somewhat over six foot. . . . Nevertheless, today that is no great height; many, especially among my friends, overtop me by several inches — for the truth is that, though we may not be much wiser, we are certainly much taller than our ancestors.

The cave dwellings reveal the traces of a small, if wiry, people. And, in medieval times, armour crushed and contracted the physique of the governing classes, wrong feeding, that of the governed : since a winter diet of salt fish, once every twenty-four hours, year in, year out, without ever a sight of fruit and vegetables, was their lot. No vitamins worried the heads, and none ever figured in the food, of the Middle Ages. . . . Height, of course, varies singularly with the generations. It is said that, after the decimation of the French race by the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian wars, the average Frenchman lost two inches off his stature : it may be too that the Romans were taller than the Italians. Perhaps, spread over a century or more, the trend of politics affects height. (And here we may notice, in parentheses, how curious it is that the citizens of a free democracy should be tall, for surely the essence of democracy is that all should be short and of the same size ? Height should be rationed and equalised.

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And, indeed, we find the acknowledgement of this ideal in the contemporary newspaper cult of the Little Man, of which I attempt to treat in a later essay.)

Why, then, when the young everywhere are so tall, and when height has so much increased, is the modern world entirely constructed for the benefit of the dwarf? . . . Looking round, it is indeed hard not to believe that there is in process a conspiracy of dwarfs. It is all very well for the poet to sing —

Howjolly are the dwarfs, the litde ones, the Mexicans !

but they are not as jolly as they seem, being a cruel and malign race. Everywhere you go — " you " signifying any ordinary person of ordinary size —, you are compelled to walk almost on all-fours; a penalty comparable to that exacted in medieval times, when sinners, or persons who had made vows, were induced to crawl up the aisles of cathedrals on hands and knees. . . .

Take, for example, the National Gallery — when it showed pictures, not when it was void of art, but popular, as it is now. The rooms, though then certainly empty of people, are lofty and old-fashioned ; but you had only to attempt to look at the pictures ! The bigger, more important works were hung just below the level of the collar-bone, though the whole of the space above them was vacant, so that this must have been done on purpose, was by no means merely accidental. By craning and straining down — though even this gave one, as the saying is, " a pain in the neck " — it might perhaps be possible to see — though not to enjoy — so much of the canvas as the reflection in the glass allowed; because the image of a custodian sleeping on his chair, or of lines of empty benches and skylights, was invariably superimposed upon the artist's conception of Mrs. Siddons or of Bacchus and his Pards : while to catch a glimpse of any fragment of the second row of pictures, hung an inch above the wainscoting, it was necessary to throw yourself, after the manner of the Moor in *Petrouchka*, at full length upon the floor, and then push upward with the arms. But this behaviour, though essential, unfortunately worried the attendants and embarrassed any spectators who chanced to be in the room — though most of these, since they came here to " do the sights ", were not perturbed by the fact that

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under no circumstances could they see the pictures. . . . The dwarfs were indeed triumphant.

Possibly, gentle reader, though tall, you may be one who prefers the picture theatre to the picture gallery, and therefore doubts the truth of this particular conspiracy. But consider the facts; the patron of the picture theatre, too, is victimised. In the winter the building is over-heated, so that he must catch cold when he leaves it; in the summer, icy-cold currents of air play on him so that he is obliged to catch a chill while he sits there. At first it may *seem* as though there were plenty of room, as though this time the dwarfs had been defeated; but just try to get up — for each seat clasps you tightly round the waist — or to push your way between two rows! . . .

As for hotels, they are constructed entirely for the midget tribe. Endeavour in any modern hotel bedroom to wash your hands; only by going down on your knees, that terrible classic attitude of submission, is such an action practicable; only thus can you gain quarter. The wardrobes, whether let into the wall or boldly jutting out from it, are made too shallow for suits and too short for dresses. If the cupboard is not built-in, its cornice will knock out an eye every time you pass it. . . . But worst of all, try to unpack your suit-case on the special stand which the authorities provide for this purpose. Often the wretched victim must remain there for ten or fifteen minutes before he can straighten himself out again. Only a long series of Dalcroze eurhythmies or years of practice in the gymnasium can teach him to perform this feat.

The old style of private house, it is true, is less dwarf-ridden than the hotel: but, ranged in the enemy camp — and a powerful weapon in tiny hands — are the blocks of modern flats, with their equalised, low-ceilinged storeys, pressed in a sandwich-like manner between others. "Who lives in all these new flats?" is a question often asked — but nobody knows the answer, for an entirely new race of fur-coated flat-dwelling pygmies has apparently been called into being. . . . Perhaps we have reached a new stage of evolution; perhaps the flat-dweller has come at last to supersede the house-dweller, to take his place for many thousands of years, until a newer type has been evolved; just as in ages past the dweller in stone houses superseded the troglodyte. . . . Certainly this heir of all the ages will be a dwarf, the contractors

## *The Conspiracy of Dwarfs*

and builders have seen to that. . . . To prove this, select any flat in any block of flats you like, — or don't like —, and try to wash up the cups and plates at the sink. Your least reward, the lightest penalty which the dwarfs decree for you, is a sharp attack of lumbago. And what of the aluminium chairs, which it seems may clasp you in their cold embrace for ever, without your being able to rise ?

Let me counsel you, then, as you pass these endless, ugly, built-in Mappin terraces that, piled one upon another, climb toward the skies, sheltering at each level their dwarfs' broods, to feel no envy for the labour-saving tricks they contain, but instead to reflect, with some feeling of superiority, that you are on your way *home*, going to your *home*, a thing which their inhabitants will never have, though if quarrels and noise are what these hop-o'-my-thumbs want, they can most easily find them here, in these reverberant, machine-ridden egg-boxes, among their own malevolent septs. . . . Let us avert our gaze.

Three motors pass by : we notice again the same show of favouritism ; even the largest vehicles are nowadays constructed solely for dwarfs. In them only a manikin, a midget two feet tall, can be comfortable. . . . To reach the further seat is a torture to anyone over that height, while to leave it, to get your feet on the step, you are obliged to adopt the position of a dancer in the famous Cossack dance — is it called the *gopak* ? — arms crossed, one leg doubled, the other straight out in front of you at right angles. " Ai, Ai, Ai ! " you must shout. " Olla ! Olla ! Olla ! "

In one single instance are the giants victorious. . . . The tube trains must have been designed to avenge our sufferings, and as they rush shrieking through the burrow at thirty miles an hour, you may observe the poor little people swinging, like so many monkeys, from the straps, or, in some cases, looking at them wistfully : for they are out of reach.

## THE BANQUETS OF TANTALUS

*To the memory of Viola Tree, who gave the author much help and information*

1 *HE TIMES* for the morning of 14th July 1941 republished from its issue of precisely a century before the following account of a suit that had just been brought in a French law-court :

M. Clary, a " useful actor ", on being summoned by his manager for most impassible obstinacy in being of no use, pleaded that his manager's feasts on the stage were no less than sheer matters of famine ; that when playing the parts of princes, marquises and the like he deemed himself entitled to treatment conformable to his temporary rank and the spirit of the part. " Pray, M. Clary," said the Juge de Paix, " explain yourself." " I mean, Monsieur le Juge, that in almost all pieces we figurantes have a dinner or supper ; in truth, we reckon upon it — we poor devils at 600 francs a year ! Well, we are treated like the veriest beggars." The manager protested that he treated his actors as he ought. " Yes," interrupted M. Clary, " you give us Seltzer water instead of champagne, and yet expect us to sing—

Qu'il avait du bon vin  
Le Seigneur chatelain ;  
Buvons encore  
Pour en etre certain !

And the other night in the *Diner de Madelon*, of what country was the turkey ? Pasteboard, by all the gods ! "

Reading an outburst so heartfelt as that of Monsieur Clary, it is impossible not to feel a profound sympathy for the " useful actor " who made it — more especially because he plainly possessed temperament and, in addition, belonged to that European nation which has for long been the most famous for the interest it takes in meals and the genius it expends upon the cooking and serving of them. These tantalising banquets, of which he makes so loud a moan that it carries easily and with full volume across the hundred years that divide us, these cruel feasts where bread turns inevitably to a stone and every — or almost every — chicken to a property fowl could, no doubt, assume a dream-like quality of horror to those compelled every night to partake of them. But, just as there is always, to the members of the audience, a glittering wonder attendant upon theatrical

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jewels, the marvel of their high lights, how they are composed and what magic makes them real, so, in a similar manner, the food in that bright world of illusion — the dishes seeming as though the curtain, when drawn up, left behind it a mirror that reflects with precision the items of food familiar to us — exercises a considerable fascination upon the minds of those who are not initiated and cannot interpret each symbol into its equivalent upon this side of the footlights. It is to us a miracle, and one that never loses its power to astonish. We can go to the play five nights running, until we become tired of it, but the properties never lose their enchantment for us; *our* eyes can, during dull moments, find occupation in examining the delicacies spread out for the actors, though beyond the proscenium it is far otherwise. Many people have been known to grumble if confronted with the same dish two or three nights running; try to imagine, then, what it must mean to be faced with it every night for two or three months, and, besides, even when obliged to put up a pretence of eating, to know it for a sham, a lie, a flint-hearted dissimulation, a piece of hollow, hard and sticky pasteboard, dized so as to look appetising at a distance.

I write, moreover, in years of war and shortage, when all things that we can eat appear to possess more than their actual value, and this, in turn, bestows on their counterfeits upon stage tables a corresponding increase in the apish mockery of their enticement — yet these meals continue, withal, to this very day, and constitute, indeed, almost the only kind of feasting that a strict system of rationing permits to exist. . . . There are, for example, those banquets set for kings and princes in ballet and pantomime, where processions of girls, dressed as boys in tights, bear aloft vast dishes, holding them at the captivating but improbable angle which their substance allows — because, since plate and apparent contents are in this case one and indivisible, no accident can occur; things that we seldom encounter in real life but which are yet recognisable, boars' heads, roast swans or peacocks diademed in their finery. In addition, during the course of the last thirty years, these feasts have increased in number and attained a further pitch of verisimilitude by means of photography; thus have they entered upon a new world, and conquered a fresh dimension. But this development, the long meals of Hollywood,

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its tables scintillant with silver and wisecracks, the crooks' supper-parties in cellars, with a revolver laid for each guest, these Imperial Roman banquets, couched in the idiom of the cheap illustrated papers, but graced, here and there, with tags of tradition and fragments of Latin, these sumptuous repasts where those partaking eat their

" . . . broaths with spoons of Amber,  
Headed with Diamant and Carbuncle "

and have

" The beards of Barbels seru'd instead of sallades;  
Oil'd Mushromse, and the swelling unctuous paps  
Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,  
Drest with an exquisite, and poignant sauce " ;

or those strange transatlantic meals of the small hours, held in an idealised mixture of night-club, Casino and Versailles, where, hidden beneath palms and scarlet trumpet-lipped hibiscus, Cuban bands knock out upon the skulls of beasts perpetual rumbas, from islands pitched on lakes, and only the Marx Brothers spoil by their capers and ingenious tricks, their ladders and ropes, their flying trapezes and falling pots of paint, the nostalgic decorum of the scene, or, again, such a supper-party as I saw represented a few years ago in a Soviet film, wherein the domestic animals broke, unsuspected, through the French windows at the back of the dining-room, and seized the dishes and the glasses of champagne from the resisting hands and under the protuberant eyes of the assembled convivial plutocrats ; all these, then, form a new path, which is too broad and too long for me to follow within the space of a few pages, and I will therefore, apart from the short discursion that follows, and a sequel to it at the end, confine my reflections and revelations to the compass of the old-fashioned stage.

In private life such properties as I have described are rare, with one exception : those shimmering but dismal replicas of Victorian wedding-cakes, which were to be seen in many London streets, but more especially behind the steamy plate-glass windows of Oxford-Street caterers and confectioners; plaster ghosts in two or three diminishing cylindrical storeys, terraced and set back after the constructional manner of a Chinese pagoda or an Aztec sacrificial pyramid, while across their counterfeit coating

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of spectral white (no wonder that Herman Melville in his *Moby Dick* enquires rhetorically why the mention of white should raise "such an eyeless statue *in the soul* !), enlivened at each cornice with elfin touches of pink, pale blue and lily-green pseudo-sugar, trail disconsolately sprays of white artificial flowers. . . . Do these edifices, aged and glittering, alluringly phantasmal in their bride's attire as, in *Great Expectations*, was old Miss Havisham when first Pip saw her, do they, more dusty yet, still survive the bombing behind broken windows ?

To these cakes, towering up into their London fog, I will revert later ; they are nearly the only relations in the outside world to theatrical-property food, and it may be that their appearance provides an answer to something that we shall ask : we will return now to the dishes on the stage. These are of two kinds, those which are made of pasteboard, and those which are genuinely edible, but composed of some other substance than what it seems. And we may note in passing that both of them will be in the keeping of " Props ", who keeps all food and drink and other dummies in his charge. As a rule he is the most dependable, and often the most popular person in the company, no Oxford or Cambridge novice, enthusiastic about the theatre, but a stage hand of wide experience and all-embracing, if rather nonchalant, sympathy.

Pasteboard plainly cannot be eaten, and therefore presents comparatively little difficulty to the actor ; but of all the illusions of reality which the Western theatre demands, no effort costs him more in the way of achievement than the semblance of consuming food. We Europeans worship truth to Nature with a passion that is purely occidental; eating *on the stage* must be made as much like eating *off it* as is humanly possible. In the East, no doubt, it is otherwise. Thus in China, though I can at the moment recall no instance of a meal being served upon the boards — albeit every member of the audience in the gaily painted wooden theatres of Peking drinks tea noisily throughout the performance, of four or five hours' duration, and after he has finished one cup, wipes his face, in order to be ready for the next, with a steaming towel which the attendant brings him, and then proceeds to roll this up and throw it across, for his use, to a friend at the other side of the stalls — ; though, I say, I can recall no

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instance of it, nevertheless it can be deduced by a process of analogy that a dinner-party would be represented by some brief and exquisite convention executed by the chiefstar. In the same way that a journey of a hundred miles undertaken by a score of people is portrayed by a swift circling of the stage on the part of a single figure with long, fluttering sleeves, a gliding movement, with a special angle and tilt of the body, at a particular pace and, as it seems, on a level a little above that of the rest of the boards : in the same way that the cuts and direction of a warrior's sword intimate the victory or defeat of a whole great army ; so, no doubt, the principal male impersonator would convey the effect of, let us say, a host and forty guests enjoying a banquet, by a graceful grinding of the mandibles or a peculiarly expert and elegant manipulation of chopsticks.

Such conventions, however, — except when presented at long intervals to illustrate the " quaintness " of orientals — would not satisfy an English audience for one matinee, let alone a run of nights. It insists, to the contrary, on the sight and sound of *real* flesh and blood eating *real* food — not, I apprehend, that it requires a higher degree of culinary excellence to be represented beyond the curtain than upon its own dinner-tables, but the material, if it appears at all, must seem incontestably prime and demonstrably genuine. . . . And this, in its turn, calls for a special technique because, natural though it may appear to us in our everyday lives to talk with our mouths full and at the top of our voices, yet on the stage it is by no means easy to manage in a way that will ensure that every word, at the same time, shall carry to the most distant places in the auditorium. To be able to play such a part at all, the actor has, perhaps, been obliged to accustom himself for years to a considerable degree of physical suffering, so as to gain complete control over his appetite. He must, in short, have trained himself to be an ascetic, a role that in private life seldom suits an actor. He may, for example, be numbered among the majority of the members of his profession, the working of whose nervous systems prevents them from eating until after they have finished their performance before the footlights ; then, if such be his case, and unless he has most carefully accustomed himself to the sight of food, the glimpse of even a counterfeit meal will stimulate the salivary

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glands in such a fashion as to interfere with the correct delivery of his words and in this way ruin his interpretation of the whole part. The reader may ask what training could possibly qualify the actor for such an ordeal; and in reply I would suggest that regime of deprivation which Augustus Hare, the author of so many guide-books, tells us<sup>1</sup> was inflicted upon himself, at the age of five, by his adoptive mother and her associates of the Maurice family.<sup>2</sup> "I was not six years old", he writes, "before my mother — under the influence of the Maurices — began to follow out a code of penance with regard to me which was worthy of the ascetics of the desert. Hitherto I had never been allowed anything but roast-mutton and rice-pudding for dinner. The most delicious puddings were talked of — *dilated* on — until I became, not greedy, but exceedingly curious about them. At length '*le grand moment*' arrived. They were put on the table before me, and then, just as I was going to eat some of them, they were snatched away. . . ."

Of course there are occasions upon which actors are allowed, encouraged even, to eat upon the stage, but people connected

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of My Life*, vol. i, p. i n . George Allen : London, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Esther, Priscilla and Mary Maurice, the sisters of the Victorian divine and lecturer on moral philosophy, Frederick Demson Maurice (1805-1872). The family became connected with that of Augustus Hare, since his uncle, Julius Hare, rector of Hurstmonceaux, married Esther. The sisters were devoted to their brother and his interests, and all four of them would afford material for an interesting, if unedifying, study of Victorian religion at work. Someone, apparently, had written of Frederick Maurice that "the noble and pathetic monotone of his life" resembled "the burden of a Gregorian chant", and Augustus Hare adds, in repeating it, that this description exactly suited the man and rendered him a far from prepossessing or cheerful companion. Maurice "was constantly lost mentally", he says, "in the labyrinth of religious mysticisms" of his own making. To complete the picture, Ruskin, in his *Praeterita*, declares of him that he was " . . . in a beautiful way, wrong-headed".

As for Esther Maurice or Hare, her nephew in *The Story of My Life* records the following anecdote about her. He then lived with his adoptive mother very near the Rectory, where his Aunt Esther lived, and she set out to conquer his selfishness and make him good. He was twelve years old at the time, and was particularly devoted to his pet cat, Selma. His aunt insisted on Selma being surrendered to her, and his mother supported her, saying that a boy must be taught to "give up his way and pleasure to others". Accordingly he was forced, with many tears, to relinquish Selma, carrying her up in her basket to the Rectory. He was obliged often to go there, and it comforted him to think that at any rate on those occasions he would now see his cat — but a few days later, when he went there, the little creature was missing. His Aunt Esther had given orders for her to be hanged.

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with the theatre are notoriously superstitious and, in consequence, producers and backers are apt to eschew plays which necessitate the serving and consuming before the audience of an entire meal, since an ancient tradition of ill fortune attends them. The stage manager, on his side, dreads the idea for more practical reasons, foreseeing, as he does, the heaviness of the task laid upon the hands who have to clear up the ensuing litter and debris. Moreover, albeit the success of a book, especially a work of fiction, is said to depend largely on the amount of description of food that it contains — Dickens, for one, enters into considerable detail on the matter, and, indeed, almost the first novel ever written, or at least the earliest that has come down to us, the *Satiricon* of Petronius Arbiter, is chiefly concerned with a feast, the Banquet of Trimalchio —, yet the sight of food it cannot devour is held to divert the attention of an audience from the play in progress. But if this be so, it would seem most unfair when one remembers how much the noisy rattle of hard and crinkly paper in chocolate-boxes, and the subsequent munching of chocolates, must distract the hungry actors who have themselves enjoyed no dinner.

English playwrights and actors, then, tend more to favour upon the stage between-meal refreshments. Formerly the ceremony of tea constituted the perpetual refuge of the mediocre dramatist, but in the two decades that separated the wars, the cocktail-shaker supplanted it, and the ice-cold rattle that now prevails, matches the fizzle of platitudes, dressed up as epigrams, in progress. But there are also soda-water in syphons, port in decanters, and cigarettes in boxes. To help, the actor's case can be taken out of a pocket — preferably a hip-pocket —, opened, and a cigarette chosen. The cigarette can then be tapped on the top of the case, and lit, and the case can be snapped shut again, to the accompaniment of a tense face, at the critical moment. Indeed authors of modern comedies or thrillers appear to be unable to get through three acts without turning for aid to these adjuncts and, similarly, few actors of the Snack-and-Run School — a type of technique invented and carried to its highest pitch by the late Sir Gerald du Maurier — can bestow an illicit kiss or even commit a single murder without having recourse to them.

To manage even these things properly requires, however, a great deal of experience and technique. The crunching of an

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apple, for instance, in which Miss Elizabeth Bergner indulged when playing Rosalind in *As You Like It* — that startling *crackle ! crackle ! crackle !* — can by no means have been as casual and unpremeditated as it appeared. Lucien Guitry, again, as protagonist in *Le Grand Due*, imparted to his always magnificent presence the further needful touch of hyperborean splendour by the barbaric extravagance of eating great spoonfuls of caviare — real caviare — as, talking all the while, he strode or lounged about the stage. . . . Again, I remember in 1909 seeing one of the famous Grasso family of actors achieve a tremendous feat in the way of eating upon the stage. This member of the Sicilian clan was young, about twenty-three or -four, and undoubtedly would have been acting within a few years in all the world capitals had he not been drowned a very short time after, while crossing with his Sicilian company to South America. At the time I saw him he was playing in a disused church which had been turned into a theatre. The performances, which every night included a drama, followed by a farce, and ended with music-hall turns, continued until two or three in the morning. The audience was entirely male, except for foreigners — for no Sicilian woman ever then permitted herself to be seen in a cafe or a theatre —, and consisted of peasants, shopkeepers and waiters, who cried and laughed and cheered, and must, indeed, from the point of view of an actor, have been a perfect medium upon which to work. The setting, too, the makeshift platform for the stage, the footlights, hastily improvised, the shadowy roof, the plaster angels and cupids and coats of arms, falling into powdery dust upon the shoulders of the audience, all these form an unforgettable picture in the memory, but one which Grasso, by the power of his art, still dominates. I was fortunate enough to see him on many occasions, and several times when he was acting the role of a worker in the sulphur mines and throughout one intensely dramatic and moving scene, added to his part a touch of sullen melancholy, alternating with a farouche and flaring gaiety, by eating macaroni, picking it out of an enormous bowl with his fingers, which he made to seem thick and swollen, and cramming the strands clumsily into his mouth. He would sit down, get up, walk about, still munching, still talking. Every word was audible.

Other great actors, again, aid themselves in the matter of

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eating by thinking out devices beforehand. Thus in *Gringoire*, the late Sir Herbert Tree, playing one of his most famous character studies — that of a penniless poet at the court of Louis XI — found himself faced with the problem of being a starving man on whom a meal is suddenly bestowed. He had to eat, for he believed in realism ; he *had* to tackle a whole chicken, with his hands. He solved the difficulty by causing to be constructed for himself a fine, plump, hollow pullet of papier mache, the breast being composed of two lids. He then filled it every night with real slices of excellent cold chicken and was thus able, when the moment came, to fling himself on the bird, tackle it with his fingers, and eat it with a proper relish and abandon in front of an enthusiastic audience. In addition, he concluded this banquet with a whole bunch of genuine grapes. The wine, however, which accompanied all this food, consisted of coloured water — except when one evening, by mistake, turpentine was substituted for it. Unfortunately Sir Herbert swallowed a great gulp from his glass before he discovered the nature of its contents. With remarkable fortitude, however, he continued to act, although he was all the time suffering the greatest agony, until the end of the play.

This meal was a feat, but how much endurance, coupled with an equal art — and more appetite —, it must take to have an entire dinner served to you upon the stage, and to consume it. Yet, in spite of the difficulties, in spite of superstitions and stage managers, it has several times been successfully accomplished. Thus, in that popular play *The Man from Blankley's*, the late Sir Charles Hawtrey devoured his way right through the menu of a normal burgess dinner of pre-war days, with the customary number of courses — soup, fish, chicken, sweet, savoury — served in the traditional manner. Notwithstanding the apparent ease and enjoyment with which he ate, and for all the smoothness with which the scene was presented, this was a triumphant achievement—but then Hawtrey and his stage manager were both accomplished technicians.

Such repasts, such single dishes, that are what they pretend to be, constitute nevertheless a rarity in stage history. Though we may have listened with sympathy at the beginning of this essay to the complaint of Monsieur Clary, it was never, in fact, justified, and we come back to the two great categories already mentioned, into which the generality of theatrical food is still divided ; paste-

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board, and one edible material masquerading as another. When we see actors or actresses eating, undoubtedly eating, we can, if we hold the cypher, translate the outward semblance of the food on their side of the mirror into its reality on ours; just as, to take another sense, that of sound, instead of taste, if we see a stage crowd in riot or panic, the faces contorted, the air full of shouts, we wonder what the words are that they utter, and then recall that the answer is "Rhubarb !", "Rhubarb !", or "Rhabarbet", as some say ; for that, I know not why, is the convention. Similarly caviare on the boards turns into black-currant jam off them, and meat — a particularly difficult substance to swallow while talking — is always represented by a kind of pink mousse or jelly. The part of wine is nearly always taken by coloured water, though ginger-ale, as a rule, passes for champagne. (Admirers of Miss Tallulah Bankhead will, on the other hand, remember with pleasure how often they have seen her drink *real* champagne in one of the plays in which she appeared in London.) There are, however, common exceptions : tea is always tea, frequent, hot and plentiful, but weak ; and chocolates are chocolates all the stage over — the contents, it can be confidently stated, of no box, however vast in size, ever seeing the light of the following day.

Now we approach another matter, an abstruse and abstract question indeed. . . . It has been said that the first thing a Chinese asks himself, whenever he sees a being or substance new to him, is "What would it taste like ?" ; so it is surely permissible, too, for an Englishman to speculate on how property foods *would* taste, were we — or those on the stage — obliged to eat them. . . . And I believe that the property bridal cakes, described some pages back, provide us with a clue to the answer, indicate, indeed, how all property comestibles would taste ; like ordinary wedding cake. . . . Be that as it may, these white, but unleaning towers of Pisa, these pipeclayed, dwindling ghosts of drums, placed one upon another, pale spectres, like Ophelia, cheated of bridehood, trailing their flowers, would surely possess the same flavour, the same brittle crust of sweetness, the same soft edging of almond-paste to guard the dark, subtle, dank nothingness within. . . . Perhaps all combinations of sugar and almond, indeed, share a tendency to beget ghosts, or how

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else explain the similar fate of confetti, sugared almonds, smooth-coated in various light colours, which are still given away at wedding receptions in Southern Italy and Sicily, and were formerly thrown after the bride and bridegroom as they left? Equally, they were used as things with which to pelt each other by the revellers at Carnival time. . . . But these sweets have disappeared, like Carnival itself, from most of Europe, leaving behind them only vestigial progeny, in the purely conventional confetti, the circles of coloured paper that we know, still seeing them littering the pavement outside churches. . . . But we wander too far.

Many actors, I intended to say, are hungry throughout a play : but fortunately more often because they refuse to eat than for involuntary reasons. At least the stage meals of today, however tantalising they may seem sometimes, lack the poignant, terrible sense of irony which formerly they possessed. Already, in the time of Monsieur Clary, the status and condition of the actor had visibly improved from what they had been a hundred years before — or perhaps members of the French stage were never so pitiable and abject as English actors and actresses; perhaps it was the Commonwealth and the long Puritan blight which were responsible. But certainly in England of the early eighteenth century, those who feasted on the stage in their apparently fine clothes very frequently starved in rags at home. Vagabonds outside the protection of the law, they were often obliged after the performance to slink off to bed, cold, miserable and starving, and, worse, when there, to hear their children — who, if above two years of age, would probably have been on the stage with their parents, and would, before long, be given a part — crying aloud for something to eat. Or they avoided going home, borrowed a few pence so that they could spend their time in the festive, aromatic atmosphere of Gin Lane (for the Whigs had seen to it that gin was cheap). Here at least they could temporarily lose the memory of their homes, or lack of them, could forget even themselves. . . . Yet it was this background which produced Mrs. Siddons and her brothers, and David Garrick and Edmund Kean !

## SAVE THE OLD SCHOOL TIE!

O N E of the attractions of war to the middle-aged and safely-placed is to be found, undoubtedly, in the release it offers to many long-felt but hitherto suppressed inclinations. Things that have been wrong for a lifetime — starting with the taking of human life itself—suddenly become morally right, and matters of national urgency as well. Those of us who have always wanted to wear old clothes, can live in them ; those of us who have been misers, scraping and paring, find our vice a present obligation ; those of us who felt repressed by railings, and ever longed to smash them, can tear them down to the applause of all who love their country ; those who have always hated art, can rejoice in the bare walls of the National Gallery ; those who hate books, can pulp them. And those who have suffered from a lifelong hatred of public-schools, can attribute to the training these afford all the defects of our leaders. It has almost become a patriotic duty to hate the public-schools.

I detested mine. I loathed playing games and the company in which I found myself. Even the pleasures of school life, the feasts and concerts, only made me long still more to be elsewhere. And I well remember, incidentally, how depressed I was, during my first half at Eton, to hear boys and old boys roaring out together at a concert the words of the famous Eton Boating Song, for I misunderstood their sense, and as they bellowed " We'll all *swing* together, and swear by the best of schools", I imagined the hangman at his grim task, and the band of juvenile criminals, myself among them, crying out, in a final contemptuous gasp, as the noose tightened round each neck, " Floreat Etona ! " Moreover the words which followed, if I am not mistaken, in one verse, " With our bodies between our knees ", only added to the fate I pictured to myself, a final touch of physical degradation, comparable to being torn down from the gibbet after execution and being drawn and quartered. . . . The short career of nameless crime to which the song must refer, was not, I felt, one to which

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a boy should look forward, or that masters and parents should thus unite to urge upon him. . . . I was surprised at them.

When I left, I was one of the first to attack the system, continually, with justice and without it. I saw that the cult of games and good form was inexpedient in the members of a nation mentally lazy. I dared to suggest — a suggestion that would be even more unpopular today — that intelligence, and especially ability of an original kind, was more to be admired and encouraged than a nimble foot or a correct style in batting.

Among the happiest moments of my life, therefore, was when, returning home one spring, after six months spent in a distant country, I found that, during my absence abroad, the old tie of the public-school had become Public Joke No. 1. It seemed to me to register another advance in the consciousness of Everyman ; a consciousness which, in England, so often registers by means of humour its new advances. . . . I remember, too, how I became aware of it. It happened thus. The porter at Victoria Station, who had, before his proper turn, attempted to take charge of my bags, was greeted by one of his mates with the rebuke,

" 'Ere, remember the Old School Tie, 'Arry. They don't be'ave like this at Eton, whatever they may do at 'Arrow. . . . "

Never, then, in those peaceful days did I expect to have to enrol myself under the banner of the Old School Tie. . . . Yet now that it is attacked from so many quarters, and for so many different reasons — nearly all of them bad —, I feel an inclination to come to the rescue of these antiquated but still barbarous institutions.

Softness, for example, is not born of a public-school. The hardships of which an ordinary man complains, bad sanitation, no baths, cold baths, insufficient, unpalatable and infrequent food, physical suffering of all kinds, including being flogged, an utter lack of amenities — to public-school boys all these were, and still are in the majority of cases, a part of the usual, concentration-camp curriculum ; so much a matter of course that they seldom even made complaints of them to their own parents. These establishments were the ferocious nurseries in which the chiefs and founders of the Empire were reared ; a glance at the *Dictionary of National Biography* soon confirms it. . . . No, the softness, the messy softness, the addled, sympathetic thinking, the belief that

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all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, these sins were born in other places and of other sires.

In a country where everyone is still free to lay the blame on whom he likes, on whose shoulders, I may be asked, do I place the burden of feather-weight wits ? . . . Well, I think the systematic cultivation of whimsical silliness in children — a silliness encouraged in the first place by the late Sir James Barrie, and very swiftly taken up by the Uncles of the daily press and the B.B.C. — has done an incalculable amount of harm. This influence was much worse in the South than the North of England, and never spread to the real poor, and seldom to the public-school class.

All the children affected by it, for example, had to wear badges to show that they belonged to some society of " little ones ", and this fortified the imitative qualities always so unfortunately strong in children. They caught the tone of current silliness from their teachers, and at the same time — perhaps for the only occasion in the history of the human race — became, consciously and self-consciously, children. Further, the badge business, and the waves of popular toys that succeeded each other at regular intervals, encouraged them to believe they must all be the same, all copy, in everything, other children of their own age, have the same manner, the same accent, the same toys, the same parties, the same thoughts, the same kind of parents with the same kind of thoughts. . . . In consequence, Peter Pan never grew up. He merely aged into the fussy, unaspiring, unthinking, uncaring, half-baked, semi-educated, ugly idol of the press, the Little Man. . . . In his hordes he was the heir to the greatest Empire in the world, hacked out of chaos by such men as Drake and Raleigh, Marlborough and Pitt, Wellington and Nelson.

The Little Man was in charge. The world was his, and the illusion of power — though, since he was too silly to make use of it, his teachers and those who fattened on the instalment systems invented to please and entangle him, wielded it on his behalf. He was the *roi faineant* of a vast Empire of which he was ignorant, and in the building of which he and his kind, only brought to birth in the last generation, had taken no part. The Empire had been built up, explored, wrested from the former owners, reclaimed or colonised — and even vast territories beyond the

## *Save the Old School Tie !*

Empire, such as the Southern States of the U.S.A. — by small armies of Old School Ties, younger sons such as Trelawny describes them to be, at the head of large armies of countrymen, adventurers and even criminals; but the well-ordered herds of the cities had not been present. All those men shared the same blood ; but the Little Man has neither blue nor red blood in his veins, but only red tape. Once outside the confines of his office, he is lost, for he cannot consult the rules. He — and she — meet every suggestion with, " f m sorry, but we have no authority. You have to go to the other ministry first, obtain an authorisation ; after that, come back here (we shut at five), and if the regulations have been complied with, we may be able to stamp the form for you, so that you can go back next door."

The Little Man, though irritable, is slow to anger. He acts largely in accordance with the instructions of his prompters ; though constant flattery is the *quid pro quo* of power. He welcomed a policy that laid emphasis on the necessity of General Interference combined with Total Disarmament. He was not pugnacious. Those who wore the badge of the Old School Tie, on the other hand, were always longing to have a scrap, perpetually grumbling, in spite of the enormous taxation to which they were even then subject, at armaments being cut down, saying " We shall have to fight the beggar sooner or later ! " . . . But they had no power now : and the papers were extolling the Little Man again, telling him to " count his blessings " (chief of which was the vote he did not know how to use) : there would be no war. So he settled down comfortably to sleep, in a cocoon of red tape spun on the city's outskirts.

Let us discard, then, the talk of Old School Ties ; and only insist that, after the war, their disadvantages should be open to all: for they do not breed mediocrity or herd-likeness to quite the same extent — though still in more than sufficient quantity — as do other places of education. I hope to see the Little Man's Son wear the Old School Tie. . . . But meanwhile the daily press must stop flattering its customers and telling everybody who has a penny to spare that he is the equal of Leonardo, Shakespeare, Napoleon and Pitt. He is not.

## THE RED FOLDER

I

**B**ADMINTON has for so long represented English life in its widest, no less than its most individual, aspects, that it is impossible for any Englishman who can read or write to approach the Muniment Room there without a sense of mounting excitement. No matter in which direction your interests lie, within this temple of panelled cedar-wood you are sure to find something to enlighten you.

What do you wish, what subject would you like to approach . . . ? The genealogist will most certainly lose himself in a forest of family trees, the amateur of early poetry will search for relics of Chaucer (whose wife, Philippa, was sister to Katherine Swynford, mother of John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, and an ancestress of the Dukes of Beaufort) or of Edmund Spenser, the scientist will look for further accounts of inventions by the Cavalier Lord Glamorgan, 2nd Marquess of Worcester, who was the first to adumbrate a steam-engine, the art-lover for drawings by Canaletto or Rysbrack, the historian will strive to solve a few of the secrets of the Civil War or read sad letters from dead great ladies whose husbands were attainted for their loyalty to the Stuart dynasty, while the student of military history will turn over the many letters from the Duke of Wellington and Lord Raglan. The lover of architecture will be content to regard the Muniment Room itself, which is one of the two terminal pavilions added to the house by William Kent. . . . But no seeker after lost truths or travellers' tales will be more fully rewarded than he who studies the trend of taste ; for he will discover here a triple prize ; he will find all the facts concerning the purchase of an entire art collection in Italy during the early eighteenth century, and within this, as it were, a chart of the currents of connoisseurship, and, within this again, the unfolding of a singular tale.

The documents from which he can unravel the various stories are contained in a book of grey-blue paper, enclosed in a folder

## *The Red Folder*

of bright-red leather, lined with pale-blue paper dusted with gold stars ; a pretty object in itself. Though a few items mentioned in the index are missing, the book has been most carefully arranged and indexed ; a considerable amount of time must have been spent upon it. Nothing exists, however, to indicate who was responsible for this process of sorting and preservation, albeit, from the handwriting, which is clear and pretty, and from the approximate date to be deduced from this, as well as from the general style of the folder — both of which point to the years that lie between 1795 and 1810 — it may well have been one of the daughters of the 6th Duke, or perhaps his Duchess ; for the letters of the Duchesses of Beaufort prove how exceptionally fortunate Badminton has been in the women who occupied it, how deep an interest they took in the house and in the garden ; a trait which, even if it wilted a little during the middle days of the nineteenth century, was never better exemplified than in those who have presided here since 1900. For the re-discovery, however, of these particular papers, as for so much else, the amateur of art has in particular to thank Her Majesty Queen Mary, who, during the course of several visits to Badminton, has displayed the greatest interest in the Muniment Room, and expended so much knowledge and energy upon its arrangement. In all probability, even now the lovers of beautiful and historic objects scarcely comprehend how much they owe to Her Majesty, with her great sense of tradition ; but it is a debt that must become more and more recognised as the years go by.

To the story contained in the red folder, the accounts at Badminton furnish the preface. The 3rd Duke of Beaufort, who succeeded to the dukedom and estates at the age of seven, had, in 1726, when nineteen years old, proceeded with a bear-leader, a certain Mr. Philips, upon the Grand Tour ; a journey of illumination that had in the antecedent half-century become almost obligatory for a great English nobleman. The route, by now hackneyed, invariably opened with a stay in Paris, and culminated in visits to Venice, Rome and Naples. Some fifteen years previous to the time of which we are talking, Alexander Pope, in *The Dunciad*, satirised this voyage :

To where the Seine, obsequious as she runs,  
Pours at great Bourbon's feet her silken sons ;

## *The Red Folder*

Or Tiber, now no longer Roman, rolls,  
Vain of Italian arts, Italian souls:  
To happy convents, bosomed deep in vines,  
Where slumber abbots, purple as their wines :  
To isles of fragrance, lily-silvered vales,  
Diffusing languor in the panting gales :  
To lands of singing, or of dancing slaves,  
Love-whisp'ring woods, and lute-resounding waves.

It was a journey of which Pope disapproved, for it led to foreign ways of life. The young man, he tells us,

Tried all *hors-d'oeuvres*, all *liqueurs* defined,  
Judicious drank, and greatly daring dined ;  
Dropped the dull lumber of the Latin store,  
Spoiled his own language, and acquired no more ;  
All classic learning lost on classic ground ;  
And last turned *air*, the echo of a sound !  
See now, half-cured, and perfectly well-bred,  
With nothing but a solo in his head. . . .

But, however this may have been on occasion, the Grand Tour seems to have instilled in the youthful head of the Duke of Beaufort a love of the arts. While staying in Rome, then, and also after his return, he gave instructions for the purchase of various objects of art and, further, of whole galleries of pictures formed by eminent Italian connoisseurs so that he could reassemble them at Badminton.

No record of the complicated transactions that went to the forming of a great English collection could be more complete than that now before us. It must be held in mind that art-collecting itself was in these years the fashion and that, in addition, within its wide bounds, the list of items which the Duke amassed betrays the current trend of the mode. The pictures and objects sent home to him might well have been bought by Horace Walpole during his visit to Rome in 1740 as a young man, and before he had developed his Gothic inclinations, had he been possessed of so ample a fortune ; here, raised to the highest pitch of excellence, are all the familiar components of a fashionable collection in the English classical or Palladian taste, but with, every now and then, a touch of the Baroque to indicate continental culture and, at the end, a gesture towards sport, the national god. We find the usual marble slabs for table-tops, the usual intaglios

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and urns and busts and vases, but all of the finest quality and possessing an authentic history. Thus of the antique marbles, one of the agents employed — and his words certainly suggest that the Duke had ordered them without seeing them — writes that they " are of exquisite beauty ; most of them were bought from a Temple of Nero in the grounds of the Villa Farnese, and the rest were found on the estate of the Marchese Saqueti ".

