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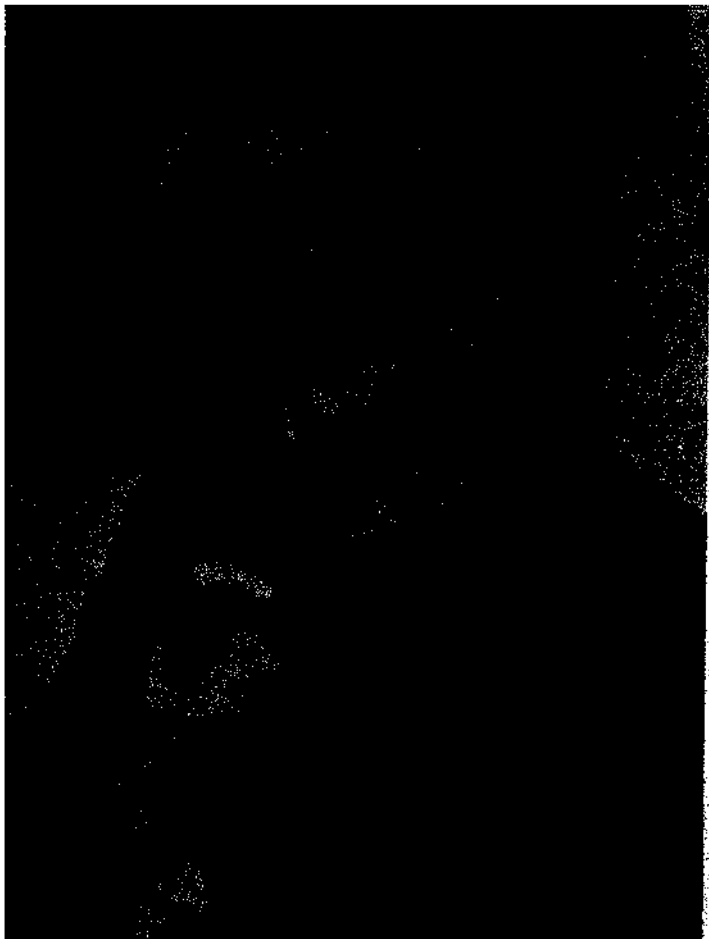
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C . E M . J O A D

The Bookmark

Preface by H. N. Brailsford

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Preface to the second edition

The material contained in this book is a selection from a series of fortnightly articles, contributed to the *New Leader* in 1925/26 during the days of Brailsford's editorship and subsequently published in book form.

They sprang from two needs; mine and the paper's. Mine was to get out of the Civil Service. I had been there for nine years, the squarest of square pegs in the roundest of all possible holes, and I was desperately anxious to be out of it. (The Civil Service, I think, shared my eagerness but was in the main too polite to say so.) But I had financial responsibilities and could not just cast my bread upon the waters without knowing where, how and when it would be returned to me. My hope was to make a sufficient name for myself to enable me, if the worst came to the worst, to make my living by writing. (Not that I disliked or despised writing but my ancestors had always been on the land and the prudent instinct of the peasant warned me against free-lancing as intolerably precarious.)

But what was I to write about? The obvious answer was politics. The *New Leader* was primarily a political paper and the I.L.P., whose organ it was, a political party. But politics was the one subject above all others on which my position as a Civil Servant froze my pen - into what almost perpetual hot water, by the way, my attempts to unfreeze it used to plunge me. It was then that my friend, Clifford Allen, the then Chairman of the I.L.P., whom Ramsay Macdonald subsequently made into a peer, suggested a series of articles on books.

"But I am not a literary critic," said I.

"I know that," he replied, "but you are something which for the present purpose is much more to the point; you are a W.E.A. tutor and a University Extension lecturer. This means that you ought to be used to talking to popular audiences on academic subjects and I have heard you boast that you can

explain anything to anybody. Well, go ahead and explain it."

That was how the thing began. The origin of the articles moulded from the first their intention. They were to be neither book reviews for those who wanted to know what the latest books were and what was in them, nor were they to be W.E.A lectures directed primarily to enlightening and informing those who were approaching literature for the first time; they were to be a cross between the two. Their intention was - and here the paper's or, perhaps, I should say the movement's, social background came in - to interest and entertain keen working class people for whose growing intellectual appetites politics was not a sufficient diet in the literature of ideas and the ideas of literature, and to open to those who had been disinherited of the treasures of beauty and wisdom that are locked in the world's great books the doors of the inheritance which, but for social conditions, would have been theirs by right of education.

The articles, then, differ from the ordinary literary causerie in three ways. First, they deal as far as possible with those writers who might be thought to be sympathetic to the aims and aspirations of politically conscious and politically insurgent men and women; secondly, they tend to emphasise the social and political aspects of the works they consider; thirdly, they pay more attention to introducing, describing and expounding and less to commenting, criticising and evaluating than is usual in literary criticism.

The reason for this last is obvious. I was writing for people many of whom had read no great literature at all. I wanted to tell them what they would be likely to find in the works of such writers as Hardy or W. H. Hudson and why what they found was thought to be important. The articles, in short, were intended to act as a pointer to the contents of books as a demonstrator might point out the significant features of a diagram on a blackboard, rather than as a measuring rod to assess their value.

The other two characteristics to which I have referred sprang from the Socialist character of the paper. I wanted to write

Preface

THESE ESSAYS BY MR. JOAD APPEARED IN A SOCIALIST WEEKLY paper. They aroused, as they deserved to do, the liveliest interest among Socialist readers. They gave rise to an active correspondence, and they brought to the editor, who had stimulated Mr. Joad to write them, both blessings and curses. Some readers would beg for a double dose, while a few were for banishing, not Mr. Joad alone, but every literary contributor from the pages of *The New Leader*. I was glad when these letters expressed gratitude and appreciation (as they usually did): I was not disturbed when they expressed dissent (which I often felt myself). I was disturbed only when they voiced the detestable, but by no means uncommon, view that Socialists ought to ignore the literature, the art and even the philosophy of Capitalist civilization. Others would present the same opinion in a rather different form: they would maintain that Socialists, absorbed in the class-struggle, should have no leisure for these trivialities.

These are, I am convinced, the most mischievous opinions with which Socialists can toy. There can be no such absolute break with the past - not even if we live through a violent revolution - as these fanatics expect. Mankind will carry its heritage of "bourgeois" culture into the new Socialist phase, adapting it and revaluing it, perhaps, but retaining all that it had developed of insight and grace. The crime of which we justly accuse that culture lay not in anything which it created, but rather in the brutality which made of its creations the monopoly of a privileged class. Some of its work is smirched with that selfishness, but even this will retain its historical interest. But, at its best and greatest, it rose above its historical limitations. Is a Concerto by Bach the less glorious because it was dedicated to an Elector of Brandenburg? Would the chorus of the Ninth Symphony lift us to sublimer heights if Beethoven had been a class-conscious Communist instead of a revolutionary democrat?