The paintings, again, included—so the catalogues state—, besides works purporting to be by such masters, immutable and immune from the decrees of fashion, as Raphael, Leonardo, Veronese, Rubens, Claude, Poussin, Palma Vecchio, Van Dyck and Caravaggio, others by such lesser artists — but then almost equally famous — as Domenichino, Guido Reni, Salvator Rosa, Pietro da Cortona, Carlo Maratti, Mattia Preti, Guercino, and some battle pieces by Borgognone. Concerning these painters, it may be well, in order to gauge the taste of the time, to remind ourselves of one or two facts. Carlo Maratti, we may note, was Sir Joshua's favourite Italian colourist, just as, later, Guercino's paintings were destined to be the most admired by Lord Byron. Mattia Preti, or Calabrese as his contemporaries called him, was a follower of Ribera, who found his technical speciality in the realistic rendering of basket-work, string, rushes, fish-nets, matting and other objects of that dry colour and crabbed and rustling texture. He should, however, have been more justly famous for his rich and sumptuous frescoing of the barrel-vaulted ceilings of the Pro-Cathedral of St. John, at Valetta, in Malta, one of the finest decorative exploits of Baroque painting. As for Salvator Rosa, undoubtedly a man of genius, his immense renown rested scarcely less upon his poetry, his musical compositions, upon his revolutionary politics and his strange career, the incidents of his hiding in caves and consorting with gypsies, than upon his pictures ; it all appealed to the growing romantic feeling of the period — and here we must for a moment digress, in order to take note of the extraordinary history attaching to one of the two celebrated pictures by Salvator — *The Nursing of Jupiter* and the still more famous *Fortuna* — which the Duke of Beaufort purchased. The story is related at some length and with great richness of detail by Lady Morgan.<sup>1</sup> This is her description of the

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa*. Ed. in 2 volumes. London, 1824.

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" philosophical picture ", as it was termed at the time, a painting of great interest and considerable beauty. " Fortune ", she says, " as she is represented when fancy paints her in her brightest smiles, appeared as a fair woman, pouring from a cornucopia a torrent of riches, honours, crowns, mitres, crosses, jewels, gems and coins, which fell in endless succession upon a multitude of gaping, greedy candidates for her fickle favour. These candidates were all either unclean beasts, crawling reptiles, or birds of prey, filthy, sanguinary and rapacious. In their eagerness to snatch at the treasures which Fortune seemed to reserve for them, they trampled under their feet the symbols of genius, liberty and philosophy, which impeded their efforts ; and books, globes, and instruments, the pen, the pencil and the stylus and the compass, lay broken, sullied and neglected. The ass decked himself with orders, the swine assumed the mitre, the fox mounted a cross ; wolves, vultures, and tigers divided amongst them princely coronets and royal crowns, and Fortune laughed while she thus accorded as caprice or violence directed her choice."

This painting at once aroused an immense amount of interest; but, writes Baldinucci, " this Fortune was to prove the 111 Fortune of Salvator". Cardinals Bandinelli and Ruspoli drew the attention of Don Mario Chigi to this allegory. The following morning he and his brother, the future pontiff Alexander VII, went to see Salvator at an early hour, and were so charmed by the picture and impressed, that its fame spread everywhere. So great was the vogue of it, that Salvator was persuaded to allow it, and a companion piece of satire, entitled *Human Frailty*, to be exhibited at the Pantheon, at the exhibition held annually for the feast of San Giovanni Decollato. The Roman people, who were thus permitted to see it, hailed Salvator as their champion, while the members of the hierarchy denounced it with vigour ; for it must be remembered that Salvator Rosa was known to be a revolutionary, and had fled to Rome from Naples a short time previously, after the quelling of the Malaniello revolt, in which he had been implicated.

In any case, the priests hinted that under a less merciful Pope, this artist would have been put to death for such a work. Moreover his rivals and enemies — of whom he possessed a host — now insinuated that the satire was personal, and in no way

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general. " The nose of one powerful ecclesiastic," Lady Morgan continues, " the eye of another, were detected in the brutish physiognomy of the swine, who were treading pearls and flowers under their feet — a Cardinal was recognised in an ass scattering with his hoof the laurel and myrtle which lay in his path; and in an old goat reposing on roses, some there were who even fancied the infallible lover of Donna Olympia, the Sultana Queen of the Quirinal ! . . ." The cry of atheism and sedition was raised and reached the ears of the Inquisitor. . . . The position was one of the greatest danger to Salvator, and preyed upon his mind so much as to affect his health. . . . But in this moment a patron appeared who could save him. Prince Giovanni Carlo de' Medici—afterwards Pope Innocent X—who had come to Rome to be made a cardinal, offered him the protection of his brother, Ferdinand II, Grand Duke of Tuscany. . . . Salvator accepted, and the Prince-Cardinal, pretending that the artist was a member of his household, smuggled him out of the Papal States, to Florence, where he was safe from *sbirri* and Inquisition. . . . All this had happened some seventy or eighty years before the Duke of Beaufort bought the *Fortuna*, for a sum of 600 Roman crowns, among many other works of art — though none, it may be, possessed of a more singular story.

Where the furniture he bought is concerned, the chief piece mentioned in the catalogue is the enormous cabinet of *pietra dura* that now stands in the ballroom at Badminton. This was commissioned by the Duke for the sum of five hundred pounds, then, in actual value, a still more considerable amount, and belongs to a type of furniture, at present far from popular, which was designed for a palace and not for a bungalow or cottage : but it is the masterpiece of its kind. The royal manufactory of *pietra dura*, or inlaid and encrusted designs in marble and semi-precious stones, had long been established in Florence, where this kind of work remained a speciality for several centuries. Under the direct patronage of the later Medici Grand Dukes of Tuscany, and their successors of Lorraine-Hapsburg, from it Italian artists in this medium were sent out to decorate the interior of the Taj Mahal, and its cabinets and table-tops found their way into every part of Europe. It still survived in Florence before the outbreak of the 1939 war, and had, attached to it, a delightful

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small museum, which contained, among other exhibits, the originals of a whole series of designs by Zocchi, the eighteenth-century artist whose book of engravings of Tuscan villas is so well known. In another letter we are told that "several of the nobility and connoisseurs of the city have found the Cabinet of an exquisite and perfect workmanship". This great piece of furniture is a sophisticated work of art, beautiful in its ingenuity and engineering, as well as in colour and design, but it will not be liked by those who care only for old oak.

Besides the cabinet, there are other isolated commissions. The accounts show, for example, an entry: "To the painter Pietro Berton, 440 crowns for 8 pictures especially painted for His Excellency, The Duke", and a payment of 50 crowns "to Francesco Santi Falcganame on account of having made Cassoni inlaid with marble". . . . At the end of the list comes the article which all English travellers on the Grand Tour ordered for themselves, "A Case with two Gunns". . . . As for the prices, we note that 400 Roman crowns, or a sum of £100, as then computed, was the price of a Leonardo, that 600 crowns was the amount paid for two pictures by Claude, 200 for a couple by Nicholas Poussin, and that the *Girl with a Guitar*, by Caravaggio, was purchased for a similar figure. Exclusive of the cabinet and the several isolated objects — as, also, of the considerable expenses which the various agents employed were careful to incur — the total which the Duke paid came to 18,284 Roman crowns, or £4571 sterling.

More fascinating, though, than the comparison of these sums, are other details contained in the letters and financial statements; details which offer possibly the most lively account extant of the getting together of a great collection in Italy by an English nobleman, of how the things were bought, how they were packed, in what kind of straw, even, they were wrapped, of how they were taken, some by road and some by river, to Fiumicino or Leghorn, how they were put on board, what the boats were called, and how much the owners and the captain received as their share, the amount of the dues and duties, and of how, in the end, they were unloaded at Bristol. . . . The fact, for instance, of which we are reminded, that an export duty was payable at the frontier of the Papal States on every article leaving them, enables us to under-

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stand something that we had scarcely comprehended before ; how great must have been the romantic revenue thus derived from the buried past, directly from taxes, no less than from sales. Rome, as late as the eighteenth century, was still an inexhaustible quarry that provided all Europe — and especially England, for the English private travellers were always the most extravagant in their purchases — in addition to the Pope and Cardinals and Roman Princes, with the furnishing of galleries and museums. The grounds of the Villa Borghese alone had provided its owners with, it was said, three successive collections of statuary, one being found as soon as the other had been sold. Each fresh level uncovered revealed in turn its buried armies of marble and bronze and stone, waiting to be sold into foreign servitude. And, just as the former wealth of the Popes, in the Middle Ages, had been drawn from the living concourse of pilgrims congregating then in Rome from every part of Christendom, so now, obversely, it was brought in by the dispersal to distant lands of these multitudes of the dead : these long-interred limbs of marble paid for the superb piazzas and palazzos of the Rome of the Counter-Reformation, in the same way that the ancient and broken aqueducts were made to supply the cascades, the plumes and the rills of water for its magnificent fountains.

Thus each small, dry fact may prove to be a key which, if we turn it, opens on to an unexpected vista, vast and sweeping, full of movement and colour. . . . As we read on, we begin to comprehend, too, the characters of the various men engaged in the transactions ; the more humble, from their own letters, the protagonists not so intimately, from letters addressed to them. And, beyond the contents of the red folder, we know them, also, from their portraits, formal and ceremonious. For, not satisfied with compiling the material for such records, the two chief persons concerned sat for their portraits in Rome to commemorate these activities. Their pictures, two of the Duke and one of the Cardinal, still hang at Badminton. In one the Duke, a young man in a dark-red coat and white wig, flourishes a hand, that plainly says " Behold Me and My Works", in a proprietary gesture towards the Colosseum, which stands immediately behind him : in the other he wears a blue *deslpbille'* and blue turban : while Cardinal Alberoni, the chief negotiator

in Rome of the sales, though too important a dignitary to make any very direct appearance upon our stage, — as, for instance, through personal letters — sits, a little in the attitude of Titian's Pope, in a chair, dressed in his robes as a prince of the Church, and holds in one hand a list of the pictures and marbles that he has so happily palmed off upon the young English collector. The last two portraits form a pair.

These three portraits are by Trevisani,<sup>1</sup> a name which occurs several times in the lists and accounts in the red folder (for example, "Advanced to Signor Trevisani, one hundred and twenty crowns") : but the first picture of the Englishman was finished by John Wootton, the incidence of whose name supplies another link between the 3rd Duke of Beaufort and the arts. The four great wall-paintings of the Duke engaged in his favourite sports — one of which depicts him setting out for a day's hawking on Salisbury Plain, a falcon on his wrist, and the enormous, broken boulders of Stonehenge here behind him, as is the Colosseum in Trevisani's portrait — have long made his patronage of Wootton known to lovers of English painting. Papers in the Muniment Room at Badminton have, however, further disclosed that Wootton had been page to the Duke of Beaufort's great-aunt, Lady Anne Coventry, a daughter of the 1st Duke, and that it was she who drew the attention of her family to his talent. The 3rd Duke, at about this time, paid for Wootton to go to Rome to study. The artist was no longer a young man then, he must have been between forty and fifty years of age, but he lived to be eighty-seven, and after his return, the works of his later years reflect very clearly, in their landscape backgrounds, the influence of Claude, under whose spell he had fallen during his sojourn in Rome, so that it now replaced his earlier echoing of John Wyck.

Besides Cardinal Alberoni, another prince of the Church was concerned in various sales of art treasures to the Duke. Of him there is no portrait; but there were various memorials of the part he had played. The catalogue mentions "Two Landskips, the present of Cardinal Albani". . . . But an even more solid testimony existed, since the most famous of the antique marbles,

<sup>1</sup> Probably Angelo Trevisani (1669-1753). Born in Venice, he became a well-known portrait painter.

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subsequently known as the Alberoni Urn, was obtained' from Cardinal Albani by Cardinal Alberoni, and then presented to the Duke as a fitting conclusion to their negotiations. We find the intermediary, named Francesco Guarnieri, writing to the Duke from Rome in these words which afford us some idea of the great value set upon this relic of antiquity : " On the subject of the Urn, I ought to inform Your Excellency that I experienced great difficulty in obtaining Cardinal Albani's permission to send it away. The Cardinal absolutely refused to allow it to leave Rome because it was already engraved <sup>1</sup> and because all the antiquaries of this city hold it in such high esteem. Eventually, however, I had the good fortune to be able to forward it."

It will be seen, though, during the course of these pages, that the credit for persuading Cardinal Albani to relinquish his Urn is claimed by more than one person. And these rival pretensions afford us the initial inkling of much else that transpires.

Perhaps for the first time the modern reader will begin to appreciate the innumerable difficulties with which the patron-importer had to contend — difficulties due no less to the frailty of human nature than to the fragility of canvas and marble. Within the framework of these letters and accounts a very curious human story now reveals itself, a tale of ingratitude and theft, but one which, from this distance, is not lacking in the elements of humour. To appreciate fully what emerges, we must not only inspect the people involved, but, after that, examine the background of the Duke and the two Cardinals, for then other conjectures will arise. Of the lesser figures employed we do not know much. Between the Duke and the Cardinal hovering, important but invisible to the laity, in the background, Francesco Guarnieri, mentioned above, seems to have been the chief visible agent. From his letters — written in French, but manifesting throughout a strong Italian accent — is wafted a certain atmosphere, a certain aroma, which — though this was only a guess — suggested to me the presence of a tonsure. He must, I felt sure, have been a monk, or more probably a priest, living in Rome and able to put wealthy foreigners in touch with various high ecclesiastics who were also great connoisseurs — able, moreover,

<sup>1</sup> The original says " déjà imprimée ". Presumably this means, already engraved beneath the Cardinal's name or coat of arms.

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to arrange sales between them, without the vendors having personally to appear, with a consequent loss of prestige to the Church. Thus Guarnieri would have been able to eke out his livelihood. And I could see him as one who took snuff, by no means delicately, and was argumentative and sanctimonious, thoroughly of the period, with swishing soutane and admonishing finger ; such a priest as Ghezzi and Pannini sometimes depict for us in their Roman caricatures. But since the spelling of the epoch, even of their own names by the persons who bore them, so greatly varies, and so continually, I now incline to identify him with *Johann Francescus Guarnierus*, described as "*Romischer Baumeister*" or Architect from Rome, who designed the plates and drew the plan for a sumptuous and rare folio volume, published in Cassel in 1727, and entitled *Eigentliche Abbildung des Nahe von der Residenz-Stadt Casselgelegenen Berges Ingsgemeen der Winterkasten, nun aber der Carls-Berg genant* Translated, the whole typical page runs, " A TRUE REPRESENTATION of the hill situate near the Capital City of Cassel, usually called the Winter Casket, but now called the Karls-Berg after the most glorious name of His Most Serene Prince and Lord LORD KARL, Landgrave of Hesse, Prince of Herzfeld, Count of Satzenelnbogen, Dietz, Ziegenhahm, Ridda and Schaumberg, etc., together with the Elaborate Buildings and Waterworks there contained with which his aforesaid most Exalted Highness decorated it in the most magnificent manner possible. Prepared by *Johann Francescus Guarnierus*, Architect from Rome, and with the greatest respect, dedicated by him to His Most SERENE HIGHNESS. First Printed in Rome, later in Cassel. Henrich Harrius, Court Printer of Books to the Prince of Hesse. In the year 1727." If then Giovanni Francesco Guarnieri is the person we seek, this book appeared a year before the date of the letters at Badminton.

The other lesser persons concerned in the transactions are more shadowy ; they are Mr. Philips, or Phillips, who had, of course, been with the Duke as tutor in Rome in 1726 ; Mr. Cockburn, of whose position it is difficult to find out anything ; Mr. Aiskew, who was agent at Badminton and also, it appears, a member of Parliament, attending to the Duke's interests in the House ; G. A. Bellini, another Italian intermediary, and Mr. Robert Arbuthnot, the banker of Paris. Besides the two entire

collections of pictures bought from Cardinal Albani, other capital collections were purchased from Signor Priore Vaini and Signor Antonio Borroni.

Concerning the background of the Duke, it must be recalled that the heads of the Somerset family had always been particularly devoted to — and badly treated by — the members of the Stuart dynasty. The father of the 1st Duke, the Cavalier Earl of Glamorgan, 2nd Marquess of Worcester, had lent vast sums, which were never repaid him, to King Charles I. He had suffered the forfeiture of his lands and the destruction of his two chief strongholds, Raglan and Chepstow, as well as a term of imprisonment in the Tower. It had been the loss of these great fortified residences which had induced his son to build Badminton, on an estate left him by a cousin, the only daughter of Lord Somerset of Cashell, and it had been, equally, no doubt, the loss of the many works of art in them, no less than the trend of fashion, which had led the 3rd Duke to buy so many pictures and objects for the embellishment of the newer house. But the troubles that accrued to the Somersets through their loyalty to the Stuarts seem in no way to have strained it; other misfortunes were to follow. A daughter of the 1st Duke, and great-aunt of the 3rd, was, for instance, the wife of the Duke of Ormonde, who was attainted because of his efforts for the Old Pretender; she was left penniless, and her own family was obliged to support her. After the succession of George I, the Dukes of Beaufort lived in retirement, combined with a certain amount of dudgeon, at Badminton. They even kept a picture of the Pretender, and one of his wife with the Prince of Wales's feathers in gilded wood surmounting the frame, hanging there as witnesses for all comers to see. Indeed, they are said only to have been transferred to a less conspicuous position some seventy years later (by which time the family had become reconciled to the change of dynasty), when a visit from Queen Charlotte compelled their removal as an act of courtesy.

When all this is borne in mind, the fact that Cardinal Alberoni should have been the other chief person concerned in the Duke of Beaufort's art-collecting activities, is seen in its proper perspective. Giulio Alberoni (1664-1751) had been born in Piacenza, in humble circumstances, but his great diplomatic ability and a

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natural flair for intrigue soon earned him a prominent position. The Princes of the Farnese family took him under their patronage, and he had much to do with arranging the match between Elizabeth Farnese and the King of Spain. He was, moreover, the man particularly chosen by the Pope to superintend the finances of the Old Pretender and his family in Rome. In 1718, the Cardinal had been engaged in correspondence with Charles XII of Sweden,<sup>1</sup> with the object of a Stuart restoration in England : but Charles XII died at the critical moment of these negotiations and his death dealt a bitter blow to Alberoni, who, on hearing the news, made the remark "*Sembra regnare una costellazione maligna*" The following year, 1719, he was again hatching Jacobite plots, and resolved to aid the Old Pretender with a fleet sailing from Cadiz. The command of this he offered to the Duke of Ormonde, the Duke of Beaufort's great-uncle. . . . And it may be relevant here to notice that when the Duke of Beaufort set out for the Grand Tour in 1726, seven years later, he opened his journey with a great ball, for which the accounts exist, at St. Germain,<sup>2</sup> where doubtless many adherents to the Stuart cause were still living, and that the bills also show him, on his way home, twice to have visited Avignon, where the Duke of Ormonde resided. . . . These facts may indicate certain sympathies or, of course, they may be without any special significance.

Of Cardinal Alberoni's character, the portrait at Badminton tells us a good deal; but an entry in the President de Brosses' *Lettres Familieres*<sup>3</sup> tells us more. In a letter to Monsieur l'Abbe Courtois de Quincy, written in 1740, at the time of the Conclave that followed the death of the Pope Clement XII, the President uses his incisive pen to give us a short sketch of all the Cardinals present. Of Alberoni he writes : ". . . *Plaisantin, plein d'esprit et de feu; inquiet, remuant, meprise sans moeurs, sans decence, sans*

<sup>1</sup> See a pamphlet by Professor Tancred Borenius, reprinted for private circulation from the *Scottish Historical Review* (April 1920). Jackson, Wylie & Co., Glasgow.

<sup>2</sup> The Stuart Court at St. Germain evaporated after the death of Mary of Modena on 7th May 1718. A few ladies of the Court, however, lingered on, probably in the Chateau. It is said that their devotion to the memory of their Queen caused them to continue every evening to light the candles upon her dressing-table.

<sup>3</sup> Le President de Brosses en Italic Perrin, *Lettres Familittres, Ecrites d'Italie en 1739 et 1740*. Paris (1885).

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*consideration, sans jugement. Selon lui, un Cardinal est un jean . , habille de rouge. On l'a nommi legat a Ravenne, on il a forme le beau projet de conquerir la republique de Saint-Marin. . . "* This last remark no doubt connects with the Cardinal's reputation for plotting, and with his previous eventful career. He had many times been accused of intriguing against them and their neighbours, by the governments to which he had been accredited. Indeed, he had been expelled from his cardinalate in 1720, and only restored to it in 1723.

The history of Alberoni, then, would lead one, further, to deduce that the Cardinal Albani — or "Cardinal Albany", as, with that delightful anglicisation so characteristic of the period, he is called more than once in various documents — from whom so many pictures were bought, was Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692-1779), and not Cardinal Annibale Albani. These two brothers were nephews of Clement XI, and the President de Brosses sums him up for us under the same circumstances, and in the same letter, in which he describes Alberoni: "*Albani (Alexandre), frere du precedent (Annibal) et son ennemi. Quelques gens pretendent neanmoins que cette haine nest quun jeu pour mieux couvrir leurs menees. lis se sont un pen rapproches depuis peu : celui-ci est chef des Picmontois, homme d'esprit, galant et le plus repandu de tous dans les societes de la ville. Il aime le jeu, les femmes, les spectacles, la litterature, et les beaux-arts, dans lesquels il est grand connoisseur*" And we may note, too, in view of what we know of Cardinal Alberoni, that the two great pictures on Stuart themes (*The Marriage of James Francis Edward* and *The Birth of Charles Edward*), now at Mentmore, came originally from the Palazzo Albani at Urbino. Moreover, the fine collection of late Stuart portraits at Stonyhurst College, though said by certain authorities to have belonged to Alberoni — a claim which the age of some of the sitters makes an impossibility — is, by others, stated to have been formed by Alessandro Albani. The likeliest solution of this problem has been suggested by Professor Borenius: that Cardinal Albani bought the earlier Stuart portraits from Cardinal Alberoni and added subsequently to the collection. In any case, in addition to being an illustrious connoisseur, Cardinal Albani had interested himself in the Stuart fortunes. . . . The reader will now, it may be, begin to wonder whether the

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young Duke of Beaufort, in addition to his main object of enriching Badminton, had not also found after this fashion an indirect means of subsidising the Jacobite cause, or, at least, of aiding the prosperity of its chief foreign supporters.

### II

The arrival of the various items composing the collection spread itself over many months. Several boats were employed, and the captain of one of them complains that, owing to the weight of the marbles he was shipping, he was unable to accept any other cargo, and asks, therefore, for special rates, or for compensation. The earliest consignment, which included some of Cardinal Albani's pictures, arrived in the autumn or the winter of 1727-1728.

Mr. Philips, who had presumably returned home with the Duke, was in England when the first ships began to unload. He had been receiving, it is clear, a salary of £300 a year from his charge, and on 20th July 1727 he executed a document, duly witnessed, which is somewhat puzzling, though it relates to a debt to the Duke. The paper is headed " William Philips Esq., to His Grace the Duke of Beaufort ", and shows that seven quarterly allowances, down to Midsummer 1727, and amounting to £525, have been deducted from a total of £2101 12:4 advanced by the Duke, thus leaving a sum unaccounted for of £1576 12:4. The paper continues : " I do hereby acknowledge to have received from His Grace . . . fifteen hundred seventy six pounds two shillings and four pence out of which His Grace is generously pleased to give me five hundred seventy-six pounds two and four pence ye remaining one thousand pounds I do hereby promise to pay unto ye said Duke or his order on demand. . . . W. Philips. . . ." As will soon transpire, however, Mr. Philips did not long remain content with his patron's generosity.

It must have been in about October or November 1727 that the first purchases were delivered at Badminton. The young collector will, no doubt, have been impatient to see the great cases unpacked, to remind himself of their exact contents, and, especially, to see how the things would look, too, now that they

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were at home. But, though there was an army of men to unpack for him, it had to be most carefully done : the Italian townspeople, like the Chinese, always packed with great delicacy and cleverness, and the perhaps blunter wits of these rustic workmen had to be given the time in which to think out the best method of opening the cases, and their certainly blunter hands had to be allowed many hours for the unwrapping of the articles within them. When, at last, the process was complete, the owner found, to his dismay, that many objects were missing. . . . At first he laid the blame on the thieving Italian authorities, their love of trickery, or the deft, quick-fingered Italian packers and porters. . . . After all, though, it would have been difficult for them to steal such a large proportion of the things. For weeks the Duke was puzzled. Communications with Italy were slow, and he could find out nothing. . . . Then, in January, he happened to glance at a printed bill which had been sent him. It ran :

CATALOGUE OF VALUABLE PAINTINGS by the most Celebrated MASTERS ; with several fine Marble Busts, etc.

Fine Granet, Marble and Curios inlaid Tables, with some Figures in Brass, by the famous Flamingo, Bernini and others, lately collected in Rome, Venice, and other parts of Italy.

Which will be Sold by Auction on Wednesday the 24th and Thursday the 25th of this Instant January 1727-8, at Mr Cock's Auction-Room in Poland-street, the Corner of Broad-street, Golden Square.

The collection may be viewed on Monday the 22nd, and every Day after till the hour of Sale, which will begin each Day at Eleven o'clock in the Forenoon precisely.

The Conditions of Sale as Usual.

Catalogues to be had Gratis at the Place of Sale.

(The Masters)

|                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Pietro Bianchi                | Guercino                       |
| Spagnoletti                   | Michael Angelo Carravagio      |
| By a Scholar of Philipo Lauro | Viviano                        |
| Gio. Battista Adriani         | Gasper Poussin                 |
| Paulo Veronese                | Ghisolfi                       |
| Horizonti                     | Cav. Calabrese                 |
| Philipo Lauro                 | Guercino                       |
| Peter de Cortona              | Mola                           |
| Salvator Rosa                 | Carlo Maratti                  |
| Perin del Vago                | A scholar of Carlo Maratti     |
| Dominichino                   | Baltazar Scholar to P. Cortona |
| Ciro Ferri                    | Nichola Poussin                |
| Van Dyck                      |                                |

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As the Duke looked at this bill, he recognised in it, suddenly, the names of many of the painters of the pictures and sculptors of the statuary so mysteriously missing from his own collection. He noticed, too, that the auction rooms — at which the sale was due to begin in only two days' time ! — were situated in Poland Street, only a few doors from where Mr. Philips was at present living. . . . It will be seen that Mr. Philips's haul had been extensive.

The Duke immediately gave orders to his other agents to stop the sale : but such action was impeded, from the very start, by the fact that all the principals in the matter seem to have been suffering from severe attacks of gout. (Mr. Aiskew, it will be noticed, could not himself reach Mr. Philips, because he had gout in the feet, and Mr. Philips was, so he tells us later, " extreme ill of the gout " at the same moment.) We have not the Duke's instructions, but here is the part of a letter from Mr. Aiskew :

My Lord,

I received the favour of both your Grace's ltrs of the 20th N.S. being the day before the auction began. Your Grace will see by mine of the 16th instant that Mr Cockburn remains in Scotland so what relates to him cannot now be pursued. I made out your Grace's list immediately and sent to Mr Bertie who hapned to come to town that night. He signed a proper warrant in case ye Mr Phillips should not comply upon delivery of your Grace's ltr as follows

" Mr Jones

I have seen letters from the Duke of Beaufort wherein he claims the several pictures and other things above mentioned to be his Right, and I am informed they are included in the sale of pictures and other things which will begin to be sold tomorrow at Mr Cock's house in Poland Street as the collection of Mr Philips who lately travelled with the Duke. I do therefore hereby authorise and require you to attend at the sd Sale and there demand the said pictures for his Grace's use and in case they are refused to be delivered you then to give publick notice to any person that offers to buy the same of the Duke 's Right and that whoever purchases them will be obliged to restore them back

Given *etc*"

I hapning to be a little lame of the gout in my feet could not go but got Mr Clayton to go for me to Mr Philips to demand the things and a proper witness also to the Auction. But Mr Philips upon receiving your Grace's, compiled and signed an agreement and gave a note to Mr Cock the auctioneer that what things Mr Jones bid for should

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be set by, which were those things your Grace mentioned to be wanting that were found to be in his Sale.

Then Mr Clayton gave him the copy also of your Grace's further demand of the remainder of the pictures wanting as mentioned in your Grace's list. Mr Philips told him he knew nothing of them, that it was a blunder of Mr Cockburn's, that he could say no more until Cockburn came to town and that the Duke should have all satisfaction.

Mr Jones has since brought me an account of Mr Philip's auction those marked in the margin are the things set by for your Grace pursuant to the agreement and the prices set down are what the lots sold for, but Mr Jones acquainted me that above half were bought for himself by what are called (bidders or bids), and that he knows some of them very well this Mr Howard's son today confirmed me . . . "

Your Grace's most obedient and humble

servant

Mich. Aiskew  
1727.

Mr. Cockburn wisely continued to remain in Scotland, doubtless hoping for the storm to blow over, and contented himself with issuing protests of innocence from the distance. He knew nothing of the things, he declares, but, finding Mr. Philips's seal on the backs of certain cases, had naturally concluded they were his and had in consequence left them at his house. At the end of his letter he adds sententiously, " Mr. Philips is a gentleman of honour and he will certainly do justice to His Grace and clear me ".

In the meantime, the " gentleman of honour " was proving to be, in addition, a man of resource, and prolific of excuses. The Duke must have received from him several letters now missing, but that which follows, headed " Hammersmith Sept. 14th 1728 ", clearly relates to newly discovered thefts, as well as to those already established :

My Lord

On Thursday Mr Jones was here to demand by Your Grace's orders some pictures etc., and soon after he was gone I received Your Grace's letter of the 9th with a catalogue enclosed. Your Grace will give me leave to observe that in January last when I was extreme ill of the gout and half an hour before my unlucky Auction began your injunctions were brought me not to dispose of a certain number of pictures. I immediately (as I allways shall) complied with them, and those Pictures to which Your Grace layd clame were reserved, and I concluded that I might justly and without incurring any blame dispose of all the rest. Your Grace has now sent a Demand for some other

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Pictures which were not included in the former list; some of them were never in my possession, particularly the two Battles Del Padre Jacomo, and if any such are wanting I presume I am not answerable for them since it was another person who packed them up in Rome and received them in London by Your Grace's orders. For the others to which no claim was made, and which as I have said I thought I might justly dispose of, it is now impossible for me to make any satisfaction by paying Your Grace either what they cost or what they were sold for. Of those pictures marked in the first List there are only two . . . to which Your Grace dos now lay clame and those Mr Jones has. And give me leave to afirm in the most solemn manner that I have charged myself with them and with all the others mentioned, in my account of what I owe Your Grace as I do everything else, for there is not anything in my possession, to which your Grace has the lest imagination you have any Right or to which you have any inclination which your Grace shall not airways freely and absolutely command. As for the box of stones . . . I had the ill luck to put them in my trunk with those I bought for myself when we went to Naples, and sent them by the fatal Partenope which was taken by the Spaniards. I am glad the loss to Your Grace was so small but what was taken from me was considerable to me in my circumstances. I hope your Grace will have better luck in getting Cardinal Alberoni's Urn and will also allow me to be particularly concerned for that, both as it is in itself so very valuable and because I have the satisfaction to think that I was instrumental in obtaining it. Some books I have belonging to Your Grace which with Augustus's Bath<sup>1</sup> shall be delivered to Mr Jones.

That there should be any mistake in these matters is a sensible disturbance to my mind, but when Your Grace considers the great quantity of things bought and the hurry sometimes of buying it is less to be wondered at and to be blamed. I am sure that I never entertained a thought that was not to your Grace's interest improvement and Honour. I am yet under greater uneasiness to perceive that I possess not such a Degree in your Grace's favour as I ever flattered myself with ; By some transactions abroad I considered your Grace placed the greatest confidence in me ; how I came to forfeit it I cannot conceive since I have not don or sayd anything to occasion that misfortune, nor will I ever entertain a thought which is not consistent with the strictest Honor and with the firm Resolution of ever being

My Lord

Your Grace's

Most obedient and most faithful  
humble servant

W. Philips

Several points in this letter are worth considering. First

<sup>1</sup> So-called. This magnificent Greco-Roman sarcophagus stands in the Entrance Hall at Badminton.

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comes the delicious ingenuity which invents a perpetually ready and almost fool-proof excuse ; the loss of any object that the Duke missed from among his purchases in Italy, and that could not be traced through its name occurring in the list of things to be sold by auction, could henceforward be attributed to the capture by convenient Spaniards of the good ship *Parthenope* ! . . . Then comes the sinister solicitude concerning the Alberoni Urn ; a wish that, being interpreted, really means precisely the opposite of what it says : " And I hope the Alberoni Urn is taken too, and serve Your Grace jolly well right ! . . ." Finally, follows the curious hint of blackmail contained in the sentence " By some transactions abroad I considered Your Grace placed the greatest confidence in me ". What were they, and why does he not name them ? Were they perhaps concerned with the Jacobite cause ?

Now Mr. Philips, injured to the last, begins to take his departure from the pages of the red folder. Among the best of his subsequent excuses is a sophism that relates to his theft of some pictures by Borgognone. Since he says the pictures were shown on the Duke's list as *Borgognone*, but were themselves labelled under the other name, *Padre Giacomo*, by which the painter was known, it was naturally concluded that they must belong to him, Mr. Philips !

So Mr. Philips vanishes, but the things continue to arrive, and with more certainty, perhaps, than before. In June 1728 Guarnieri writes from Rome : <sup>1</sup>

My Lord

I have the honour to present my humble respects to Your Excellency and at the same time to inform you that the cabinet is already finished. I have already put it on board, with the Urn which Cardinal Alberoni presented, together with eleven miniatures, which I have forwarded, part by the ship *Beritoni* and part by the "*Ange Bel-loni*". I have wrapped them up in straw in three different cases. The cases of marble number 96 in all. Your Excellency will find annexed a list of the expenses I incurred over the Urn, the Customs, and the transport from Rome to Livorno. May God guide the things safely into port !

Monday morning, the 21st, I left for Fiumicino <sup>2</sup> to put the marbles

<sup>1</sup> The letter is translated by the writer of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Fiumicino : ". . . je parti pour Jiumecino . . ."

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on two small sailing boats, for I wished to be present myself, to see that everything was placed on board properly, and carelessness avoided in moving the things from one boat to the other. As soon as they were on board, I left for Livorno to supervise the loading of the English vessel. Some time before this, I had written to Messrs. Winder & Aikman that they should have their ship ready by the time the two barges arrived, so that those could be immediately unloaded. . . . Nothing, however, had been prepared, and this caused fresh and considerable expense, because we had to wait to take the 12 cases from the warehouses, so as to be sure that none of the marble was spoilt. That is also why I felt I must make the journey to Livorno. I had notified Signor Thomas Tyrrel of Florence in several letters that he must put in order and duly pack in cases the works for Your Excellency, and that he must send them without delay to Livorno. To my mind, this should have been accomplished punctually, as soon as possible after my arrival at Livorno.

I think Your Excellency ought to give orders in London that when the marbles are unloaded, they should be treated with the utmost care and that the moving of them should be made on sledges, for if they go on chariots on wheels there would always be the fear that, in passing over large stones, some pieces would be broken by the jolting. . . . When they are put together, the craftsmen employed ought to be men accustomed to work in marble. . . . Then all will go well.

. . . After many quarrels and disputes with the Roman Customs House officials, who did not wish to accept less than three crowns per cent, and were insistent for 185 on the Urn, I only paid them 60. My voyage from Rome to Livorno, though I tried in this, as in everything else, to keep expenses as low as possible, cost 100 crowns. I had to go and return in a private coach because of the *mauvais air*.

We never hear whether he developed Malaria or not ; but in another letter, written subsequently, he refers again to the cabinet of *pietra dura* — it was the various parts of the cabinet, of course, that he had advised to be moved on sledges, — and says :

It occurred to me to send to Your Excellency a plan of the said cabinet, to show the doors and windows in the wood, and how everything can be arranged so that the wood is hidden in the joints of the walls and only the marble work can be seen, so that one would not know there was wood in it. . . a new invention, newly invented at Rome, according to the drawing and the plan which is marked in colour.

Next comes the actual bill of lading for the *Mary and Susanna* :

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Directed to the Duke of Beaufort. | /Shipped by the grace of God in good order, and well conditioned by Winder and Aikman in and upon the good ship called the Mary and Susanna whereof is Master under God for this present voyage Capt. Ezekias Vass and now riding at anchor in this Port of Livorno and by Gods grace bound for Bristol. The goods hereunder mentioned, marked and numbered as in the margent, and are to bee delivered in the like good order and well conditioned at the aforesaid port of Bristoll (the danger of the seas only I excepted) unto Mr Nathaniel Beal Merchant there or I assigns, he or they paying freight for the said goods Two hundred & twenty pounds sterling in all with ten guineas to the said Capt. as a present for his particular care without any other primage with average accustomed.

In witness whereof the Master or purser of the said Ship hath affirmed to 5 bills of lading, all of this tenor and date the one of which bills being accomplished, the other 4 to stand void, and so God send the good ship to her desired port in safety. Amen.

Dated in Livorno the 8th July 1728.

1-96.—96 cases Say ninety-six great and small containing polished ana wrought marble.

97-99.—3 small Cases say three covered with Canvas . . . containing divers, all by order and account and Risk of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort.

Insides and Contents unknown sd. EZEK. VASS.

The 96 cases " great and small containing polished and wrought marble ", arrived safely and were put together. Perhaps the arms of its rightful owner, the Duke of Beaufort, so proudly displayed at the top of the clock face, set flat, which forms the apex of the monumental cabinet, had prevented Mr. Philips from attempting to annex it; or perhaps its bulk, and its sheer weight, had made such an enterprise formidable, even to a gentleman " of honour " and of much resource. Be that as it may, the cabinet can still be seen, as also the very pretty water-colour drawing of it which safely accompanied the great piece of furniture to Badminton. . . . The Alberoni Urn, too, in spite of Mr. Philips's good wishes, contrived to stay afloat, and in English custody. It remained at Badminton during the lifetimes of the 3rd Duke and his brother, the 4th. Presumably it was sold, some thirty years after the Duke bought it, during the infancy of the 5th Duke, whose uncle and guardian, Norborne Berkeley, Lord Bottetourt, allowed many fine objects to be sold. At any rate the present environment and ownership of this vase, for long very famous, and

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solid enough to have endured for nearly two millennia, is now unknown ; a fate so singular for it, that it is permissible to hope that the publication of this paper may help bring it to light again.

For the rest, Badminton is still full today of the Duke's purchases, pictures and busts and, for example, marble table-tops. Two of these, with tops of "*bianco e nero*", very striking in their zebra-like markings, are immediately identifiable — as are two, described in the contemporary lists, as "*prosciutto*", or "like ham". The plain slabs of marble, the brackets and shells, were many of them used for the construction, a year or two later, of the Turkish Bath, which still exists. Many of the pictures are yet in their places; and out of a particular collection of seven bought from Cardinal Albani, five are at once to be recognised from their descriptions. The two great Salvator Rosas, pictures so beautiful that they would persuade anyone possessed of esthetic sense to admire this neglected painter, hang above the stairs, as do the portraits of the Duke and of Cardinal Alberoni. . . . To all these the red folder affords the clues.

Alas, it is time to put it away, after a last look at the papers it contains. So vivid is the scene which they revive as one reads, that one can almost see the Roman carts, like brightly painted snail-shells, and the peasants who ride in them, rattling over the cobbles in the centre of the city, through the splendid piazzas, with their obelisks of granite, their statues and fountains by Bernini, fountains the play of which imparts an aqueous glitter to the walls of travertine, an unequalled liveliness and sparkle to the atmosphere; rattling down the roads, past drays loaded with treasures, carefully packed for the barbarians of the north, while the dust is lifted in clouds and spreads its wings above the glossy dark-green cypresses, and the noble tombs and temples and monuments with the air of proud impregnability which they preserve despite the battering of a score of centuries. So strong is the sensual impression created, that for the moment the reader seems to hear the splash of oars and the flutter and tugging of sails at Leghorn, and to hear the thud of waves as the ships near England. Almost, too, he seems to see Mr. Philips, in bed, attacked by gout, in a room in Poland Street, Golden Square, on that bitter January morning when, only half an hour before the sale was due to begin, the Duke's injunctions were brought to him.

## MUNICIPAL RHAPSODY : AN IDYLL

(1920-1940)

X HE seaside year is now nearing its zenith. The waves are quieting down beneath the soft summer rains, and the ragged old men no longer poke about for drowned treasure among the seaweed deposited by the storms : while the rival teams of school-girls who during the winter months used to play hockey upon the sands, have laid aside their clubs and made way for the platforms of pierrots and other entertainers licensed by municipal authority ; now, led by mistresses dressed in sensible tweeds, the crocodiles walk in prim procession along the more distant, untrodden golden sands which every day the sea unrolls for them afresh.

Today is a great day, the opening of the Municipal Carnival. Entertainment is no longer unorganised, and every joke and happy outburst of laughter has been long and carefully prepared. Through the mists, the incipient sea-fogs of the early morning, which shroud so far the floral violence, municipal gardeners, carrying upon their arms brass labels, as though they were the loquacious but indistinguishable porters who carry the luggage off French boats, can be seen dimly, balanced on ladders propped against the concrete pergolas of the Italian Gardens, here tin-tacking down the errant branch of an ice-pink Dorothy Perkins, and there shaking the dew off more ponderous, pendent and scentless blossoms. (A chrysanthemum has here been invented which is larger than all others, and blooms — if such a word can be used of such a flower — in shaggy, camphorated perfection throughout the entire summer.) Protected by movable screens of canvas and by overhanging rocks, a few sub-tropical plants, yuccas and palm trees, wilt in sad advertisement of the climate, and dew — more owing to the intense cold of the past night than to the mildness of the morning — has laid a mirror-like sheen upon excessively trim lawns. Soon, however, the sun appears — at first a poor, lost, red balloon floating uncharted in this grey vacancy. At once the gardeners climb

## *Municipal Rhapsody : An Idyll*

down their ladders, place them in tool-sheds disguised as Swiss chalets and Norwegian houses, and wheel out their little green-painted motor-mowers, which stripe the grass with patterns in a lighter green, the while their humming imparts, in spite of the facts declared by the thermometer, an indescribable atmosphere of summer. Up and down, up and down, they clip these lawns, above the sands; the morning tidiness of which, alas, even they will never rival.

The holiday-makers by now begin to saunter ox-eyed along the promenade, determined to obtain their money's-worth of staring. A dull sense of expectancy pervades them : they seem to be on the look-out. And, indeed, today is a great day, the first of Carnival Week. For months past the Councillors and Aldermen have sat in conclave in the carved-oak chairs within the red velvet Council Chamber, discussing plans for this occasion. Even last year, in preparation for it, a large, cream-coloured square of Regency houses had been thrown down, and the wind-cut trees, in the garden fronting it, pulled up, so as to make way for a municipal battledore-and-shuttlecock court, combined with the latest " Lido " and soda-fountain. Only a few days ago this had been declared open by a jubilant Lady Mayor. . . . But today is even more important : today takes place the Battle of Flowers, modelled upon the delicious, southern gaieties of the Riviera. Alas, since this year, except in the gardens belonging to the Corporation, the flowers are very backward, the solemn, red-faced crowds have been forced to rely — instead of throwing carnations and opulent roses — upon a plentiful supply of confetti, streamers and Jubilee medals made of chocolate.

First of all there rolls by (a sigh of interest passes through the crowd) an enormous papier-mache car entitled *Progress*, in which are borne aloft a mammoth bomb, a monster radio, a gramophone and the advertisements — for by this means the Corporation saves the pockets of the ratepayers — of numberless patent medicines. The maladies to which the conditions of their lives expose the members of a democracy are here freely emphasised : there is no attempt at censorship. Behind the chariot of Progress, so beautifully painted and gilded for the occasion, comes a car, drawn by stage horses, containing clownish yokels in yellow wigs, smocks and top-hats, and armed with pitchforks. Now arrive

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towering Carnival figures, like the exaggerated ghosts of ventriloquists' dummies. A red-faced woman suddenly hurls a paper rose at the Lady Mayor, and all the children blow noses, dance and clap their hands. Next marches past the band of the local Yeomanry or Territorials employed for the occasion, and braying lustily along. The defectives, removed in the summer from their winter playground, the sands, and usually immured in houses at this season, have been brought out to watch the gaieties. It seemed a shame that their shortcomings should deprive them of such a simple, yet delightful, pleasure. Poor things, they have suffered enough, and their guardians whisper and confide to each other innumerable secrets ; but the scene appears to excite their charges, to work them up to curious and unexpected frenzies, and their attendants are forced to murmur soothingly to them. One shakes from head to foot without ceasing, another barks like a dog ; a third grimaces at the spectators. . . . Perhaps it was a pity, after all, to bring them.

Now the whole procession wends its way down to the sands ; wherefrom, for the moment, the platforms and the pierrots in their glittering white clothes have been removed, and crowds, still greater, collect to watch the fun. The civilian municipal band takes over from the military, and, caged-in on one side, as though they were rare animals, from the wind's attack, the members of the orchestra indulge their curious, nostalgic fancies; sometimes Dvorak, singing of the negroes shuffling through the orange-hung darkness of the South, and sometimes Tchaikovsky, celebrating the hot-house delights of Tsarist Russia, the gypsies, the waltzes and the lights that gladdened its polar nights. . . . And now, the sun comes out, reveals itself for all the crowd to see, and the happiness of the Councillors, the Fathers of their People, is at last complete.

## STILL LIFE : (I) DINING-ROOM PIECE

I WANT now to paint for you a still-life of things that are eaten in far-away lands, with, in the background, the likenesses of those who evolved the dishes and, beyond them, a glimpse of the strange and imposing landscape which brought them forth. This picture aims to be a piece of the kind that was once so popular, hanging in every large English dining-room, but has now been set aside ; by Snyders, or — as in the superlative examples of this *genre* — by that artist and Jordaens in conjunction. Differences, however, will at once be manifest, for instead of the peacock or the death-divining swan forming, as it were, the feathery explosive nucleus of my canvas, and lording it over the corpses of turkey, lobster and domestic fowl, here it will be that bird of fabulous beauty, the Quetzal, who queens it over iguana and armadillo, and the background will resemble ruins depicted by Pannini rather than some Flemish hall. . . . But you shall judge.

The Quetzal, indeed, plays a part at the beginning, for it is the national emblem of Guatemala, and was formerly, before the Spanish Conquest, the sacred bird of the indigenous clans. Clothed in green plumage of incredible brilliance and loveliness, and in appearance akin to a bird of paradise, it is so shy, so rare, as to be almost legendary except in the inmost prides of Zoological Gardens the world over. Nevertheless, even the coinage is named after it, a franc is — or was — a quetzal; and the strain of imagination touching practical affairs, which this nomenclature exemplifies, runs through the whole national life, and begins to form a national style inspired by the original people of the country, albeit in many directions it is also intensely Spanish. Everywhere this Indian influence, Maya or Aztec, is to be felt; everywhere, beneath the disguises it has assumed, this national flavour obtrudes — and not least in the food.

It pervades everything — the things to be bought and sold, the houses, the clothes, and, above all, is to be detected in the dark interiors of the gigantic churches, cloudy with incense,

## Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece

glittering with threads of gold where the flickering light catches the gilding ; because all the illumination comes from the floor. For an hour or more each worshipper kneels on the stone pavers, strewn with rose petals, within a circle of candles that form, as it were, the footlights, and gesticulates, threatens and implores the Christian Deity for help, in one of the innumerable Maya dialects — and then leaves the church and returns to some dark nook in the mountains, there to renew the same pleas to the monstrous stone images that his tribe still worships in secret. Everywhere, as I have said, you will find the old gods evoking the old culture within the Christian forms ; and it is surely more sensible to cultivate this sentiment to the full than to reject it — and yet, where deliberately it has been set aside, that, too, goes so far to the other extreme as to introduce an original atmosphere, and so I will mention here that many of the larger villages and towns in Guatemala have in their dusty centres, or in no-man's-lands on the outskirts, set in a gesticulating swirl of cactuses, and with, behind them, the essentially non-European outlines of their numerous volcanoes, a Doric temple, erected in white plaster by dusky workmen. These were decreed by the edict of a former President, in love with Greek culture, and determined to forge a classical pedigree for his country : the plaster is already falling, and the temples look anaemic, mean, unhappy ; poor white trash, in fact.

The provisions for every *menage* in Guatemala have to be bargained for at the market. It is impossible to obtain supplies outside, because the peasants throughout the country so much enjoy the occasion, which develops, for the man into a kind of club for drinking, and for the woman into the equivalent—though certainly more democratic — of Ascot and Longchamp. If you meet these Indian peasants upon the road, and stop them — they are running — and offer to buy some of the chickens, ducks, pigs, vegetables, fruit and flowers, under which they are weighed down, for treble the price they could, at the best, hope to extort for them from tyros in the market-place, they will assuredly refuse, otherwise they will miss the talk, the fun of a function, discussion of scandal and the showing-off of clothes. And upon *clothes* we must lay emphasis. Living for the rest on fruit and a little dried armadillo, in semi-transparent establishments woven of wattle,

*Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece*

with mud added to it for substance, both men and women lavish their whole fortunes — and they are not peons, are by no means so intensely poor as the natives in other regions of Central and South America — upon dress. These costumes vary entirely in cut and in colour with each village, but in every case their origin is to be sought for in the Spanish fashions of two or three centuries ago, though the decorative motives which they embody are of Indian inspiration. They add a wonderful splendour and strangeness to the landscape and a sense of fantasy to the towns.

It is for these reasons, then, that the broad tracks along the sides of the roads are perpetually crowded with Indians, always at the run, padding along on their silent naked feet at a particular quick running trot, for they never walk, and markets are frequent and universal. And thus it is that in the morning, when the forests and the plantations of coffee and sugar round the city of Antigua are still thick with dew, and when, as the sun rises, the world of insect life within these balmy wildernesses sets up with voice and castaneted wing so great a clamour, loud and brief as a shriek, a sound that can only be described as a rhapsody of triumph, these peasants in their dresses, diverse but always gay, can be seen converging from all sides upon the city, the women trotting too, some with long plaited pigtaails of coarse black hair hanging down behind, and some with a baby fastened to their backs by a shawl, its nose level with the mother's shoulders.

I have chosen Antigua for the market, since though this is no finer than another, I know it the best. And though the scene lacks the Doric temple that graces so many of these towns, it has its own beauties and advantages of Nature and architecture. Formerly the capital of one whole quarter of the Indies, it was partly destroyed by a great earthquake in the 1760 's, and its ground space is in consequence too vast for the present population, and therefore no wave of modern American construction has ensued. It remains today a partly ruined city of enormous, crumbling, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century churches, made of golden stone, or of adobe of the same rich tone, the intricate sculptural and arabesque decoration fitted in between the twisting pillars and round the pompous coats of arms upon the facades being the work of Indian craftsmen trained by the Jesuits. Some

## *Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece*

of the facades are so covered with deeply incised decoration that they look in the distance as though they were scrawled all over with handwriting. A few of the palaces — notably those with the three arcaded storeys in the chief *plaza* — exist only as to their fronts. The sky now shows through the windows of their theatrical *decor* ; but the majority, in this resembling the houses of Andalusia — from which province, surely, the conquistadors who first settled here must have set forth, — are of one storey only, enclosing *patios*, and therefore sustained less injury than the lofty and aspiring churches. All these old palaces have fine iron grilles over their windows, and doors of smooth cypress wood with ornate bosses and designs of iron nails and studs, almost Byzantine in appearance. And several of them, of which the finest example is perhaps the former university and present museum, were designed by an eclectic architect from Seville, who lived here during the 40's and 50's of the eighteenth century, and whose declared aim it was to invent a manner which would represent the style wherein the descendants of the Moorish builders in Andalusia *would have* worked, had their ancestors never been turned out by the Spaniards ! And this ingenious adaptation of Saracenic, embodying *rococo* themes, which he deliberately evolved, is singularly delightful and to be seen nowhere else, even in Guatemala. The resemblance between, let us say, certain courts of the Alhambra and that of the university here, with its gaily fretted arcade and its lion-fountain, is unmistakable ; though, in addition, since all the workmen employed were peons, the Indian influence is again to be felt.

In this town, then, the great market — for every day there is a market of a kind — takes place twice a week. More even than Sunday, and though — in spite of the comparative size of the city to its population — the life in it is always vivid, vital, it imparts a tremendous air of festival to the days on which it occurs. In the first light of the morning the peasants begin to arrive, and you detect the well-known silent padding on the pavement. Soon after, a military band is heard practising. It is time to set out now, for, as elsewhere, the market here must be visited at an early hour. The streets are deserted, since everyone has already started, but on the way we notice the bakers' shops, for bread is not to be bought in the market, and the bread of Guatemala

## *Still Life : (i) Dining-Room Piece*

will be the most delicious and varied that you have ever eaten. At breakfast three or four kinds of roll at least would appear, in either private house or hotel. Otherwise, the shops are rather empty ; empty vaults with cigarettes, rank cigars and postage stamps exposed for sale. But you must hurry.

The market is held in the gigantic *plazas* formed by the chapels, refectories and cloisters of a roofless monastery. . . . In flawless sunlight, the rays of which, though you feel them on your body under your thin clothes, are never *too* hot, this fantastic setting acts as background for a spectacle that never allows the visitor for a moment to forget his surroundings; the violence of it reminds him that, though not so far from the Equator, yet Antigua stands at a height of some five or six thousand feet above sea-level, upon the central plateau of Guatemala, and so the tropics have not sapped the energy of the people. Moreover, wherever you move here, you will see the feather-tufted cones of the two enormous volcanoes, their bulk being the colour of the bloom upon purple grapes, except when snow covers their tops ; mountains which dominate the scene.

You see them, these monstrous twins, rising far over the tops of the towering, broken walls of adobe and stone that frame the market, over the sagging cornices festooned with tropical weeds and foliage, over the immense and disintegrating arches, laced with grotesque decorative motives, through the gaping windows. The best view of them, perhaps, is to be obtained from the one large roof which still exists, a green meadow supported upon arches. Mounted thus, and squatting upon the ground with their wares spread round them, in brilliant sunshine or under the flickering mauve-blue shadow of jacaranda trees that have seeded themselves within these precincts, or of square sails pitched above them, for their shade, on rough wooden supports, sit in long lines these beautiful little golden men and women, clad in dresses which create an amazingly rich effect; coarse homespun linens encrusted with embroidery that, being of fine design, coalesces into splashes of purple and mauve and rose and crimson, of blue and green and yellow and gold. The noise that rises in the air is hardly credible, the general chatter — for these people seem very gay, always chattering, except when they giggle silently, for they seldom laugh aloud — mingles with shouting, with the hammer-

## *Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece*

ing of blacksmiths, with singing, and with the squealing of pigs, bleating of lambs and lowing of calves. In one room alone is there comparative silence, because the women in it — and you notice few men here, except the cooks — are eating, resting, and regarding one another, examining minutely each stitch of embroidery within range.

You might think this difficult, for at first, when you enter from the sun-drenched courts, it takes you a little time to see at all. Formerly a refectory, this room still possesses a roof and its windows are blocked up : no light enters save through the door from the cloister beyond ; but the glowing charcoal fires of the cooks, who crouch above their stoves, stirring unknown concoctions, outline their figures and those of their customers, and flicker redly over the groups of mothers and restless, clawing children sitting on the ground. Eyes and teeth gleam from these sepia shadows, but everything else is gilded only in silhouette, seems to be smouldering, so that the forms take on most curious effects of light and shade, rich blooming darkness and sullen glow. Indeed, this interior, in the contrast it affords between the magnificence of its ruined setting and the unexpectedness of its inhabitants — the last people one would look for in such surroundings —, can be compared in strangeness to those scenes of gypsies, fantastically garbed and feathered, feasting in the Gothic kitchens and dilapidated refectories of deserted monastic houses, which the eighteenth-century Genoese painter, Alessandro Magnasco, loved to depict.

But you must stop looking at the people and go to see what they sell and buy. First you will come to a cloister filled with flowers, placed within its lightly vaulted shade so as not to wither ; huge mixed bouquets, arranged with the skill which this race shows always in its use of colour, gigantic bunches of Harrisii lilies, of orchids, stacks of tuberose, the scent of which lies on the air and wanders far, and many flowers of which I never found out the name, orange and flame-coloured and scarlet. But you must now notice especially one flower, that here is bought either for decoration or to be eaten. This is the yucca ; large spikes, clustering spires of cup-like blossom, creamy and green, ivory and white. The petals, cool, crisp and aromatic, of these flowers, sprinkled with their golden centres shredded over them, dressed

## *Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece*

with oil and vinegar and rubbed with garlic, form one of the usual dishes of this country. Texture and flavour are both excellent. The stalk is then cooked and eaten as a vegetable, but to me — though I seldom recognised what it was until I enquired —, it seemed always rather tasteless and pithy, with a suggestion of soft wood and badly cooked root vegetables. . . . I cannot say whether these yuccas, though they look precisely the same, only larger and more florescent, are identical with those grown in English gardens, and I have not dared to find out empirically.

Passing on, you reach a court devoted to the sale of Guatemalan blankets, and, beyond it, another that displays embroidered shirts for men and shawls and scarves for women. In its turn, this leads into a colossal, sunny *plaza* where the native pottery is to be bought, mounds of earthenware pots and jars, their shape, the perfection of their irreproachable line, seeming more Greek than Spanish — a remark even more applicable to the neighbouring collections of flat dishes, made of an earthenware that is almost rose-coloured, which are used for cooking *tortillas*. Indeed, these large, flat, round plates resemble the discs of the *Discobolus*, so suave and stream-lined are they. From the next immense court, over which hangs a mantle of dust, issues that mingled lowing, bleating and squealing which you have already remarked.

Here, among the young pink porkers on string leads, who so resolutely make an inevitably ineffectual dash for freedom upon their short, apparently unjointed legs, here among the tufted calves attempting to escape — and indeed perhaps the cause of the general frantic behaviour of the animal world —, sits a woman with a large round linen-basket full of the strangest cattle, the greatest living delicacy of the land : iguanas. These giant lizards, three or four feet long, are tied, like whittings upon an English breakfast-table, or the symbol of eternity, mouth to tail. Otherwise they would thresh out with their tails, which are spiked and can inflict formidable injuries. Their jaws, too, are bound together to prevent their snapping at and biting their prospective devourers, already bargaining over their bodies. Incidentally, the customers cannot poke them in the ribs, in the same manner in which they prod the calves and small pigs, to see if they are fat, because, even if an iguana possesses ribs — and at this point my knowledge of reptilian anatomy breaks down —, the knobs and

## Still Life : (i) Dining-Room Piece

spikes of its armour would defeat prying fingers. Weight, alone, is the criterion.

A clean feeder, the creature lives in the tree-tops of the steaming jungles on sea-level, and subsists on the green leaves round it. The iguana-catcher is trained to net his prey, a difficult profession that needs a long schooling in these swamps and forests; or again, it may be shot — sitting, I apprehend — and in these tropical regions " a day's iguana shooting " is a popular sport, comparable to " a day's partridge shooting " here. . . . Now it may be that the iguana is no pleasant object to look at. Its small eyes, pail-shaped snout and shark-like jaws, lined with a saw's teeth of steel, are, I know, repellent to many. Even the reptile's best friends, indeed, will be obliged to admit that at first sight it presents a somewhat case-hardened exterior, and that its saurian countenance bears an unpleasing expression, both sarcastic and ferocious. But it is good, *very good*, to eat : and its cost does not amount to more than the equivalent of a shilling ; two facts which must both tell in its favour. The ways of cooking it are many, but the best seemed to me to be roast saddle, cooked with herbs, and served in a circle of its own eggs with a rich brown sauce, flavoured with madeira or port. The saddle is white and tender as the best capon, and the eggs, too, are a suitable, and even delicious, concomitant, once you have grown accustomed to the idea of them.

If, then, iguana, saute or roast, is the great indigenous delicacy of Guatemala, *tortillas* and *tamales* constitute the country's most ordinary dish. You can see them everywhere, in market, hotel and restaurant, in house and hut. The sight and smell of them is as common in town and village and jungle settlement as is the music of the *marimba*, the liquid-tongued national instrument of Guatemala, which sounds out in *plazas*, in crowded streets, in wattle-built villages, and in clearings between the jacarandas and flamboyant trees. . . . But the word *tortilla* is deceptive. First you must clear your mind of its Spanish significance, for here is no flattened-out omelette, sprinkled with flat strips of tomato and pimento, but a bastard pancake, resembling the sole of a boot fashioned of oatmeal, or some substance like it, instead of leather — though certainly leathery enough. *Tamales*, on the other hand, are more interesting ; small, flat, hot, square

## Still Life : (1) Dining-Room Piece

packets of savoury maize, of a brown colour. The varieties are endless, but they are always very hot and aromatic, always square or rectangular, and always cooked and served in a neat green casing of banana leaf, which the consumer himself has to unwrap (this, perhaps, psychologically, is one of the secrets of all tempting food : it must give its consumer trouble, not make things too easy for him ; that is why a cold lobster should never be separated from the shell except by him who eats it). In addition, *tortillas* and *tamales* seem in every instance to be permeated by a subtle and curious flavour, difficult to identify, but akin to the smell of incense — perhaps due to something used in the fires upon which they have been cooked.

In these two dishes I have just described, and in a very fragrant and sustaining paste, made out of *frijoles*, or black beans, the Indians of this country find their chief nourishment. Unfortunately the native liquor, also made from maize, which accompanies them, is a vile and brutish spirit, immature and immediately intoxicating. Two small glasses would overwhelm any European, and among these simple people, though more inured to it, the results are often distressing.

In the market, you can see, too, the dried halves of armadillo that I have mentioned earlier (*they* have ribs, you will notice), which present a painfully smoked and desiccated appearance, and other foods of the sort. Piled up, in a court near by, are brightly coloured, juicy and often rather tasteless tropical fruits, mangoes or custard-apples — these last of many different kinds, but all with their dark and scaly skin, which seems to indicate that, as a dessert, they belong to the same order of dinner as does the iguana for roast, and all possessing a cool, very sweet flavour of mingled banana, pineapple, eau-de-cologne and turpentine. Custard-apples in mounds are rather beautiful, but not so effective as the hillocks of serpote, many of them cut to display their yielding, flame-coloured flesh, and of grapefruit, tropical oranges with green rinds, and bergamots and limes, as refreshing and fragrant as they are decorative. . . . But you must turn away — it is time to leave the market now, being nearly eleven. Already the wings of the dust hang with a midday heaviness over the city. The peasants are furling their sails, putting their wares in boxes, and packing up. Having eaten their meal in the refectory,

## *Still Life : (I) Dining-RoM Piece*

others of them he down in the most cool recesses of the cloisters, there wrapping themselves, head and body, in their home-woven blankets, preparatory to a siesta. It is time to go. Life in the market is dead — in the town outside, too, until dusk brings a revival, or until darkness brings the hour of pleasure. Tonight the marimba band gives a concert from under the arcade on the second floor of the Governor's Palace in the *plaza*. There are six of these long, wooden instruments, and two men play on each of them, by beating the keys with very flexible wooden gavels, thereby producing as liquid a music as that of carillons, or of falling waters or the tongues of fountains. Those peasants who have not far to go, and have not yet run home, sit on the stone benches of the garden, planted with strongly scented night flowers, or stroll about in the feathery shade thrown by arc-lamps spluttering above the fronds of the tall pepper trees which line the square and the diagonal paths that run through the garden. The concert lasts for two hours, tango after tango, rumba after rumba, and the audience sit, many of them, listening in silence, intently, as though they had never heard the instrument or tune before.

## STILL LIFE : (2) BOX AND BOTTLE

I

**L**IFE is breaking into new designs, burning, blazing, cooling down, crystallising into new patterns before our eyes, the eyes of a generation dazzled by megalomaniac conceptions and inflamed by virulent dreams. Therefore let us for a moment keep our sight level, rather than fix it upon the heights or depths, and engage our attention with trifles, for, though we cannot rearrange the constellations, it is at least possible for an artist to prevent for a while the memory of some small object to which he is attached from fading out of recollection, and a single tear-bottle from the tomb of Nefertiti tells the poet more about Ancient Egypt than could all the treatises ever written, though their facts were marshalled with consummate skill.

Already, before this second war had come to bring us those innumerable spiritual blessings of which bishops love to speak, many little things of common use were growing rare or had become extinct. To take at random three things that we knew as children, sugar-loaves, fireworks, tangerines done up in silver paper, all these have disappeared, some, it may be only temporarily, some, no doubt, for ever : (even today it is necessary to explain to several readers what a sugar-loaf looked like : a smooth white, glistening cone, a foot or more high, of moulded sugar). Yet many of these articles had charm, or were agreeable to the touch.

There were, for example, the boxes of Elvas plums that, when I was a small boy, graced at Christmas every prosperous table. They have gone. Nevertheless, in those generous and ample days they used every year to be sent to the head of a household by the grocer with whom he dealt : (now, on the other hand, it is more probable that he would be obliged to send a present to the grocer). They could be seen, too, piled up in cylindrical towers upon the crowded counters of that season, each storey consisting of a drum of coloured paper, or, to be more accurate, of white paper flecked all over with drifts of pink and green.

## Still Life : (2) Box and Bottle

When the lid, invariably with some difficulty, was at last raised off one of the boxes, it revealed the wrinkled plums lying there, sticky, sepia-gold in tone, round, though flattened at the top and sides by the pressure of the box, while, between the fruits in the first layer, separating them, were little spangled darts of tinsel paper possessing an Iberian grace that at once, better than any trademark, proclaimed Spain or Portugal as their place of origin, and themselves as related to those darts, with coloured paper twisted round their handles, with which the *bandcrillero*, at a certain stage in a bull-fight, pricks and goads his antagonist. . . . Or again, there were to be obtained, at a special tobacconist's in St. James's Street, the china boxes in which Balkan Sobranie cigarettes used at one time to be packed. Square cut, but thin, their rectangular forms showed a degree of elegance in their shape and presentation, and their flat lids, which always lifted off with a slight but characteristic clatter, bore, depicted upon their white, shiny surface, groups of peasants, whiskered men in white ballet skirts, and veiled women in plus-fours.

These boxes, I think, had gone some time before the war, leaving behind them only a meaner progeny in tin and paper ; though other things have vanished but lately. Nor is it they alone that have departed ; the very shops from which we bought those articles that seem to us to have been in some slight way representative of the old world, shops that typified the spirit of an older London, have also, many of them, disappeared. Where, for instance, is the " *Chymist*" we used to see thus placarded in early-nineteenth-century lettering above a chemist's shop off Belgrave Square, and where — and this is the modest announcement of one of the two main themes out of which my composition must be built —, where can we buy "*Segars*"<sup>9</sup> today : (cigars are rare enough) ? . . . On the other hand, Mr. Pollock's shop — its business, it is true, now transacted by his daughter, in the same way that he carried it on after the death of his father-in-law —, still survives. . . . But then it stands in how different a quarter of the town from that wherein the rich dealt with *chymists* or purchased their *segars* ; albeit one that none the less exhaled a certain rather forlorn glamour — Hoxton Street, in fact.

When, nearly a century ago, Mrs. Lane presided at the Britannia Theatre, almost directly across the road from Pollock's,

## *Still Life : (2) Box and Bottle*

Hoxton had long constituted a centre of English theatrical life, a repository of the great pantomime tradition. It was essentially the sort of theatre in which Miss Petowker " of the Royal Theatre, Drury Lane " must, in reality, have played when in London, and not on tour in the provinces. The late Stanley Lupino, in his excellent autobiography,<sup>1</sup> relates a story told him by Clarkson, the famous whiskered wig-maker and costumier, which exactly renders this atmosphere. One night when the great Sarah Lane was at the height of her renown, young Clarkson had been told to deliver a bundle of wigs below the stage. In an effort to save time, he paid off his hansom opposite the main entrance, and tried to take a short cut through it, still carrying his precious load. He found himself, however, wedged for a whole hour in a solid block of people, for another hour in a crowd slowly moving forward, and, still unable to escape, was finally rushed headlong with everyone else up to the gallery. Nearly suffocated, and partly crushed by a beam, he could only deliver his parcel by persuading a soldier in front of him to heave it on the stage just as the curtain was going up. . . . Mrs. Lane herself was a member of the great Lupino clan, which, since the founders of it first appeared from Italy in the reign of James I and introduced Punch-and-Judy shows to London audiences, has given innumerable artistes, clowns, jugglers, dancers, tumblers, acrobats, to the English stage. Of this former period of glory, then, the shop of which I write is the sole residuary legatee. Here was — and is, albeit Mr. Pollock, alas, himself has gone — a place entirely unlike any other, and belonging in its essence to London, to the London of the harlequinade.

In early life, Mr. Pollock had been for a time a clown. It is said that all men retain about them until their end signs of their first profession, and it was noticeable that his hair fell naturally into the three *poufs* that are part of the mask of his original calling. Behind him, as he used to stand at the counter, were innumerable pigeon-holes, like those we saw formerly in the shops of old-fashioned hosiers, who would turn round to draw out of them dusty paper packets, carefully done up with string, of socks and gloves; packets that would inevitably take some time to undo

<sup>1</sup> *From the Stocks to the Stars: An Unconventional Biography*, by Stanley Lupino. Hutchinson & Co., 1934.

## Still Life : (2) Box and Bottle

and thus increase the pleasurable expectation of the prospective buyer. In this case, however, the compartments contained prints, a penny plain, and twopence coloured — and, indeed, the extra penny demanded was a cheap price to pay for such an expenditure of vivid primary colours. Some of the designs were by George Cruikshank, and by other known artists of his day, but the majority were drawn by the bearers of unfamiliar names, and consisted of theatrical scenes of long ago, and portraits of the great popular stars who had performed in them. These last were iconic and conventional; crinolined beauties, formal in gesture, with large, open eyes in Byzantine faces, and with eyelashes, each of them delineated separately, and long as those of a film-star today. The very names of the dramas in which they acted summon up a lost world, often exotic, but, for the most part, to be seen round us every winter. On the whole, in the background of these scenes, snow and frost prevail; trees, their branches weighed down with tinsel snow, reveal their black bareness against a blue, polar sky. And we wonder where we can find a southern counterpart to this world, which is another, though humourless variation of that portrayed by Breughel the Elder, only belonging to the early nineteenth century, instead of the mid sixteenth ; a world which the starving actors of that time knew only too well, as they trudged or bumped along through the glittering white landscapes, their noses blue, their feet just tingling with life, their minds full of the next town, over the hill, and what fortune it would bring them.

These stylised and glowing scenes then, from *Tamerlaine the Tartar* or *The Brigand*, though in themselves they seem to belong to so fabulous a past, can still be purchased : whereas cigar-boxes, albeit the warm visions depicted within them provide to those prints the dulcet southern counterpart for which we have been searching, are much more difficult to come by. . . . Let us, therefore, take down an old and empty box, lying on a shelf, and study it, for, in the essay that follows this introduction, I shall strive to paint for the reader another kind of still life, consisting of a box and bottle, and a twist of coloured paper. The bottle, empty like the box, is of stoneware, a tall cylindrical shape, except for its drooping shoulders, with a small handle attached to its spout, and a heavy, old-fashioned seal, carved on it in relief, two-thirds

## Still Life : (2) Box and Bottle

of the way up its length. Its tone is that of a clove's wings, in light shades of grey and brown. By its side, and a little to the front, is the cigar-box, marked with a name famous in all the money markets of the world. The lid has been thrown back, away from us, and the white, shiny flap lies, as it were dead, turned inward within the empty box, from which still rises the perfume of cedar and fine tobacco, and thus we can see, in reverse upon this polished whiteness, a picture in strong hues, and, further, in relief, embossed ; an example of the only millionaire-folk-art, as we may term it, in existence. The rendering of this highly coloured scene, the way the creases and bulging fold of the paper distort its intention, must be as clear and incisive as that of the embroidered panels that form the stole of the stooping acolyte in El Greco's *Burial of Count Orgaz*. . . . By the side of the box lies a broken cigar-band in scarlet and gold.

These three objects, painted solidly, I hope, show against a background of blues and greens, variable in tone and executed in broad strokes . . . but, as we continue to regard them, we shall notice that, for all their apparent volume and density, they are portrayed in a surrealist manner, and that, through the pale, antiquated form of the stone jug, we begin to perceive, not only the groves of orange trees which might, perhaps, have been suggested merely by the still pervasive aroma of this *Curasao* bottle, but also the broad features, splayed in darkness, of negroes and negresses, and the image of an island, floating light and bubble-like between the tropic sky and tropic sea ; through the broken paper ring, the figure of a Cuban dandy of a hundred years ago ; while, beneath the lines of the cigar-box, is to be traced the shape of the island in which he lived, of Indians crowned with feathers, smoking in their accustomed silence, of trees that blossom superbly in vermilion and azure and amethyst under a hot sun tempered by cool breezes, of waters that cover with their sheets of glass oceanic gardens, and, in short, of a life of an intensity that never dies down, flares day and night save when it smoulders through the noon. . . . But, above all, these groups and vistas which appear, when we look more closely, to break through the surface of the picture, make us feel the presence of a strong and alien sun that is touching the skin round the corners of the eyes and soaking through our thin silk shirts.

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### II

We of northern blood and. upbringing have always thus hankered after the sun. Norsemen founded kingdoms in Syria, Africa, Sicily and Spain, and in this same fashion as ourselves, no doubt, those who had returned home or were too old to sail again, caressed the marble lions that had been given to them as keepsakes in Constantinople long ago by the daughters of the Emperor, and, moved by some nostalgic impulse, some longing for warmth and for the past, carved with their knives upon the hard flanks of the animals a runic inscription. But their thoughts turned to ancient lands, clothed with palm and olive and vine and asphodel, whereas mine, for example, now revert to the islands of aloe and cactus, tree fern and prickly pear, that fringe the New World. . . . Not necessarily because I liked them best of all beautiful places, but because subsequent events have tainted every memory of Southern Europe. Who dares now to think of Toledo or Madrid or Athens, Venice or Vienna, Naples or Palermo or Syracuse? Greek temples and mosaic churches, the monuments of the Gothic Age, no less those that are Baroque or Rococo, all are liable to be bombed at any moment or have, more probably, already been disfigured, while the hatred of whole peoples seethes and erupts round them. It will be a long time before we cease once more to notice the grin of the skull behind every smile that is offered to us. Misery and starvation have come to Europe as the fruit of a thousand years of triumphant achievement, the stupid have been again proved right, the wicked, sensible, and the ant, the beetle and the rat, rather than the butterfly, the bird of paradise and the gazelle, are seen at last clearly to be the patterns that Nature holds up for us to copy and extol. And so, to obtain happiness, even from our memories, we must turn our thoughts in the direction in which men perpetually march and cities grow; westward, to islands that, untouched by war, float gently as ever upon their gleaming nacreous tides. A little opalescent mist, born of the water, surrounds them at the first glance, but this clears as we draw near, near enough to see enormous spiky shells, with lips as large and red as those of negresses, lying upon the beaches, short and regular, and the flowering trees, clouds and hill-tops they seem in violet and blue, rising from the shore, until at last,

indeed, we are so close that it is possible for us to watch the humming-bird hover and quiver in a dynamic ecstasy of multi-coloured fire over a single blossom.

As we wait for winter, sighing at its approach, so the inhabitants of these places are longing for a cool breeze and a day's cloud over the sun. In Curasao — that remote island in the Caribbean whence come the special oranges from which alone can be distilled the liqueur that once filled the bottle before us — I met a Sephardic Jew who told me that, all through the hot, dry years he spent upon this baking rock, his thoughts dwelt continually upon the north, and that, albeit the owner of a prosperous business and coming of a family settled here for a full three hundred years, yet he could not have endured to live in the Caribbean regions but for the prospect of a voyage that he took every fifth year, starting in July. Then he would set out in a boat that had Spitzbergen for its ultimate goal, and, as he sailed further and further towards his strange destination, he would sit longer and longer on deck — wrapped, it is true, in a fur coat —, inhale the fresh breath and foam of Arctic seas, he back and allow the cold mist to dampen his forehead, as though it were a second attending to a boxer after a heated round. Only in those moments, only in that so peculiar culmination to every lustrum, did he feel perfectly content. But, all the same, this pining for northern vapours must have been due more to the utter dryness and lack of shelter of his native place than to the unaided strength of the sun, for in spite of its dazzle and reverberations it lacks altogether here the torment that it brings to Africa and Asia, and it is possible to walk bareheaded beneath its rays when at their fiercest without incurring the least risk of sun-stroke. Indeed, that is one of the mysteries of this hemisphere ; such rashness elsewhere in a parallel latitude would entail death. . . . And this difference, this deliverance from the *sola topee*, certainly imparts a feeling of freedom typical of the West.

The first impression of Curasao is one of singularity and of well-being. Though the island is by no means fertile or luxuriant, its atmosphere is nevertheless totally unlike that of any of the tragic little ports of northern South America to which it is so near. Fever-stricken and lethal, those towns are still haunted by the ghost of Yellow Jack, that, only two

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or three decades ago, would sweep away within a few days an entire population. Pucrtá Limón and La Guaira, for instance, seem to be wholly peopled with grey-faced or green-faced half-castes, wasted with disease, and their empty cobbled streets are lined with palaces of so degraded a design, so mouldering and festering in their plaster surface, that no splashing of sunshine, no shade or light, can redeem them, or with decaying churches, in the heartless, squat interiors of which, even though they have now been turned into cinema theatres, you can still feel the hard pulse-beat of the Inquisitors and the anguish and expectancy of the natives, wondering what torture the next day would bring. Cartagena de las Indias — a great city which at any rate once had drawn out for it a destiny that was worthy of its site, and still has about it the splendour of unfulfilled dreams — is the sole exception : but a single glance at any of the other neighbouring ports assures us that the existence to be found within their streets and houses is a thing of misery and squalor, and that, though they have been built only a few centuries ago, life is already receding from them. They seem to have no roots, no power of drawing strength from the rich, exuberant soil round them. Above their peeling towers the vultures can be seen on guard in the sweltering skies, superintending the deaths, as though they were registrars in English towns, while in the sea, stained a dirty yellow where it touches the shore, the sharks and barracudas can also be distinguished, waiting their turn with eager snouts and sharp teeth behind the sullen, gloomy tides. The whole amusement a stranger in such a place can find is to sit in a public garden, full of large-leafed plants and flowering trees, and watch, in the branches high above, the slow-motion antics of a tree-sloth, a beast which, in his skilful but terrible lethargy, inspired by a ruthless purpose — to find food —, sums up the rhythm and character of indigenous life throughout vast territories stretching to the south.

In Curacao, on the contrary, in spite of the heat, a briskness makes itself felt at once. Its only town — Willemstad — stands upon banks on either side of the very narrow mouth to the harbour, and several bridges that lift up and down connect its two halves; a feature which, in itself, imparts an interest to a walk in its precincts, for the pedestrian is continually obliged to stop, in order

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to see if a ship is approaching, in which case he will be dislodged, prevented from crossing for five minutes or so. Round these bridges, and on the quays, and in the streets behind them or leading down to them, there is a continual bustle and stir. And the harbour must surely be considered among the finest, as certainly it is to be counted among the most beautiful, in the world ; a long lagoon, widening as it bites deeper into the grey rock, its waters possess the identical apple-green tint of those that wash the stone and marble decks of Venice. The whole air of the place, the particular kind of energy it manifests, emphasises its aquatic nature, and links it with such other larger and more famous ports, that also float upon the water or are intersected by canals, as Venice and Constantinople, Syracuse and Amsterdam. And to this last, indeed, its architecture makes it curiously akin, for Curacao, though it belonged for a time to the Spaniards and — like almost every other country in the world — to the French, is preponderantly Dutch in feeling and has always returned to Dutch rule. The streets, except where they abut upon the water, are narrow : there are few open spaces in the city, few churches, but the houses on the quays, usually two or three storeys in height, are built in the sober Dutch style of the seventeenth century and are surmounted by the stepped gables of Holland. Such streets might well stand in one of its maritime cities, and so, too, saving in one or two respects, might the many villas and mansions upon the outskirts. These rather large houses, which are mainly responsible for the architectural character of the whole place, or, at any rate, for its atmosphere, instead of being built of small, dark-red bricks, seem to have been made of parrots' feathers, so brightly are they painted in lime-green, crimson, pink, yellow, orange or Algerian blue, and they glow in the light of the sun with the incandescence of an ember. In front of them, guarded off behind railings and grilles of wrought iron, stand prim little gardens. But, though everything is Dutch in feeling, though everything is on the small, neat scale, factual as opposed to imaginative, and though there are no wildernesses, no equivalent to ilex woods with statues, yet the attempt to impose Dutch cleanliness and order upon riotous tropical Nature has not been altogether successful; and in consequence, where we should expect to find box hedges, yew trees and ordered beds of tulips,

we see in their place a tangle of lianas and gaudy tropical blooms; creepers with vast waxen bells and trumpets climb the trunks of the jacaranda trees, which spread their azure and violet blossom beneath the sky in a sort of effort to imitate it, making up for the dimensions and luminousness with which they can never vie, by the intensity of the vibration of its tones that they offer. Then there are serpote, also leafless trees of forest size, bearing flaming cups that are of precisely the same colour as the flesh of the fruit they will bear later, and large bushes of frangipani, which resembles an oleander that has been both blessed and cursed; blessed in its flowers, in the same tints of rose or white or cream, but ten times as large and of an overwhelming sweetness, cursed as to its bare, ugly, thick branches, that taper in an ungainly way towards their ends, magically covered with these huge rosettes.

All these details and impressions of the town and its surroundings we gained, however, the morning after our arrival, for it was just before dusk on a breathless evening that we entered the harbour. The natural ordinary colours of the port were then the whole time undergoing a phoenix-like mutation, as layer after layer of pklest-green fire, and of rose, was projected upon the tremendous expanse of sea and sky. From the top deck we could see huge silver drums that, as if they were the towers and keeps of Norman castles, dominated the entire landscape, floating above the flat stretches of rock which, even in this welter of glory, still looked so grey. They constitute, indeed, the chief feature of the landscape, and the main reason for the evident and unexpected prosperity of the town, since oil is brought hither, by one of the great companies, to be refined, and then stored in them. . . . From here, there appeared to be little vegetation, nothing but this skeleton of an island, these cylinders, this green lagoon now flushed into unaccustomed tints. No doubt there were grey, fleshy cactuses and aloes, that seemed cut out of tin, growing there, but we were too far away to discern them, or their colour melted into the rock.