The man who thinks that he will have more to give to the Socialist cause if he starves eyes and ears and imagination is making a tragic mistake. He will give what a sub-human being

can give, who has refused to grow to the full stature of his species. Every thought will be distorted, every effort will be lamed, because he has stunted the development of his mind. Every motion of his intellect will be impeded, even when he reasons about history and economics. The mind which is truly master of itself must concentrate, indeed, on its purpose. But it will mobilize for its task every experience through which it has lived, and the more diverse that experience has been the richer and the stronger will it be when it comes to act.

These essays are the explorations of a quick and many-sided mind into many realms of experience. Mr. Joad has the art of seizing the essential in the writer whom he is discussing. He can make the most abstruse reasoning (as in his masterly study of Bishop Berkeley) luminous and clear. He thinks with an enviable confidence and decision, and his writing is as clear as his thought. His book, I am convinced, will achieve what his articles achieved. It will lure others to venture into the fields which he has explored. It will map the road for many a fireside journey. It will open doors, and lift curtains, and store up, I predict, much gratitude for the author and a little (it may even be) for the editor who set him to work.

H N BRAILSFORD

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The author excuses himself

Edward Carpenter

IT MAY BE WELL TO INTRODUCE THIS SERIES OF FORTNIGHTLY articles on books and writers with a short account of their scope and object. Books are queer things, and they are read on the whole by queer people. We know that some books are better than others, yet why they are better it is difficult, often impossible to say; we know that reading, though it entertains, is different from other forms of entertainment - like billiards or shove-halfpenny - yet in what its difference consists no two people are agreed.

In the matter of beer, bacon and tobacco we know what we like, and are prepared to call it good if we like it. Thus, when we say that a pipe is a good one, we mean that it suits us, and we mean nothing more. But books are somehow different. It may be that we like a novel by Nat Gould, or Ethel M. Dell, better than a play by Shakespeare; but that does not mean that Nat Gould is a better author than Shakespeare. On the contrary, we know that Shakespeare is a great writer in some sense in which Nat Gould is not a great writer, and we know, further, that anyone who prefers Nat Gould to Shakespeare is just wrong. Thus there is an important difference between books on the one hand and beer and tobacco on the other, a difference which we may express by saying that whereas to like beer and tobacco is enough, to like books is not enough ; we must go farther and like good books. And it is because of this difference that there exists what is called the art of criticism.

Criticism is the attempt to distinguish the good books

the

bad, and to give reasons for our choice.

Now, while it is impossible to lay down rules for spotting a

good book, there are, I think, certain rough-and-ready tests that may be applied.

In the first place, literature, as opposed to pot-boilers, has a definite effect upon our lives. We enjoy a good book, but the enjoyment is not all that we get from it. Good literature is what great men and women have thought and said memorably about life. It is only natural, therefore, that it should affect those who read it. What, after all, is the object of reading, unless something comes of it? What is the point of studying history, philosophy, morals, biography, unless they affect your own life and action in the present world? What is the sense of reading poetry or fiction unless you see more beauty, more passion, more scope for your sympathy than you saw before?

Secondly, while one bad book is very much like another, no two good books are the same. An acquaintance of mine proposed to present a book to a friend for her birthday. "No, don't give her a book," said his wife, "she has one already." Comment is needless! Bad books are like boxes of chocolates, not to be multiplied for fear of a glut; but of good books no library can be too large.

In the third place, no man who has once appreciated what is good returns to what is bad, though many who begin with what is bad go on to what is good. There is in fact such a thing as taste. That does not mean that good taste is innate; on the contrary, a proper discrimination in the matter of literature comes only with faith and patience. You cannot take the kingdom of beauty by storm, and much of what is best in literature makes no immediate appeal. Good taste, in short, can be cultivated.

It is here that the critic comes in. It may not be amiss for those who have no ready access to books and few opportunities to discuss them to pick up now and then a wrinkle - I had almost said from those who know. But, unfortunately, I do not know. I am not a racing tipster, and books are not horses. I do not pretend to be able to spot the best in literature week by week, and to advise others out of the stores of my omniscience. Why, then, do I presume to write in these columns? Partly because I have a

shiewd suspicion that nobody else knows much better than I do, and partly because I shall back only certain winners. I propose to write, that is to say, only of those books which are stamped so plainly with the hall-mark of merit that even I cannot fail to see it.

Moreover, it is not every subject that is as elusive as pure literature. Poetry and fiction are the playgrounds of the will-o'-the-wisp genius, and genius, it is agreed, is not to be confined by rules or caught by a formula. But there are history and philosophy, psychology and science, biography and biology. Of these, too, I shall venture to write, and here it may be possible to pronounce with more certainty and less presumption. In these fields there are facts to be known, and facts can be communicated. Information can be given on books to be studied, authorities to be consulted, and text-books to be avoided. It is even more important to know what not to read than to know what to read, and if I can be of assistance to students who wish for information on any of the subjects touched upon I shall be glad to render service.

There are, too, questions of cheap editions, of where books may be bought and, sometimes, of where they may be borrowed. On these and similar points I shall welcome inquiries ; I shall hope to reply to them (if accompanied with a stamped addressed envelope) with tolerable delay, and, if there turns out to be anything that I do not know, I shall make it my business to find it out those who do.

This week I want to say something about the life and work of Edward Carpenter. Carpenter is an old man now - he celebrated his eightieth birthday at the end of last month¹ - and his influence on the life and thought of our times has been enormous. In what does that influence consist ?

Between our own and the Victorian age there looms an enormous gulf. So marked has been our reaction from the ways of thought, the habits and the ideals of our fathers that there is scarcely a Victorian god that we have not transferred to the shelf, scarcely a Victorian bogey that we have not adopted with acclamation. The Victorians believed in dignity and authority ; we

¹ August, 1924.

laugh at authority and are apt to be suspicious of dignity. The Victorians were afraid of liberty, took their beliefs ready-made from Church and State, and adopted their conventions from Mrs Grundy; we insist on having liberty even at the cost of licence, claim the right to make our creeds for ourselves, and have turned Mrs Grundy into an Aunt Sally. No wonder that so many respectable mothers and fathers of families hold up their hands in horror, and do not know what the world, in the persons of their children, is coming to.