Nor was there any sign of the glossy-leaved groves of that particular kind of orange tree that bears a small, bitter-rinded fruit; the which, by giving its flavour to the liqueur, has made the name of the island famous throughout the world. In England,

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for example, this cordial has been well known for at least three centuries, but more especially since King George IV set the fashion for it by defying his gout and drinking large quantities of *Curasao* every night after dinner, in the conditions of tropical heat within doors which he always favoured, under the carved palm-leaves and among the dragons and twisting serpents of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. Indeed it may be that some of the inspiration for the lovely if grotesque decoration of this pleasure-dome came out of stoneware bottles such as that before us, and certainly there were not wanting among his subjects those who disloyally insinuated that the gilded serpents and silver-scaled dragons were but an exteriorisation of the King's monstrous dreams, amounting to delirium, the result of an injudicious diet and undue indulgence.

The next day, however, we saw piles of this fruit being carried on board various ships bound for Holland, and heard the men who staggered up the gangways under their burden, speaking the tongue which constitutes the other speciality of this island, and for which it is — or certainly should be — famous. This is called *Papaimento*, a pleasant name which sounds as though it were that of the language spoken in the realm of the *Magic Flute*, or the native means of expression, before they began to imitate the talk of men, of popinjays ; of the macaws and parrots and love-birds of the surrounding lands. Indeed, the syllables lead us to recall the words of Skelton's alliterative *Speke, Parrot*:

Parrot, Parrot, Parrot, praty popigay !  
With my beke I can pyke my lyttel praty too ;  
My delyght is solas, pleasure, dysporte, and pley ;  
Lyke a wanton, whan I wyll, I rele to and froo :  
Parot can say, *Cesar, ave*, also ;  
But Parrot hath no fauour to Esebon :  
Aboue all other byrdis, set Parrot alone.

Its real interest, however, consists in the fact that it is a tongue that has formed itself on this one island within the last three centuries, and is now full grown, with its own vocabulary and laws of grammar, as similarly our own language established itself many centuries ago. Moreover it derives from elements equally diverse as those that gave birth to English ; in this instance from Dutch and Spanish and French, as well as from African and Carib sources.

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We are still drawing in to the harbour, though, and as the colour in sky and sea deepened and became more unreal, the lamps on the quays and in the streets were turned on and began to glitter with a green and primrose brilliance. . . . Just inside the entrance to the port, on the right, the tops of the stone-walled terraces or ramparts, one above the other, of a large stone house, exhaling an air of prosperous yet modest Dutch dignity, were crowded with heads, for the Governor was giving a party ; this was his palace, and his guests had flocked out to watch the arrival of the big ship. Fortunately we were near enough to be able to survey the scene in detail. Not gathering dusk itself could blur or mar in any way the finery of the women guests, because they were dressed in the substantial fullness of the Netherlandish fashion of some forty years ago. Thick, elaborate, hot — above all, hot — Dutch dresses, with high collars of triple lace, stiffened here and there with whalebone, covered their so massive bodies and necks ; above came faces, unspoilt by paint or powder, reflecting the glow of these last few moments of sunset, and then puffs of hair, upon which floated flat-brimmed picture-hats, loaded with the same plenitude of ostrich feathers with which Frans Hals liked to weigh down the hats of his burgomasters. Yet, though such apparel was old-fashioned, it could in no sense be considered as old, being, to the contrary, triumphantly new, so that these complicated confections inevitably evoked the idea of some phlegmatic Ascot in the early years of Queen Wilhelmina's reign, and were irresistibly exotic in this setting, as their owners stood watching us with a silent, stolid curiosity, while, just beyond the walls that hemmed in this peaceful corner of Holland, jostled people of every colour, shouting, talking and arguing. Negroes, Spanish Jews, Chinese, Caribs, and those vague, drifting Armenians and Syrians who are to be found in such numbers and so unexpectedly in this quarter of the globe, all were represented. But here they looked happy and thus differed from their brothers on the mainland. An air of comfort, of order and plenty, seemed to pervade the whole city.

Though its colours are so vivid, nevertheless Curasao does not flaunt itself with the same lustre as that other island, the landscape of which is emblazoned on the flap of the cigar-box. There is

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nothing Dutch about this scene, languid and voluptuous yet fiery, for here is the mulatto world of octoroon, griffo, zambo and Creole, and the music is a rumba played on the skulls of animals to a shuffling in the dust. Haiti, the black republic, and once the dominion of the sable Emperor Christophe, lies only just across the water. Though rebellion broods always in this volcanic air, though a tornado may sweep away whole forests, yet the place lulls the mind and soothes the nerves.... Nevertheless it was with this island that my first thoughts of war were connected, for when I was in the nursery at the age of five the Cuban War broke out between Spain and the United States, and, I suppose, I must have continued to think of it as wrecked by wars and rebellions, and in consequence was not prepared either for the beauty or the wealth and luxury that it shows : because the truth is that nearly the whole world has in the space of the last twenty years gone downhill, excepting Panama and Cuba alone.

Until I visited this place, I had always imagined that the scenes that embellish Havana cigar-boxes dealt in fantasy, and not in verisimilitude, but I found that, in spite of the improbability of the scenes they depict, they are, in the finest sense, true. Cuba appears at first, indeed, to have realised the fabulous panache of *Les Indes Galantes*, that visionary world of the seventeenth century where figures roped in pearls and crowned with high American feathers lounge in the warm and spicy air, play lutes and listen to the conversation of fiery-plumaged, bitter-beaked macaws upon the branches of a tree of gold. Actually, however, it proves to be a variation of the old Mediterranean world, but painted in colours that satisfy the esthetic sense of native races. In its situation, in its gaiety, in the very planning of its rococo churches, their facades breaking into curves, and of its arcaded palaces, Havana takes us back to the fantastic coastal towns of Sicily rather than to the more severe and discreet cities of Spain. It lies disposed round the shore in the same way, by an identical expanse of blue-green sea, streaked with tails of lilac and purple and a still more intense green. There is the same luxuriance of flowers, save that here they are many times the size, more vivid in hue, more strong in their sweetness. Only the *patios*, the quiet cool perspectives — seen through wide-open doors — of green plants climbing up pillars of stone and clinging to the flat wooden

balusters of the balconies, recall the streets of Seville or of other Andalusian towns.

Unlike Willemstad, this city is full of open spaces as well as of narrow streets; there are many *plazas*, with a church occupying the whole extent of one side, while palaces fill the other three sides of the rectangle or square. A small formal arrangement of trees and flowers is usually laid out in the centre. . . . The palaces in these *plazas* now for the most part serve as the chief places of exhibition by famous cigar firms. Cool awnings hang over the open arches of the ground floor, and the assistants, dressed with every possible exaggeration of stripe and shiny patent leather, stand in the doorways to lure possible smokers into their toils, and equipped with an American accent sufficient for twenty, enjoy the vast cigars that form part of their daily hire with almost too ostentatious a relish. . . . There are, in addition, many more restaurants and cafes here, and altogether there is more open-air life, more leisure and, at the same time, even more employment than in the other island. In fact, the same difference is to be felt between the existence here and in Curasao as between the two landscapes ; one, dry, flat and bare but for cactus and oil-drum, the other, full of variety, with waterfalls dashing down hills to the valleys, the slopes of the mountains luxuriantly clothed with vegetation, the plains and fields richly cultivated.

Similarly do the inhabitants of these two islands differ, albeit they share much of the same blood. Curasao, though possessing a distinction of its own, has nothing of the mingled gaiety and melancholy which inspire everything in Cuba. . . . Let us watch the people here, as they are watching us; for in the smaller streets everyone is at the window, looking, apparently in a desultory manner, but really with faculties most highly trained, at the passers-by. This makes the chief amusement of the day. Continually the doors open and shut, because people live on each floor and are for ever going in and out. The women, who come out to shop or peer at us from the doors of their shady *patios*, are often strange to look at — strange and beautiful. Every shade of mixture of blood finds its representative in this city, and skins vary from brown to lilac and gold, all suffused with darkest rose. Often the women are heavily painted, with a rouge that is almost petunia-coloured, or of so deep a crimson that the red flowers

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they wear above their ears, tucked into their blue-black hair, so straight and glossy, look pale by comparison. As a rule they go bareheaded, and many still wear shawls thickly encrusted with embroidery.

Behind this old town of which we have been speaking, rises another, newer city, inspired by American money and example. And very delightful it is, too, with its gay, smart shopping streets, so full of varnish and paint and brass, and with windows in which everything is set out most skilfully. In another direction, along the sea-front, spreads a nineteenth-century suburb, with elegant, tall, yellow houses, the fronts of which carry pillars with ornate capitals. These terraces overlook a wide promenade planted with flowering trees and shrubs ; recalling at one moment Brighton, and at another Buenos Aires. . . . Beyond this, again, a very modern motoring road, divided for traffic into two halves, with hibiscus and frangipani and tall palms planted between them and at the sides, leads away towards the mountains.

One night we motored along this road so as to dine at an open-air restaurant in the country. The air was warm and scented, though, mindful of Spanish hours, it was long after dark when we started, for we had determined not to reach our destination before ten. But in all such matters the Cuban outdoes his Spanish ancestor or exemplar, and, when we arrived, the place was still empty save for the waiters, dressed in their white clothes with coloured sashes. We sat in a corner and watched them, as they wandered about in a leisurely manner, laying the places, while all the time they smoked enormous cigars, which in England would have cost five shillings each but here were merely the equivalent of a cigarette. They seemed rather taciturn, perhaps being occupied with their cigars, but the band in the garden occasionally flared into life with a warm pulsing sound of sand-paper and bones and pipes and then relapsed again into a green lethargy. Huge moths, the size of a small bird, fluttered against the electric lights hidden in trailing wings of vegetation, and the insects, cicadas and others, maintained a loud, insistent vibrating which seemed a translation of the heat itself into terms of sound.

At last, however, it was possible to dine, and, what was more, to dine well. Since, not only does this lovely island have a constant but not overpowering sun, nights that are clear and

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warm, yet cool enough to enjoy them, a smooth sea that radiates blue and violet, not only does it possess flying-fish, humming-birds, pineapples, parrots, flowers of the most lovely and, to us, unusual description, huge sea-shells that, in their exquisite convolutions in nacre, must surely instil, even in minds the least accustomed to the idea of such sentiments, a love of architecture — which certainly seems here to have found its vent in the old stone buildings, always of great charm and often of considerable beauty, that rise from the *plazas* of the old town —, but, by that happy coincidence occasionally to be remarked in a particularly beautiful place, it boasts in addition, and rounded off, as it were, by the profusion of such things as grapefruit, oranges, limes, grenadillos, peaches and mountain strawberries, and many other fruits of which I do not know the name, an excellent native system of food and drink. In it is evinced, too, another Iberian characteristic, the habit of eating shell-fish : we are reminded continually of the mounds of prawns, rock-lobsters, mussels and nameless molluscs from the marshes which used to be seen piled upon counters in Spanish bars. Here the people devour quantities of lobsters, and of a special kind of crab only to be found in these blue, transparent seas. Peculiar to the country, too, are other dishes, consisting of such tropical specialities as flying-fish, or turtle and rice or avocado pears. The drinks are for the most part constructed on the sure foundation of bacardi rum, one of the most powerful of all liqueurs, and a product of Cuba almost as much to be associated with it as is the liqueur *curacao* with the other island from which it comes. Yet, in spite of bacardi and turtles and exotic vegetables, the cigars of Havana are still its chief glory, unequalled elsewhere.

As we look round a restaurant after a meal, we observe that all the men are smoking large cigars. . . . men, I say, for I never saw the women smoking cigars here, as they do to this day in Austria, or as they did formerly in parts of South America. Page, who commanded the American expedition to La Plata, tells us, for example, that there it was the custom in all houses for a servant to bring in at a certain hour " a small brass vessel, containing a few coals of fire, and a plate of cigars . . . and all men, women and children — delicate refined girls, and young masters who would not with us be promoted to the dignity of pantaloons —

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smoke with a gravity and *gusto* that is irresistibly ludicrous to a foreigner ". And a traveller of the same period in Central America notes that all " the ladies of Central America " smoke, the married ones, especially, smoking cigars. He adds that " when a gentleman asks a lady for a light, she always removes the cigar from her lips ".

It must be remembered that the habit of smoking had originated in America, and doubtless the indigenous inhabitants of the continent and its islands, both men and women, had smoked for many centuries. . . . They appear, however, usually to have smoked tobacco in pipes, and on ceremonial occasions, such as the signing of a treaty, these were decorated with their inevitable feathers and constituted the famous " pipe of peace ". . . . But the history of tobacco, as of the cigar itself, is singularly obscure when we consider how comparatively recent was its introduction into the Old World, and the few facts that follow are chiefly derived from reading Fairholt's *Tobacco*.<sup>1</sup> Fairholt qualified by his birth as an authority on this subject, for he tells us in his dedication of the book that, since he was never out of sight of St. Paul's until he was twenty-two years of age, the tobacco warehouse in which his father worked became his playground, and that his first memories were " of rolling in the tobacco-leaf, as country children would roll in a hay-field, and playing at ' hide-and-seek ' in the empty barrels ".

Some of the facts he gives us are, of course, familiar. Many of us are aware that Jean Nicot, Lord of Villemain — whose name is immortalised in the word *nicotine* — first took tobacco in 1561 from Portugal, where he was French Ambassador, as a present to the Grand Prior of France ; on which account it was originally called *Herbe du Grand Prieur*. The whole world knows that Sir Walter Raleigh first brought this incomparable

<sup>1</sup> *Tobacco : Its History and Associations*, by F. W. Fairholt, F.S.A. (with 100 illustrations by the author), was published apparently ten years after the author's death, by Chatto & Windus, London, 1876.

The sixteenth child of a German named Fahrholz — who came to London, and later anglicised his name — by his wife, the daughter of a Spitalfields weaver, F. W. Fairholt (1814-1866) early showed talent as a draughtsman ; and, after being for some time a print-colourer, and then the assistant of a scene-painter, became in time well known both as an illustrator and writer of books, in many of which he displays considerable antiquarian knowledge.

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gift to England, apparently in April 1584. Of this event, King James I, who hated tobacco nearly as much as he loathed Raleigh, wrote : <sup>1</sup> It is not so long since the first entry amongst us here, as this present age can very well remember, both the first author and the form of the first introduction of it amongst us. It was neither brought in by King, great conqueror, nor learned Doctor of Physic. With the report of a great discovery for a conquest, some two or three savage men were brought in together with this savage custom. But the pity is the poor wild barbarous men died, but that vile barbarous custom is yet alive. . . ." Elsewhere in his pamphlet he writes : " Surely smoke becomes a kitchen farre better than a dining chamber ; and yet it makes a kitchen often times in the inward parts of men, soyling and infecting with an unctuous and oyly kind of soote as hath been found in some great tobacco takers, that after death were opened. A custom loathesome to the eye, harmfull to the braine, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black, stinking fumes thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless/" A regular persecution of smokers followed on this royal denunciation, and in other European countries the moral oppression was accompanied not seldom by physical torture. In the canton of Berne, indulgence in tobacco ranked next as a sin after adultery ; George Sandys <sup>2</sup> records having seen a Turk led about the streets of Constantinople in 1610, mounted backwards on an ass, and with a pipe driven through the cartilage of his nose ; the Pope Urban VIII excommunicated all those who used snuff or tobacco in churches, and the Tsar of Muscovy, going one better, ordered all smokers to have their noses amputated. . . . Yet only a few years before, smoking had been a popular innovation and, far from being deemed " harmful to the braine " and " dangerous to the lungs", had been chiefly valued for its supposed medical and healing properties. Indeed tobacco had been sold at the apothecary's, and Henry Buttes, in his *Dyets Dry Dinner*, published in 1599, praises it highly. He writes that it was " translated out of India in the seede or roote ; native or sative in our own fruitfullest soils. It cureth any grief, dolour, imposthume, or obstruction proceeding of colde or winde, especially in the head or breast,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Counterblaste to Tobacco*.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Relation of a Journey*.

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The fume taken in a pipe is good against Rumes, Catarrhs, hoarseness, ache in the head, stomache, lungs, breast: also in want of meate, drinke, sleepe or rest."

Though, as I have said, the pipe had been the favourite method of consuming tobacco among the American Indians, cigars, or at least a form of primitive cigar, had been smoked there long before the advent of Columbus. Cuba soon became the chief place for the growing of the fine tobacco leaves required for cigars, its climate being particularly favourable for their cultivation. The best leaves of all were formerly reserved for the personal use of the King of Spain. And Spain was the European country in which the smoking of cigars first became popular, playing an important part in the life of the poorer as well as of the richer classes. It long remained, however, a purely Spanish idiosyncrasy, and it was not, indeed, until about the time of the French Revolution that the fashion invaded most of Europe, reaching France and Austria in 1796 from Hamburg. There are reasons, however, for thinking the habit of smoking cigars spread to England from Spain when the veterans of the Peninsular War returned home. Fairholt tells us that in 1823 only 26 lb. of manufactured cigars were imported into England, but that the duty being then reduced, the next year showed a return of 15,380 lb., rising in 1830 to 253,882 lb. !

Fairholt has much to say of accessories of smoking ; especially does he denounce ornamental cigar-cases. " When men," he writes, " enshrine cigars in pearl cases, elaborated with metal work, that make them seem only fitted for the scent cases of a lady's boudoir, they may be looked upon with due contempt, not only by ladies, but by those of their own sex who adhere to the honest, useful case of plain Russian leather." Yet he makes no mention either of cigar-bands or of cigar-labels, though one might have imagined that the pictures on these, inspired by the soft south, would have roused him to similar flights. For, in spite of their being, as we have noted, possessed of a peculiar kind of accuracy of observation — being, in fact, more true to Cuban nature than truth itself—, it must nevertheless be admitted that the actual scenes depicted are not those with which we meet every day, even in this fantastic island. . . . Let us look at the Larranaga label in front of us, by the side of the grey bottle.

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There it lies, with a bulging fold in it. . . . It is, I should judge by the light, the early morning ; a dewy, rather smudgy freshness prevails, lightly swathing the haze of green vegetation, the thin, spider-leaved palm trees and, even, the blue sky, which holds in it the promise — as yet only the promise — of a burning day. Out of this background towers a forceful, Palma-Vecchio-like blonde, clad in a white robe, and wearing a debutante's tuft of feathers, only that these are dyed in crimson and Cambridge-blue. In one hand she clasps a trident. She is being borne along towards us in a pony-cart, drawn apparently by two lions, although one of them, no doubt owing to some perspectival trouble of the artist's, has got part of its massive head underneath the scarlet travelling rug which a friend, presumably, has thrown thus heavily over the lady's knees. The noble beasts are being led along, in the style of Derby winners, by various pink, yellow and beige children, crowned or turbaned, and they, I hold, can be identified with some confidence as typifying the four quarters of the globe. The whole conception is lightly spattered with gold, as though the Cuban fire-flies had refused to go home in the morning, and is, further, enclosed in an elliptical ring of gold coins, embossed and standing out from the paper. Indeed, these coins, we note, seem to play a preponderant part in this and every similar design, a miraculous gold manna, falling from blue skies and larger than the heads of lions. . . . Of course, it is a little gaudy, that we must admit, and is best seen, perhaps, as the grey smoke from your cigar drifts across your eyes and slightly veils the enchanting scene.

Not only, then, does such a picture possess a strange kind of warm, carnival-like truth, but also the same sort of fascination that appertained to the problem-pictures, formerly so teasing, if unfortunate, a feature of recurrent Royal Academies. . . . Take, for example, another label from the collection — now the truth is out ! I have formed a gallery of these delightful labels, that were still, I believe, being produced every day until the war came, continuing to present us with a sense of formalised and stylised beauty to be found existing nowhere else, except in Hoxton prints, and much more comforting, too, than those, in that they make us feel both warm and rich. . . . Take, then, another example. . . . Partaga will show you, beneath the rather set hovering of an eagle

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with spread wings, a crowned Empress, of indeterminate features, proudly seated on her throne and plainly commending two females draped in Greek robes that might have been invented by Alma-Tadema save that they are more tropical in hue. One of them carries a palette, and so must surely be the Muse of Painting, while the other, a neater and altogether less Bohemian figure, I should say, holds a wreath of laurel or bay leaves, done up with a white ribbon or even, it may be, by some flight of allegory altogether beyond me, with a bunch of white feathers. On either hand, beneath a shower of golden guineas, mulatto cupids stagger under the weight of cornucopias of pineapples and serpote, custard-apples and passion fruit, avocado pears, orchids and lilies and many flowers of which the varieties are unknown to us. . . . And here we may pause to observe how luscious, in every vista, are the flowers and fruit, up to the richest millionaire standards — the sort of bouquets and baskets in the description of which, upon a Rougon-Macquart table, Zola would have luxuriated — and yet at the same time plainly showing the gratitude of the artist to the creator of this bountiful paradise, who, as in " the remote Bermudas",

. . . does in the pomegranate close  
Jewels more rich than Ormuz shows ;  
He makes the figs our mouths to meet  
And throws the melons at our feet.

There appear, also, to be accumulations of objects on either side of the cupids; trophies of wheels and bronze vases and lyres and, very distinctly, a yellow bowler hat, and an 1840 clock of incredible Gothic complication and confusion. The whole is set in the primrose light that follows dawn or precedes sunset in these countries, and there are flowing ribbons and, of course, gold coins.

Often, in the background — though not of the two we have examined —, are views of sea, volcanic mountains, and of huge sailing ships, argosies with accompanying escorts of flying-fishes. . . . And some of the labels show us street scenes and *plazas*, and at these we must glance, if only because they throw light on the epoch in which they were drawn. They take us to great gilded palaces wherein the cigars are made, huge, sun-splashed *plazas* across which sleek horses, prancing with the very same updrawn

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action of the hooves as we see in Colleone's bronze horse in Venice, and driven by coachmen in livery and top-hats, are bearing crinolined ladies, reclining in vehicles as light and elegant as shells. It is a splendid world, indeed, and one in which, it is made plain, every lady, in the phrase of the time, kept her own carriage. Today, however, a few ladies have chosen to issue forth on foot, under the shade of parasols, and various men in frock-coats are bent almost double as, in acknowledgement of a bow, they sweep their hats low towards the ground. . . . Nevertheless, most of the pictures take us to less sophisticated scenes, to day-dreams of Southern beauties gazing down through eyelashes encrusted with tears as though with diamonds, upon dark young gallants with curling whiskers, gallants who are clad, moreover, in Tudor doublet and hose, repousse in that fashion of which these artists, these processes alone, seem to hold the secret. The palm trees above them betray a spiky, rather centipede-like quality, and we can almost hear the warm drone and drumming of tango, rumba and cubana as they float across the little waves that so often occur in these pictures, and the white perukes of which curl so modishly.

Even the names of the brands seem to possess the same subtle lilt to them, the same chirruping, as we murmur Larranaga, Partaga, Estrella, Integridad, Cabana, Eldorado, Rey del Mundo, Santa Damiana. Surely here beats the same rhythm as in Cuban music, which has, sounding in it, so much of the cicada's vibrant shrilling ? Indeed this insect seems with the whirring of its wings to provide the basis for it, in the same manner in which the notes of a thrush afforded, it might be, a foundation for English music of the great age. And we may, moreover, note here, as appropriate, that the Oxford English Dictionary offers the word cicada or cigala as the origin of the word cigar — and indeed some physical likeness exists between them ; both show the same cylindrical shape, with diminishing ends, the same dark colour.

There is another point to notice. . . . Just now we mentioned a dark young gallant; on the label, he stands on a golden ladder, clasping in his arms a fair-haired girl, who hangs entranced across a balcony : Romeo and Juliet ! And is it not singular that a cigar, so often regarded, in combination with the top-hat,

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as giving the stamp to, being the very embodiment of, materialism, should so often exhale, in the decorations that set it out, such romantic ideals ? Love or poetry, or both, figure in almost every label, even if implicit and not stated outright in the name of the brand, as in *Romeo y Julieta* or *Byron*. Political conceptions, too, are plainly idealised, these large classical-looking females shaking hands, these lions and spinning-wheels, all possess a meaning — though sometimes one that is difficult to follow — are, it may be, a Testimonial to International Virtue or something of that sort, or a Tribute to the Supremacy of the Arts, or signify the possible inauguration of a *Pax Cubana*. Again, all the designs abound in flowers and fruit, both of them — except, of course, in the case of Eve's apple — the most innocent of all Nature's creations. . . . We should have presumed, then, after a first glance at these boxes, and without a previous knowledge of the luxuries they extol, that they had been called into being, not for the hard-headed, hook-beaked tribes of magnates, company directors, bankers and speculators, sitting all day long at enormous desks in offices, but for some race of simple, child-like being ; a genial, light-hearted sort of creature who knows nothing of practical affairs, and finds — as the Sultan Abdul Hamid, with his unrivalled flair for national psychology, claimed to find, when the British Ambassador interviewed him in order to lodge a protest against the Armenian Atrocities — his only interest in birds and flowers ".

None of these pictures, alas, bears a date. It is impossible to pronounce with certainty when they made their appearance, who designed them, or whether any were of recent manufacture. But I believe that the street scenes, and the shower of gold coins which edge the sky in nearly every instance or depend from the trees like great gold fruit, may supply a possible clue to the solving of two of these problems, though not to that of attribution. Upon these coins — awards, it must be assumed, at various international exhibitions — are occasionally to be distinguished, though very often they are too vague in outline to admit of absolute identification, the effigies of the rulers of European States. Never, not once, however, do we see upon them the ferocious eyes and timid moustache of Hitler, the jutting jowl of the Italian tyrant, or the slanting moustachios and jovial, Red-Riding-Hood-

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like smile of Uncle Joe. . . . No, it is Napoleon III, over and over again, and sometimes the square-bearded Leopold II of Belgium and the Congo, and, in one instance, the whiskered but chinless profile of a strangely young Emperor Franz Josef, his head sycophantically belauded. Moreover it is to be noticed that, while many carriages are shown, and there even occurs in one of them a very old-fashioned, high-seated type of tricycle, not a single motor-car figures in the street scenes. Further, the old monarchical flag of Spain, floating above the *Fabrica Real*, securely places the epoch in days previous to the Spanish-American War. . . . All these facts, taken in conjunction, must lead us to conclude that the majority of designs were contemporary with the last decade of the Second Empire ; a time which also saw the heyday of cigar-smoking in Europe. Fairholt, for example, writing in the same period, enumerates sixty-six kinds of cigars published by one London importer alone in his list. It was an era when every country in Europe possessed a crowned emperor, king or prince, and when revolutions were confined to the boundaries of the Southern and Central American states. It would seem, then, that cigar-smoking accords with peace even better than the pipe — though, on second thoughts, a tabulation of the revolts, wars and civil wars that have taken place in Cuba itself may lead us to abandon our new theory.

We had better, therefore, stop moralising and turn to consider the broken cigar-band which lies by the side of the box and bottle, and manifests, on a miniature scale, suited to its dimensions, a similar quality to that of the label. The particular example in front of us is somewhat in the shape of a signet ring, and shows a bearded and reflective head contained in a gold and scarlet circle. . . . Yet bands such as this are, for all their splendour, merely vestigial ornaments that conceal a former use, and indicate a history. . . . The Cuban dandy has always indulged in a singular extravagance, almost a frenzy, of dress. During the 40's of the last century he affected a style that recalls that of the Mexican bandits who made so perpetual and ever popular an appearance in English musical comedies in the days between the wars, except that his air was neither so ludicrous nor so brutal, being more soft and foppish. The costume consisted of a wide light hat, dark whiskers, ear-rings, a silk shirt of brilliant hue, a huge belt, often

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with a revolver tucked in it, fawn trousers and a pair of lemon-coloured gloves of which the owner was always peculiarly, and justifiably, proud. . . . Now cigars, in their native habitat, as indeed throughout the New World, are smoked, not in a dry but in a damp, or green, condition, and, since it was the fashion for the dandy to smoke them all the time that he strolled in the *plazas* or through the plantations, they unfortunately left a brown stain upon the fingers of his very exquisite gloves. In consequence it became the practice of such elegants to wrap a twist of ordinary paper round each cigar where they held it, so as to save discoloration — until one day an enterprising member of the Cabana firm, the oldest-established factory in Havana, suddenly comprehended that in a glorification of this paper band lay an ingenious new method at once of pleasing his patrons and advertising his goods. It need scarcely be added that his example, or dodge, if we prefer that word, was followed immediately by every other firm in Havana. . . . Thus of masculine vanity were born these splendid strips of paper, shaped and emblazoned and adorned with a thousand touches of southern fantasy. Moreover it affords a curious footnote to the history of social shibboleths to reflect that although, in the Cuba of a century ago, to smoke a cigar with the band still on it was the height, and indeed added the very stamp, of fashion, yet here in England, for the last fifty years at least, it has been considered the acme of ostentation and bad form.

Now we must return, though, to the larger examples, and, through them, analyse their art, comment upon its affinities . . . first noting in them the singular and utter lack of kinship that they show with Gauguin, the best-known painter of tropical life. But his were naive scenes, attempted by someone sophisticated, struggling backward by means of colour and feeling ; while these are scenes of attempted sophistication executed by a naive. Everything in the world of the cigar-box label is bright, light and European — suspiciously bright and European. Artistic anti-kink, as it were, has been liberally applied. Moreover, these artists have stretched towards a different ideal, to them romantic, to us banal, since it is seen to have been achieved elsewhere. In spite, then, of the pretensions to luxury and pomp which these labels exhibit, their essential quality is that of innocence — a blessed innocence sometimes resembling a little that of

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Blake or Fra Angelico ; though very different to their work, it must be admitted, in point of drawing and colour. On the other hand it is also permissible, as we study them, to suggest a still nearer comparison with two men, with the most sophisticated, no less than with the most naive of modern artists. Notwithstanding the wooden stiffness of the figures, the same voluptuous and now demoded exquisiteness that we observe in the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley — notably in the illustrations to his *Under the Hill* — can be traced in some of them. We find the same serious preoccupation with delicious trifles, though all are nevertheless subordinated to the line, and observe how the birds and butterflies and flowers and fruit bear an identical relationship to the beings they surround. While, in a direction apparently the most opposite, an obvious kinship to Douanier Rousseau makes itself evident. Not, of course, that I am attempting for a moment to insinuate in either case a direct influence, but merely that there existed some similarity in the point of view from which such art sprung.

Thus, just as the Douanier Rousseau could never comprehend how it could be that his extremely unusual and poetical renderings of tigers and Mexican jungles, and of the patriotic celebrations of the Third French Republic, were not chosen for the Salon by the hanging committee, because to him his pictures seemed to touch the height of academic realism, so, I take it, would these unknown artists have been unable to perceive in what respects their creations were unusual or did not conform to drawing-room standards, and how their dreams — to which, perhaps, their share of a darker blood imparted a certain passionate vehemence — of palm and pineapple, and the various Carnival figures of Democracy or the Arts, with their whole illusory circumambience of blue sky and golden prizes, differed from the reality. And we cannot help wondering, as we examine the extraordinary scenes they depicted, so entirely unlike the run of the production of other artists of their day — if it be some seventy years ago, as I incline to believe —, who these anonymous men were, and whether they essayed any bigger or more important works. . . . For example, to what heights would not such a party as that described a few pages back, in the garden of the Governor of Curasao, have inspired them ; in the same fashion that it would have made so

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especial an appeal to the genius of Rousseau ? One can see the decks, tier upon tier, of Dutch faces, with a kind of naive, highly-coloured, but surly innocence brooding over them, all mounting up to the climax of the flag of the House of Orange floating above the palace.

In vain, alas, did I search Havana and its immediate surroundings for fresco or wall-painting by the same hands, notwithstanding that whenever I saw a big building, palace or church, I forced an entry, hoping to find within a vast design of Peace leading her team of lions through a tapestry of rosebuds and hibiscus, while a flying-fish hovered aloft with an olive branch, or even to be confronted with an appropriate historical scene, such as the Landing of Columbus ; an episode which graces one cigar-box in my collection, and the delineation of which would perhaps, even on a wall, have been carried out in the same natty and execrable shallow relief. . . . I failed to discover them, or anything that resembled them — but I found, instead, a city more fascinating, withal, than I had imagined it could be, and a country more lovely, much more lovely.

It is pleasant to be able to think still of Havana and of Curasao without incurring the horrors attendant upon letting the mind wander to any part of Europe. . . . Yet how infinitely distant these far, fair isles must seem, distant as the fabled gardens of the Hesperides or the nesting-place of halcyon, more remote than ever the Bermudas can in reality have appeared to Andrew Marvell. For, in modern war, every man is the prisoner of his country as well as the slave of his State. Even the objects that remind us of travel have vanished of late years, and it is for this reason that I have sought to paint my still-life, of the empty bottle, standing there, the open box, the broken band. . . . There they are yet, in front of me, the stoneware bottle, so typically Dutch in its plain, strong solidity, as it catches the light that pours into the room from a wide Derbyshire perspective, hilly, umbrageous, with tufts and plumes of smoke and layers of mist. The light plays upon the curves of the bottle's neck, in cool, broad tones of grey and fawn and almond-husk. It brings out a new watery whiteness in the white of the paper with which the box is lined, and yet also emphasises the threading of gold among the blue and scarlet of the label. . . . As, for a last time, we look at it, the sound of a

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rumba comes once more stealing over a glassy tide from a coastline that seems to resemble a feather as it lies so lightly on the water. The whole island vibrates to the rhythm, nor will it cease throughout the hot noon or the night; not until, indeed, the electric lights, shining here and there, dwindle down to take second place, as the palest green morning light begins to prosper under the branches of the trees, as if born of them, and to illumine delicately the scarlet and orange trumpets of the flowers among which the people dance. . . . While we listen, to try to catch the precise air that is being played, the sound alters, and, with it, the scene. Now each strand of the feather is a forest tree, a gigantic tree, growing larger and larger. We are in a forest before dusk, at that moment when the great diapason begins, when a shudder passes through the leaves that have lain dead all day, and every insect, for green mile upon green mile, with a rustling and clapping of its wings, with every variety of rustling and clapping and shrilling, gives praise to its creator for the sure prospect of dusk and of the cool that comes with it. That is the music of the tropics, a music which no other region knows.

## A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

*Being a Discourse  
on the Importance of Bad Art*

**T**L O many people, especially during a war, art signifies nothing. It may be that the Englishman at any time regards it as being of little consequence ; at best, a recreation. Moreover, frequently misled either by false prophets or by his own untrained faculties in this respect, he is usually inclined to prefer bad art, and to pronounce it of greater importance than good. . . . But then, the Englishman is a political animal, and perhaps, in a sense and from a political angle, he may be right. Perhaps a worthless book, for example, can achieve more ill than a good book can ever achieve good. . . . At any rate it is upon this seeming paradox that I will now dwell, in the effort to demonstrate, beyond the power of any scepticism to disprove, how a bad writer, by means of his bad writing, can influence the fate of a whole country, and how, by advocating false ideals through the medium of cheapened words — and thereby still further debasing the verbal currency —, the author of a fifth-rate romance can, ninety years after he has written it and eighty years after his own death, become responsible for the destruction of a flourishing and famous land.

Bohemia was a country which we all knew. Every English child had read the story of the capture, single-handed, of the old King of Bohemia by the Black Prince ; as a result of which the shield of every Prince of Wales since that time has been surmounted by the three ostrich feathers and has carried the motto " Ich Dien ". Shakespeare himself deigned to pitch scenes in this realm and — another instance of how, throughout the ages, the English have plotted against a virtuous Germany — added to it a sea-coast. It may be that a vague knowledge of the fjords and rocky islands of Croatia had made him confound it with this inland country of mountains and of castles balanced upon conic hills, of vast forests and monasteries fattening in green valleys. At any rate, be that how it may, his description, for example, of Act III, Scene in in *The Winter's Tale*, runs: " Bohemia. A

desert country near the sea. . . ." And always for English children the name of this nation blended beauty, tradition and romance ; the word itself possessed in its sound a high and chivalric ring.

The gypsies made their first appearance in England during the early sixteenth century, and were well established—though looked upon with no very favourable eye by their involuntary hosts—in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Throughout Western Europe they were known as " Bohemians", because when they had first entered it, they had passed through Bohemia. But, in spite of their dirt, their lies, their vermin, they did little harm to the name they had appropriated ; added thereto, indeed, a certain ragged lustre, associating it with scenes of wild and improbable beauty, of droves of horses, of sneering, handsome faces, and of exotic dances by the light of fires blazing out on the darkest nights from strange encampments. . . . Then, two and a half centuries later, came Murger and, with his triumph, the name of this ancient country entered on its decadence.

Born in Paris in 1822, the son of a German concierge and tailor, Murger became secretary to a Russian nobleman, wrote several books, and published his greatest success, *La Viede Boheme*, in 1848. (Himself featured in it under the guise of " Rodolphe "). He it was who put across to the curious middle classes the idea of " Bohemianism ", cafe-gypsies of the bed and board, sharing everything — and everybody — with everybody. As his pattern of the artist, he set up the old crook and crank of the cafe, who, in the sacred cause of Intoxication for Art's sake, would sit up all night in good companionship (with the result, of course, that he would be unable to work next day).

In time, the word " Bohemian " became an excuse for almost any sort of moral obliquity or lack of manners. Anyone who never paid a debt, or lounged about the world, never doing anything and getting in the way of those who did, was called a Bohemian. And, alas, attracted by the popularity of the book, and seeing in it the possibility of a popular opera, Puccini later lent his genius to this debasing process. *La Bohitne* must have sullied Bohemia even more than *Carmen* tainted the idea of Spain. In time, therefore, the name extended from the improvident to include the rich ; any rich young man who wasted his

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fortune and sat up till morning in expensive night-clubs, any girl of the " Bright-Young-Thing " period, who possessed her own flat in a mews and had learned to live on cocktails or take drugs, was a " Bohemian ". The name became a reproach equally to the genuine artist, to the Bohemian by nationality and to the gypsy ; to the first, because, if he is to learn his craft, whether painting or writing or music, his life must be devoted to it, and not to drinking in bars and cafes; to the second because he is the most respectable and hard-working of men ; to the third because, after all, he belongs to a virile and open-air race, and cannot afford to sit smoking and drinking for days together, still less to take drugs.

The results of this debasing of a word have been tragic and amazing.

When Bohemia recovered its independence after the war of 1914-1918, the provisional government very naturally shied at the implications of the word " Bohemia ". Murger, though dead since 1861, had rendered it impossible as the name of a country. . . . And so the citizens of the Bohemian state were now called " Czecho-Slovaks " (as if the English and Scottish had been obliged to describe themselves as " Brito-Picts " and England as " Brito-Pictonia "). The Czechs and Slovaks showed all their historic virtues of industry and imagination ; they produced great statesmen, remarkable writers and musicians; their country became the most prosperous small state in Europe. . . . But when old national enmities were able to assert themselves again owing to the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany, these foes to the Bohemian nation were able to say to the masses in Europe with some show of justice, " Are you going to involve yourselves in war in order to fight for a nation that never existed until twenty years ago ? Are you going to bring on your countries all the horrors of war for a composite, hyphenated race of whom no one has ever heard ? "

If Bohemia had then been called Bohemia, the peoples of the world would have known where they stood ; the banners of history would have unfurled themselves in their minds. We should have remembered " Ich Dien " and the proud panache flowing in the wind above it. And Bohemia might, perhaps, still be its ancient Christian self, not overrun by barbaric, bom-

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basic hordes. . . . But, as it was, there seemed to many to be something genuine in this propaganda ; who were the Czechoslovaks ? ; why should we fight for them ?

Thus the work of Murger was completed, a nation passed into servitude because a bad author had written a cheap romance.

When the old state of Bohemia is reconstituted, let us hope that its rulers will decide to defy Murger and return to the old name of Bohemia, and that the old name will then redeem its value and beauty. . . . Meanwhile you and I can help the cause by never using the word " Bohemian ", except of an inhabitant of the country Bohemia, and by calling a waster " a waster ", and a drunkard " a drunkard " — or, if you like, " a drunk ".

## ROOTS OF THE SOLE ARABIAN TREE

**T**all writers, whether chiefly concerned with the exterior or interior of the world, books of travel are the most stimulating, lending wings to head and pen, effecting an absolute, if transient, rescue from care, from pain, even from the nearness of death itself. And among authors of volumes of this kind, Marco Polo is prince and phoenix, ever arising anew in flames more glorious, a thousand formerly obscure points in connection with his voyages springing to life again from year to year, lit by the prodigious renewal of these fires, so that in his travellers' tales, even in the most improbable, is to be found an inner core of a strange truth more true than truth itself and, in addition, a thousand reflections, some temporary and mutable, others eternal, of things past and to come.