Now, if I were asked in what more than in anything else the significance of Carpenter's work consisted, I should say that it was in the part he has played in bringing about this change. Carpenter denounced the Victorians for hypocrisy, held up their conventions to ridicule, and called their civilization a disease. He was like a man coming into a stuffy sitting-room in a seaside boarding-house and opening the window to let in light and air, or like one who dared to pass his rapier through the ribs of an idol of terrifying pomp and sanctity and let out a little bran and sawdust.

Carpenter began his adult life as an ordinary Cambridge undergraduate, was elected to a Fellowship, read for the Church, took Orders and became a curate. But he was not the man to confine himself within the boundaries of a creed. In 1874 he resigned his curacy and his Fellowship and became an Extension lecturer. His lectures took him to America, where in 1877 he met Walt Whitman. The meeting with the famous American poet profoundly affected Carpenter's life and work. His most famous book, *Towards Democracy*, is closely modelled on Whitman's free verse, and the ideals of freedom and democracy which were Whitman's watchwords become henceforward Carpenter's as well. So much so indeed that he now felt himself incapable of living the hampered restricted life of an English middle-class gentleman. Hating everything that was artificial, he craved for a more natural existence. He must get nearer to nature by living in the country; he must get nearer to himself by restoring himself to primitive conditions and undertaking manual labour.

In 1881 Carpenter took a smallholding at Millthorpe, near

Sheffield, made sandals and worked as an artisan. There for thirty years he remained, and there he was visited by Socialists and vegetarians, by Theosophists and anti-vivisectionists, by ex-convicts and Members of Parliament, by every sort and kind of queer and cranky person, united only by their common dissatisfaction with the existing state of society and by their common regard for Carpenter as a pioneer and a prophet of a new social order.

On what did that regard rest? Mainly, of course, upon his teaching. Carpenter had gone for Victorian society tooth and nail, and trounced it so effectively that all malcontents regarded him as their natural leader. First and foremost he attacked the sacred institution of private property. "There is much to show that the greed of Private Property was the Old Serpent which brought about the fall of our first parents," he tells us in *Love's Coming of Age*. Property divides man from man and man from nature; it separates the individual from the whole and sets each man's hand against society and his fellows.

Get rid of property, get rid of the distinctions which separate you from your neighbours, love your neighbour as yourself, because he is yourself, and you will be a happy member of a happy society. Continue in the ways of individualism, allow each part to glorify itself at the expense of the rest, and you will bring society to ruin.

"To love your neighbour as yourself is the whole law and the prophets; to feel that you are equal with others, that their lives are as your life, that your life is theirs . . . is to enter into another life which includes both sides; it is to pass beyond the sphere of moral distinctions, and to trouble oneself no more with them. Between lovers there are no duties and no rights."

It is in the name of this all-embracing principle of humanity and equality that in *Love's Coming of Age* Carpenter attacked modern marriage. Marriage, like all our institutions, is cursed by the sense of property; and, because woman is the most valued of man's possessions, marriage is the citadel of the possessive instinct. Thus marriage turns man into a tyrant and a bully, and makes of woman **a lady or a drudge**.

In all that he wrote Carpenter preaches his fundamental doctrine of unity and equality. Most of his teaching is sheer Christianity. We are members of one another, and in the recognition of this fact lies our salvation. The character of the man is a striking example of the truth of his teaching. His sympathy with others is amazing. He possesses a wonderful power of projecting himself into other people. He *is* the ploughboy whistling in the furrow, the prostitute sitting on a seat on the esplanade, the lady in corsets and feathers coming out of church. Read *Towards Democracy*, his greatest book, and you will see that Carpenter not only speaks for them all; he is them all.

Books by Edward Carpenter

Civilisation, its Cause and Cure

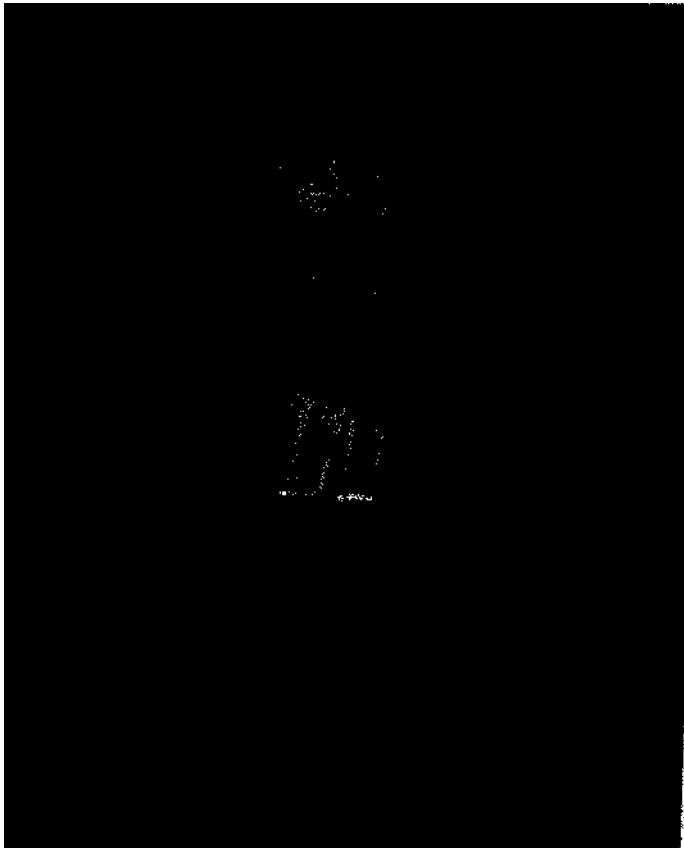
Towards Democracy

Love's Coming of Age

England's Ideal

My Days and Dreams

All published by Allen & Unwin



Jonathan Swift

RETURNING TO LONDON FROM THE COUNTRY I WAS SEIZED with a great hatred of my fellow-men. Viewed in the mass after weeks of sheep and cattle they appear no more intelligent, and they are much uglier. They make horrible noises, go to silly entertainments, rush endlessly and aimlessly about the streets, and get in my way when I want to go anywhere. There are too many of them and they all do the same things ; even when they go for their holidays they pack themselves together so tightly that, if all the holiday-makers conglomerated on the beach at Margate at a given moment were placed end to end, they would stretch from the promenade to the North Pole—where let them perish ! What a herd, and yet they call themselves reasonable !

" But, when a creature pretending to reason could be capable of such enormities, he dreaded lest the corruption of that faculty might be worse than brutality itself. He seemed confident that, instead of reason, we were only possessed of some quality, fitted to increase our natural vices ; as the reflection from a troubled stream returns the image of an ill-shapen body, not only larger but more distorted."

That is from the fourth part of Dean Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, where the ascending waves of savagery and satire reach a height such as no human being before or since has dared to breast. Oh, he was a fierce old devil, was Swift. Outside the Jehovah of the Old Testament there has been nobody to touch him, and if you feel as I did about your fellows you cannot do better than take him down and read him, when you will find the wind taken out of your sails by a scorn and hatred so immeasurably superior

to your own, that for very shame you must needs relapse into charity and your gall turn to the milk of human kindness. Satire, you find, is not your line; somebody, who was one of the greatest writers in our language, has been before you and turned your feeble efforts to ridicule.

A fierce old devil ! It was not only that he flayed mankind in his works, he was so abominably uncomfortable to live with. He broke the hearts of two women. He kicked a boy so hard that he broke his own toe on his backside. " Dining at a house where the part of the tablecloth which was next him happened to have a small hole, Swift tore it as wide as he could and ate his soup through it; his reason for such behaviour was, as he said, to mortify the lady of the house, and to teach her to pay a proper attention to housewifery."

He had a charming way of speaking of his contemporaries. Most of his more famous remarks are unprintable ; I quote a couple of the mildest. The first on a would-be talker:

" He relies upon his imagination for his facts, and his memory for his jokes."

The second on a judge:

In church your grandsire cut his throat;
To do the job too long he tarried:
He should have had my hearty vote
To cut his throat before he married.

And he was so surly in the giving of his favours that his friend said: " I think I would rather have had a potato and a friendly word from Goldsmith, than have been beholden to the Dean for a guinea and a dinner."

There are a hundred anecdotes about Swift, and with one or two exceptions they are all of a piece.

Swift had a turbulent career. He rose to be one of the most powerful men in eighteenth-century England, fell into complete disgrace, and returned to Dublin a broken and disappointed man, only to become the popular hero of Ireland.

Born in Ireland in 1667, Swift was educated in England, took Holy Orders in Dublin, and had a living just outside the Irish capital. In 1709, however, he returned to England and began to

take a prominent part in party politics. At first on the side of the Whigs, he later joined the Tories and formed close friendships with Harley, Lord Oxford, and Lord Bolingbroke, the leaders of the party. He was the foremost political pamphleteer of his time, and his biting pen was of invaluable service to the parties to which he allied himself. Disappointed in his hopes of a bishopric, he received the Deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin, and when, in 1714, the Tories fell from office, he retired to Ireland in disgrace.

In Ireland Swift rapidly became famous through his authorship of the *Drapier Letters*. A certain William Wood had acquired a contract through influence at Court for supplying the Irish with a coinage of copper halfpence on such terms that the profit accruing from the difference between the real and the nominal value of these debased coins went very largely into his own pocket. In a series of six letters, signed "M. B. Drapier," Swift set Ireland aflame with indignation. The patent was cancelled and Swift, to whom the Government tried in vain to bring home the authorship of the pamphlet, was regarded in the light of a saviour of his country. Injustice or cruelty of any kind roused his bitterest indignation, and in the later years of his life he wrote a number of highly satirical pamphlets on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, such as, *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burden to their Parents or the Country*, by fattening and eating them, and *Directions to Servants*, in which all the faults which domestics can commit are with imperturbable solemnity imposed upon them as solemn duties

Swift is the greatest master of English prose. His great characteristic is lucidity. His sentences, clear, simple and concise, never leave the reader in the slightest doubt as to his meaning. The manner is calm and equable, and the most fantastic exaggerations are stated with the utmost gravity; yet the fires of passion are never far below, and irradiate the smooth surface with a glow of indignation which burns all the fiercer for the apparent restraint. His pamphlets are a model for all would-be writers on politics. Never did a man who wrote so simply write

with such deadly effect, so that there are none who read who cannot understand, and none who understand who are not moved.

The greatest and best known of Swift's works is *Gulliver's Travels*. They are divided into four parts, and recount the adventures of Captain Lemuel Gulliver in remote and undiscovered parts of the world, whither he is carried as a consequence of being shipwrecked.

In the first, Lilliput, the people are pygmies about the size of a man's little finger ; in the second, Brobdingnag, they are giants as tall as a church steeple; the third records a visit to Laputa, an island that floats in the air, and the fourth introduces us to the land of the Houyhnhnms, inhabited by two races, one of horses who are types of perfectly virtuous beings, and the other of Yahoos who are broad and particularly hideous caricatures of men and women.

The book is alive with incident; the narrative goes briskly forward, and the hero's adventures are so excitingly, at times so thrillingly, recorded - the shipwrecks in particular are done with great care and detail - that the travels might at first glance be taken for a boy's book of adventure. Boys at any rate can read them with pleasure, if not with profit. Gulliver escaped from Brobdingnag through the instrumentality of an eagle, which caught up his wooden travelling box in its beak, flew off with it, was attacked by another eagle and dropped the box into the sea, where it was picked up by a British sailing vessel. Reading this, it is difficult not to think that Swift got carried away by his own story and, forgetting his primary object of flaying mankind, could not resist the temptation of giving rein to his fancy and pleasing himself, even if in so doing he had to please others as well.

As to the primary object there can be no doubt. It is impossible for those who have not read *Gulliver* to gain any conception of the savage and ironic bitterness with which Swift assails his fellows, for nowhere in literature is there anything to match it. A quotation may help to give some idea of the quality of the writing.

Gulliver, admitted to the friendship of the king of Brobdingnag, proposes to let him into the secret of gunpowder, in order that he might the better control the country and "destroy the whole metropolis, if ever it should pretend to dispute his absolute commands." The king is horror-stricken at the suggestion, amazed⁴⁴ how so impotent and grovelling an insect . . . could entertain such inhuman ideas," and declares that he would rather lose half his kingdom than be privy to such a secret.

"A strange effect of narrow principles and views," comments Gulliver, "that a prince possessed of every quality which procures veneration, love and esteem, of strong parts, great wisdom and profound learning, endowed with admirable talents, and almost adored by his subjects, should, from a nice, unnecessary scruple, whereof in Europe we can have no conception, let slip an opportunity put into his hands that would have made him absolute master of the lives, the liberties and the fortunes of his people. Neither do I say this with the least intention to detract from the many virtues of that excellent being whose character, I am sensible, will, on this account, be very much lessened in the opinion of an English reader: but I take this defect among them to have arisen from their ignorance, by not having hitherto reduced politics into a science, as the more acute wits of Europe have done."