Thus Coleridge, at the urgent request of Byron, puts on record the history of his *Kubla Khan* :

In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he [the author] fell asleep in his chair at the moment he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in Purchas's *Pilgrimage*:<sup>1</sup> " Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed within a wall."

The sentence to which the poet refers actually runs, in *Purchas his Pilgrimage* :

In Xamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightful Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place.

Professor Lowes has proved, however, in *The Road to Xanadu*, that memories of an earlier reading of *Purchas his Pilgrimes* were stirred to life in Coleridge's mind by these words from *Purchas his Pilgrimage*? The two books are often confounded, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Purchas his Pilgrimage* was published in London in 1612.

<sup>2</sup> I am obliged to Mr. C. H. Wilkinson for calling my attention to this in a letter which he addressed to *The Times Literary Supplement* of 3rd May 1941.

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similar passage from the *Pilgrimes*, which I give for the sake of comparison, runs :

The Citie is three dayes journey Northeastward to the Citie Xandu, which the great Chan Cublay now rainging, built ; erecting therein a marvellous and artificiall Palace of Marble and other stones, which abutteth on the wall on one side, and the midst of the Citie on the other. He included sixteene miles within the circuit of the wall on that side where the Palace abutteth on the Citie wall, into which none can enter but by the Palace.

Coleridge proceeds, in his record of the history of his poem, to tell us that he continued

for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines ; if that indeed can be called a composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved.

Purchas's rough ore of poetry was thus refined by the sub-conscious mind of a great poet into the pure and scintillant gold we know :

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree ;  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round :  
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

So the remembered music, firm, resonant yet full of hallucination, rolled on until Coleridge had snatched from his dream world with certainty and ease fifty-four out of " the two or three hundred lines ". Alas, as he approached what are, as they stand, the last two lines,

For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise,

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there came the most dramatic and tragic interruption in all literary history. The author was, in his own words, " unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock ". On returning to his room, after being detained for over an hour, Coleridge discovered to his amazement and chagrin that the rest of the great poem had evaporated from his mind. Lost for ever to us were sunny domes and caves of ice, and that Abyssinian maid, the damsel with the dulcimer, gone and lost for ever, together with the unforgettable, alien, dream-Jogic that governed them and transports us, while we read, to a world of rhythmic illusion, situated in some far planet, though the names of places and people in it bear to our ears a strange familiarity.

Of this history, the momentous intrusion of the Person (he must, surely, be spelled with a capital letter !) from Porlock will seem, to many, not the least interesting incident. Destruction, no less than creation, has its giants, and here was a mortal able by his mere unwanted presence to deprive the world of perhaps five-sixths of an immortal poem. Moreover his precipitant emergence is of especial concern to those whose craft is writing : for he is the personification of Everyday, breaking like a bull into the delicately furnished china-shop of the poet's mind. He is the most victorious, if the most accursed, embodiment of that poltergeist who ever plagues the works of genius and, to a lesser degree, the whole body of imaginative writing ; an immense, symbolic figure, looming up, as it were, from the cloud-capped visions of William Blake, and destined to wake all poets from their divine trances. Further, he takes on, in the pursuance of his ordained task, does this Person from Porlock, as many aspects as a Hindu divinity ; one day, it may be, the innocent likeness of a child learning to play execrably upon the piano, the next, that of a gently dusting housemaid or of a kindly voice enquiring what you would like to eat for dinner. Sometimes, again, he will assume the guise of a poor wretch blowing *Abide With Me* upon a trombone or clarinet in the wintry street below, of a fox-terrier, loyally barking, or even of an inanimate object, such as a dripping tap in a hotel bedroom : while in years of national stress he appears as a Bonaparte or Hitler.

Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether the Person from

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Porlock is ever completely successful. Even though he cut short *Kubla Khan*, yet that indestructible fragment, rooted strongly in the soil of its own enchantment, stands for ever to the poet's glory. Mr. Walter de la Mare observes luminously in his *Behold This Dreamer!* that " the prescription for the broken dream at Nether Stowey . . . was not opium *per se*, but opium *plus* Coleridge ". To this formula, however, he might well have added "*plus* Marco Polo". For the Venetian traveller has proved to be one of those guardian angels, able to nourish and fertilise genius, able, five centuries after his own death, to raise in the minds of others these imperishable flowers of beauty ; in this the very opposite of the abhorrent Person from Porlock. Nor, I like to think, had this particular guardian angel of poetic inspiration been idle in the years that had elapsed between his own time and those entranced hours in which Coleridge composed his great poem, for I believe it is possible to trace his part, albeit on this occasion a much slighter one, in another astonishing achievement.

Consider the tremendous opening of Shakespeare's *The Phoenix and the Turtle* :

Let the bird of loudest lay,  
On the sole Arabian tree,  
Herald sad and trumpet be,  
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

May not that resounding and authoritative exhortation be derived, equally with *Kubla Khan*, from the mind of a great poet who has read Marco Polo's *Travels* ? The province of Tonocain (I quote from a recent edition of Yule's *Travels of Marco Polo*) " also contains an immense plain on which is found the *Arbre Sol*, which we Christians call the *Arbre Sec*. . . ." In pursuance of my argument, it is to be noted, too, that this mysterious tree is, in the first text of all — the French text — referred to variously as " *L'Arbre Sol*, which in the Book of Alexander is called *L'Arbre Seche*" and as "the *Arbre Seule*, which the Christians call the *Arbre Sec*." Does not, therefore, the use of the word *sole* seem to emphasise and enforce the allusion — the tree of the Sun or Sol, and the sole tree —, as well as to indicate its source ?

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If, then, this is, as I hold, " the sole Arabian tree ", let us continue the passage :

. . . and I will tell you what it is like. It is a tall and thick tree, having the bark on one side green and the other white ; and it produces a rough husk like that of a chestnut, but without anything in it. The wood is yellow like box, and very strong, and there are no other trees near it nor within a hundred miles of it, except on one side, where you find trees within about ten miles' distance. And there, the people of the country tell you, was fought the last battle between Alexander and King Darius.

The guidance is not strong, either as to the nature of the tree or where it grew, though in this last respect we are at least told that the " natives all worship Mahomet ". At any rate it grew in Persia or Arabia, both legendary countries in their associations, and the tree has been identified by experts under many different names. Some have said that it is " a manna-bearing oak " ; others, a Chindr or oriental plane ; others, " a Ficus Vasta, a tree of Arabia Felix " : others, again, have sought to recognise in it one of the two vast cypresses which grew in Khorazan and were held sacred by the Magians, who believed them to be grown from shoots that Zoroaster had brought back\*from Paradise, while the less ambitious have seen in it a giant mimosa, or even the humble, if beautiful, arbutus.

The Tree of the Sun, together with the Tree of the Moon, appears earlier, in all the versions of the Alexander Romance :

Thou shalt find trowes two ;  
Seyntes and holy they both bo ;  
Higher than in othir countray all.  
*Arbeset* men heom callith.

" Sire Kyng," quod on, " by myn eyghe  
Either Trough is an hundred feet hygn,  
They stondith up to the skye ;  
That on to the *Sonne*, sikirlye ;  
That othir, we tellith the nowe,  
Is sakret in the *Mone* vertue." <sup>1</sup>

Both trees were oracular, " speaking in the Indian tongue ", and were clothed with the skin of animals. And the peacock was said to nest in the branches of L'Arbre Sol, which grew, Sir John Mandeville tells his readers, " a 15 journeys in lengthe, goynge be

<sup>1</sup> From *King Alisaundre* (Weber's Collection).

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the Deserts of the tother side of the Ryvere Beaumare ".

Now it has been assumed by the general public in its majority and by many commentators that the phoenix was the " bird of loudest lay ", but, since this great poem opens with four stanzas detailing which birds shall be permitted, which forbidden, to be present at " the obsequy " or funeral rites of the " Phoenix and the Turtle fled In a mutual flame from hence ", I submit that this reading would appear to make nonsense. I would like, therefore, instead of it, to be permitted to put forward another suggestion. Since " the bird of loudest lay " cannot have been the phoenix, was he not the peacock, said, we have seen, to nest in the branches of L'Arbre Sol, or " sole Arabian tree " ? In support of this theory, several reasons can be adduced. It is plain that no herald, decked in his bright and chequered armorial garb, could ever, in a visual sense, be termed " sad ". The meaning of the word in this connection could only be either that the message he came habitually to announce was mournful, or that the sound of his voice was ugly and melancholy, or that the sight of him was distressing because a tradition of ill luck attended his finery. But the peacock fulfils all these three conditions. The burden of his discordant and disconsolate cries — which also qualify him for the part of "the bird of loudest lay" — is always said to presage the end of a spell of fine weather ; his uplifted voice is, in fact, said to " herald rain " ; while his exterior, heraldic in the extreme, is nevertheless ill-omened, for an old and persistent popular belief, throughout Europe and Asia, still maintains — no doubt through some early association of the beautiful eyes upon the peacock's tail with the evil eye — that his feathers are unlucky and, because of this, must not be brought into the house.

Notwithstanding, whichever bird he may be, and wherever the " sole Arabian tree " may grow, whether in any of the five continents or even in the mere soil, albeit still more marvellous, of men's imagination, there will be many, I feel sure, who will, in the same manner as myself, prefer to consider the opening lines of Shakespeare's poem, not as derived from the *Romance of Alexander*, but as one more blessing from the same source as many others, seeing the origin of them in the *Travels* of Marco **Polo**, and the effect of this book upon the poet as the magic union of Phoenix and Turtle which he celebrates:

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So they loved, as love in twain  
Had the essence but in one ;  
Two distincts, division none.

Though the fact of the peacock nesting in the branches of the Tree of the Sun hails from the *Romance*, this does not preclude Shakespeare from having culled the material from Polo, and having then heard how the peacock was said to dwell in its burning shade. Chronologically, such an influence is possible. The first English translation of the *Travels*, John Frampton's, was published in London in 1579, when Shakespeare was fifteen years of age, while " a poetical essaie on the Turtle and the Phoenix " appeared for the first time in Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr*, a collection of poems by contemporary writers, in 1601.

An editorial in the same number of *The Times Literary Supplement*<sup>1</sup> as that in which, in its first form, this essay appeared, rightly pointed out that the poet's knowledge of the bird could be derived equally from Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *Natural History*, in which the phoenix is described as building himself " a nest with the twigs and branches of the Canell or Cinamon and Frankincense trees ", or — for the *Natural History* did not appear until 1601, more than three decades after Frampton's translation of Marco Polo's *Travels* — from earlier sources, Chaucer and Skelton. Indeed, the classical fables had long impregnated English poetry with the fragrance of the Phoenix Tree and the fire of the fabulous bird. Further, as Professor Baldwin pointed out in a long letter in the correspondence columns of the same journal a month later,<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare could have read about the phoenix in the original of Pliny, Ovid and Lactantius, who were " grammar school authors ". . . . But, whichever may have been the nourishment of his inspiration, there can be no doubt that, to adopt the jargon of today, Shakespeare was intensely " phoenix-conscious ". In *Cymbeline*, for example, there is the allusion —

If she be furnished with a mind so rare,  
She is alone the Arabian bird.

And the same editorial to which I have referred, recalls that passage in *The Tempest*, when, in Act III, Scene 111, after there have entered

1 26th April 1941.

2 24th May 1941.

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"several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet", Sebastian, astonished at Prospero's magic, exclaims,

. . . Now will I believe  
That there are unicorns ; that in Arabia  
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne ; one phoenix  
At this hour reigning there.

But is it drawing too much on the debit side of probability for me to suggest to the reader that he may perceive in the last half of the penultimate line, and the final line itself of Antonio's speech, a definite allusion to Marco Polo, and the way he was treated by his fellow citizens on his return from Venice ? Here Antonio, taking up the amazed utterance of Sebastian, declares :

I'll believe both ;  
And what does else want credit, come to me,  
And I'll be sworn 'tis true ; *travellers ne'er did lie,*  
*Though fools at home condemn 'em.*

Do not these words, which I have italicised above, show how much Marco Polo was in the poet's mind when he wrote them ?

Several of my surmises, doubtless, are without foundation ; others — such as whether the bird of loudest lay is not the peacock rather than the phoenix — are concerned in no way with the deep and essential mystery of *The Phoenix and Turtle*,

Death is now the phoenix' nest ;  
And the turtle's loyal breast  
To eternity doth rest,  
Leaving no posterity.

But so little is known of Shakespeare that almost every new theory, every speculation, however slight in scope, counts to us as a discovery. And what a triumphant, miraculous coincidence it would be if those same *Travels* which, in *Kubla Khan*, gave birth to the most splendid and haunting poem of the nineteenth century (for though written in 1797, it must count as that) were also responsible for, or at any rate entered into the composition of, the most strange and magical of all Elizabethan poems. . . . As I write these words, my mind opens, and I seem to see still farther, hear — but no, it is only the echoing footsteps of the Person from Porlock in his latest, least amiable guise, bidding me stop and take refuge in the cellar.

# THE EYE WITHIN THE EAR

For Samuel Courtauld

"**S**MONIDES", Plutarch tells us, "calls painting silent poetry, and poetry, speaking painting."<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of this close connection between the two arts, it seldom occurs that a great painter shows himself to be a great writer as well; the perfect equipoise is to be found only, perhaps, in the drawings and notes of Leonardo da Vinci — his entries, for example, about the Deluge, on the shape and effect of waves, or on different forms of cloud and vegetation, and his sketches for them. William Blake, too, maintains a remarkably fine balance between the poetry of his *Prophetic Books* and the drawings that accompany the text. Through his achievements in both mediums there sweeps a terrible and equivocal music; the sound of the rippling of great harps played by bands, rank on rank, of Immortals, who, risen from the age of the Old Testament, but armed with the full druidical powers of the Stone Age, combine the flowing beards and flaming orbs of the prophets with the staring wide-open eyes of extreme old age . . . On the other hand, his pictorial work seems to offer no precise counterpart to his lyrics, to such poems as *Auguries of Innocence*, *The Tiger* or *The Little Black Boy*. D. G. Rossetti, again, manifests a similar genius in drawings and poems. But though poet-painters are rare, nevertheless, the similarities existing between the poetry and paintings of different great individual poets and painters — a similarity that often oversteps the spirit of the works they create, and extends, so far as this is possible between diverse mediums, even down to matters of technique — opens up a no less interesting realm of speculation. Here a whole new world lies ready for the investigator, the lover of beauty, thus able to explore the great and fruitful valley of the spirit that lies between the two vast ranges of poetry and painting.

In early times, poetry — I write of English poetry — lagged

<sup>1</sup> From "Whether The Athenians Were More Warlike or Learned". Plutarch's *Morals*; various translators revised by William Watson Goodwin.

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far behind the art of painting. For the equivalent of the Italian or Flemish primitive we must wait a full century, or even a century and a half. . . . But let us begin.

In the mysterious beauty of the lines that follow, can there not be detected a likeness to Piero della Francesca ?

The maidens came.  
When I was in my mother's bower,  
I had all that I would.  
    The bailey bcareth the bell away ;  
    The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
The silver is white, red is the gold ;  
The robes they lay in fold.  
    The bailey beareth the bell away ;  
    The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
And through the glass windows shines the sun.  
How should I love, and I so young ?  
    The bailey beareth the bell away ;  
    The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.

The actual *feeling* of the words, infiltrated by some meaning that can never be grasped, is, it may be true, absent in these paintings, which are more simple in their significance. But Piero's pale maidens, as they wait, young and grave and comely in their robes, so finely sculptured, and beneath their garlands of spring flowers, are set in the same light of a golden dawn, the same hush that can never be broken save by the songs, sharp as the first summer fruit, of the earliest thrush and blackbird.

To the work of Chaucer it is difficult to find a precise counterpart ; though this may be because his great poems, with their burden of warm human feeling, to our modern eyes resemble the novel more nearly than the pure poem. Notwithstanding, some affinity is, I believe, to be detected between his *Balade*

Thy faire body, lat hit nat appere,  
Lavyne ; and thou, Lucesse of Rome toun,  
And Poliscene, that boghten love so dere,  
And Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,  
Hyde ye your trouthe of love and your renoun ;  
And thou, Tisbe, that hast of love swich payne ;  
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

and the most beautiful of French primitives, a saint by Froment or Fouquet's picture of the Madonna, guarded by those flying angels of red sealing-wax, at Antwerp. The flowers in Chaucer's

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poetry are Italian flowers, though, the same blossoms that spring from the verdant pastures of Botticelli. . . . But you would expect an Italian influence, as well as a French one, for he had visited the two countries. Again, *In Honour of the City of London*, attributed to Dunbar, displays all the flat and strongly coloured beauty of a cassone-front : any one stanza chosen at random will underline this resemblance :

Upon thy lusty Brigge of pylers white  
    Been merchauntis full royall to behold ;  
Upon thy stretis goth many a semely knyght  
    In velvet gownes and cheynys of fyne gold.  
By Julyus Cesar thy Tour founded of old  
May be the hous of Mars victoryall,  
    Whos artillery with tonge may not be told :  
London, thou art the flour of Cities all.

When we begin to approach the High Renaissance, painting still marches far ahead of poetry. We may look in vain, until the latter half of the sixteenth century, for an exact equivalent in verse of the work of any great painter. Where, for instance, can we discover the precise counterpart of Giorgione ? The nearest we can approach him is by indirect paths, through those painters in whom his influence is to be felt : (and no artist ever existed who, with a less body of work, though not of achievement, of his own, was able by means of his genius, clear and transparent as the elements, to affect plainly the whole trend of Italian — and through it of European — painting). Thus, in certain moods, Edmund Spenser, an altogether lesser artist, shows a dim reflection of this pervading glow ; occasionally a gleam of distant genius falls on his work, in the same way that it illumines momentarily, and at times, the canvases of such a minor painter as Dosso Dossi, whose pictures are often full of an umbrageous, fugitive poetry hidden under the not seldom coarse and superficial flatness of his brushwork. His *Prothalamion*, with its exquisite refrain of

Sweet Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song,

and with such lines as

Eftsonnes the Nymphes, which now had Flowers their fill,  
Ran in all haste to see that silver brood,  
As they came floating on the Christal Flood ;

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Whome when they sawe, they stood amazed, still,  
Their wondring eyes to fill;  
Them seem'd they never saw a sight so fayre,  
Of Fowles, so lovely, that they sure did deeme  
Them heavenly borne, or to be that same payre,  
Which through the Skie draw Venus silver Teeme ;

possesses the identical summer calm contained in brooding heat, the same flat leaves carved out of the golden, translucent mass of air, the same mysterious sounds of voices and of lutes coming from under them, that we find in work of this painter, and in that of Giorgione with how much greater a degree of poetry.

The most spectacular, however, and, in a sense, the most unexpected of such analogies is to be found in the work of Shakespeare. But first we must note that Giulio Romano,<sup>1</sup> the curious Giulio Romano, is the only painter mentioned in his plays. In *The Winter's Tale*, Act V, Scene in, the Third Gentleman relates how the princess heard of her mother's statue : " — a piece many years in doing, and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape ". Thus the poet seems to go out of his way to pay the painter a tribute ; and those who like to argue out such matters may wonder what examples of his art Shakespeare had seen, whether there were then — as there are today — pictures by him at Hampton Court, or perhaps at Greenwich. . . . But we might well — because of the predominant background of the world at that time, and because of the Italian atmosphere of so many of his plays — expect to find in his lyrics a likeness to Italian painting ; but, on the contrary, the most evident case of similar imagery, and of a kinship in essence, is to be discovered in Flemish painting, as it seems to the present writer an almost perfect coincidence.

When icicles hang by the wall,  
And Dick the Shepherd blows his nail,  
And Tom bears logs into the hall,  
And milke comes frozen home in pail,  
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,  
Then nightly sings the staring owl,

I B. 1492 ; d. 1546. Raphael's best pupil, to whom the painter left by his will many of his implements and works of art.

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Tu-whit !  
Tu-who ! — a merry note,  
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

These lines have the very life and movement of Breughel the Elder, the same queer, elusive perspective, the magical foreshortening and airy view of snow and red noses and bare trees, that are to be examined in such pictures of that great northern master as " The Months " in the Vienna Gallery. Occasionally, there is — as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, or sometimes in *Romeo and Juliet* — something that reminds us of Tintoretto or Veronese; but not for long, for the light is not the same. Indeed, when we notice Shakespeare deliberately introducing into his poetry a Mediterranean element, as in the lovely

Come away, come away, death  
And in sad cypres let me be laid ;

the lines seem, notwithstanding, to lack the vivacity and strangeness and movement of most of his poems. Further, Breughel — or one of his descendants, the Teniers — is very evident in the same clown's other song :

When that I was and a tiny little boy,  
With hey, ho, the winde and the raine ;  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the raine it raineth every day.

Webster, it may be thought, presents a similarity — though here the comparison is far less satisfactory, for it has only a likeness of spirit, none of treatment — to Mathias Griinewald :

Sin their conception, their birth weeping,  
Their life a general mist of error,  
Their death a hideous storm of terror,

such lines resemble one of the great panels by this master at Colmar, though his palette and certain of his forms recall William Blake. . . . On the other hand, Donne approaches, by his deliberate and compelling use of distortion, by the wild and death-charged imagery of his love, the painting of El Greco. In these two worlds of pen and brush, these two tremendous kingdoms of the spirit, flickers the same delusive light of candles, meaning so much more than it says or can illumine, the same faceted depth of jewels, rendered, not because they are sumptu-

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ous or precious, but for their quality of magic, a capacity to catch the future and hold it for an instant in their scintillant depths.

With others of the Elizabethans, however, no comparison is to be found, and though an influence — or, at any rate, a reaction — from Italy is plainly to be seen in the work of Ben Jonson, it is of an entirely different order. That which, for example, stands out so obviously in *Volpone*, and from the following lines of Sir Epicure Mammon's in *The Alchemist*

The few, that would give out themselves, to be  
Court, and town-stallions, and each-wherc, belye  
Ladies, who are known most innocent, for them ;  
Those will I beg, to make me Eunuchs of;  
And they shall fan me with ten Estrich tailes  
A piece, made in a plume to gather wind.  
We will be brave, Puffe, now we ha' the Med'cine,  
My meat, shall all come in, in Indian shels,  
Dishes of Agate, set in gold, and studded,  
With Emeralds, Sapphyres, hiacinths, and Rubies.  
The tongues of Carpes, Dormise, and camels heeles,  
Boil'd i the spirit of Sol, and dissolu'd Pearle,

is the English moral suspicion of the Italian Renaissance, even though, for all its grudging admiration, it may bring to mind some great fresco by one of the Venetian masters.

The lesser Elizabethans appear to have their counterpart in the native plastic arts rather than in Flemish or Italian painting. The wonderful painted plaster frieze of the Boar Hunt at Hardwick, the figure of " Ceres " there — albeit they may be the work of a Fleming —, or its stone chimney-pieces, on which are sculptured all the conceits of the contemporary poets, stars and flowers and suns and dolphins and unicorns and sheaves of wheat, these are the equivalent of Peele and Nashe. In the poems of Sir Philip Sidney, for example, we might expect to discover traces of his friendship with Paolo Veronese ; because friendships between English poets and great Italian masters have been very rare, and when one such relationship occurs, we should hope to find some influence from it, some concrete token of it. And, indeed, in this connection it is pleasant to wander further along the lines of conjecture, trying to summon up for our own delight the series of magnificent frescoes which Veronese would have

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been called upon to execute for Sidney in the royal palace of Warsaw, had that epitome of Elizabethan virtues accepted, as he was asked to do, the throne of Poland. But *Rural Poesy* and his other finest poems have none of the pictorial sumptuousness of his friend's paintings.

With the great figures of post-Elizabethan poetry a comparison is difficult; albeit those lovers of Italian painting who estimate Guido Reni at his true worth may think the comparison to be drawn between his pictures and Milton's poems more exact than one between Milton and Michelangelo. . . . Towards the end of the seventeenth century, however, the relative positions between poetry and painting were completely reversed ; poetry raced ahead of the sister art, and remained there. Thus, with many of Dryden's lines, with those, for example, from *Absalom and Achitophel*, beginning

Now stop your noses, Readers, all and some,  
For here's a tun of Midnight work to come,  
Og from a Treason Tavern rowling home. . . .  
Round as a Globe, and Liquored ev'ry chink,  
Goodly and Great he Sayls behind his Link ;

and with a great deal of Pope, too, a very manifest equivalent is to be obtained, but it is with the best of Rowlandson's work, a hundred years later, with Daumier's dark canvases, almost another century on in time, or even with the paintings of our contemporary, Rouault.

In the eighteenth century Gray and Richard Wilson have a great deal in common, the same lakes, catching the light's eye, the same ruins inhabited by melancholy ; and in the late nineteenth, some may observe a similarity of spirit, and even of technique, between Verlaine and Whistler, between Baudelaire and Gauguin. But, on the whole, comparison becomes more difficult, since from the time of Chatterton onward a consciously archaistic spirit begins to betray itself in poetry. Of Keats, perhaps, a reflection shows in the groves and nymphs of Corot, but as I have suggested elsewhere, the domes of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* are to be found mirrored in architecture rather than in painting. We must look for the " stately pleasure-dome " and for the " gardens bright with sinuous rills " in the grounds and buildings of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton or of Sezincote in

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Warwickshire, rather than in the painting of the time ; for Coleridge's great poem is therein reflected as surely as the dream that gave it birth was rooted in the *Travels* of Marco Polo. . . . Nevertheless, even today, when poetry and painting are more conscious of themselves, of their bodies and minds, than they have ever been before, the same untrodden land, its territory only a little diminished, still lies between them, a kingdom hard to reach, and over which rules that most incorporeal yet dominating of tyrants, the Spirit of the Age. Perhaps he is a god more than a tyrant, the messenger, the Mercury, of the Time God. His is the power to come down from Olympus and blow life into innumerable works of art that, without his inspiration, would swiftly wither and die. He seems, too, to be a god whose direction is seldom clearly seen, or indeed to many visible at all, at the moment of his descent, while the results of his visitings are not to be mistaken. For this god can make the same blossoms flower at the same time in places the most remote from each other, and in climates the most diverse ; for example, he caused the pre-Raphaelite painters to flourish, poppy-fed, in their ivory towers among their blue-and-white china, and poor Richard Dadd, forlorn, immured for whole decades in Bedlam, to paint in those identical years almost in the same style, but yet without any knowledge of the contemporary work in progress outside his besieged world of delusion.

## THE ART OF PAVEL TCHELITCHEW

X HAVE long been of the opinion that Tchelitchew is a great painter, and it is for this reason that I take up my pen to write about him. . . . But there are two kinds of great painters, and it seems as well to decide to which order he belongs — though of the two divisions, who, finally, except the person content to mouth the contemporary modes of thought, is to decide which is the greater ?

One group of the masters — painters such as Giotto or Titian or Ingres or Raphael or Cezanne — leads us through the rich open pastures of pure painting. Their personality provides no veil to darken the subject here, and to lighten it there, no film of light interposed between subject and spectator. . . . But there are the others, such as Giorgione and El Greco, Simone Martini, Rembrandt or Seurat, who conduct us into a closed garden full of mysterious forms merging into shadow, to listen to the sound of voices, coming we know not from where, but from beyond the wall that bounds us, and carrying in their tones the most elusive intimations. In these works it is as though the silken strands of cobwebs, hitherto unsuspected, glitter for a moment in the sun.

There are, then, I think, these two divisions, and in my opinion Monsieur Tchelitchew belongs to the second and more mysterious of them. Nor is this distinction I am trying to draw but another formulation of the old difference between classic and romantic ; for even when Monsieur Tchelitchew purposely discards all the old cloak-and-sword effects that would come so easily to such a hand, even when he forbids himself to use his own most brilliant and personal effects of form and colour, and limits himself to a bunch of grapes or a shape as severe as a map pinned down at the corners, even then, the voices still whisper their hints of immortality from behind such apparently dry and dusty curtains.

Monsieur Tchelitchew has, of course, from his beginning been a " success ". He has met with no difficulty, ever, in finding admirers and people who would buy his productions. Neverthe-

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less he has, I apprehend, suffered from the fact that his work is so varied, and that he is never content to serve out the same dish every day in the year : which is the ideal, unfortunately, of most collectors of painting. His talent is infinitely varied, and has shown as many successive phases as that of Picasso. . . . I wonder, at times, then, whether the contemporary world can yet correctly estimate the enrichment which he brings to it ; an enrichment comparable to that which accrued when the first Spanish painters joined themselves to the European art tradition, or when the first Russian novelists became engaged in the writing of the European novel. He is, in fact, the first Russian painter of western power and originality, and counts, in the same way as does El Greco as a painter, or Dostoieffsky as a novelist, as a European.

There is in his work a curious and primitive horror ; and yet, this strange imaginative line, new in European art, is not far removed from certain traits in Chinese painting. It may be that here we again tap the source of Monsieur Tchelitchew's power, and that we feel, in the vibration of these paintings, the oriental strain that influences all Russians. But the imagination resides in the treatment as much as in the conception. Take any of his great oil paintings, and remark how unusual and original are the textures and surfaces which he creates.

Moreover, in this, as I have said, the only living painter who can rival Picasso, he continually experiments and passes on to new modes of expression, throwing them aside afterwards. Each phase as it comes, I suspect the painter himself considers to be final : but subsequently, in its turn, he rejects it, and then deems it to be for ever discarded. It is at this moment that the jackal painters and decorators of the Art World pounce on his refuse and produce it as their own . . . Thus, there are often exhibitions, derived solely from the example of this painter, in progress at galleries in fashionable streets, just as there are to be seen in the theatres several ballets similarly founded, without acknowledgement, on his work. Indeed, Monsieur Tchelitchew's richness of imagination, the strangeness and newness of its quality, is quite as much in evidence in his designs for the theatre as in his drawings and paintings. If you had ever come across the merest scrap of a drawing by his hand — a head, for instance, scrawled on a piece of blotting-paper — and were then to be presented in the theatre

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with any scene mounted by him, it would, however different in execution and conception, sound at once for you the same pealing bells that announce his personality as a painter.

A power almost of hypnotism inhabits the forms he makes, so that a little mound of sand becomes a mountain, and a head becomes a sphere embodying the whole world of space as well as its own world of thought. In instance of this, take one of the giant babies he depicts for us. These infant Titans, related, despite the passage of infinite centuries, to the stone progeny of Ancient Rome, and, more nearly still, to that Children's Crusade which Michelangelo, or such an artist even as Correggio, caused to march round the walls of churches and fly up under the heavy heavens of their domes, are full of intimidation, because full of their own power to grow ; infant Napoleons and infant athletes; the progenitors of some mighty brood of warriors.

I choose these heads to talk about, since the subject itself is one devoid of strangeness. The heads, in a sense, are ordinary heads; the quality of their imagination resides entirely in the treatment of them, in their presentation. But the bulls and matadors of Spain, standing so sturdily in their vast golden plains, or the bull-headed figures he draws for us elsewhere, the actors and the clowns, the singers, and the strange inhabitants of that lost planet which he has depicted, are full of visible as well as invisible imagination. Imprisoned in their cages of blue air stand the prima donna and the actor, the dwarf and the clown : it seems as though they would be there for ever, unable to escape, moving with the terrible slowness of a slow-motion picture. All these beings seem to have a reality of their own, to stand in space, with a quality that belongs as much to the everyday world as to the world of nightmare upon which it so often touches. And thus it is, too, with his recent work, with the great pictures he has painted in America, those huge, fecund continents that turn to naked women, those mountain ranges that are human, those trees that have the limbs of men, those masks of prophecy, caught for a moment in the spherical and opalescent perfection of a soap-bubble, or the pathetic and artful foetus, immeasurably old for all its immaturity, and comprehending within itself the whole secret of animal birth and growth, as well as the magic of the choirs of angels.

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**T**HOMAS ROWLANDSON was happily able to express himself and to define his subjects with a transcendent swing, ease and shrewdness. This is fortunate for us, since the facts of his career, as so often we observe to be the case with artists of remarkable prolificacy — because, of course, they are usually too busy drawing to have time for an eventful life —, must appear rather bleak and meagre and, in many instances, extremely obvious, in comparison with the interest and multitude of his drawings.

As one might surmise from their quality, his lifetime coincided with an outburst of national vigour unparalleled since the age of Elizabeth. He saw England lose her Empire and build it anew ; he saw her in straits so desperate that many of her own people imagined she could never recover, and then attain to heights of glory from which it was supposed she could never decline. Thus he could depict, from personal observation, the fruits of defeat and triumph ; he could oppose against the ideal summer life of the village, or the scenes of national rejoicing, the squalid horrors of bread riots and the bullying terror of the press-gang. Yet, whatever the subject he chose, every line is instinct with the spirit and character that made us so powerful a nation. Indeed, Rowlandson plainly takes his share in the English scene as the counterpart, in his own realm, of our victories by land and sea. In him we possess not only one of the most bitter and mordant of satirists, but — which is not perhaps so universally recognised — one of the most vigorous yet refined, personal and exquisite of draughtsmen, unrivalled at home or abroad. His name, therefore, should be as much of a boast on our lips as the self-trumpeting names (what magnificent swashbuckling sounds they make, from Drake and Raleigh to Cloudesley Shovel and down to Jellicoe and Sir Andrew Cunningham !) of great naval commanders.

Our hero, then, was born in the month of July 1756, in Old Jewry, where his father was " a respectable tradesman ". He

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learnt to draw before he could write, and at Dr. Barrow's school in Soho Square, where he was sent to be educated, he filled his books, before he was ten, with humorous distortions of his masters and schoolfellows. A few years later, his obvious genius for drawing led to his being sent to the newly-established Academy School, where his abundant energy and booby-trap sense of fun found its vent in playing tricks upon the keeper, George Michael Moser — he had a strong German accent when he spoke English, and this irregularity, we can be certain, entered into the simple jokes played upon him — and upon Richard Wilson, then the librarian of the Royal Academy. We know little, as I have said, of Rowlandson, few details have come down to us. But one of his primitive bits of fun has survived.<sup>1</sup> Moser was arranging the female model one afternoon when Rowlandson let fly with a pea-shooter, hit her, threw her entirely out of position, and upset the whole class. For this he was nearly expelled. As for Wilson, the great landscapist was by this time a disappointed man, and had grown dowdy and very severe. He used to interrupt the boys looking at books, with the remark ". . . Don't paw the leaves, sirrah ! . . . What ! have you got eyes in your fingers, boy ? " — a precise description, had he only known it, of Rowlandson's genius. Wilson was known in his own neighbourhood of Covent Garden as " Old Nosey", because of the prominence of that feature, which must surely often have attracted the youthful Rowlandson's attention, and given an opening for his pencil. . . . Be that as it may, when the boy was sixteen, his aunt, a French lady, whose maiden name was Chatelier, and who had married a Thomas Rowlandson of a generation earlier, invited him to Paris, so that he could pursue his studies of the human figure in one of the art-schools there. She must plainly have been a person of discernment, and, as we see later from her will, became much attached to him. He resided for two years in Paris, where he learnt to speak French perfectly, and he must have greatly enjoyed his stay, for he often returned, although, while he was there, as an obituarist<sup>2</sup> declares in a fit of popular xenophobia, he " occasionally indulged that satirical talent, in portraying the characteristics of that fantastic people,

<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo*. London, 1828.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June 1827. Written by Henry Angelo.

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whose *outré* habits, perhaps, scarcely demanded the exaggeration of caricature ".

At eighteen he returned home and once more attended the Academy School, being by now a fully qualified student. During this time he formed a friendship, which was to last for the whole of his life, with a fellow student, John Bannister, the future actor. His extreme proficiency with the pencil, more especially in his drawings of nudes, — an aptitude that had been greatly encouraged by the superior training in this respect afforded by Parisian art-schools, where such models were more freely employed — led to his being often instanced in London as a possible future rival to Mortimer, then universally regarded as a paragon. Rowlandson drew everything that appealed to his eye. Angelo tells us that when Rowlandson was twenty, he and Angelo used to frequent Vauxhall. At that particular time, it more resembled a "bear-garden than a rational place of resort", especially on Sunday morning. "It was then crowded from four to six with gentry, girls of the town, apprentices, shop boys. . . . Crowds of citizens were to be seen trudging home with their wives and children." These scenes supplied the young artist with endless material of just the kind he liked. . . . But he was soon off to Paris again, however, for there he found a *milieu* at once the best possible for the enhancement of his genius, and the worst for the development of his character. "Being of a sociable disposition," we are told, "he sought the company of dashing young men and among other evils imbibed a love of play."<sup>1</sup> At some moment during these early years, his father, who had entered into trading schemes that were too ambitious for him, failed financially, and his son, in consequence, found himself obliged, before he had reached manhood, to rely on his own efforts. But his French aunt came several times to the rescue, helping him in generous measure, and on her death left him her entire property of seven thousand pounds, with plate and other valuables. He was then able for a while to give full rein to his passion for gambling and general dissipation, or in the words of nineteenth-century music-hall songs, for "leading the life". He mixed, says the writer whom we have already quoted, "with the gayest of the gay". But whatever may be urged from a moral point of view against such

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an existence, for us, for posterity, his love of unbridled pleasure proved very auspicious, because, to an artist of his rare kind, it provided the ideal training, in that he was able to observe so many scenes of human frailty and of superficial beauty, a combination at the rendering of which he was to excel.

By this time, he was a burly, personable young man, " large and muscular, resolute in appearance, and having regular and distinctly handsome features ".<sup>1</sup> But this information will scarcely astonish the reader, since it is to be read in every drawing he executed. . . . And here we may pause for a moment to reflect on something that is so obvious as to be seldom and little noted : the extraordinary measure to which the physique of an artist can be read in his work, exemplifying for our purpose men as diverse as Michelangelo, Beardsley or Keats, Marcel Proust or Wagner, Pope or Mozart, Rossini or Kipling, Zola or Voltaire. . . . Thus Rowlandson's drawings are plainly the fruit of a strong and balanced constitution. Muscle, power of endurance and a very clear eye stand — until, perhaps, in the course of years himself clouded it — behind each one of them. His caricatures, as compared with others more ordinary, seem the comments upon the life of his epoch of a gigantic and robust lion — albeit a wise and subtle lion — as against those of the ordinary household cat. Cruelty of a sort may figure in them occasionally, but never anything that is paltry or mean. And this lion's paw outdoes that of any cat for the miraculous velvet wherein its iron is wrapped. As we look at his later cartoons, as opposed to drawings, we can, it may be, read in them that curiously detached surprise at physical suffering, and making-use of its consequent deformity, which springs from having little personal acquaintance with it. Perhaps, though not of intention or consciously, there really was, inherent in every corpuscle of his body, a certain feeling of contempt for the unhealthy.

To revert to his life, his newly acquired fortune was soon and easily exhausted, though it is difficult to tell at what precise date he had either inherited or lost it. In any case he was left other considerable sums, which he also proceeded in time — and not a very long time, either — to squander with relish. In 1777 he had set up in a studio at 133 Wardour Street, and for four years

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contributed pictures regularly to the Academy Exhibitions. He then showed at intervals until 1787, after which, for no reason that can be discovered, the exhibits cease altogether for the rest of his life. No doubt, even without possessing much money, he could to some extent continue the style of life he enjoyed, but the great days were soon over ; soon gone were the times when he had been able frequently to play throughout a night and the next day, and, on one occasion, to outdo his own record and remain at the gaming table for nearly thirty-six hours, " with the interval only for refreshment, which was supplied by a cold collation ".<sup>1</sup> And not food alone, one would hazard, for the strength of his constitution enabled him to support great quantities of liquor, if we can judge by a mention in Angelo's Memoirs of his drinking a twelfth glass of punch at the house of his rich friend and patron, Mitchell the banker. But his dissipations only drove him to drawing. And he was known, after losing all he possessed, to go home and begin a new series of drawings, " remarking, as he set to work, ' I have played the fool, but,' holding up his pencil, ' here is my resource.' " He belonged, in fact, to that order of artists condemned to be clamped to their pens or desks by what precisely the world condemns as his worst folly, extravagance and excess. Had Rowlandson been more prudent, less exuberant, his work would have been far less remarkable in both quantity and quality. All his contemporaries who mention him, agree with unction, however, in saying that he " always gambled with the feelings of a gentleman " and invariably paid his debts of honour. Nevertheless it is to be feared that, as he grew older, he was not so scrupulous in business matters pertaining to his profession, and that, by his conduct in repeating his drawings and even, perhaps, in signing others that had been copied for him, he set many baffling problems for future connoisseurs and moralists. Rather, though, a hundred times, an artist who sins against his patrons by the reduplication of good drawings, than by the single commission of a bad one !

Of his later life it is difficult to learn much. He became a close friend of Gillray, Bunbury and Wigstead. He continued to travel, often accompanying Bannister and others : " his restless disposition ", says the writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*,

<sup>1</sup> *Gentleman 's Magazine* for June 1827. Written by Henry Angelo.