A somewhat similar passage occurs in the voyage to the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver's equine master is trying to understand how it is that mankind go to war in order to prove that they are in the right, and Gulliver is doing his best to enlighten him on the causes of war:

"Sometimes the ambition of princes, who never think they have land or people enough to govern; sometimes the corruption of ministers, who engage their master in a war in order to stifle or divert the clamour of the subjects against their evil administration. Difference in opinion has cost many millions of lives; for instance, whether flesh be bread, or bread be flesh; whether the juice of a certain berry be blood or wine. . . . Neither are any wars so furious and bloody, or of so long continuance, as those

occasioned by difference of opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent."

The mournful reflection that most of the above analysis is as true to-day as when it was written would have given Swift great pleasure.

The world after its fashion has revenged itself for Swift's treatment of it. It has declared him to be mad, and it has turned his bitterest work into a prize-book for diligent schoolboys. The first method of treating those who affront one is common enough. It is a healthy instinct in men which makes them refuse to believe in the sanity of those who refuse to take them at their own valuation. If X thinks I am a fool, he must be a fool to think it; if Y calls mankind a pack of idiots, then mankind cannot give better proof of their indubitable sanity than by putting Y in a lunatic asylum.

Thus Nietzsche was kept under restraint. Shaw is usually presented standing on his head and waving his legs in the air, and Swift is called mad. It is true that as he grew older his mind did begin to give way, and during the last nine years of his life, 1736-1745, his mental faculties became increasingly paralysed. But this senile decay is not enough for our modern critics. They will have it that he was more or less mad all his life - "There is no doubt but there was some radical disorder in his system," says Professor Mair - when he was as sane as I am and much saner than most. Well, human conceit will have its due, and it is doubtful if anything else has caused Swift's shade to emit a more sardonic chuckle, unless, perhaps, it is the use we have made of his *Gulliver's Travels*.



VOLTAIRK aliter *HUBERT*

Voltaire and History

OF ALL SUBJECTS OF HISTORICAL CONTROVERSY THE MOST popular turns upon the influence of ideas upon events. Is it to human wills and the desires of individual men and women that we must look for the causes of what happens, or are human wills and desires merely the effects of things that have already happened? Do ideas and aspirations bring revolution, or are revolutions the inevitable outcome of circumstances? If a revolutionary situation finds expression in the works of a Voltaire or a Rousseau, a Tolstoy or a Lenin, may we suppose that these men are merely the mouthpieces of forces and movements which they have not created and cannot control - that, in short, ideas are never the causes of the upheavals¹ they foreshadow, but rather the incidental by-products of the material circumstances in which the cause of those upheavals is ultimately to be located?

Homer tells us that the Greeks went to Troy and laid siege to it for ten years because the Trojan Paris fell in love with Helen's pretty face. Paris eloped with Helen, and the outraged husband, Menelaus, gathered a great expedition to rescue his wife and punish her lover. A simple enough account and one not obviously at variance with human nature. Men have been known to act from jealousy, and the desire to rescue an errant wife is recognized as a common, even as a laudable, human motive. But we must, it seems, look deeper. Menelaus, it is true, may have felt jealousy and the desire to recover his beautiful wife, but his friends can scarcely be supposed to have shared his feelings. Could he then have induced them to provide him with an army for the furtherance of his designs had not the times been ripe for such an expedition on other grounds?

And that is just what they were. The Greeks were anxious to open a new trade route to the East; Troy stood in the way; demolish Troy and the spices and perfumes of Persia will find their way into Greek markets. Meanwhile this Paris-Helen business, like the neutrality of Belgium, affords- an excellent pretext for the activities of a nation which is on the road to great things ; but it is not to be supposed that anything so remote as human jealousy could interfere with anything so compelling as human avarice expressing itself in the automatic workings' of economic law.

Such, I imagine, would be the Marxian interpretation of the Greek expedition to Troy. This is not the place to discuss its merits, but it is worth while to emphasize its belittling effect upon the importance of human will and motive. We are, it seems, the mere instrument* of circumstances which we can neither alter nor control, puppets twitched into love and war by invisible forces which pull the strings. Great men are those who are twitched most violently, or most eccentrically, creatures of circumstance like the rest of us, in fact rather more than the rest of us.

I have mentioned this perennial controversy because it is raised in an acute form by the great French writers of the eighteenth century who immediately preceded the Revolution. Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert and, from a different angle, Rousseau had for fifty years waged a wordy war upon the cruelty and injustice of the contemporary social system. The limitation of the power of the Church, the freedom of thought and expression, the abolition of legal injustices and oppressive privileges, the sweeping away of a system of taxation which took half his earnings from the poor peasant and nothing from the rich noble-these were the objects implied or expressed in Voltaire's unremitting propaganda.

In conjunction with other reformers of the time he was responsible for the production of a so-called Encyclopaedia of Human Principles and Knowledge. The Encyclopaedists subscribed to a common programme, which may be summed up as follows:

toleration, freedom of thought and expression, the equality of all before the law, individual liberty, and the belief in the progress of mankind.

Now Voltaire was not only the greatest man of letters of his time, but his influence was greater than that of any man of letters of any time. During the revolutionary period and up to 1835 thirty-four complete editions of his works were issued, besides innumerable reprints of separate books. In seven years alone - 1817-1824-31,600 complete sets of his works were published, making a total of 1,598,000 volumes. The list of the titles of his works occupies fourteen pages in Mr Richard Aldington's recently published study, *Voltaire*.

The whole weight of this enormous influence was directed against the authority of Church and State as exercised by the old regime in France. Eleven years after the death of Voltaire the French Revolution broke out and abolished both. Is it not reasonable to suppose that Voltaire had at least some hand in brewing that cauldron of discontent which subsequently overflowed in the revolutionary ardours of 1789?

The historians say " Yes " and the historians also say " No." In an interesting concluding chapter to his book, *Pioneers of the French Revolution*, M. Roustan argues strongly for the decisive importance of the personal factor. This much at least, he thinks, may be placed to the credit of Voltaire and his allies, that, for the first time in the history of the century," They gave to the masses not so much a dogma as elementary ideas on politics and administration, and set them dreaming of a regime under which all the privileges would not be for the rich and ail the burdens for the poor and unfortunate." As the revolutionary inscription on Voltaire's tomb reads: " He prepared men to become free."

A moderate claim this, at which even the most cantankerous Marxist would find it hard to cavil. In his introduction to M. Roustan's book Mr Laski goes further, affirming of the philosophers of the eighteenth century that they " released those **permanent** forces of the human spirit which **lead** men to **seek** for **the realization of their best selves.**"*

To release the forces of the human spirit in the eighteenth century was not a task to be lightly undertaken; for Voltaire it meant the Bastille. That he would have hated the Revolution if he had lived to see it is perfectly true, but the fact that he would have disliked his stew to boil over is no reason for depriving him of all the credit for its mixing.

As for the contrary view, it finds its characteristic expression in the mouth of Shaw. Revolutions, he tells us, are born not of the success but of the failure of propaganda. It was not because men listened to Voltaire, to Rousseau, and the rest, that France rose in revolt, but because they refused to listen, and then found the State tumbling about their ears before they even knew that it was threatened.

I am not historian enough to argue this controversy ; I can only take sides. Besides I do not wish to indulge in controversies at all, but to write about Voltaire. Let me, then, hasten to make the not very helpful remark that what you will think about this particular question will depend upon what you already think about the materialist conception of history; that I, who believe that minds do influence events instead of merely reflecting them, cordially dislike the materialist conception of history ; that I, therefore, believe that but for Voltaire there would have been no Revolution ; that I am quite incapable of substantiating my belief, and pass accordingly to that much more exciting subject, Voltaire himself.

When Voltaire at the age of eighty-four, after an absence of twenty-seven years, made his last journey to Paris, the city proclaimed a public holiday. The crowds thronged his carriage in the street, the Academie made him their president and held a special sitting to read speeches in his honour, and at the *Come'die Francaise*, where a performance was given of his tragedy *Irene*, the rise of the curtain was delayed for twenty minutes while the audience cheered Voltaire in his box. At the end of the performance Voltaire's statue was crowned with laurel upon the stage, while the old man walked to the entrance of the theatre between two rows of the prettiest women in Paris. **Not even**

the modern American film star has had so spontaneous and so unadvertised a reception ; certainly no film star has been so welcomed and honoured by *every* class of the community.

But the crowd which remained permanently massed outside Voltaire's hotel cried not " Hail, Voltaire, the poet," or " Hail, Voltaire, the philosopher," or "Hail, Voltaire, the enemy of priests and kings," but " Hail, Voltaire, the saviour of les Calas!" Who then were " les Calas " ? No better insight into the activities of Voltaire and the forces against which these activities were directed, could be given than by answering this question. Calas was a Protestant, with a half-witted son who committed suicide. The Catholic Church asserted that Calas had himself murdered his own son, because he (the son) desired to become a Catholic. The fact that there was no evidence in support of this theory was of no importance to the Church. Calas was arrested and broken alive on the wheel; his wife was ruined, his daughters imprisoned in convents, and his sons exiled. Voltaire satisfied himself that Calas was innocent, and his fate the result of religious bigotry and intolerance. He laboured accordingly to secure a reversal of the verdict, spending his money, composing innumerable letters and pamphlets, and assaulting public opinion with every art known to the greatest propagandist of the age. The contest lasted for years, but in the end Voltaire won. Madame Calas was rehabilitated and her daughters released.

This story, and it is one of many like it, suggests that Voltaire was primarily a great reformer, a friend of the poor and the oppressed, a rebel against authority, a Tolstoy or a Keir Hardie. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Voltaire was a gentleman of France who had, for part of his life, been a courtier. He even entertained serious political ambitions. It was only his mischievous humour, which was continually finding vent in irreverent epigrams about the Church, and disrespectful gibes at prominent personages, that insisted sooner or later on making all the polite societies he successively provoked too hot to hold him. For ten years he was forced to live in comparative retirement with his mistress, Madame du Chatelet, at Cirey. Here, except for meals and occasional exer-

cise, Voltaire and Madame spent all their days and most of their nights at their reading desks, Voltaire writing poems, tragedies, histories and books of philosophical essays, and Madame, an eighteenth-century blue-stocking, translating Newton and initiating Voltaire into mathematics and physics. So unremitting was their industry that they never permitted themselves to sleep for more than five or six hours. On Madame du Chatelet's death Voltaire went to the Court of Frederick the Great of Prussia, where he spent four stormy years. The two men heartily admired each other, but quarrelled like a pair of lovers, Voltaire's inveterate habit of poking fun at the learned men with whom Frederick, most cultured of monarchs, delighted to surround himself being a constant source of provocation. Finally, Voltaire escaped in a storm of royal indignation which nearly cost him his liberty, and took up his residence at Ferney, on the borders of Switzerland, where he lived for the last twenty-five years of his life. It was here that, abandoning all hope of royal advancement, he insensibly became, almost as if it were a last resort, the champion of the forces of republicanism and revolt.

Yet now that I have suggested that he was forced into the role of a rebel almost against his will, I feel that I have done injustice to his strangely complex character. At bottom, and beneath all his wit and levity, he really cared for men's welfare. But his was a mellow tolerant creed, far removed from the fanatical enthusiasm of most of those who have appointed themselves doctors at the sick-bed of Society. He wanted men to be just, reasonable and tolerant, and as a preliminary to the exercise of these virtues he wished them to be comfortable and to enjoy life.

Unlike Rousseau, whom he hated, he did not think that man was by nature good and that a return to a state of nature would accordingly be to his advantage. Unlike the pessimists he did not believe that man was by nature evil and doomed to misery. He took a middle view; all things, he held, are compounded of good and bad, and man amongst them. He cannot, as things **are**, enjoy much happiness, but he can enjoy some, and he can enjoy more if he will only face facts and be tolerant of others. All is

certainly not for **the best** in **this** world, **but it is tolerable** and can **be** made better. Voltaire is thus essentially a moderate man.

Those who wish to know more of his life cannot do better than consult Mr Aldington's charmingly written and amusing study.

Books recommended

Voltaire by Richard Aldington (Routledge)

Pioneers of the French Revolution by Roustan (Benn)

Candide by Voltaire (Chapman & Dodd The Abbey Classics)

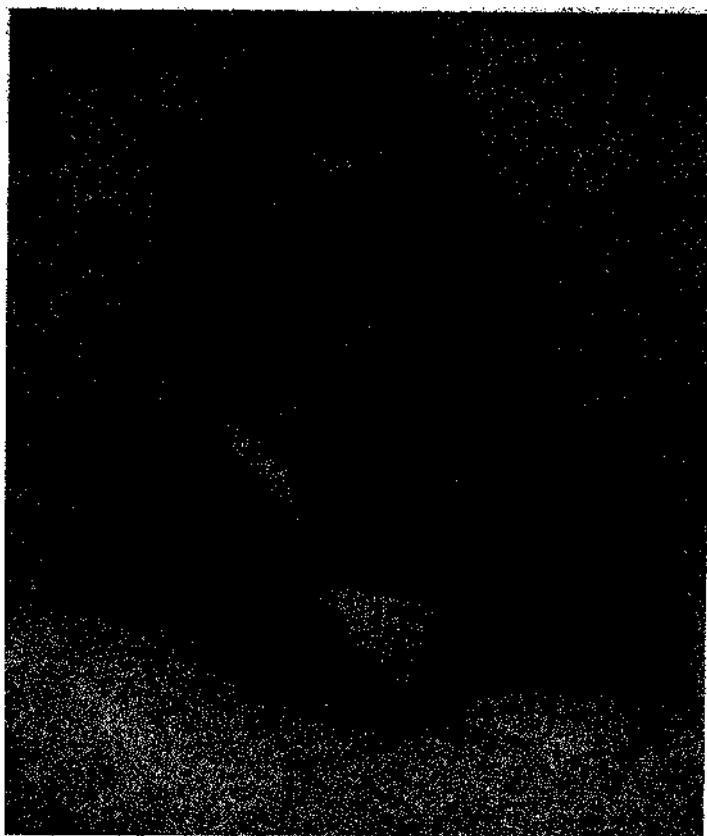
Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary (Allen & Unwin)