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with a true Victorian disapproval of such foreign experiences, "took him frequently to the continent, where he rambled vaguely in Flanders, Holland and Germany". . . . However vague his travels may have been, of these trips were born his exquisite sketches of foreign parts, no less pungent and revealing than those which depict his native land. . . . He married in 1800, but apparently remained childless. Ackerman, the publisher, proved in Rowlandson's later years a valuable friend to him, and supplied him with subjects. In addition, after 1810, Rowlandson perfected the art of book illustration. All the volumes to which we refer, and the best known of which are *Dr. Syntax* and *The Dance of Life*, were commissioned by Ackerman and produced under his imprint. But these many books deserve to be treated separately, being outside the scope of this essay. . . . The great draughtsman died in the Adelphi on 22nd April 1827. And Mr. Oppe produced, in his excellent book,<sup>1</sup> the fact that, in spite of his extravagance, he left nearly three thousand pounds, which sum, by a will drawn up in 1818, he bequeathed to his housekeeper : moreover, in spite of convivial habits, he had contrived to reach the age of seventy and over ; in those days a quite respectable score.

We may now proceed to examine Rowlandson's artistic ancestry and, in conjunction, to consider the various styles he stamped out for himself. He is said, when in Wardour Street, to have started as a painter of portraits and to have obtained with them a considerable degree of popularity, as well as praise from West and Reynolds. Mr. Oppe points out, however, that some of these were hung in the Academy Exhibition among the miniatures, and suggests, with a considerable show of reason, that they were in fact portrait drawings such as we associate with his work of all periods ; and were no doubt executed by the method described by Angelo in his obituary of the artist in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. " His style, which was purely his own, was most original. He drew a bold outline with a reed-pen, in a tint composed of vermilion and Indian-ink, washed in the general effect in *chiaro scuro*, and tinted the whole with the proper

<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Rowlandson, his Drawings and Water-Colours*, by A. P. Oppi. Edited by Geoffrey Holme. Published by The Studio Limited, London, 1923.

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colours/' . . . The foregoing lines tell us indeed more about his drawings than might a whole treatise ; we see his almost Chinese equipment and delicacy, and his cleverness in finding exactly the right medium for the expression of his genius.

For an artist of this order, who did not execute the usual formal portraits, to be English, was, notwithstanding, a misfortune, for we belong to a practical race, interested in no painters, and proud of none, except portraitists ; since these at least serve a use that none can deny, in being able to hand down our toadied likenesses, toggled out in best clothes, to appreciative future generations. Yet it can be argued, I think, that Rowlandson has eternalised the Anglo-Saxon type — not the English alone — with much more success than Romney, Reynolds or Lawrence. When we see crowds besieging a 'bus or a tram or forming a shopping-queue, when we observe an English family travelling abroad, or look at a party of people on their way to the theatre in a motor-car, or visit a flower-show — subjects entirely out of keeping with his age —, it is yet of Rowlandson rather than of any contemporary artist that we are reminded. And even while we watch the rich contemplating, with a heavy satisfaction, their own portraits in the Academy, we cannot but feel how much more verisimilitude his renderings of them would have held in their swift line, and the apt netting of personality within it, than these dolls and dummies possess, that smile back at them.

As fitted one who produced such an infinity of work — in this, as well as in other respects, he resembled Goya —, Rowlandson developed several manners, but those predominant were two in number. The chief and most excellent of them was surely his earlier, in which he portrayed the social and country life of the period. In such drawings the French influence is very plainly manifest, though never, at the same time, has an artist been so happily, so un-self-consciously, national. It would be impossible even for a Lapp or Eskimo, unacquainted as he might be with our native land, to mistake their provenance. But the woods, the hedges, the houses, men and women, horses and dogs are no whit more easily to be placed than the spirit in which, the hand by which, they are rendered. So long as a few typical drawings of Rowlandson's survive, it will ever be simple to reconstruct the life and appearance of English people of all classes and sorts in the

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last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the next. They will always impart to later and foreign generations as much of the character and circumstances of those they celebrate, as, similarly, the burial-finds of Ur or Egypt tell us. Indeed, whereas these only reveal the apex of the pyramid of national life, Rowlandson's drawings clearly depict a whole broad panorama. Yet by a singular paradox it was the French influence in his work, his training in Paris and his appreciation of life there, that enabled him to achieve this. In the productions of this early period we notice a Gallic liking for curly, rococo lines and a use of them that seems yet to be peculiarly apt as a medium for rendering our landscapes, trees and people. And surely — though this may seem far-fetched — there sounds in the pale, open sunlight of these scenes an occasional, leafy echo of Fragonard, greatest of all eighteenth-century French masters. To a lesser extent, a certain Flemish flavour can also here and there be traced, but — a thing most rare in his epoch — hardly any Italian influence at all is to be detected. Notwithstanding, even if this descent be admitted for him, and if we find in Rowlandson the only rococo English pictorial artist, his English ancestry, withal, is equally plain. Hogarth, of course, inspired him continually, and, through Hogarth, we reach Marcellus Laroon, that queer, hybrid father of English painting, and the only English artist to picture the contemporary life of his earlier generation with an equal grace and distinction.

These countless drawings, of such varied excellence and often of so great a beauty, were nevertheless not counted to him for much fame, either during his own lifetime or in the subsequent century, in comparison with the results of his next adventure, the extremely notorious colour-prints which he had invented as the medium for savage political and personal caricature. These indeed for a long time completely obliterated the memory of his finer and more delicate productions. And, for example, the author of this essay can still remember the surprise with which he discovered for himself the Rowlandson of the first and exquisite period : since at an early age his mind had been impressed by a lengthy — or it had seemed lengthy — visit to a country house, in which there were pasted on screens, beneath heavy coats of dark, shining varnish, great numbers of the grotesque, and

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often brutal, cartoons. On this estate the life which Rowlandson had portrayed with so much force still persisted on every side, and so, though compelled to admit the vivid truthfulness of the artist's account of it, of the riding, the drinking and the intense cold, of the political views and daily conversation, one was unprepared for the wit and elegance of his perceptions as evinced in his other chief style.

The subjects of the drawings of his earlier period — though it may be a little misleading thus to describe them, because he continued to produce work of the same category, albeit in smaller volume, until the end of his life — were diverse. Village steeples cleave the cumulous green clouds of the tree-tops, under the shade of which the villagers dance so gaily. There are pleasant lawns, parks in which graze the dappled deer, and urban scenes, where the *beau monde* saunters or masquerades — these always rendered with a supreme appreciation of fashion in dress and its exaggerated follies —, there are carnivals and rustic sports, drawings of young noblemen lurching unsteadily down back alleys among the vegetable stalls of the early morning, groups of sailors and soldiers returning from or setting out for war, the neat brick streets of provincial towns with a little shopping in progress, the rumbling of gilded coaches as their four horses, with postillions, drag them along the country lanes, their green walls spattered with the open flowers of huge bushes of wild rose, the havoc wrought by seaside gales on the east coast, or, favourite subjects, ships in full sail or musicians playing their instruments. Implicit in many of these drawings is an undertone of satire ; but, though this quality tinges the whole conception, it has not been allowed to attain that absolute predominance which it shows in the work of his subsequent period.

Among the finest of the more purely caricatural drawings, is the famous *Exhibition Stare-Case*, formerly in Professor Henry Tonks's collection, and bequeathed by him to the nation. This work, Mr. Oppe suggests, was executed as late as the year 1800, or even subsequently. It satirises the contemporary rage for exhibitions and auction sales. The frame for the action, the bold use of part of the arch, Chinese in its simplicity as an expedient, the admirable twist of the staircase itself, meeting the curve of the arch at the top and its support below, the elegant

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lightness of the bellying iron balusters, all are in exquisite contrast to the dishevelled rabble, which, attacked by some herd instinct, is panicking up and down the stairs. With the exaggeration of genius, this score or two of figures is made to do service for a mob. Some have plunged head down, others have fallen backward on their heads, and are kicking their feet up in the air, one woman is tumbling over the balusters themselves, while, calmly, at the side, old gentlemen peer through quizzing glasses out on the disarray, the skirts and petticoats, the rounded limbs and masses exposed by all this confusion. The struggling, trampling, fighting, falling figures seem welded in one continuous, beautiful, and all-expressive line. Never before, I think, and very seldom since — except in Daumier and Toulouse-Lautrec — can such a subordination of satirical detail to the main theme have been achieved. This same perfection is, I hold, to be seen in *The Tight-Rope Dancer* — a drawing in my own collection —, though here the satire is mingled with a tenderness of line and colour, and contains more of the grotesquely beautiful and less of the overwhelming. The violinist's lewd, grinning mask, edged by a frayed white wig, gazes up at the plump grace of the lady who, lightly clad and crowned with long, dancing ostrich feathers, airily walks her tight-rope above him : could ever the swaying, easy, but hesitating motion of such an amphibious expert, the halting and shivering swirl of her clothes and plumes, have been better rendered, could even Seurat, supreme master of this type of picture, have brought to it a more complete consummation ?

We approach now the caricatures, on which his fame for so long rested. In his day he was, because of them, immensely well-known, the equivalent of a one-man *Punch* — but a funny *Punch*, if such a thing can be imagined. Every week one of his cartoons — or, occasionally, a substitute by his two excellent friends and disciples, and almost imitators in this vein, Bunbury and Gillray — was delivered at country houses all over England, and at the clubs now coming into fashion in London, and in Bath and other such resorts of the world. Moreover, just as still, today, copies of *Punch* litter the table in the dentist's waiting-room, lying there just as they were thrown at the moment of the awful summons, so, one conjectures, these prints could be met with,

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heaped on the table in the excruciating dentist's parlour of that period. Most certainly, too, the customers at the smart barbers' shops used to stare idly at them, while their heads were being frizzed and powdered.

How, then, if one were familiar with art, but ignorant of this particular contribution to it, could one convey its quality by analogy? . . . Most nearly, I think, by a comparison with Japanese woodcuts of more or less the same period. The resemblance is most marked, though no doubt entirely unconscious, for probably Rowlandson had never even set eyes on a single object that came from that remote and then happily self-isolated country. But the Englishman and these Japanese artists both improvised a technique absolutely appropriate to the mechanism on which they were relying for multiplication of their work : and this may perhaps account for the likeness. Both, moreover, had invented for their purpose a convention of the strictest type and the productions of both in this medium may be called ugly, though both can be called beautiful. For, however much the purple, bloated and distorted countenances of Rowlandson's cartoons may offend the over-fastidious, it is not an esthetic offence. The line and execution are unimpeachable. Yet those who hate these caricatures, approach them with a nervous prejudice which would suggest that the superficial hideousness disguising the beauty of their design was *unintentional*: whereas, on the contrary, their whole point and effectiveness reside in this surprising conjunction. Rowlandson was, it should be remembered, in no sense striving to be a Laszlo. Flattery, soothing-syrup and varnish were never prescribed by him.

Alas ! it cannot be pretended that these coloured prints are unrealistic, however stylised they may be. Just as in other drawings he seized on the most typical and beautiful traits of English physical exterior and English life, so here he captured and set down the worst. The technique which in each case he evolved for his purpose was the one most calculated to preserve the life of his subject; never for a moment did he allow his intensely personal style to get in his own way, as occasionally do other artists. Every drawing from his hand is as alive as it can be and, in consequence, to this day his caricatures ring painfully true to the race he depicted, and to its component tribes. The

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faces he shows us often appear at first sight to have been distorted by a delirium ; and then, horror on horror, one discovers that they are still to be encountered every day in the street or glaring from the pages of the newspapers. The particular curious tendency towards acromegaly, to an enlargement of the features, that distinguishes the famous political figures of the Anglo-Saxon world, he was the first to notice and present. The affliction must be racial, for it is as noticeable in America as in England. First, I think, to be observed in portraits of Cromwell, it is no less obvious in paintings of Washington : while today all our prominent, and especially our more pugnacious, politicians seem to share with American business men this same peculiarity; an inclination towards " prosperity chin " and bumpy noses. In " Dr. Syntax ", most famous of all the heroes of Rowlandson's book illustrations, we find the best known and, at the same time, least exaggerated summing-up of this unfortunate physical anomaly. . . . Here, then, we grasp one of the two main reasons of that contempt and unpopularity in which the name of this remarkable artist was held during the greater part of the nineteenth century. He was indifferent, it was said, to the physical suffering of others ; " he made fun of people's faces and their bodies ".

With this accusation we reach the root of the matter. The English nineteenth century had no use for a satirist — though plenty of room for one. It scarcely produced a single artist of this description, in spite of the galaxy that had graced the previous century. The nearest approach perhaps was the contemporary music-hall artiste. Indeed, the new crowds of respectable gentlemen in top-hats confounded the satirist with the moralist, and held that all satire should be aimed at making people " better ", in the restricted sense in which this word was then used (*i.e.* either more docile, if in lowly circumstances, or still richer and more church-going if already well-off). The complacency of the Victorian age resented any unbiassed critical comment, and in consequence the art of satirical drawing, in which England had once excelled, slumped from Cruikshank to du Maurier, who patted indulgently, while pretending to rap, his age. The mild, genteel fun had to be sought in the caption, or in the words beneath, not in the line, not in the drawing. Now if Rowlandson had contented himself with ridiculing his own epoch, the nine-

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teenth century would have approved, for it was particularly conscious, as is every generation, of being the progressive, improvement-making heir of destiny. But, while describing his age to perfection, Rowlandson unfortunately also achieved the universal and eternal, and summed up one permanent aspect of the nation to which he belonged. These red and bloated faces, though "grossly exaggerated", though surrounded and disguised by the funny, artificial old white wigs of a dead fashion, and though, indeed, the whisker had crept over and receded from them since those days — were only too easily to be identified, In making fun of their fathers, he had brought themselves into ridicule. This was unforgivable.

In the way in which he regarded physical suffering and deformity, Rowlandson was, in fact, representative of his epoch. It is true that he does not seem to show as much pity as Hogarth : but then Hogarth, for all his longing to wipe foreigners off the face of the earth, remained essentially moralist and humanitarian. Rowlandson was most assuredly not morbid, but often the comprehension that has gone to his noting-down of the idiosyncrasies of cripples and lunatics is the proof of that very pity later denied to him as one of his virtues. The artist, unless a biased, rather than critical commentator, has, however, to be content with arrangements of line and colour, of whatever they are constituted. It is no business of his. Even Goya, that supreme master of the grotesque, accepted what the age gave him, never allowed his personal view of life to obtrude, except in some outburst of temper so violent that he could not control it. But Rowlandson's temperament, being English and not Spanish, was even more moderate. It was his duty, he knew, to chronicle the scene and respect the truth — and would it have been true to have depicted a humanitarian eighteenth century ?

Henry Angelo, for example, mentions that after Lord Howe's Glorious First of June, Rowlandson was in his company at Portsmouth, and that together they saw the landing of the French prisoners on the Gosport side. The wretched men were bundled into carts, and their groans were terrifying. In the evening Angelo and Rowlandson went to Forton prison. The prisoners who had not been in the last battle were in high spirits, and could be seen in their shops, selling all kind of "toys and devices, made

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from shin-bone ". In one of the sick-wards they noticed a prisoner, who must have been a tall and handsome man ; his leg had been lacerated, and he was dying, being occupied in making a will, while his comrades stood by, trying to console him, holding his hands and shedding tears. Angelo could not bear to be a witness of so sad a scene, but yet could not persuade Rowlandson to leave. In consequence, Angelo waited for the artist below, and after a little time he came down and produced a rough sketch of the dying man, " a ghastly figure, sitting up in bed, a priest holding a crucifix before him, with a group standing round. The interior exhibited the contrivance of the French to make their prisons habitable. . . ." This passage has been advanced as proof of Rowlandson's heartlessness; but was he more heartless than Goya, who showed the agonies of street-fighting and the *corrida* ? He was compelled to hold the mirror to his age. Tortures and picnics, fruit and flowers and men robbing the cemeteries, Vauxhall and dungeons, animals and people, live or dead, all were grist to his mill.

*Regrettably Coarse* was the unanimous verdict of the ensuing age. But Rowlandson had been content to make permanent the life in progress round him, and if that life were coarse, it cannot be accounted to his fault. He drew what he saw — but through how inspired an eye ! His contemporaries, too, would have preferred him to be any kind of artist save the kind he was ; a recording angel without prejudice. " Had he pursued ", writes his obituarist, " the course of art steadily, he might have become one of the greatest historical painters of the age " ;<sup>1</sup> comparable in his achievement, in fact, to John Hamilton Mortimer, against whom in his young days — Mortimer was fifteen years his senior —, he had been pitted. And instead of his delicious and characteristic studies, in which a whole age lives, things blown on to the paper, to remain there for ever, lit by the fitful splendour of his genius, we should be left with large, solemn, owlsh, unwanted works such as Mortimer's *St Paul Converting the Britons* or *The Battle of Agincourt*.

The Victorian age was even harder in its judgement on him. The types of women he drew, pronounced the writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, were " somewhat over-nourished

<sup>1</sup> The *Gentleman's Magazine* for June 1827.

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and voluptuous ". Moreover it was doubtful whether he liked dogs — (it can, I think, be doubtful to no one who looks carefully through his caricatures). And he was blamed for the brutality of his epoch. . . . Even Angelo, his contemporary and friend, relates with amazement, as we have just noticed, the story of how Rowlandson insisted on staying behind to draw the dying French prisoner — yet Goya, we may remember, painted a portrait of himself when dying and presented it to his doctor ! Perhaps Rowlandson, who certainly might have been expected to act in similar circumstances in the same manner, did not feel well enough.

The name of Goya persistently crops up in this essay. It cannot be doubted that this great Spanish contemporary was aware towards the end of his long and formidable career, of Rowlandson's colour-prints, though he was probably ignorant of his finer, more elegant work. It is pleasant to think that the old Spaniard, who in his time had also dealt in idyllic scenes, in picnics, and lovers' meetings, and had then moved likewise more and more towards the grotesque, may, as he worked at his easel, have had one of the Englishman's prints nailed above him on the wall of his studio. Occasionally he may well have turned to peer at it and wonder concerning its author. But abroad, Rowlandson's influence never dwindled. It survived, incorporated in a living and magnificent tradition, through the work of Daumier, and those whom he, in his turn, influenced. It is clear that Daumier not only resembles, but often echoes, our earlier artist. Indeed his drawing of *The Three Doctors* is an adaptation of that to which we have referred. Gavarni — who was much in England and Scotland — must also have known his work, and in the *Galop Final* has perfected that running, all-embracing line which we have noted in *The Exhibition Stare-Case*. Nor can we doubt that Constantin Guys, most exquisite of latter-day draughtsmen, admired the Englishman's work, for in his sketches of papal equipages and the like, one can hear once again an echo, and see the reflection, of Rowlandson's gilded coaches tumbling and trundling through the heavy and undying green tunnels of the English lanes and royal roads. And yet, in spite of their elegance, they lack something ; the robust, rolling thunder of the Englishman's conveyances, the plump sense of fun, the

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rustic, idyllic beauty, the strength and vigour of our race, that gave to us a quarter of the world, and gave to the whole world a literature incomparably rich, a poetry with which that of no modern nation could vie ; qualities which nevertheless so seldom found an outlet in the particular direction wherein Rowlandson expressed them in such full and original measure.

Let us, before this essay draws to a close, reflect on another cause of — or, rather, excuse for — the attitude of the succeeding age. As we examine his earlier works, not those in which he was wilfully caricaturing, we notice how many intoxicated persons, either singly or in whole groups, frequent his drawings. From the esthetic point of view, this may seem unimportant : yet it contributed largely to his being for so long deposed from his proper position — that of the greatest master of pure line that England has ever had the good fortune to produce.

What, the Victorian art-loving public asked itself, could you expect from such a libellous and grotesque caricaturist ? His finer drawings were obviously, in this sense, immoral, and must therefore be bad. And he was dismissed as a mere, common, colour-print artist : to be compared with one of our prosperous portrait-painters, as " Little Tich " with Henry Irving. . . Every generation claims to drink less than that of its grandfathers. The newly-born, sodden, port-drinking middle-classes of the nineteenth century looked back with horror at the rum-punch orgies of the eighteenth ; the cocktail-drinking twentieth century is pained at the dull, heavy toping of the nineteenth ; probably, relative to any increase or decrease in population, the number of those who tend to alcoholic excess in each class varies very little from one age to another. . . . And, indeed, it must be admitted that in his depicting of inebriates there is no hint of moral disapprobation — unless one can detect, now and then, an altogether personal, " morning-after " revulsion. Speaking generally, there exist two types of men especially addicted to drink : the first, weak mentally and physically, feels at the same time a constant need of stimulation and of an escape from reality ; the second drinks out of friendliness and high spirits, founded on good health that no amount of immoderate drinking can shatter. It was to this type, which so often figures in his work, that Rowlandson himself belonged.

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Consider the drawings in which his drunkards occur — sailors roaring down little narrow red-brick streets, clumps of heads watching them with pride and joy from the window ; the scenes of rejoicing, armistice-night-like, save that they take place in the broad noonday and under the shade of rugged elms, their leaves shivering in the pale English light; soldiers and sailors dancing with the girls of the town, while even the fiddler who plays for them is drunk too ; the drunkenness of the gentry, with their insolent and clouded eyes; the scenes at parties, people falling and staggering. Yet in nearly all these variations upon intoxicated themes, the artist treats the drunkard with as much sympathy and understanding as the satirist imprisoned in his hand — for he drew with his hand more than his head — would ever allow towards any human frailty. His attitude, in this respect, like that of the Chinese poets towards the same vice, was always simply one of observation, tinged with pleasure in the ridiculous and unexpected fantasies that resulted. There is, for the most part, no hint in them, as we have said, of condemnation. With so prolific an artist, exceptions, of course, can be cited ; such drawings, for example, as those of Doctors of Divinity, with their very red, cruel, hypocritical, bloated faces. But, even here, it was the hypocrisy, we perceive, rather than the drink, which incurred his censure. . . . Compare, then, this artist's robust drunkards with those of his ancestor, Hogarth, or of his most obvious descendant in England, Cruikshank : or set them against those of famous nineteenth-century French draughtsmen, Daumier, Degas, Forain, Steinlen, or of Aubrey Beardsley.

Hogarth's drunken young noblemen, with the splendour of their clothes and stars and ribbons, and the lack-lustre elegance of their persons, will finish up badly ; from the beginning he makes us feel sure of that. Debt, so every detail of the picture informs us, started them on their course down to perdition, they *would* despise honest English ways of living, and adopt a Frenchified mode (enough in the artist's opinion to damn anybody, including the French themselves) : their dress was foreign in style, they frequented the Italian Opera-house, their great saloons were full of kickshaws and bric-a-brac — and now, as you can see, they are finishing in Newgate. . . . But Rowlandson's drunkards are, quite as evidently, going to end up comparatively well. There is

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much in their tricks and attitudes that is ludicrous, nothing that is ominous, as with Degas's absinthe-drinkers, with Steinlen's Zola-esque alcoholics or the cafe-drunkards of Beardsley. These last are pathological, wasted with disease, or amazingly, morbidly adipose. Each of them remains for ever morose and alone, in some sunken dream-world of evil, out of which he can only emerge for a moment or two, to notice the madhouse lurking round the nearest corner, crooked and menacing. . . . How different are they from Rowlandson's convivial crew, who have been drinking, not to escape from life, but to enter into it more fully. A jolly, and usually capable, if abandoned set of men, who seem nearer akin to the intoxicated boors of Tenders and Breughel, except that they are never dull-eyed or witless. They belong to an idealised *plein-air* school of inebriation. Even if they have been obliged temporarily to pledge their belongings — and, indeed, over the fluttering, fat leaves of the English trees, we can see the three gilded pills of the Medici hanging exotically upon the June air, while, above them, out of a dormer window in the hunched-up and rat-ridden old house from which they depend, can be detected a sly nose and oriental eyes peering craftily down at them —, nevertheless, these singing, gaily gesticulating figures will get their valuables out of pawn again before many days have passed. Nor, we can deduce at once, will the somewhat rollicking regimen in which they are indulging injure them in the least in heart or head, limb or reputation. Boys will be boys, the drawing assures us ; a little gout in their old age for the gentry, for the others, perhaps, a scuffle with the night-watchman and a resultant black eye : nothing more. These are all the penalties that fate will exact from them. . . . Cruikshank, on the other hand, who began life as a drunkard and ended it as a very convinced and fervent abstainer with an urge to proselytise, introduces into all his scenes of inebriation a tract-like note, which is yet effective, since it persuades us to be as disgusted with the sinner as we are sorry for his wife and children. These lurching, sodden figures of his are infinitely pitiable, destined to end infallibly in work-house or prison via the gin-shop : there is no fresh air, there are no trees, no red-tiled roofs, nothing but miles of cobbled streets and muddy roadway, wet slate roofs, themselves the colour of rain. And herein, perhaps, we find the reason for the difference

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of outlook between Rowlandson and Cruikshank, a difference to be sought in the outside world as much as in their minds. Within the few decades that divided their deaths, the face of England had altered. In Rowlandson's epoch drink was unadulterated, air was pure, and poverty of another, less degrading order : but now, as Cruikshank looks down the darkening streets, the lights of the gin-shop — the pauper's diamonds, the devil's halo — show like so many auras of lime-yellow and crocus-mauve through the permanently fog-bound Saturday night of an industrial England, and the songs that issue so raucously from bars and parlours are yet melancholy, out-of-tune, and lack vigour, for these drunkards can obtain but little even transient enjoyment from their vice, oncesorollicking.

## A GRAIN OF SAND AND A GRAIN OF SALT

**ONE of the advantages pertaining to a democracy, in time of war,** is that, when no definite public catalogue of war-aims or peace-aims is pronounced by its leaders, every citizen feels free to set up his private list in his own heart and fight for it. But this apparent multifariousness makes, as I hope to show, for national unity. To the contrary, the peoples of the Totalitarian States — the great Paupocracies, to coin a bastard but serviceable word — possess no notion of the perverse ideals on behalf of which they have really been obliged to sacrifice themselves. The only thing of which any single individual belonging to those countries can be confident is that, whether winner or loser, he will not be permitted to have his own way.

In Britain, on the other hand, we are sure, each of us, that our personal prescription for human ills will be adopted after the war. Some groups are engaged in a struggle to build a new civilisation, others, in order to guard the old from change or to preserve their right to maintain that war achieves nothing ; some are prosecuting a mystic crusade, on behalf of nameless, mysterious but Christian ideals, occasionally led by Lord Halifax ; others fight because they refuse to believe anything ; some are fighting because they thought Nazi-ism to be the same as Bolshevism, others, because they hold it to be the opposite, and, at the lowest, a few are fierce in battle because two million dogs are said to have been liquidated in Germany — and, since dogs do not possess political principles, no man can be found here willing to defend this enforced liquidation and/or pronounce it to have been " an interesting experiment". Many, likewise, are under arms because they are British Israelites or look forward to the prophetic interpretation of the measurements of the Great Pyramid, give credence to the prognostications of Nostradamus or find comfort in the more homely couplets of Mother Shipton. Every man fights, therefore, to protect his own right to believe in what he believes, and thereby asserts in general the rights of

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the individual. . . . And the rights of the individual include the rights of the amateur — using amateur in its English, rather than French sense.

In lesser matters as in greater, we insist on the rights of the amateur, and like to pay but scant attention to that which the professional says concerning the things within his own province. We even have a disparaging word for it, "shop". Equally, the public is never-endingly curious to hear what Sir William Dobbie or Lord Gort has to say upon God, and is much moved to know the opinion of the Archbishop of Canterbury about banking and poetry. The Director of the National Gallery was sent not long ago to the Ministry of Information to supervise the making of films (at which, being a man of talent, he no doubt proved his worth), while, equally, any film director is popular with the crowd if he lectures them upon the esthetics of Leonardo. There are continual picture exhibitions by firemen, and a wireless concert has just been given, I notice, by the Band of the Post Office. Moreover, the phrase "freedom of the press" impels its writers to tackle every subject that does not concern them, and perpetually to put forward madhouse or creche schemes in finance and diplomacy, as well as in tactics, naval and military. Only lack of space now puts a limit to their kaleidoscopic ambitions.

This system, at which it is so easy to mock, nevertheless possesses certain advantages. . . . In his declining years, the Duke of Wellington is said to have summed up the virtue which had enabled him to overcome a Napoleon, in the metaphor : "Bonaparte made his dispositions in wire, I made mine in string." And something of this same looseness and flexibility (which renders his nickname of "The Iron Duke" so unsuitable to him) will no doubt animate, too, our present improvised war effort at its fullest; just as it inspires our conception of religion : for our national religion is apt to be hastily re-assembled and mobilised, and the help of its patron constantly implored, in times of stress. On the other hand the "good old German God", whose character never varies, who was once Thor or Odin, and was so often invoked in the last German war, still creaks down the immutable steel rails of Time to another of his recurrent tumbles.

Our danger, contrarily, transpires to be that of too much flexibility and versatility, of the public being *too* easily and

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variously gulled. In normal epochs, the citizen is more interested in profits than prophets, but now, rather than dwell on the unhappy present, he turns to the future, and so becomes the prey of charlatans in the spiritual realm and of delusive hopes in this. For, though it may well be that a true prophet lacks honour in his own country, a false prophet is none the less honoured here because of the continual and patent failure of his prophecies. To realise the truth of this, it is only necessary to read week by week those columns that deal with the military situation. Obversely, a single false prophecy based on apocalypse and insight fatally damages a prophet of the *mystical* category, except to his own flock, bound by *esprit de corps* to support him.

For the most part, however, men and women constitute in war-time their own diviners. Patiently they tot up the figures, and find that the letters in Hitler's name, given their equivalent numerals, or whatever the trick may be, amount to 666, the Number of the Beast; just as their fathers applied the same mystic stratagem, within my memory, to the Kaiser, or their ancestors, before that, to Kruger, Napoleon III and Napoleon I. Indeed I have just read a similar calculation, which worked out beautifully, applied to Louis XVI in the pages of Mrs. Piozzi's *Thralliana*. William Blake wrote

The bat that flies at close of eve  
Has left the brain that won't believe.

And it may be that bats, in that sense, are fewer today than in time of peace.

When a friend informs me that Nostradamus foretold the calamitous advent of Leon Blum to power in France, I am not averse from believing it, for certain of his references to earlier periods — notably to the flight to Varennes, — seem, but always *after* the event, to have been singularly apposite in a mumbo-jumbo way. Similarly I always find Strindberg's attitude to domestic portents comprehensible, albeit unattractive. ... In my childhood, however, in remote Boer-War days, my teachers used continually to stress that, while it was the "right thing" to put my trust in every fancy incident of science, and in every supernatural occurrence related in the Bible, I must not believe in anything of the same sort that took place outside its pages.

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Only "uneducated persons" and fuzzy-haired savages were superstitious, they pronounced. But I knew in my heart that, were I given the chance of it, I should prefer the company of fuzzy-haired savages to that of fringed governesses and neatly-groomed tutors, and should learn more from them. As it was, I cultivated my friendship with the servants, who were then less highly educated than they are today, and in consequence possessed much greater knowledge. Their gossip was both more racy, and more full of omen and portent and ghost. And, in tribute to their wisdom and character, it may be remarked that in the whole panorama of Shakespeare there occur no governesses or tutors, though there are countless memorable and typical servants, of whom Juliet's nurse is chief. . . . But the educated, I noticed, though they did not believe in ghosts, were frightened of them. In fact, they altogether neglected the psychic side of life. Not theirs

To see the World in a grain of sand,  
And a Heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.

My own experience, in no way, I imagine, unusual for an artist, who must possess highly trained senses, has proved them wrong. On more than one occasion in the last twenty years I have caught a glimpse for an instant of what men call a ghost — though, of course, I have no idea of the nature of the manifestation, whether subjective or objective —, and three times during the last six years, but only three times altogether in my whole life, my dreams have outwitted the trained Viennese truffle-hounds of the late Professor Freud and, in their old-fashioned way, have very accurately and precisely foretold incidents in the immediate future ; a winning number at roulette, the death and burial of a cousin, and the death of an acquaintance. . . . Perhaps these episodes can be explained on the basis of Dunne's theories, but their mystery is thereby for me in no way dispelled.

Even the superstitious, however, should be selective. A grain of salt must be taken to the grain of sand. And, indeed, the growth of a certain kind of credulity in the last three or four years has often greatly enraged me. I refer to that "Leave it to

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Old Moore " attitude which saves so much thinking, and avoids the making of so many preparations. . . . Thus in latter years, whenever you asked any prominent English politician how he thought international affairs were shaping, instead of beginning to expound his views, 01 those of some expert, he would at once start his reply with " Well, Old Moore says " or " Lyndoe leads us to believe . . ." Nor were these answers founded in discretion. . . . In Germany, it would have been " The Fuhrer is said to think . . ." ; though, of course, Hitler himself is a confirmed star-gazer.

Again, why read Old Moore and Lyndoe when you can read Blake ? What more strange and accurate indication was there of the future than that contained in the couplet from " Auguries of Innocence " ?

The strongest poison ever known  
Came from Caesar's laurel crown.

That the poet no doubt based this prophecy upon the contemporary facts of Napoleon's career, in no manner invalidates the predictive quality of the lines. Yet Englishmen still prefer the star-gazing of the Sunday press to such poetic illumination, still rely on the spirit voices of mediums rather than on their intuitions. . . . Myself, while remaining unregenerately superstitious, I find the hocus-pocus of modern spiritualism unconvincing and distasteful. When reading of mediums who hear the voices of dead airmen, and of all the other current and tragic psychic trash, I recall with pain the many cruel cases of deception and self-deception practised to my knowledge during the last war.

From a factual point of view, moreover, I find it difficult to put much faith in the " controls " (as they are termed in the technical jargon) of those mediums prone to trances. Why, for example, should these controls invariably claim — according to the mediums — to be the disembodied spirits of negro, Red-Indian or Chinese children ? . . . Indeed, my confidence was shattered from the start : because the first time I visited a celebrated medium in order to investigate a little for myself, she at once tumbled into a trance and, falling under the influence of the little Zulu or Hottentot child whom she stated to be her guide, began to talk very quickly, whining in broken English,

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between really terrifying snorts and grunts, and finally, wishing to tell me that I must produce something for her to hold that belonged to me, my latchkey, if I had nothing else, said, " Massa gimme key of wigwam/" Insinuatingly she repeated her request and with no sense of incongruity, or any feeling that, while from a negro child the word " kraal" might take in a beginner, the word " wigwam " would never deceive the merest tyro.

This psychic fondness for piccaninny and papoose is due, I apprehend, to the serviceable ambiguity of their childish utterance. Their lingo, that particular pidgin in which their vehicles presume them to indulge, imparts to the sentiments expressed a more than delphic equivocation. " No-Go-Africa " may be interpreted, according to later events, as " You are not proceeding to Africa ", or as " Please do not proceed to Africa ", or as " You would be wise not to proceed to Africa ", or as " Africa will prove a disappointment ". . . . In spite of all this, I am willing to believe that great mediums from time to time exist, and are able, though infrequently, to use their real powers ; that they are forced to eke them out with fraud in ninety-five out of a hundred cases through the continual strain of their profession and the need for them to produce results ; that these gifts, usually in abeyance, are at present useless to the world, inexplicable, and *in* no manner connected with the spirits of the dead, being based upon some atavistic principle long forgotten by civilised man, some great natural endowment that has been allowed to run to seed and in its essence belongs to a world we have outgrown, inhabited by witch-doctor and shaman.

Strangest of all facts concerning modern man, however, is that he appears equally to despise the psychic and the physical. He believes in nothing he does not see, and yet he does not trust his eye. He seldom dares to say " This man must be a villain, or a fool, for he looks it ". He believes in no link between flesh and spirit, and neglects the half-tones audible from another world, no less than the poet's warning :

We are led to believe a lie  
When we see not thro' the eye.

## PICNICS AND PAVILIONS

" **T**HE war is no picnic ", someone will remark from time to time, and that phrase alone proves how high a place the picnic holds in man's affection. It offers through the generations a quiet and rustic ideal, attainable only during spells of utter calm, snatched from the world's restlessness and disillusion. Indeed, a picnic resembles an essay in that its whole purpose is to afford pleasure ; and it therefore seems appropriate that an essay, or part of one, should be dedicated to it. . . . Yet nobody I think, would pretend that it was other than an ugly word, *picnic*, verging on chit-chat, or snip-snap ; such a word as might figure in *The Dunciad*, in that famous, almost onomatopoeic passage,

Now thousand tongues are heard in one loud din ;  
The monkey mimics rush discordant in ;  
'Twas chatt ring, groaning, mouthing, jabb'ring all,  
And noise and Norton, brangling and Breval,  
Dennis and dissonance, and captious art,  
And snip-snap short, and interruption smart,  
And demonstration thin, and theses thick,  
And major, minor and conclusion quick.

It is, in fact, a busy, self-assertive, mediocre word, that has sacrificed all dignity, but without attaining any compensatory sense of ease. Imagine the loss to us had Manet, for example, named his famous picture *he Pique-Nique* instead of *Dejeuner sur VHerbe*. Again, to eat *alfresco* sounds much more delightful than to picnic — but then it does not possess quite the same significance ; to eat out-of-doors is not enough, otherwise the every snack of every tramp would, constitute a picnic. . . . No, it implies — though this shade of meaning is contained in no definition of the word to be found in a dictionary — that one has a home and eats out-of-doors by choice.

While, however, even the most enthusiastic adherents of the picnic will scarcely deny that the sunny hours of preparation that herald the inevitable downpour when you set out, are the

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most enjoyable, or that it is often more pleasurable in reality to *think* of a picnic, while steadfastly remaining in your own dining-room, than to attend one, nevertheless the idea is undoubtedly enticing, calls you away from worries, from the cares and dust of cities. The harder you are working, the more it haunts and allures your mind, forbidding you to attend to the task in front of you, creating in the cruel desert of your life confined to four walls, mirages, the gleaming webs of sunshine that are now the tops of young birch trees, the trunks, silver, gold and rose, a stream, peat-stained, washing its dark boulders, a turfy bank bare except for harebells, or the deserted and broken cloisters of some vast abbey lost in the green scoop of a Yorkshire dale, a thousand tricks of accurate, substantial representation, all the more beautiful for the nostalgia of which they are built, man's ancient homesickness for summer fields and the dawn, and for that bright garden which the loss of innocence made forfeit. Particularly in times of great wickedness and folly, the contemplation of so idyllic, so simple a delight holds a peculiar poignancy : yet of one thing you can be sure ; whether or no the picnic is a true pleasure, the habit of it is so firmly engrained in human character that it will survive countless calamities and holocausts.

So simple a delight, I write. . . . Yet is it so simple, after all ? Certainly it depends upon a complex of illusions, while, further, considered as an art, it possesses its own very clear rules. For instance, a man cannot picnic by himself; it takes at least as many to make a picnic as to pick a quarrel. In addition, the element of make-believe is essential ; for not only is the urge to picnic, as I have suggested, a longing to return temporarily to the original circumstances of your ancestors, to that perpetual picnic enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the Fall, not only is it bound up with your present state, your possession of house and of clothes and your inclination to shed them — or several of them — for the day, but you must, to enjoy yourself, affect to be someone other than you are. You must for the moment make yourself into that contradiction in terms, a contented peasant, a Petit-Trianon hay-maker, or become a charcoal-burner, issued from your hut in the wood. Or you are a savage once more, a noble savage who has descended from his mountainous retreat, or a mariner wrecked for an hour or two upon a desert island, or a

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member of the eternal Swiss Family Robinson, waiting with that same not unjustified trust for Providence to play his part, and provide. You must pretend that no other food can be obtained (hence the excuse of anxious hostesses to guests for whom they have not prepared : " You won't mind picnicking, I know "). And, for the support of these excursions into unreality, there must be a view ; a prospect, remote and full of poetry, to cut you off from the world which ordinarily you and your fellows inhabit.

Thus the scene must be pitched, if possible, in some transient paradise and, after the manner of the flower festivals of the Japanese, dedicated to an occasion ; a glade of bluebells, where you sit on the silver trunks of birch trees, still fragrant from their felling, and with a prone oak for your awkward table, while round and under you floats a mist of blossom, the perfumed, blue smoke-cloud, composed of millions of bell-flowers, that each year lies just above the surface of the ground. Perhaps the spring is the most fitting season for a picnic. . . . And yet, again, it is appropriate to the autumn — or should I write " it can be offered to the autumn " ? For in a sense you become representative of the old anthropomorphic gods to whom our ancestors made sacrifice, and every mouthful, as you contemplate the dry floor, paved, as London streets were said to be, with gold — the transient, fading gold of fallen chestnut leaves, or darker gold of beech —, or the mossy earth from which rise pale, moon-fed mushrooms or amethystine blue-stalks, or look up at the rowan-berries no less vivid in their display than the blossoms of tropical trees, should constitute a hymn of praise to autumn. And, indeed, as though some sacrifice, some burnt-offering, were being made in earnest, you should, at this time of year, light a bonfire near by, so that the acrid flame of it, the very seal and token of the season, shall drift across to you on the west wind.