Thomas Love Peacock

ABOUT A TORY THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO ATTRACT. I do not mean your modern up-to-date article who calls himself "young" (as if any Tory could be young), and stands self-consciously and benevolently for progress, profit-sharing, and baths and enlightenment for the workers; I am not, indeed, sure that I mean anything political at all (although in politics Peacock was as good a Tory as any), but rather a certain type of mind belonging to a certain sort of man.

He is a man who is generous and kindly, who wants to do good and be happy and, provided they will be happy in ways of which he approves, wishes others to share his happiness ; who defines this happiness largely in terms of material things, with particular reference to good eating and good drinking, but who loves, nevertheless, not only his country but *the* country ; who likes people to be simple and unaffected, hates shams, hypocrites and humbug like the devil, opposes the new-fangled both in idea and contrivance, and, as the new-fangled in spite of protests besets him ever more closely, expresses an increasing wonder as to what the world is coming to, combined with an increasing conviction that it is coming to no good.

Such a Tory was Thomas Love Peacock, who lived through the early years of the nineteenth century; of this attitude to life in general, and to the life of his times in particular, his incomparable novels are the best and most typical expression. A servant of the famous East India Company, Peacock lived a singularly calm and uneventful life. He met a young lady in Wales in circumstances of tolerable romance, waited nine years without seeing her until he was earning enough money to keep her, proposed to her, was accepted, set up house with her at Shepperton, went to the city every day, returned home every evening in



the week but one (on which he went to the play), and ruled his household benevolently but autocratically - we are told that " he was kind and considerate to everyone who would comply with his simple needs, the chief of which were to have his library regarded as a sanctuary, to have his orders in house and garden carried out and to be spared the necessity of seeing any but a very few visitors." (I think that I could be a perfectly good-tempered Tory on these terms.) He entertained his friends, of whom the poet Shelley was the chief, and at long intervals wrote his incomparable novels.

There is no writer known to me who combines the peculiar comfortableness of Peacock's attitude to life with the peculiar pungency of his writing. In this last particular he is more reminiscent, or rather anticipatory, of Shaw than of any other writer. Take, for instance, the following as a sample of his quality. It comes from his novel about legendary Wales, *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, and forms part of an account of the habits and customs of the inhabitants of Wales in the sixth century:

"Of moral science they had little; but morals without science they had about the same as we have. They had a number of fine precepts, partly from their religion, partly from their bards, which they remembered in their liquor, and forgot in there business. Political science they had none. The blessings of virtual representation were not even dreamed of. . . . Still they went to work, politically, much as we do. The powerful took all they could get from their subjects and neighbours: and called something or other sacred and glorious when they wanted people to fight for them. They repressed disaffection by force, when it showed itself in an overt act; but they encouraged freedom of speech, when it was, like Hamlet's reading, 'Words, words, words.'"

But it is time that I said something of the novels themselves. There are seven of them, and they are published in two volumes (at 2s. each) by Routledge. Strictly speaking, they are not novels at all. What happens in them is, broadly speaking, something like this: a rich business man makes his pile and retires into the country. Here he entertains munificently, gathering together

every kind of crank and eccentric - Mr. Firedamp, who believes that water is the source of all evil, Mr. Chainmail, who thinks that mankind reached the highest pitch of perfection when nourished on beef and ale in the eleventh century, and Mr Cranium who believes that a man's views are determined by the conformation of his skull, are typical Peacockian cranks-and presides at interminable but exceedingly amusing discussions between the cranks. The whole boiling of satire and nonsense is sweetened by some jolly old parson, who eats and drinks enormously, makes fun of everybody's fads and fancies, and voices Peacock's own sturdy, Tory common sense. Add to this a faint love interest, which culminates automatically and rather ludicrously in the marriage of all the younger characters, and you have the recipe for a Peacock novel. *Crochet Castle* is perhaps the best and most typical, as it is certainly the most popular.

Now it should be made clear at the outset that these novels are not for everybody's reading. Those who can be affronted intellectually should avoid Peacock. To enjoy his works you must be completely free of intellectual prejudice, you must hold no opinion which you cannot bear to have laughed at, and you must detest none which you cannot bear to hear praised. You must be willing to listen cheerfully to attacks on your favourite positions, and you must be prepared to be made game of yourself. And however securely you believe your self fortified against ridicule, however devoid of prejudice and free of cant, be sure that Peacock will find you out. Through chinks in your armour that you never suspected he will force the rapier of his wit and cause you to squirm; upon even the smoothest of intellectual understandings he will find the corns of prejudice, and having found them will proceed to stamp upon them.

Peacock, then, is not for everybody; above all he is not for those who lack a sense of humour, while even for the most hardened he is something of an acquired taste.

But once you have acquired the taste for him, what fun you will have, and what fundamental soundness you will find in his crusty old views. He hated the industrial revolution like poison, and was one of the first to make men ashamed of its horrors.

In that same chapter from which I have quoted above he continues :

" They had no steam-engines, with fires as eternal as those of the nether world, wherein the squalid many, from infancy to age, might be turned into component portions of machinery for the benefit of the purple-faced few. They could neither poison the air with gas, nor the waters with its dregs; in short, they made their money of metal, and breathed pure air, and drank pure water, like unscientific barbarians."