As for food, this is no moment to write anent it. Gone are the days of such picnics as that to which Rossini alluded when, on meeting Patti and congratulating her upon her incomparable singing, he remarked,

" Madame, I have only cried twice in my life ; once, when I dropped a wing of truffled chicken into Lake Como, and once,

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when for the first time I heard you sing."

The Edwardian picnics, still more profuse, and even decadent, in their luxury, and in the ingenuity of the mechanical toys employed to minister to the comfort of the rich in the open air, have vanished, together with the footmen who served them — and, I should say, for ever. Yet they were not without their own inapposite joys, such as those the Banquet of Trimalchio afforded in other times : but they have gone, disappeared, have collapsed with the collapsible chairs, have been folded away with their folding tables; the portable stoves are rusty, and the hinges of the thermos cases creak. Gone, too, alas, are the bottles of white wine, and the bottles of red, that once replenished the chiselled glasses, lifted in some glen, or by a stream embowered in meadow-sweet and rushes, until the sun began to trace increasingly complex shadows on the ground beneath the trees. . . . All I shall say, then, is that the food of the perfect picnic should be near the earth and of it, without being lethal or botulistic, should include, crushed between the Stonehenge boulders that sometimes do service for bread, none of those slimy layers of paste like something out of *The Ancient Mariner*,

. . . O Christ!

That ever this should be !

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs

Upon the slimy sea.

Nor should the meal present any of our national sweet, trifle, lying coiled, listless and tired, within a cardboard cup, and uniting in its flavour ratafia, soya bean and a thousand subtle and sad suggestions of times past and to come, but, instead, the fruits of the month, cheese with the goaty taste of mountains upon it, and, if possible, bilberries, apples, raw celery, a meal unsophisticated and pastoral, imbued with the spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Yet, how little in reality have food and drink to do with a picnic and its enjoyment ! You must, it is true, have something to eat, but mood, companions, scene are everything. You must have trees to shelter you, groves of oak or chestnut, or clumps of limes, their tall poles hung with fragrant grey-green bells hidden beneath the most transparent of all leaves. In Southern Europe — when one could travel there — if the ilex woods were

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out of reach, the pillars of temples wrecked by time would offer you their shade. In happier days, for example, I have, how many times, picnicked on the high steps of the Temple of Poseidon at Paestum, choosing a winter noon, when loud-voiced visitors were few, and when in the clear light you could trace the shape of shells within the texture of the stone of the building, fresh and golden, as though, to honour its god, it had just risen from the sea, which showed, some half-mile away, its purple and green tessellations merging everywhere into blue. Only during the morning hours and the early afternoon was the visitor safe from the attacks of the malarial mosquito, and this added to the occasion a certain sense of audacity, of having appropriated out of the void an hour of peace and pleasure. When you left, at four o'clock, the clouds and sea had already caught fire, and it seemed certain that the whole scene had been created for you. As the gate shut behind you, the old custodian, in his high peaked cap, and carrying in one hand the jangling key of the enclosure, would move sleepily away towards his lonely pink-washed cottage on the outside walls of which a few long strings and garlands of tomatoes were hung up to dry ; but windows and doors were wired against the death-dealing mosquito, and from now on, until tomorrow's dawn, he was virtually a prisoner.

It will be seen, then, that even mosquitoes can kill those who feast. But no guest ever wishes to provide the skeleton that will impart the pleasurable shiver to other spines. Thus Europe was the continent where the pure art of the picnic most prevailed, for there are other prowling beasts besides mosquitoes and in Asia and Africa, where " Nature red in tooth and claw " is at her reddest, an ordinary picnic would constitute a dangerous indulgence. No human being, however much he may love wild life, however altruistic and whole-hearted his devotion to animals, to bears and lions and tigers, would want himself to supply an alfresco meal — in fact, a picnic — for them. And out of man's insistent inclination to eat in the open air, albeit in safety, was born one of the most beautiful subdivisions of architecture. So it was that the picnic first impinged upon art, and that the pavilion, a necessity in the East, spread as a folly into the West, and finally, in its decadence, merged into the summer-house.

When, however, we use this word, we must restore to it its

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former magnificence, strip from our minds all idea of the temporary structure of wood and canvas, furnished with creaking wicker furniture, and with cushions split open to show a dirty lining, oozing white feathers, that now so often bears this proud name, and imagine in its place a domed cube of a building, its interior walls encrusted with the precious tiles of Persia or of Spain, and having on each side, facing each of the four winds, an opening, with a pointed arch, supported in the middle by a slender marble column, polished through the centuries by the hands of those who have touched it. It is placed so as to overlook a garden of rose and lotus, divided by a shallow stream paved with onyx or alabaster, and cypress trees afford their narrow but sombre depths of shade, their restful, aromatic scent. From the earliest days, from Babylon and Ur and Nineveh and the Egyptian cities, through later times when Kubla Khan decreed himself his " stately pleasure-dome " and Tamerlane built small palaces that resembled tents but were open at the sides, down to the last extravagances of the Great Moghul or, later still, of the Dowager Empress of China, these pavilions and their like, in which the rulers, Prince, Priest or Amazon Queen, Begums, Shahs and Rajahs, with their jewelled egrets and proud profiles, with falcons on their wrists and leopards following them on golden chains, ate and took their ease in the open air, yet guarded from the sun and the schemes of wild beasts, were being built in eastern lands. To shelter the turbaned princes and other potentates in such peaceful moments, while their wives played to them on the lute or Turkish viol, or there were singers or dancing girls to perform for them, countless buildings were created ; there were the painted pavilions of wood and paper that lay like boats on the edge of the Japanese islands, or by the long silken strands of the waterfalls; there were the little houses in Chinese gardens, poised on a miniature peak of rock so that the owner could obtain the best view of the blossoming trees just beneath ; there were the tiled, melon-domed garden palaces of Persia that grew, as though they were monstrous vegetable shapes, out of the lily-beds; there were the alveolate marble tents that Indian architects made as traps for the fluttering of that rarest of rare birds, a cool wind from the north ; there were the secluded, ogreish retreats that overlooked the Sea of Marmora and the Bosphorus. . . . Until the advent of

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Mustapha Kemal, however, the bashaws round Broussa, where Nature is nearly as polite as she is in Europe, would often go for picnics proper accompanied by their wives and families. They would spread their most beautiful rugs upon the tops of little hills, and, sitting there, cross-legged, would eat from time to time, and throughout the day would enjoy the view of a champaign such as Piero della Francesca might have painted, pricked out with dark cypresses and — their balance in another, lighter key — with golden poplars, and adorned with pale, flowing streams, while, ever and again, a small, hill town showed upon a summit, but with minarets to crown it instead of steeples.

Across the water from Broussa, in the grounds of the Old Seraglio, that veritable house of Bluebeard, stands the Baghdad Pavilion. Its walls are lined with tiles brought back from Persia by the victorious Sultan, and a fountain plays in the middle of the marble-paved floor. Hither the Grand Turk, in one of those immense turbans that sometimes measured a yard in diameter — and did not in reality originate in Eastern Asia, but were a legacy from Byzantium — resorted in the heats of July and August, to sit on a low throne and gaze across the Sweet Waters, for the windows are placed nearer the floor than is usual in Western buildings, so that those reclining on the floor on cushions, or resting cross-legged, can obtain the best view. . . . But the ladies of the harem were forbidden by court etiquette to join the tyrant here. They possessed their own pavilions, where, clad in striped silk trousers, with small jackets and caps, they would lie on cushions, exchange gossip, quarrel, play stringed instruments, and eat fruit and heavily scented sweets.

From the lands of the Orient, these buildings had spread to Southern Europe ; the Moorish Kings of Granada created within the precincts of the Alhambra innumerable pavilions in which to feast by the side of streams and myrtle alleys, under the shadow of clouds born, as the butterfly from the chrysalis, of the distant snow on the mountains. Charles V, again, erected in the grounds of the Alcazar at Seville a perfect example of a tiled Arabian tent, pitching it among the scented parabolas of the orange trees, laden always at the same time with fruit of gold, with fruit of green bronze, and with white blossom, rosetted among dark, glossy leaves. Again, there flourished in Morocco —

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albeit they were not so finely built — many such edifices, in the similar immense orange groves, that had to be guarded day and night against thieves, or overlooking the water-lawns of the great chieftains. The dark, flat-nosed beauties of the African harem were even more indolent than the wives of the Turkish bashaws; through the long summer hours they sat on their cushions, placed against the latticed windows, and drank mint tea or sherbet. But there would be constant friction concerning precedence, for the chief wife was entitled to a rug by herself and no other favourite must share it, so she occupied a separate pavilion. All day long she waited in rich and lonely ennui, until the bearing-in, by negro eunuchs, of a vast hubble-bubble announced the approaching arrival of her lord. . . . Then a new interest began temporarily to fill life for her ; the other women would look out from behind the slats, or become angry with one another, and the dark faces that peered into the water of the little streams that ran through the rooms, were intent now, not so much on the frisky or the drifting gold of the goldfish, as on their own reflections.

Though for three hundred years there had been *miradors* in Spain and *Bella Vistas* in Italy, and although gazebos — as, with an unpleasant sense of fantasy, these similar structures had been named — were placed at the corners of walled gardens in the reign of Elizabeth, yet in Northern Europe the eighteenth century was the great epoch of the pavilion. Everywhere these buildings arose and a whole book could be devoted to them in their countless variations. For example, at Caserta, the great summer palace of the Kings of Naples, there is a *Giardino Inglese*, so called, nestling below the cascades and fountains, the sheets of water and groups of statuary of a vast formal garden which had been built some fifty years earlier. According to the revolution in taste that had occurred in the interval, the smaller artificial paradise was all calculated disorder. It had been laid out by Lady Hamilton — the predecessor of Emma and the great friend of the youthful Beckford — for the use of Queen Maria Carolina. Here the Englishwoman had created a series of groves of ilex and of palm, of orange trees, of meandering streams and of sham ruins. One of these assumed the form of a very authentic-looking broken-down Roman colonnade, over the arches of which roars down a

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torrent, its waters directed so that they shelter from observation, and also help to cool, though they do not splash, those who picnic in the rocky recesses behind them. And the Queen and her husband, King Ferdinand — the Re Nasone — loved to come to this retreat, with all their innumerable progeny, to escape behind this shifting curtain from the torrid noons of the Neapolitan summer, and to eat spaghetti, cooked for them in this place, and figs and grapes.

Maria Carolina, we may note, was the sister of Queen Marie Antoinette, but possessed a very different character, of a harder, more tyrannical mould. . . . And sometimes, indeed, it is impossible not to wonder whether there may not be a connection between despotism and blood-lust, on the one hand, and the almost morbid liking for simplicity, for fresh air and plain food, on the other. Where is the gourmet, the lover of spiced and complicated dishes, who has ever done harm to other human beings — or to animals save for the necessity he feels for consuming them? Obversely Tamerlane, Hitler and the Dowager Empress of China, to pick at random three historic personages, all loved simple food and simple things, all worshipped Nature. The grounds of Berchtesgaden no doubt abound in pavilions, in wooden nests in pine trees, where Hitler, when he issues forth from the interior of his mountain to listen to the birds and to smell the wild flowers, while he consumes a dishful of *Sauerkraut*, drinks milk, and plans out fresh schemes of torture and destruction for his own kind . . . Be that as it may, certainly the Dowager Empress created very many resting-places and eating-places beside the lakes and on the hills of her palace gardens, and I propose for a moment to tell of them.

Not the least original of them is the marble, double-decked vessel which she placed on the clear, level waters of the lake in the grounds of the Summer Palace. For its creation the old lady was very much censured; I have never been able to understand why. It was said to "look heavy", and financial purists declaimed against it because the Old Buddha had spent upon this craft revenues extorted from her subjects in order to "build ships" so that they might fight Japan — with whom China was then at war. . . . The defence of the Empress against this charge, when someone ventured to mention the matter to her,

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was that the Chinese did not make good sailors and would only have lost the boats at once, had they been constructed. It would thus have been sheer waste. Moreover, the Japanese dwarfs were an island race, born to triumph on the sea against continentals. After all, she had employed the money, in all truth, for shipbuilding, and further, it had helped the war by providing her with a quiet place in which to think out schemes for defeating the enemy on land.

The Dowager Empress did not, however, use the boat much for her own pleasure, although she liked occasionally to receive foreigners on the top deck. They would find her seated there among conventionally contorted trees, under a yellow silk awning. They would talk to her for a while, and then she would lead them downstairs to have tea, cakes, sweets and fruit on the lower deck. . . . Her guests would go away, enchanted with her, saying to one another what a charming, democratic old lady she was, although with the manners of the old school. Meanwhile, after they had left her presence, she sat on there a little, the water round her lulling her nerves, and yet giving an added acuteness to her thoughts, so that she dreamt of fresh and this time victorious outbreaks against the white devils, conflicts in which the art of geomancy should give her subjects, armed only with knives though they were, complete victory. She would like, she reflected, in person to watch the Lesser Slicing Method — at which the present heads of the Imperial School of Torture excelled — practised upon these creatures with the pale eyes of ghosts. . . . But the old lady dearly loved picnics and boating.

In the only account of her written by a white woman from personal knowledge, the authoress lays special stress upon the Dowager Empress's love of simple things in general, of flowers and birds and fresh air. The writer, an American portrait-painter, lived for many months at the Summer Palace and the Imperial Palace, for she had been commanded to execute a likeness of the Old Buddha for the St. Louis Exhibition, and it is obvious that the wily old Empress fooled her to the top of her bent, and thoroughly enjoyed the process. Nevertheless *With the Dowager Empress of China*<sup>1</sup> is a delightful book, in a naive, prim way. And the

<sup>1</sup> By Katherine A. Carl. Societe' Francaise de Librairie et d'Edition, Tientsin, 1926. First published 1905.

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descriptions in it can be taken as accurate. . . . Thus Miss Carl gives us an account of the Imperial party setting out for a boating expedition on the lake of the Summer Palace :

Attended by the young Empress and Princesses, and with the usual train of attendants and eunuchs, we went out into the court of the Throne-room, passed through a small pavilion opening directly upon the beautiful white marble terrace . . . which stretches along the southern side of the lake. Her Majesty's own barge lay at the foot of the marble steps and numbers of other barges and boats lay around, forming quite a little fleet. She descended . . . and entered the barge. The young Empress, Princesses, and Ladies followed. Her Majesty sat in the yellow, throne-like chair in the middle of the raised platform of the barge. The young Empress, Princesses, and Ladies took their places as decreed by centuries-old tradition. They sat upon cushions placed upon the carpeted floor of the raised platform of the barge.

When I stepped in, Her Majesty motioned me to come near her and sit at her right. The young Empress was on her left. Several of the high eunuchs stood at the back of the Empress Dowager's chair with her extra wraps, bonbons, cigarettes, water-pipes, etc. There were two rowers on the barge who stood with their long oars to guide it, for it was attached by great yellow ropes to two boats, manned by twenty-four rowers each, and was towed along by them. Only the eunuchs of the highest rank, Her Majesty's personal attendants, went on the barge with her, and the two boatmen simply guided it. All the Palace boatmen stand to their oars, for they cannot sit in the presence of Her Majesty, even though not upon the Imperial barge. . . . A number of flat boats followed . . . with the army of eunuchs that go to make up the train of Their Majesties when they move about the Palace grounds. One boat carried portable stoves. . . .

The party crossed the lake to the island, then, in Miss Carl's words again, " We were . . . rowed into a field of beautiful lotus flowers, and Her Majesty ordered some pulled by the eunuchs to be given to the Ladies. She seemed delighted at my sincere admiration of this beautiful water-plant, so dear to the Chinese."

In Peking itself, in the park of Pei-Hai, there exists another lake, its banks dotted with decaying temples, full of idols, painted wooden figures now leprous, frozen in gestures of a curious blandness or of a yet more singular wrath. No doubt the wives and children of Kubla Khan had often spent the day in boats upon these waters, while the Emperor had hunted the dappled Chinese deer, with antlers like the fronds of young ferns, along the shores; for it was his particular pleasure to come here for the sport he loved, and Marco Polo tells us that the great enclosure

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was full of white stags, fallow deer, musk deer, roebucks, gazelles and " fine squirrels of several sorts ". . . . And many centuries later, the Dowager Empress, when she was at the Sea Palace, liked, too, to float on these waters, examining the lotuses, the texture of their petals seeming to have been fashioned of that particular rose-stained vellum on which the Byzantine Emperors inscribed their decrees. Here the boats were different from those on the Lake of the Summer Palace, being " of the household variety, with an enclosed cabin forming the centre, and a platform running all around, on which the rowers walked up and down propelling it. The interior was carpeted, with a cushioned lounge, tea-tables and chairs. The eunuchs and attendants sat outside on the prow." The eunuchs, on these occasions, used to entertain their mistress. Many of them could " repeat whole pages from the classics ". And, of one, — though on this occasion the Empress was not present — Miss Carl tells us that he was " splendidly attired ", and " had a good speaking voice, and recited poems and told stories in a charming way. As we were rowed along, he stood at the prow and recited verse after verse of classic lore and told stories of the heroic times. He intoned them like a recitative — the rhythm so perfectly observed, the intoning so musical, it was a pleasure to listen to him, though I could not understand."

These vast, roofed barges, their cabins delicately painted, and lined with a pink-and-white paper of swallows in the branches of a pine tree,<sup>1</sup> had survived the many revolutions that had occurred since Miss Carl wrote, and still existed in 1934. They could then, indeed, be hired for dinner-parties by pleasure-seekers, for the gardens were open to the public. The food on board, famous throughout the north of China, continued to be cooked by former chefs of the Dowager Empress. On an evening in May — the last night I spent in the city —, I was entertained to dinner on board one such vessel by some friends. Though it was yet so early in the year, the shade temperature had already touched ninety, and darkness, with its cool breath, came very slowly to these waters, seeming only to brush them, minute by minute, to a darker shade, until they mirrored, instead of fading daylight, innumerable stars. The temples bordering the lake still

<sup>1</sup> A reproduction of this paper forms the end-papers of *Escape With Me* !

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showed the outlines of the massive pyramids of their roofs, the angles of the base upturned against the lighter sky, and the scent of the famous Chinese peonies and early roses and flowering shrubs reached us in gusts, and seemed stronger here, as we moved through the darkness, than where they grew upon the shore.

Such an evening, however, belongs to a separate category, a subdivision of the picnic proper : the water-party. . . . The first, largest and not the most pleasant of these was that upon which Noah and his wife, his family and the strange procession of animals which followed them — that stiff-necked company familiar from nursery days to every English child — embarked : but this is by no means the prototype of what I strive to indicate ; for Noah and company were refugees, whereas the description *water-party* should evoke pictures of indolence and music, of gay comrades seeking a day of ease and coolness. The very sight or sound of lakes or rivers has ever refreshed the spirits of countless tired men and women. Only the Psalmist, I apprehend, sat down by the waters of Babylon to weep, and hung his harp upon a willow tree — but then, when commanded to sing, he was a captive in a strange land. On the contrary, far from making the tongue cleave to the roof of the mouth, the proximity of water usually persuades even the most unmusical of us to sing, for that element possesses the curious power of beautifying the human voice, or, at any rate, of making it seem beautiful to its owner ; to which magical attribute we owe equally the various exquisite serenades and barcaroles given upon rivers and lagoons, and the fragments of song, the humming and roaring, in which the average hearty young Englishman indulges every morning in his bath. Yet a bath by no means constitutes a water-party, the very essence of which is to be on the water but not in it. You may trail hand or wrist as you float, but you must not immerse the body.

In Europe, Venice was naturally the home of the water-party, as in the East was Angkor, with the immense quantity of lakes, basins and moats that its princes had created for the breeding of its most precious product, the kingfisher. . . . But we can only picture at a great distance, and dimly, those forgotten delights of a lost civilisation, the rulers in their golden robes, the priests in

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their yellow ; the courtiers, bent double, always bowing, as their masters are carried in Uppers, under appropriately hued parasols, down the flights of steps, with the nine-headed sacred serpents carved as the chief motive of the balustrades. These vast stone platforms descending from level to level above the warm, smooth lakes, resembled curiously the prows of ships; and over them towered the jungle trees, tangled with festoons of blue and scarlet flowers, while the sun splashed the green leaves and turned them to gold coins. Now the dancing girls, in their hundreds, and the Amazon guard in armour, descend the steps, and board the elaborately painted barges moored there, under coloured silk awnings, mounted on wooden frames, canopies fashioned like the roofs of temples, and ending in an upward surge of wings, as it were, at each corner. The slaves, with sweating bronze bodies and shaven heads, pull the oars, and the boats move out, among the numerous blue and jade-green birds larger than those we know, and the source of all this grandeur ; birds that skim the water with a flash of such fire in their breasts, and, indeed, in every feather, as otherwise only inhabits the dark opal, with its smoky heart of flame. . . . This scene, as I have said, is something of which we can only faintly catch a glimpse, whereas we know much of Venice, and of the life it sheltered. During the years of the High Renaissance, every Venetian gentleman's idea of pleasure consisted in being taken out of a morning in a gondola to Burano or Murano, there to spend the long hot hours of the afternoon in the trellised arbours of the gardens in which those two islands specialised. Many of these pleasantries belonged to the fashionable courtesans, celebrated for their gifts of conversation and music, and there would be much talk, much learning displayed, as well as much laughter to be heard coming from the depths under the cypress trees or from sheltered pavilions, thickly hung with green grapes. In the evenings, the parties would return to the city, starting across the lagoons that now held the light that had descended from the Friulian Alps. Then the sky began to flame, and scarlet dragons shone, too, in the water, changing their shapes continually, until darkness came and the gondolas would be garlanded with lights, and voices would sound out, singing the great *arias* of Italy or the little honey-sweet Venetian songs.

In the course of the next two hundred years, as the neigh-

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bouring mainland gradually became part of the territory of the Republic, the Venetians took their water-parties thither with them. . . . Thus, in the eighteenth century Casanova describes a picnic which lasted for forty-eight hours. It had been organised for the Carnival by one of the leading patricians, who took with him, across the lagoons and up the River Brenta from the city, a string of barges filled with guests. We can imagine the music, for the art of singing had then attained its height in Venice, and how the songs rose and fell and floated above the water. During the days and nights that followed, the barges stopped in turn at each famous Palladian villa upon the banks of the river, and at each — and no mansion was ever more than an hour distant by boat from the next — found a feast prepared. The splendour of these villas, especially of the Pisani Palace at Stra, with its ball-room frescoed by Tiepolo, and its enormous stables facing it, and seeming to echo it, across the garden, was unsurpassed, even in the Italy of that day. The guests were masked, dressed, of course, as we see them in the pictures of Longhi, with three-cornered hats, wigs, velvet tail-coats, elaborately embroidered waistcoats and silk knee-breeches. Some of the banquets were laid out in the loggias of the villas, or at the top of flights of steps under the vast porticos that soared high above the mulberry trees and vines, intersected everywhere with water, ditches and canals of the flat countryside. These lofty platforms enabled the revellers to see the distant blue mountains, cloud-crowned, across the vivid colours of the lagoon, and the clustered domes and campaniles of the city. Elsewhere, again, the tables, loaded *with fasci* in straw covers, and with the light wineglasses made in Murano, with the figures of dancing peasants engraved round the bowls, will doubtless have been laid in grottos; for grottos were then at the height of their fashion. Built as a rule of huge blocks of rough stone, and no doubt contrived after this fashion so as to relieve by the marine appearance they presented the great and tedious heats of the summer, the interior of them was lined with shells, coral and *spugne*, a kind of sponge-like rock. These grottos abounded in practical jokes — or *giocchi*, as they were termed. Complicated, for all their lack of variety, they applied the epoch's delight in mechanical ingenuity to minister to its peculiar sense of humour, its love of booby-traps and tumbles. Thus the owner of a

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grotto, taking his guests into it, ostensibly to show them some new fresco upon the domed ceiling, or some new design in shells upon the wall, would, unnoticed by them, turn one of several bronze handles, cleverly placed so that they could not be seen, and the guests, although they had so often previously been taken in after precisely the same manner, would be again surprised to find themselves drenched through and through by means of concealed jets and sprays in floor, wall and ceiling, while those who had by some chance escaped the shower would be diverted for the rest of the day. Perhaps the heat — and the degree, moreover, to which eighteenth-century skins were unused to water — rendered such jokes supportable. . . . We may be sure that, during this party, Casanova enjoyed many of them.

In England we could never vie with these scenes on the water and along the shore. The greatest nautical race in the modern world indulged but little in water-parties, perhaps because every ordinary picnic becomes sooner or later, owing to our climate, a water-party. . . . Nevertheless, during the eighteenth century the members of our Royal House were very fond of being rowed on the river in the royal barge, propelled by boatmen in their splendid scarlet coats and caps, which resemble jockeys' caps. On one occasion, in 1715, George I and the royal party voyaged from Whitehall to Limehouse in this long vessel, with its suggestions of gilded allegory, only a little less complete than those that adorned the state coaches of the period. During the journey, a second barge unexpectedly made its appearance and followed the King's boat, and in it was ensconced a small orchestra, which played a set of beautiful short pieces that the King had never heard before. They had, indeed, been specially written for the occasion, and His Majesty was so enraptured with them that he forgave their composer, who had been very much in royal disfavour. Thus was born Handel's *Water Music*, and it secured him a pension of two hundred a year for life, and a further four hundred a year for instructing the two youngest daughters of the Princess of Wales. . . . In those days and further, until the middle of the next century, — by which time its waters were so contaminated as occasionally to be lethal to those falling into them — the London stretches of the Thames still maintained upon their miasmic

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surface a life of pleasure as well as of commerce. And one of the most original of water-parties took place as late as the 'forties, when a great honour was paid to Johann Strauss the elder by his compeers. The famous writer of waltzes had been on a visit to England, where he had enjoyed a tremendous success, and had played before Queen Victoria. . . . On leaving London, he and his orchestra were accompanied as far as Gravesend by seven or eight barges containing rival dance bands which played his waltzes to him all the way down the river.

Throughout the eighteenth century in England, parties and picnics — albeit the word itself was scarcely naturalised here until the very end of the period — were held on land, though hardly perhaps on dry land. Monuments, follies and domed pavilions had sprung up like mushrooms in the lush grass of parks and by the side of ornamental waters. There were grottos, too, modelled on the Italian style, and lined with shells ; notably, for example, that folly known as Carne's Seat, built, by the 3rd Duchess of Richmond, on the downs above Goodwood. In the twenties of the next century, King George IV built the Fishing Temple at Virginia Water, where he and his friends could dine on a hot summer's evening in a flower garden, while the royal band, unseen, played for them. . . . But the days of such creations were drawing to a close, though later in the century Queen Victoria in her incessant search for rest, seclusion and fresh air, erected in the grounds and forests of Balmoral many solidly built summer-houses, to which it was her wont to drive, there to have tea ; and they were most comfortably equipped with chairs and tables and pens and ink, so that, if necessary, she could attend to the State documents, which would be brought to her in these retreats as they arrived. . . . But elsewhere the pavilions had been, or were being, replaced, firstly by chalets, and then — and Rousseau had been the inspiration of both — by those crazy, old earwig-haunted huts of thatch and peeling bark, which, though on the very point of dissolution, still linger, sham-rustic ghosts, in the gardens and wildernesses of nearly every country-house. . . . But the thatch has decayed beyond repair, and only a few old men still retain the art of thatching ; the great old trees that afforded these summer-houses shelter are being felled and the stones of the ha-ha are falling, while the light iron railing,

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contrived so as to be almost invisible, has latterly been taken for the killing of human beings. . . . This would now be a sad place in which to picnic. . . . Yet once, withal, I picnicked in a place where no tree, no human being, no ancient column cast a shadow.

It was a bourne, indeed, from which, very nearly, no traveller returned. . . . A romantic conception of a desert island lies at the back of the mind of each one of us; perhaps derived from a childhood reading of *Treasure Island* and of *Robinson Crusoe*, later reinforced by memories of *The Tempest*. Certainly no circumstance of romance was absent from the nameless isle of which I write; a waterless rock in the very middle of the Atlantic, one of three such islands, known together and generically as the Desertas. The seas round them are the deepest in the world, unplumbable, as deep, it is said, as the mountains of Madeira are high, and teeming with the strangest forms of sea life; those circular, bladder-like fish that peer at us dully in natural-history museums, spiky, bulbous objects resembling armoured balloons with small but very identifiable faces — the sort of face of which you could say, "I don't *know* him, but I remember seeing him somewhere" —, and many anomalous shapes equipped with waving tentacles or fitted, like the bristling pocket-knives of schoolboys, with every kind of fret and blade and saw and hatchet, every possible device for murdering and maiming, as well as endless varieties of elusive, dancing, gay, transparent, undulating creatures, and, no doubt, many monsters the existence of which in these faint green, shifting wastes of water is still not conjectured. And, relating to this, it may be noted that the chief fish upon which the inhabitants of Madeira live today, exists at so great a depth, about two thousand feet, that its presence here was altogether unsuspected until some thirty years ago.

For over a month we had been waiting for a suitable morning to set off, and, at last, it dawned and we started, several of us, accompanied by our host's pet monkey. It was a morning which ravished the heart; the sunlight, though it was only just past seven, lay in hot pools upon the quays, and turned the buildings of Funchal to such unimaginable glories of gold, and the trees to such cool, fluttering retreats and green islands, that the whole town, the aspect of which was very familiar to us, had taken on a look of strangeness, of enchantment. In the market, through

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which we had to pass, the green love-birds nestled fondly, and the piles of fruit, custard apple and grenadillo and orange, glowed more brightly than ever. An enormous turtle rested on its back, displaying an armoured breast-plate that resembled an old-fashioned grooved dish for carving meat. We reached the motor-boat, already panting in readiness, and started. . . . Never, in fact, have I seen a morning that was more beautiful or looked so auspicious — and, in truth, that alone should have placed us on our guard, should have made us recollect, for example, that when Talleyrand, as a very old man, was asked what occasion that he could remember had seemed the most full of happy augury, he had replied, Undoubtedly the coronation of Louis X V I ; never had there been such a day, such a perfect setting for a ceremony, such a young and lovely queen, so much magnificence and beauty. . . . We should have been watchful, of course, but the Atlantic stretched green and level as a lawn, and seemed, in addition, so smiling — and this ocean, of which, equally, were born the two most depressing things in the world, American briskness and Celtic melancholy, is not usually gay.

This morning, it was impossible to think ill of these waters. The boat was going perfectly, the boatmen were showing smiles of bronze and ivory. . . . It might have been the beginning of some ordinary picnic, except for the presence on board of a number of carrier-pigeons, to be sent home in case of difficulties. Who could have dreamt of difficulties on such a morning of carnival ? , . . . Scarcely had we left the harbour before we ran into the middle of one of the finest and largest schools of porpoises — the Eton, it must have been, of the porpoise world — that it has ever been man's good fortune to meet. The creatures seemed, too, to be as pleased to see us as we were to see them. They kept pace with us — but then, they can keep pace with the fastest craft afloat —, and leapt with joy ; they swam just under the surface so that every movement was visible, they splashed and skimmed ; they transcribed sleek arcs of passage above the water, too, and almost at our side. Innumerable superstitions attend the appearance of these " cetaceous mammals with a beak-like snout", as the Oxford English Dictionary ungallantly describes them ; an unworthy definition, indeed, of beasts which have formed so constant a theme in European art, ancient and modern, the

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conventionally gilded, scaly, rococo dolphin, with — to reverse a simile in Gerard Manley Hopkins' notebook — a tail resembling in shape the ending of a glacier where it splits in two. As I watched, the thought came to me, not only of the great quantity of classical legends attached to them, but of their curious deaths, how their skins change colour, passing through every hue, so that Byron compares them, as they die, to the dying day.

. . . Parting day  
Dies like a dolphin, whom each pang imbues  
With a new colour as it gasps away,  
The last still loveliest. . . .

Yet the sight of them certainly affects everyone in a different manner, since I remember that one of my companions, carried away by enthusiasm, remarked, " Their hides make the finest laces in the world for shooting-boots."

Certainly when the porpoises left us, our luck changed. . . . Even before they had gone, I remember wondering whether their swift dipping in and out, and their action, which resembled that of torpedoes, might not perhaps be making the water immediately round us a little rough. Scarcely had they disappeared before the mighty storm swooped down. In a moment the wind had assumed the stature of a gale, and great rollers seemed to swallow up our small boat. Everyone on board was soaked continually in spray, and soused to the skin every few moments by a flapping wing of water flinging over the boat's edge. The sounds — the roaring, whistling, thuds, buffeting and creaking — were beyond imagination. Many of us were sick, yet I felt more frightened than ill, for the valleys of utter darkness that we were obliged to traverse between the rollers served to remind me of the illimitable depths beneath. . . . I tried to divert my thoughts by watching the monkey. It capered, blinked and gibbered angrily, no longer was its voice high, speaking of content. What, in its animal mind, could it be making of this journey, plainly no pleasure trip ; perhaps that we were being driven out by some appalling fresh outbreak of human malignancy, of cruelty or greed, revolt or war, to seek a kinder refuge in the sea ? . . . Meanwhile the sailors, plainly, were more frightened than any of us, for they knew better the danger. They shouted orders to each other through the wind's bellowing which dwarfed their voices. They

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yelled despairingly at our host. . . . We were, it appeared, too far out to sea to attempt to turn back ; if we could reach the Desertas, and if then we could find a means of landing, it might be possible to wait there until the wind dropped. . . . When ? . . . Well, that might occur in a week, or the same afternoon. . . . When a storm rose here in the morning, its violence often began to flag between 3 and 4 P.M.

Many and long seemed the minutes that passed before we saw, in perfection and entirety, the outline of the three islands; the first was flat-topped, the second mountainous and rocky, while the third was extremely craggy, and, as my host aptly phrased it, lay on the horizon like a graph of the emotions he had experienced during the preceding three hours. . . . We chose the centre island as being the more easy of approach, and, at last, after a few minutes' journey that I shall never forget, in a rowing boat, reached temporary, if barren, safety. . . . But was it going to be only temporary ?

The scene was so stupendous as nearly to persuade us to forget the difficult situation in which we found ourselves; an enormous wall of rock towered above us. Devoid of all vegetation, as if created solely for the furthering of science, it demonstrated faultlessly, with a pin-point accuracy, the many geological strata that had gone to the forming of the island. The top layer of purple, almost magenta, contrasted magnificently with the sky, now blue again, for the tempest had blown the clouds clean out of it. Not a wizened tree, not a blade of verdure broke with its shadow the glare of that rock. But though this factor entered powerfully, no doubt, into the impression the whole place made, still more did the complete absence of movement and of sound assert itself, to the point of inducing an atmosphere of nervous discomfort. Except for the prevailing roar of the wind behind the rock — a sound which, being, as it were, universal, the ears discounted —, except, from time to time, for the bitter mewing of the sea-gulls — which, again, only intensified our awareness of the great void in which we stood —, there was nothing ; no shadow fluttered, there was not even a pale-blue pennon of wood-smoke drifting upward, nothing. Though enormous seals are known to bask in the protection of the vast caverns by the shore — caverns such as that which gave its shelter to Caliban —, we

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saw none, nor did we detect their presence by the very strong odour offish which they are said to exhale from a great distance. No Man Friday's footprints, nor those of any " freckled whelp, hag-born ", were to be traced upon the hard and rocky floor. The only sign that man had ever visited this place was a long-burnt-out fire, and a horrid little mound of dried-up and torn sea-gulls' wings, indicating that, several months before, fishermen had been stranded here by bad weather, and — for who knew how long they might not have been obliged to wait here ? —, had sated frantic appetites with this nauseatingly fishy feast. . . . On careful examination, too, we found that near the shore grew a single tomato plant — presumably, again, the result of some former banquet —, and that a few dwarf flowers blossomed in the crevices of the rock, a variety of white poppy, and a small, very strongly-scented yellow flower, upon a succulent stem. . . . In this wilderness we ate our sandwiches and drank a deep honey-coloured wine with as good a heart and appetite as we could summon ; since before us lay only the choice of remaining here, until the storm abated — and no one could tell for certain when that would be —, or of attempting to force our way back through the breakers, which looked as menacing as ever.

After we had eaten, we wandered about, resolved to find a seal, or, if we were not granted that delight, at least a goat. . . . For there were goats here too, it was maintained by the fishermen, and they possessed — if they existed, which I doubt, for what withered and rank herbage could they find to feed upon ? — an interesting descent. . . . It was claimed locally that King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, had anchored, during a yachting trip to the Atlantic islands, in the harbour of Funchal. . . . One of his friends in Madeira was the owner of the Desertas, and in order to induce His Royal Highness to remain longer there, he had told him of his three islands, and, by boasting of the sport to be obtained there, had finally lured him to stay. When, in return, he was asked what there was to shoot, inspiration seized him, and he replied " Wild Goats ! " The Prince was greatly interested, continued to refer to the matter for several days, and made it quite plain that he intended to test the sport, albeit the owner of the islands had begun to regret his former vaunting. In the end, to substantiate his word as far as he could, he was

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compelled to round up several hundred domestic goats from his peasants, and convey them to the islands at dead of night. A morning or two later, the shooting party arrived, only to find the wild animals, of which so much had been heard, unbelievably tame. Many of the poor bleating creatures were shot, others starved to death subsequently, but the rest somehow found food, and in time bred the brave and wiry stock that inhabited the islands today — that was the story. But either it was not true, or else the goats feared we were royal princes and had hidden for the day, for, though we searched most carefully, we could find no single trace of them.

At last the moment came when, if we were to return to Funchal that night, we were obliged to embark once more upon those wild and high-flown seas. . . . The monkey tried to stay behind and had to be carried on board : but we went willingly, for some special sense, combined with experience, told the sailors — who were obviously nervous and careful by temperament — that it was safe, albeit the storm had not visibly abated. Nevertheless, the voyage back, though less frightening, was still an unending torment, composed of noise and nausea. As soon as one stepped on board the bigger boat, one felt sick. . . . Even so, as we drew away from the shore, I managed to keep an eye open, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the seals lying, damp and glistening, in their grottos, so unlike those I have described earlier. No doubt these creatures, too, disliked the weather and so had wisely flapped their way further inland. . . . Before long, before an hour or two had passed, it would be dark, and there would come that hour of which George Darley speaks in his *Siren Chorus* :

In this sweet hour all things beside  
In amorous pairs to covert creep ;  
The swans that brush the evening tide  
Homeward in snowy couples keep.

In his green den the murmuring seal  
Close to his sleek companion lies,  
While singly we to bedward steal  
And close in fruitless sleep our eyes.

# LONDON

For H. L. D.

F O R the last four years, London, especially during autumn and winter nights, has seemed to many of its citizens a place they had never seen before. Yet to others it may have revived memories of a London of which they have read ; of London in the age of Elizabeth, or at times during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the words of Dekker, as " soone as ever the sunne was gon out of sight . . . darkness like a thief out of hedge crept upon the earth ", and " the Banckrupt, the Fellon and all that owed any money, and for feare of arrests, or Justices Warrants had like so many snayls kept their houses over their heads all the day before, began now to creep out of their shels, to stalke up and downe the streets as uprightly . . . as if they meant to nock against the starres with the crownes of their heads. . . . The serving-man dare then walke with his wench : the Private Punke (otherwise called one that boords in London) who like a Pigeon sits billing all day within doores, and feares to steppe over the threshold, does then walke the round till midnight, after she hath been swaggering amongst pottle-pots and vintner bags."

During all the war period this great city has been at night a secret, apparently deserted, hive of darkened streets, of glimmering torches that dare not give so much light as Dekker's candle ; of corners where footpads, too brutish to be conscious of their ancient ancestry, lurk once more, and where the prostitutes are bolder again in the pursuit of their dreary trade, jostling, laughing, talking loudly in broken English. Looked back on, it seems that the nights have always been dark and cold, with a soaking, all-pervading drizzle. People hurry down the streets as if they were haunted. They appear with a startling suddenness out of the darkness, and are swallowed up again by it as swiftly. Shapes are discerned for an instant, but not faces, unless a passer-by strikes a match for his cigarette. Even the searchlights, those glittering

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instruments that continually probe the darkness of the sky, reveal to us nothing ; great domes in the sky, certainly, and golden roads of light, changing, shifting patterns, effected with diagonal lines that afford strange revelations of perspective, making us realise the immense distances above us in the heavens, so great as to have no distance ; but nothing here, nothing down here below, on our own creeping level, as we scurry along, borne on a keen wind. The last buses, with their small blue lights, are starting — they seem always to be starting — and a perpetual bleating sounds from the pavements and the black doorways of apartment houses and hotels: Taxi ! Taxi ! Taxi ! But not a single cab answers the call; each one approaching is watched by anxious groups on each side of the road ; but it speeds on through the mud, unheeding. Sometimes groups of men and women in uniform, wardens or A.F.S., stand in the dark gulfs that are the openings to houses, watching the interminable calculations of the searchlights, thinking of the end of their term of duty, wondering perhaps when the war will finish, and what London will be like in the years that follow.

Even as I write, London is changing again ; a different sort of city, very confident of victory, has been brought into being before our eyes. Its people walk with a new ease and swagger. Many buildings have gone — yet could this be no city but London. . . . And it is at least appropriate that the background should vary, for the essence of London is change, and, in turning my half-century, I have seen and can remember at least five Londons. . . .

The earliest was the London of the late 'nineties, when I was a small boy; a London of vast railway stations for ever full of golden fog ; a London to which the trains that came were lit by little yellow gas flames flowering like *immortelles* beneath an inverted and steamy glass bowl. Outside, the carriages, the omnibuses, the hansoms, waited in line : but the " growler ", or four-wheeler, with the inevitable smell of oats and beer and leather within its mouldy interior, was the chief method of conveyance. First came the drive through the endless mean streets, and then the West End, the old Regent Street lying in front of us, gas-lit, with the curve of some sickle-bay in a Greek island. . . . At night there was little traffic, the clop-

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clop of an occasional cab, the bells of a hansom, and the forlorn and desultory whistling that served as its enticement. The daylight, when — and if — it came, revealed a city of yellow plaster houses, continually repainted, a modest city of crumbling caryatids and vases — though always, of course, there existed as a background and a culmination the splendid exteriors of Wren's churches, to show to what heights of genius, and even of magnificence, the English art of good manners and the plain statement of humane facts could rise. It showed, too, a city of paint and varnish and of glitter, transient in its impeccable finish. The brief winter sun flecked its red-gold on every kind of shining object, brass plates, plate-glass windows, elegant balconies, newly painted and varnished doors, and upon the royal coats of arms, and supporting lions and unicorns that embellished certain favoured shops, and drew out of them, though in a subdued and most respectable manner, a thousand muted sparkles. In spite of the high lights, there was no ostentation. The top-hats of the wealthy and of the hansom-cab drivers, with their polish and dark shining glitter, might well have stood for the symbol of this world now perished ; but the clothes of the women, rich and poor alike, were complicated, fussy, designed for richness rather than for beauty or for smartness ; fashions that remained the costume of Cockneys on gala days even until the outbreak of the present war. This London that I first remember was the capital of the world, whither the Thames bore its tribute of the spices of the East ; delicacies responsible for as many wars as, since that time, has been the gold of South Africa — also conveyed here regularly, and over which hostilities were even then about to break out. Cattle from South America, leather from Russia, endless objects from China, wheat from America and Canada, all were brought hither, while some of the cargoes, no doubt, were of the most unexpected and almost fabulous character, — humming-birds from the West Indies, hundred-year-old eggs from China for the colony in Limehouse, sea-shells from the coastline of Arabia, fruit from South Africa, turtles for Lord Mayors' banquets brought from the South Sea Islands or the islands of the West Indies. And the great fortunes that resulted from the commerce in these and other outlandish goods were to be lavished on such temporary,

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homely things as paint and varnish in a city so dark and foggy that one could seldom see the effect which they were attempting ; thus the little sparkle that could be obtained ranked as a moral, rather than a material, aim.

The next London I knew was the city of stilted Edwardian baroque, when the full tide of riches and materialism was sweeping over Victorian London, submerging it. The old Nash houses of Park Lane, so modest in their luxury, many of them rising to no more than two storeys, country villas set down on the most expensive sites in the world, were making way for riotous excesses, for flights in the Chinese Gothic manner, and for fantasies in the Hindu and Arabian styles; the capital of England was becoming a cosmopolitan city. Everywhere you looked the stucco houses were beginning to be torn down, and the monotonous, swollen palaces of commerce and of the newly-created bureaucracy were replacing them. Only the lodging-houses and the slums remained the same. London, formerly, in the last century, renowned for its dullness and decorum, was now the pleasure capital of the world, and for the first time conscious of its mission. Triumphal roads, arches, stone balustrades, had been constructed. Blore's old plaster front of Buckingham Palace, chocolate brown, and with the statues of Britannia and the Lions decorating its roof-line, was soon to be hacked down, and a rather mean and featureless Portland stone facade, a kind of gigantic prophecy of prefabrication, was to be erected in its place. Portland stone constituted an ideal, to be worshipped rather than used. This was now a city built for processions, called into being to challenge the Rome of the Emperors; these great streets were built for visiting monarchs and for semi-captive princes to ride down, potentates who must be cheered enough, but not too much, on their way to Guildhall banquets. The Guildhall itself, and those who governed it, were still unique in their civic consequence, as when Dunbar had praised them five hundred years before :

Thy famous Maire, by pryncely governaunce,  
With swerd of justice the rulitn prudently.  
No Lord of Parys, Venyce, or Floraunce  
In dignyrie or honoure goeth to hym nye.  
He is exampler, loode-ster, and guye.

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At night, as during the day, the din of motors, of lorries thundering along the roads, was overwhelming. In the daytime, horse traffic had almost disappeared, except for the vans of a few obsolete, obstinate tradesmen, yet clinging to old ways and deathlessly determined to block the traffic ; though at night the slow, clumsy market carts, with the carter asleep, still lumbered along Piccadilly. But by 1912, there were not more than a hundred hansoms left; one of them was the only three-wheeled cab in London. In addition to the two enormous wheels of the ordinary hansom, it boasted a small third wheel tucked underneath it, the purpose of which remained obscure. This cab was owned, and had been invented, by its driver, who wore a black bowler hat and a black beard. He was a man of marked originality, and a delightful and untiring conversationalist, and I used much to enjoy a talk with him after the opera, for normally he plied outside Covent Garden Theatre.

The hotels, previously discreet and even muffled places of comfort, given over still to muffins and stone hot-water bottles, had now blossomed out into cosmopolitan centres, created in a universal Louis-Quinze style, and each, despite the impossibility of telling it from the next, famous throughout the globe. The opera was the most celebrated in the world, mounted on an unusually extravagant and ugly scale, until Sir Thomas Beecham came to reform it. But even if the stage often left something — or rather less of something — to be desired, the audience was certainly the most astonishing spectacle in Europe. The glitter of the jewels and the general splendour could not be matched elsewhere, and the talk, during the music, was louder — if not more entertaining. (The story of the well-known hostess who cancelled her opera-box on the grounds that she had a sore throat, belongs to this period, though it is said to have occurred in later years.) Indeed, Edwardian London rivalled for gaiety that of Elizabeth or Charles II.

Nevertheless, in this genial Edwardian climate, the arts too were beginning to be respected, and there were among the rich some who had begun on occasion to wonder whether the clever were not more amusing than the dull. They would perhaps experiment, invite one or two of them to their houses\_Indeed a ferment was to be felt in the art world. Shaw's plays were

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beginning to be popular ; Augustus John's vast and impressive pictures of gypsies squinting in their camps were attracting much attention, and, finally, Russia, represented by Monsieur Diaghilev and his band of painters and dancers and musicians, had taken artistic London captive with a genius for music, dancing and stage spectacle new to Western Europe. Russian ideas now influenced fashion and spread even to house decoration. The ballet *Scheherazade* alone was responsible for innumerable lamp-shades and cushions that blazed in barred and striped splendour from the shop windows ; and a more exotic style began to banish the drawing-room wall-papers trellised with roses and water-lilies, and the early Edwardian wood-panelling, that had seemed created as a background for long cigars, or perhaps even fashioned out of the fabric of their boxes. For the rest, in the warm long summer evenings, dance music prospered in the golden air of the squares, and striped awnings rose like mushroom-rooms in the night to shelter the international herds of the rich. For more rich people congregated here than anywhere in the globe ; and more poor — but the poor too now had their diversions, mammoth football matches and cricket matches, and newspapers which, on Sunday, served up at great length every species of moral delinquency in order to shock the intense and abiding sense of respectability and responsibility, dwelling still in the hearts of the majority of the citizens of London.

This glittering city of lights ended on 4th August 1914, and for the next four years a different London, a London in transition, came into being. . . . Now it had become a place devoted to officers and to men on leave. We were perpetually surprised at the way in which this darkened city, ever bleeding from the immense losses in process of being suffered just across the water, kept up its spirits. Lights were low, and bombs — though few and feeble compared with the bombs that fall on cities today — were yet sufficient in number and strength to be intimidating ; but the cheerfulness was maintained, even when there was no manifest reason for it. Indeed, the First World War came in and went out in a blaze of popularity. I saw the vast crowds cheering it in front of the Palace in August 1914 ; I saw them dance it out in every paved square and open space on the night of the nth November 1918.

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Within a few years of the Armistice, one London the more had come into being — a new city which largely depended on the ruin of the old. The clouds of dust, rising from street and square, now added the same peculiar glory to London sunsets that the volcanic dust from the erupting mountain of Krakatoa was previously said to have produced. The age of destruction, which had originated in 1914, was continuing. Concrete was beginning to replace Portland stone, and the country itself, within a radius of thirty miles, was becoming part of London. A vast new economic class had been called into being, and the individual members of it were being housed in the red bungalows and villas on the city's edge. There was a new tendency to extravagance in life and morals, and the acts of a few rich young people, who, endowed with an idiot persistence, set themselves to enjoying life in their own manner — which culminated in the celebrated exploit when they, literally, "set the Thames on fire" — attracted more attention than the steady conduct of the mass of reputable citizens. But the mass of reputable citizens loved, nevertheless, to read of these antics in the papers.

The ferment in the arts continued, but there was never quite the same feeling as had existed in the former decade, that we stood at the edge of a great art revival. The fact that the stupid had been once again proved right — for they had been the only people to foretell the war — had set a further premium on general stupidity. It became the rage. . . . All the same, in spite of the complacency, in spite of the smugness, in spite of the vulgarity, it was an epoch of hope and accomplishment. People were happy . . . But at the end of the pleasure-loving twenties, a difference was to be sensed in the air, a certain imponderable dullness, typified by the new fashion in house decoration ; there was, it seemed, a rush for the vacuum, for negation, for nothingness, for beige and cinders and ashes; for white, and more white, and white on white, and near-white.

Now came the desolate London of the 'thirties, a disconsolate and apprehensive city ; the City of the Slump, when all wondered what lay behind the curtain — for everyone could feel that it was on the point of rising. An intense and dreary earnestness blighted the arts. The newer buildings were less vulgar but more boring. There must be no trimmings. Life was to be

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a matter of wrestling with facts in a continual struggle, and economics began to take the place of religion. (Soon it would be impossible to distinguish the speeches of an Archbishop from those of Lord Keynes.) Wren and the great builders had not, it was felt, looked life in the face, or come to grips with it. A wave of spiritual desolation engulfed literature, architecture and painting, and the voice of Lord Elton began to be heard in the land. I am not trying to say that the painters were not in themselves good, but a nightmare brooded behind their minds, and poetry — leaving even the marvellous world of nightmare aside — became acrostical, argumentative, a matter of addition and subtraction + moral fervour. But artists are always right, always initiate, always inspired ahead by the years to come. . . . Outside, apart from the looks on the faces, which had indeed altered, the life of the West End remained much the same, except that hotels were fuller, the food in them richer and worse, the motor-cars more numerous. And when a reigning monarch — so much rarer a figure-head now than in the London I have previously described — came to visit us, he was still received in a style with which no other place could vie. . . . At night, though, a difference was to be detected. There were lights, neon lights and electric signs. The news, nearly always bad, wound itself in letters of fire round the squalid cornices of large Victorian buildings, yet, in spite of the greater illumination, the life of the streets had grown less vivid, partly, perhaps, because of the various purity campaigns, fiercely supported by the police, and partly because the suburbs offered the same form and quality of entertainment. The night was dull.

The London that followed was the darkened, sublunar London that we know today, and that I have attempted to describe at the beginning of this essay. Yet, as I have said, this war-time London itself has varied widely enough. . . . Compare, for example, the city of dropping bombs in September 1940 with that of today, 1943. Both are alike only in their darkness. On the second night of the " blitz " I walked from Charles Street, Berkeley Square, to my home in Chelsea. It took me half an hour, and I passed hardly anyone on the way except constables on duty, in steel helmets. There was no traffic ; a few buses, dark, black and deserted, drawn up in small

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lines at the side of the roads. The noise then came from falling bombs, not from our gun-fire, for, in those times, we had few guns with which to fire, few aircraft with which to give battle. That kind of night has gone ; only the black-out persists. . . . Now, as I write, the long summer evenings are beginning, and we are no longer confined to the primitive darkness of the Stone Age. The streets, during the long twilight, are crowded with soldiers of every nationality, French and Dutch, Greek and Polish, American and Norwegian. Some talk gaily, others are musing, thinking perhaps of the vast, endless wheatfields of Canada or the States, that roll their golden waves over a whole continent, covering it with the sign of the sun ; others are remembering sadly the tobacco-stained air of the cafes of provincial towns in France, the quiet talks and the games of chess, or the inns, where workmen sit outside under a trellised vine, above a river, and drink coarse red wine. Others, again, recollect scenes in Poland and Bohemia, pictures that suddenly flash into their minds, memories of their family, a chanting in a church, a bear trundling out of a wood into the snow.

In the daytime the city blazes with life, in spite of the ruined buildings, now tidied up and finished off like newly-made graves. The flat lawns of water, installed where once were the basements of houses, reflect the light, and people — because of the deadness of the winter nights — cram into these hours of summer daylight an unimaginable pressure of life. The parks too, trampled and without any railings, are fuller than in peace-time. Airmen, sailors, soldiers are lying and sitting on the grass, sunning themselves, and in some parks, where formerly duels were fought, groups of sturdy young Americans are playing baseball. The streets round Piccadilly team with men in uniform, especially Americans. Everything is very bright, flamboyant and sure of itself. And the spring of 1943 provided an unequalled setting for this gaiety ; it has favoured the Americans, who must have been granted almost as many hours of sunshine here as they would have enjoyed at home. Flawless day followed flawless day, alike in its golden rind, until finally, in April, the whole city burst into flower ; apple and cherry blossom, prunus and peach and lilac, in a thousand delicate, egg-shell varieties. The suburban gardens, the gardens of Hampstead and Chiswick, and such outlying

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districts, became comparable to tropical jungles. You could scarcely see the walls dividing them. The new shrubs introduced into common use some twenty years ago — and every Londoner is a gardener — had now grown up. Never had there been such a profusion of blossom. Even in China, even in Central America, with its jacaranda and coral and flamboyant trees, even in Spain, during the spring, when in the orchards of Andalusia, almond, peach and orange burst simultaneously into bloom, never have I beheld a scene which suggested an equal force of flowering.

It was such weather as caused you to look out of window every instant, and called on you to walk whenever you got the chance. . . . I used every day in those weeks to go by the Green Park, and thence into St. James's Street, making my way there by means of what had formerly been a dark, narrow passage, pressed between high walls of old and grimy yellow brick, but was now open to air and sky. On one side, below a wall a foot high, I passed, every time, a floor of white marble, with an inlaid circular pattern, in the antique manner, of porphyry and serpentine ; a floor now identical in appearance with those from which originally it had been copied a hundred years before, those pavements that have been uncovered by archaeologists in the Roman Forum, or in the Golden House of Nero. Thus one night of modern high explosive can be seen to have produced the same effect as the rolling past of two millenniums, including numberless incursions of old-fashioned barbarians, and numberless outbreaks of old-fashioned wars. . . . But what imparted to this floor for me a particular interest arose, I deduce, from my egotism : this was the hall floor of a house in which I had often dined ; it was here, standing on these designs in inlaid marble, that the butler and footman had waited deferentially to take the top-hats and coats of the guests. On the staircase above had stood the majordomo after dinner, posted there to call out the names of those who were arriving for the ball ; names that he called portentously, as though trying to evoke an echo out of a tomb. The rooms that lay beyond were, when I knew them, always full of people, gay with flowers and pictures, and with tapestries that seemed from their colour to have been fashioned from rose petals. . . . When next I see the floor of a villa uncovered in some meadow or by the

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classic sea, I shall be able to picture better than before the life or which it is the surviving token. And the smaller floors, those wooden miles of flooring that have gone, completely vanished ; they meant as much, and are no less our gage that London shall be rebuilt, and yet remain her own self, only more splendid.

Of all the cities in the world, the future calls upon London, when the hour strikes, to rise from her ashes with a magnificence transcending even her own tradition in that respect. For, indeed, ashes are nothing new to her ; like the Phoenix, she soared up from them once before, in a splendour born from flames. This historic city, already of " high renown " in the -Middle Ages, bore in it, even then, the traces of a legendary past and the seed of a no less fabulous future. Moreover, it was the prototype in Europe of the great modern cosmopolitan centres. As early as the first years of the Hanoverian dynasty, it possessed — apart from Naples — the largest population of any western city, and by the middle of the eighteenth century it had come to contain its enclaves of Chinese, French, Indians, Italians. And this fact, more than any other, illustrates the nature of London. As with Imperial Rome before her, the very character of the place is complex in its essence, varied and variable. And we must, therefore, be most careful not to rebuild it in a way that will restrict it to one particular facet of its genius.

London, then, is not one city, but a noble group of cities, united by the waters of a river — the Thames, that tranquil and seemingly river which, with its dark, quiet flowing, has made our capital one of the world's treasures.

Above all ryvers thy Ryver hath renowne

wrote Dunbar, for the importance of the Thames was recognised from the first moment that London began to flower, and, instead of trying to hide it, we should undoubtedly strive continually to lay emphasis upon it. It is the Thames that quickens London every day with a breath of sea-air, and the Thames through which the blood of the Five Continents beats. These unsensational waters, with their typical lack of glitter, with their effects of beauty dependent upon surrounding mists and darkness, and a sense of purpose, are yet more important than any of the great historic rivers of the world. The Thames is, indeed, the one

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permanent feature of a shifting scene, for London changes with each decade. It was always a lavish, always a spendthrift city, tearing itself down and building itself up, apparently with no purpose but commerce and a love of change. We Londoners have destroyed, or allowed to be destroyed, even in the last two decades, far more of our historic heritage and architectural wonders — take the great squares of the West End alone — than the Germans could ruin in several years of war. During each raid that I experienced in London, I was able to thank Heaven that we had been permitted to enjoy the sensation of destroying these things ourselves, and that if, for example, the Germans were blowing up the present Regent Street, at least the damage to the arts would be negligible. Nor must we forget that the clearing process effected by the German planes has, esthetically, its good aspect. If it has destroyed little of military value, it has rid many of the classical churches of their hideous Victorian coloured glass windows, which defaced entirely the interiors of some of them. Similarly, in certain instances, the glass roofs of buildings have been injured, and we can see how unsuitable they were and are. Those condensers and preservers of fog and darkness are no longer apropos. Time, moreover, heals the wounds of a great city very quickly, and, for example, many who know Paris intimately would be amazed if they realised how much of it perished in the Siege and the Commune, how much has been patched, mended and renewed. The unforgivable scars in that city, the boulevards and the vulgarisation, were the work of the inhabitants themselves; Haussmann's wholesale reconstruction, regardless of tradition, made Paris hard and mean and featureless, and long ago, moreover, its great arcaded alleys had become the centre of the world's traffic congestion ; which nullified their whole purpose.

What sort of city, then, are we to build to make a capital worthy of the people of London ? ( . . . I do not intend to write about London here from the angle of hygienic housing, but from the esthetic point of view, for bad housing will no longer be tolerated. Moreover, one cannot live in one's bath ; we must have a perspective outside it.) . . . First, let me offer a word of advice.

Never trust the architects; they are the most untrustworthy

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of artists, and have now become entangled with interior decoration and the various stages of fashion. Some would like to make the City of London into a garden suburb ; others, under the spell of a tardy but grandiose Edwardian ideal, into the sort of thing we have lately seen at the Royal Academy ; others want a cement hive for busy bees, a Middle-Western city or mid-European, a concrete cobweb of flat-faced, flat-roofed houses. But we must avoid constructing a city in which each house resembles an aeroplane. There is no need for it, any more than there was a need, in the nineties of the last century, to build a city in which every house resembled a bicycle. The aeroplane is only a method of conveyance. We want none of these schemes, no excesses, old or new. . . . What we want is a new *London*, not just a new city.

Therefore the characteristics of the place, inherent in the nature of the various districts and its inhabitants, must not be denied. . . . London is, and must continue to be, a conglomerate city, what in botanical terms is called a composite. We must uphold the ancient — what little of it remains — as much as build another London. Modelling our new capital we must yet take as a model the old. Above all, we must remember the classical tradition, the hundred spires and shell-like turrets of Wren and Hawksmoor, so dignified and beautiful, and so unlike any other system of architecture in the world ; a London that could only be London, austere and solid and reasonable, for all its imagination. We must never again haggle for years over the rebuilding of a bridge, but build with certainty, create bridges that are a hundred times more lovely and more effective than those that stand today.

Let us examine the proposed semi-Edwardian scheme, for it has the greatest popular support since it entails the spending of the most public — by which is meant private — money. We saw plans and models of gardens and fountains and arcades built with arches too wide apart to give us shelter from the delights of our climate. . . . Fortunately, London is London ; even when we abolish a great part of the fog by abandoning the use of coal fires, it — thank God — will still be a lovely and a foggy city. . . . I imagine that, when the first Romans or the first Britons came to the site of this great metropolis, what they beheld on the marsh each side of the river banks was — a London fog. That, too, is

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what our most remote descendants will see.

It is a special and a very lovely robe of pearly smoke and mist in which our capital thus arrays herself. It possesses every attribute of poetry, and has been lauded, in their various mediums, by artists as dissimilar as Dickens and Whistler. It may not be easy to breathe, but it is the native atmosphere, and so there can be no purpose in introducing into it those vistas created for sunlight in Florence, Paris or New York. London should — and always will — be a Gothic city, true to its soil, a place of surprises, in which you come upon things suddenly, and not a town in which you can see at great distances. In Rome, the superb twin colonnades of St. Peter's enclose, above its fountains, stretching high over domes and towers, a vast arena of blue sky, piled with Roman clouds, like the trophies of conquered nations ; but here, in London, we should not, if we are wise, plan to see too much of the sky, or it will fall on us in rain and snow and soot. We need arcades, certainly ; but to protect, and not to expose, us. If you open up a vista of St. Paul's, what you will see will not be St. Paul's, but more fog, and, perhaps, a policeman looming up out of it from near an island. . . . The people of Bologna created, against the rain and cold of their winter, a special city of narrow arcaded streets, giving shelter. We must, similarly and obversely, be true to the tremendous fogs that have been granted to us as a birthright. We must remember that both Inigo Jones and Wren, though it was then a so much smaller city, understood London. They gave it those precise towers and spires round which London fogs wreath themselves with a peculiar splendour, suddenly releasing, as it were, the vision of them, so that they are unexpected, magnificent. We must remember that Nash's stucco and Wren's Portland stone were the most admirably suited mediums for building in this atmosphere, for the first could be — and must be — continually repainted, and the second acquired, from being smoked, a perfect texture and colour. We must try to invent new building mediums with the same qualities. We must never seek to emulate other cities, but only to transcend our own. We must not, for example, embank our river (alas, it has already been done), hemming it in as if it were some paltry ditch, because continental cities have treated their rivers in this way. We must avoid making another and

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more heartless cosmopolis; a poorer edition of some South American city copied from Paris or Vienna. We must remember that the people of this city are a people full of heart, — and that is what the teeming irregularities of London have always shown and represented.

The seasons may vary, and with them the aspects of London ; a fresh London may grow up and disappear, but the character of its inhabitants never changes. They are, indeed, the citizens of no mean city, and prove themselves worthy of it every day ; royal in their politeness, ostentatious — even the poorest — in their generosity, unequalled in their courage, unsurpassed in their originality. In spite of the immense foreign influence brought to bear on London for so many centuries, the people are the very essence of the country. Rich and poor are alike in their courage, in the continuity of their conduct and in their determination. The rich accept countless inconveniences without a murmur, resolved to bear, without flinching, everything to which they are accustomed, — bad food, little food, cold, walking in wet streets for miles, no servants, disagreeable servants — all because the war must be won. You can almost hear them repeating under their breath the public-school commandments : " Do not let the side down, you can't do it, don't-ye-know ". The poor remain equally steadfast, working harder than ever, and taking little advantage of the position in which they now find themselves. Like those formerly more fortunate than themselves, they have little to which to look forward, but they are as resolute, unbeaten and unbeatable. And although the richer members of society may be more staid in demeanour, there is a feeling of irresponsible gaiety and *elan* about true Cockneys, as can be remarked during any Bank Holiday on Hampstead Heath. City-bred, they have the countryman's humour, identical, sharpened only by an additional tolerance and quickness. An immense love of liberty, a feeling for the best of life, inspires them. In their humour there is a sort of wise gravity that no other people knows, a consciousness, too, of the sacred idiosyncrasy of every human being that is typically English.

In this connection, I often recall an occasion before the war, when I heard a Covent Garden porter, as the crowd was coming out of the Opera, hail a taxi in the street for an elegant

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young man in white waistcoat and top-hat, and open the door for him with the words " In with you, Norman ! " . . . Or, again, I think of the time when I passed some navvies in the now destroyed Lansdowne Passage. One of them dropped a paving stone as I passed, with a tremendous crash, and, noticing that I jumped at the noise, remarked — with a true observation of character, for he plainly deduced that I was not a devotee of night life, but an artist, possessed of a delicate nervous system — " There, sir ! . . . That's the worst of them night clubs ! " . . .

What a mistake Hitler made to provoke these people, the inhabitants of this city, let alone of Great Britain and of the Empire ! . . . How is it possible not to love Londoners, with their understanding of life, their want of envy ?

## WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE AN AUTHOR

**H**UNTING the author, painter and musician is a traditional and popular sport. In this country poet-baiting at an early stage assumed the place of bull-baiting. The critics drove Keats to death, Shelley to Italy and Swinburne to Putney. . . . After visiting the old Protestant Cemetery in Rome, and seeing there Keats' tomb, bearing on it the inscription " Here lies one whose name was writ in water " — words written by the poet himself and placed there at his especial request by his friend Severn —, after reading, in addition, his letters, it is, I apprehend, impossible to doubt that the critics really did *kill* Keats ; though the bare recording of this fact in any public journal still causes them to defend themselves, crying out that if he were so weak a creature as *that*, then there was no hope for him, and it does not matter. Thereby they shirk a statement of the real truth, which is that it was " grand sport ", because, for killers who love their work, to tear to pieces a poet like Keats, one of the most sensitive beings who can ever have lived, with genius, too, so clearly indicated in his appearance that they could be quite certain of the quality of their victim —, for, says Severn, he had the " hazel eyes of a young gypsy maid in colour, set in the face of a young god " —, this, all this, must have constituted it an infinitely more enjoyable sensation than, for example, to hunt Tennyson and fail to kill him.

A poet dead has always been worth a dozen alive, both literally and metaphorically. . . . This should have been particularly brought home to the public by the death of Sir William Watson some seven years ago. The facts of his career as presented in the obituary columns must have caused a pleasant glow to warm the heart of many a reader. . . . Every poet becomes a " Famous Poet ! " on the posters announcing his demise : but here was one who, to a name familiar enough for easy lip-service, joined every attribute that such a being should possess; he had lived and written in the reign of good Queen Victoria (a great aid to any poet), had remained uncomfortably poor during most of his life

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(as poets ought), was yet a knight (it is not often, by some strange coincidence, that the knight of today is a poor man), and, further, had been gifted — so the obituarists united to declare — with that elusive quality " the authentic note " : of which I hope to have more to say one day in an essay entirely devoted to it. Yet he wrote verse which the man-in-the-street — who, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, is recognised today in this country to be sole arbiter of art, as of politics and economics —, could easily understand, if only he would read it. . . . And many, no doubt, wondered, as they perused the columns before them, what was really the life, the *private* life, of an author.

None : he has none : comes the answer. Whether poet, novelist or essayist, a writer possesses, when his profession is compared with other trades, one supreme advantage combined with disadvantage — he can never stop working. Everything he sees or does is, in a sense, work; as much as writing itself. Thus he can never be idle for a moment, never live for the sake of living, never take an absolute rest. When he says " Now I will stop work," it is only in order to begin labouring in another medium. Moreover, being in this way both inside and outside his work, he is at the same time, or should be, abnormally sensitive and abnormally insensitive. In consequence he is able to watch himself in action at the dentist's or when annoyed by some noise at night, and to observe with amusement his own responses and ruses.

If, however, the author has *his* own way of looking at life, so have the members of the public *their* way of looking at him. They well know that every writer — and more especially every poet — is sent down from above as much for the counselling of all aspiring amateurs as for the entertainment of the crowd : and they consider that his sense of duty should oblige him to read carefully every manuscript forwarded to him, accompanied by the usual egotist's screed, and then annotate it and comment at length upon its merits. . . . All this the author must do without payment: indeed it is only fair, since writing in general consists of pure inspiration, poetry in particular being crooned, as it were, directly across the ether by the Great Invisible Crooner. No hours of labour, therefore, are needed for composition.

Ever has it been thus with poetry since, instead of being sung,

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it first began to be written down. Doubtless Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Dryden — although manuscripts in those days were less easy to land on authors by post —, found themselves similarly victimised. Pope, we know, felt himself obliged to spend countless hours in inventing excuses for not reading the imitative echoes of his own verse with which unknown persons continually favoured him. In consequence, he incurred much blame for the lies he told so profusely in order to avoid having to hurt the feelings of innumerable young people. And unless the world has changed, moreover, not only *young* people — for we seem, really, to be a nation of would-be poets rather than of successful shopkeepers. Old ladies and young ladies, cabinet ministers and porters, housemaids and aldermen and gamekeepers, hunting men, fishwives and interior-decorators ; all of them appear, at one time or another, to have essayed *The Easy Art*. . . . And war, which stirs the emotions and numbs the brain, only increases the number of aspiring poets and addled poems.

Nevertheless, these treasures which every post brings to an author of any celebrity constitute by no means his most serious infliction. His standing being that of an unpaid public servant, he is expected to bestow his time and the benefit of his advice upon anyone, whatever his need may be, who sees fit to claim them. And how diverse is the range of the necessity ! It varies from giving instruction in the proper control of a hot-water bottle in the winter bed to an opinion upon psychic dancing or the principles of Schopenhauer. Chaperonage, too, apparently forms part of his job : for only a little while before the war, a lady of whom I had never heard, but who wanted to write a book which obliged her to contemplate spending some hours every day in the Reading Room of the British Museum, telephoned to command me to escort her there every morning, and to fetch her back home every evening ; because, as she phrased it, " The museum's such a grimy old place, it makes me feel quite nervous going in and out of it by myself". And, on another occasion, a stout woman rang the front-door bell, and when I answered it, put her foot between the jamb and the door so as to prevent my shutting it, and demanded that I should take down in embroidery — one of the few arts of

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which I am altogether ignorant — the colours that she would sing to me — and, at this point, she burst into loud, unbidden song.

In growing numbers, too, there are the hordes of charity harpies begging books, a most unpleasant and persistent species. I refer particularly to the organisers of bazaars for eleemosynary causes, who never think twice before demanding from an author, almost with menaces, a signed copy of one or more of his works: though at the same time he is expected to pay his taxes and contribute in the ordinary way to deserving objects. And how frank and unabashed in tone is this great army of cadgers. "Our idea is", runs a paragraph in a letter, headed *Famous Authors Books Fund*, which has just reached me from a hospital situated in a distant part of the country to that in which I live, "to collect autographed books from famous authors, and auction them to book-lovers and well-to-do people". (I like particularly, do not you, gentle reader, the distinction so wisely drawn between "book-lovers" and "well-to-do people"?) "All of the money", it continues reassuringly, "thus raised will be put to the Fund. The Appeals Committee will be tremendously grateful", the writer goes on, "if you will autograph, and give us a copy of one of your books, preferably the book which you consider to be your best, as that will add to the interest of the sale. . . ." So even the gift of a volume, and its signature by a "famous author", is not enough; no, he must deliver judgement upon himself as well! . . . Yet the writer of this letter is in private life a nice, kind person, I should hazard, who would never dream of writing to a fishmonger, saying "Our idea is to collect your best fish, ask you to sign them, and then auction them to fish-lovers and well-to-do people". He only writes in this way because he, together with the general public, shares the crooning conception of the author's work which I have adumbrated earlier.

Both of them consider that printed books fall upon the author like manna from heaven. Never does it begin to dawn on the acquaintance who says to you, with the insinuating whine that authors know so well, "You never sent me your last book!", that he is demanding the equivalent of a postal order for 7s. 6d. Yet he would seldom dare to ask you for that amount outright. On the contrary, as his accompanying wheedling smile indicates,

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he regards his request as in some mysterious way a compliment to yourself. For every fool, however double-dyed in his folly, considers that his wishing to read a book must flatter its author. Or perhaps he bases his request on economic grounds of a different sort, understanding the real truth, now so often denied, that the only kind of money worth having is inherited, unearned money, and thus feeling that, if you earn the money by writing, you cannot mind giving it away, for you will certainly not have time in which to spend it — nor, as for that, anything, now, to spend it upon.

Sometimes, of course, the organisers of bazaars are more generous and provide the books themselves : but even this can end badly. I remember, in this connection, a friend who asked me to sign some of my books which she had purchased and was giving to be auctioned for charity. Being vague by nature, she sent me round the *Forsyte Saga* instead, with a note saying "Would you mind signing these as you so kindly promised. . . ." I did not feel I could disappoint her, as apparently I had given my word, so I signed them and they were auctioned, but I never learned what prices the admirers of Mr. Galsworthy gave for these unique items.

The most peculiar of all the special attitudes which members of the outside world manifest towards writers, though, is that reserved for them by servants. They take a kindly care of us, as if we were rather mad children, albeit they generally refuse to look upon authorship as a profession and regard themselves as entirely free to interrupt their masters whenever they feel inclined to do so. . . . I remember, for example, how when I asked a servant, now dead, whether my sister was busy, because I wanted to show her a letter I had just received, he replied at once " Oh no, she's only writing " ! And there can be little doubt that some deep instinct guides them very surely to burst in at *the* critical moment of inspiration, and generally to pursue the author with radios, gramophones, bumping, singing, stamping, smashing, dusting and other ingenious tortures.

Yet, I suppose, authors have only themselves to blame for conduct of the kind I have described. They are for the most part a kindly, talkative lot, interested in everything and everybody — even if the interest is, perhaps, a little professional, like that of

## *What it Feels Like to be an Author*

Granny Wolf in *Red Riding Hood*. And often, after the pattern of all artists, they are passionately conceited and self-centred, which tends to render them slightly ridiculous. "Let's have a little fun with them. Let's stick a pin or two into them and the bubbles they blow"; that is the general reaction to them. . . . But if the author hits back, then his opponent, the Little Man — that degraded and hideous personification of a contemporary ideal — yells to his brother, "Look! He's hitting someone smaller than himself!", forgetting, though the press daily and flatteringly reminds him of the fact, that, however small, it is the Little Man who composes the big battalions: the packs, flocks and droves. Collectively, indeed, his methods resemble those of the herds of dwarf pigs which sweep through the forests of Central America, harrying and killing any living creature they meet that is bigger than themselves. They chase their victim for miles, and when they catch up with him, gore him to death. If a man climbs a tree to elude them, they saw through the trunk with their tusks, and so get him just the same. Yet individually these little black porkers would harm no one, and are said to make charming pets, and can often be seen in the cities of their native region going shopping with their mistresses.

But I wander. . . . The reasons of the Little Man's attacks upon anyone over the normal size are, of course, easily to be comprehended. He is playing for safety, as well as enjoying the fun, and, further, there is the common desire to hit something bigger than yourself, to spit at the creative forces, to burn books, to de-bunk the great, to picnic in the ruins of a temple or palace — and, above all, the hitting is due to fright, sheer downright funk. The Little Man suspects an author — often wrongly — of being "clever". This, by itself, would terrify him, but there is, in addition, his permanent, haunting nightmare of "being put in a book". A kind of humiliating form of individual preservation, he feels it to be, as though he were a foetus or freak preserved in spirits of wine in a bottle, for future ages to wonder and wince at. . . . And the duller-minded and more boring he is, the more he dreads this fate, which he regards as inevitable if he should meet a novelist, for the Little Man is unaware that his own fear of "being put in a book" is only surpassed by the author's terror of the little beast getting himself there; an exploit which may

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involve a libel suit and impose upon the writer the payment of several thousands of pounds in damages.

The Little Man, therefore, relies upon persecution to rid himself of his terror, and constantly seeks — and finds — new methods. Of these, noise is the chief. The arrival of an author in a hotel, for example, inspires the most extraordinary phenomena. All the parents staying there will, swayed by some peculiar herd instinct, at once bestow upon their children the most raucous and ear-splitting toys, whistles, croakers, toy trumpets, crackers, miniature whizz-bangs, hooters, watchmen's rattles, plates to smash, fog-horns, and dogs that have been taught to bark in an especially prolonged and attractive manner, and are encouraged to exercise this art by their dear little masters' perpetual teasing. And then, without adventitious help, the children themselves can cry and shout and sing — and do we not all love children's voices ? . . . Down below, perhaps, a child of about fifteen, with fingers like a fox-terrier's paws or sometimes, you may think, like an elephant's feet, is being given lessons on a piano by a professional torturer, who does not mind what suffering he inflicts on innocent, compulsory listeners so long as he obtains his fees. This is the kind of pest who should be prosecuted and imprisoned. . . . The man in the next bedroom is learning to typewrite by day, and practises his snoring by night. (When you make a complaint about a snorer, he will always protest that he has " never been known to snore before " : and I think this is probably true ; his unconscious mind has been tempted by the proximity of an author). During the daytime, in every direction sound Salvation Army bands, the bands of the mutilated, and every kind of professional howling and bawling by beggars, while the perpetual dripping of taps, tattooing of hot-water pipes — now cold — and an occasional burst of wireless news or music, gives variety to the nights.

Many other methods of annoying an author are known, however, to the cognoscenti. Invitations, for example, are extended to him, not by friends, but by those who only contrive to remember his existence at certain periods. Thus, every time a book of his appears, he is sure to receive an invitation from Lady Flinteye, or from soulful persons who claim to have known him in some other existence which they have rendered tragic

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for him, and who are determined, equally, to prevent him from enjoying this one. . . . Worst of all, there are the clubs run for artistic ladies ; institutions which exist to enable their three hundred members to boast " I met Mr. So-and-So at dinner," and, more especially, to provide a meeting-place for all those who wish to insult at their ease any painter, author or musician whom they have been able to decoy thither to eat their rather indifferent food. Moreover it meets the difficulty that etiquette precludes them from being rude in their own, or in other people's, houses : but in a *club*, specially organised for the purpose ! What *could* be better ! For the Little Woman favours sex equality and intends to be every bit as rude as the Little Man. . . . And how expert she has become ! . . . I remember my initial experience of one of these meals. I was placed next to a gentle-looking, white-haired old lady with a soft manner and a slight but genial palsy. She turned to me at once, and said with a sweet, old-fashioned smile : " Do you know, Mr. Sitwell, I believe I've read nearly all your books " — a pause (during which I clamped across my face a mask of expectancy and pleasure appropriate to the coming compliment), then she added, *con brio*, " and I don't like a single one of them ! " . . . The insults are, indeed, often ingenious and sometimes amusing, even to those who are the object of them. On another occasion, I remember, I was introduced to a woman who was sitting next to me. . . . She at once burst into tears. My voice, I am sure, showed the interest and concern that I genuinely felt, as I enquired what was the matter. Giving a loud, yelp-like sob, she replied, " For a long time I have looked forward intensely to meeting you, and now that I *have* met you, it is *such* a disappointment ! . . ." It was impossible not to sympathise with a display of so much combined virtuosity and feeling.

Men, nevertheless, are no whit behind women in this direction. Thus, I recall an incident after a large dinner-party in Madeira a few years ago, when an individual, who was obviously a prey to a peculiarly intense inferiority-complex — for he was stressing his individuality in the most painful manner by means of an eye-glass strung on a wide ribbon, and by a red-lined evening cloak, and every other possible, and impossible, attempt at originality of outward aspect —, came up to me, solely in order to

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be rude. . . . By this time, for I had already been writing for many years, I knew that look in the eye, so when, by way of prologue — having already been carefully introduced to me once, he said, — " Your name is Sitwell, isn't it ? " I replied loudly and clearly, " NO ! SHAKESPEARE ! "

However, he proceeded : " Well, I know you are an author ; and I want to tell you how much I despise all people who write books."

" You ought to try to read one of them . . ' ." I suggested.

I should, perhaps, merely have replied, " Little Man, You'e had a Busy Day ! " Because some instinct seems to prompt such people to be insolent to — it is true — all authors, but more particularly to that precise type of author who can most neatly or most severely answer them back. . . . Is it kind, one might enquire, to be rude to Pope or Dr. Johnson or Sheridan or Shaw — or Sitwell ? is it *hind* ; but, above all, is it wise ?

THE END