Because by the aid of a few scientific discoveries they had succeeded in establishing a society which mistook comfort for some for civilization for all, the Victorians believed in progress. Peacock was never tired of ridiculing this belief. He hated cheap handbooks, cheap mechanical knowledge and the cheap and charitable societies, with which the Victorian age abounded, for communicating the ideals and ideas of the middle classes to the poor. Of such is the Steam Intellect Society which figures in a famous passage in *Crochet Castle*:

"'God bless my soul, sir!' exclaimed the Reverend Doctor Foiliott, bursting, one fine May morning, into the breakfast-room at Crochet Castle. 'I am out of all patience with this march of mind. Here has my house been nearly burned down, by my cook taking into her head to study hydrostatics, in a six-penny tract, published by the Steam Intellect Society, and written by a learned friend who is for doing all the world's business as well as his own, and is equally well qualified to handle every branch of human knowledge. . . . My cook must read his rubbish in bed ; as might naturally be expected, she dropped suddenly fast asleep, overturned the candle, and set the curtains ablaze. Luckily the footman went into the room at the moment, in time to tear down the curtains and throw them into the chimney, and a pitcher of water on her nightcap extinguished her wick ; she is a greasy subject, and would have burned like a short mould.'"

Peacock disliked "reforming" Radicals because he thought them humbugs; but he was himself one of the most vigorous critics of the factory system and the evils it brought in its train. In *Headlong Hall* there is a dialogue between two typical

Peacockian cranks. Mr Foster is one of your exasperating optimists who believes in an automatic law of progress, which means that every generation is better and happier than its fathers, and that a thing is necessarily good because it happens. Mr Escot, whose name is compounded of two Greek works meaning "towards the darkness," takes the diametrically opposite view, and regards every achievement of the nineteenth century with horror, as increasing the gulf that separates us from the blessed state of innocence and nature assumed to have been the condition of our forefathers. As a rule Peacock holds the scale pretty evenly between his disputants, but when he comes to the industrial revolution his feelings run away with him, and Mr Escot literally talks Mr Foster out of the field.

They have just returned from a visit to one of those newly formed villages which subsequently developed into the great manufacturing towns of the north - you can read all about them in Disraeli's *Sybil*:

"What think you of the little colony we have just been inspecting," says Mr Foster, "a city, as it were, in its cradle?"

"MR ESCOT : I confess the sight of those manufactories, which have suddenly sprung up, like fungous excrescences, in the bosom of these wild and desolate scenes, impressed me with as much horror and amazement as the sudden appearance of the stocking manufactory struck into the mind of Rousseau, when, in a lonely valley of the Alps, he had just congratulated himself on finding a spot where man has never been."

Mr Foster replies with some complacent fatuity about the evils which are inseparable from the beginning of any novel undertaking. This provokes Mr Escot, who, in a speech of furious invective, running to a couple of pages, fairly lets the optimist have it. Science, machinery, factories, *laissez-faire* and the industrial system are castigated in turn, the speech ending on a high note of indigation at the effects of money-making on the children:

"Wherever this boasted machinery is established, the children of the poor are death-doomed from their cradles. Look for one moment at midnight into a cotton-mill, amidst the smell of

oil, the smoke of lamps, the rattling of wheels, the dizzy and complicated motions of diabolical mechanism: contemplate the little human machines that keep play with the revolutions of the iron-work, robbed at that hour of their natural rest, as of air and exercise by day: observe their pale and ghastly features, more ghastly in that baleful and malignant light, and tell me if you do not fancy yourself on the threshold of Virgil's hell."

This rings true, true enough to make one wish that his party could have imitated Peacock in something more than his love of good food and drink.

Apart from his satirical novels, Peacock wrote some excellent verse. It is free, vigorous stuff; it sings the praises of hunting and fighting and is full of good drinking.

The best known of his poems, beginning:

The mountain sheep are sweeter
But the valley sheep are fatter;
We therefore judged it meeter
To carry off the latter.

—*was actually quoted quite recently by a Judge on the bench.

Peacock is a fine stimulating writer, a tonic for bad nerves and morbid imaginings, and a welcome relief from the emasculated subtleties of modern literature.

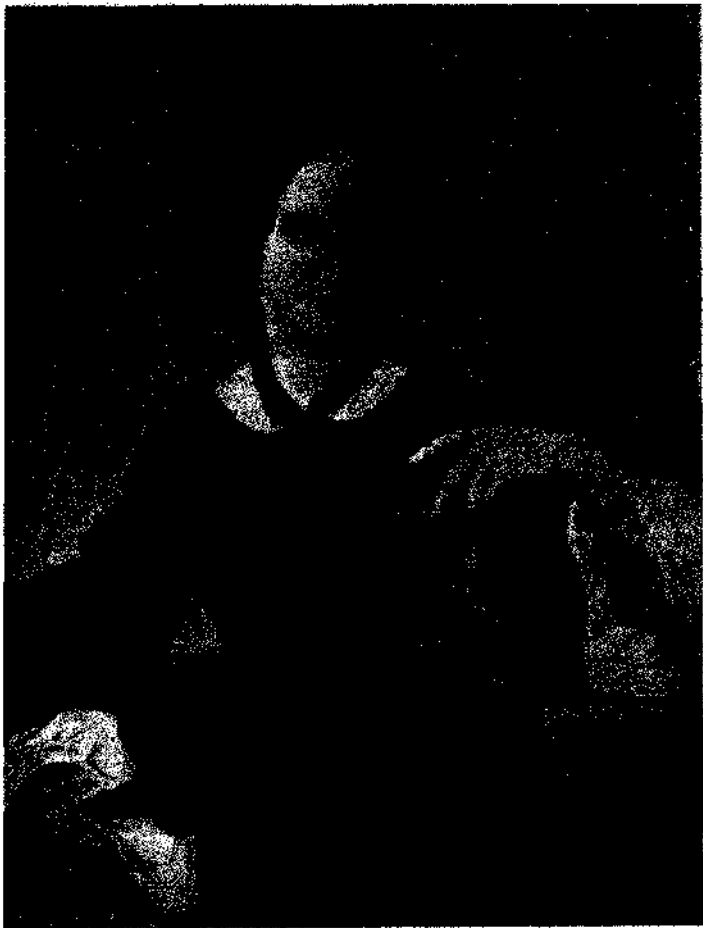
The Brontes

PEOPLE FIGHT SHY OF THE CLASSICS; IT IS VERY WRONG OF them, but they do. Go into a man's house, look at his books, and what will you find? Dickens, perhaps, and a Shakespeare never read, a cookery-book and a Bible. These, or something like them, exhaust the tribute which their owner pays to antiquity. For the rest there will be a paper-back novel telling how a governess marries a lord, a shocker or two, and the magazines. It is these latter that provide the excitement and romance of reading; those others are, for the most part, window-dressing-books to be seen rather than read.

The fact is, people think the classics dull, though why they have this belief it is difficult to say. In part, perhaps, it is due to the unappetizing appearance of old books - we all know those yellow pages of tiny print, and covers bedecked with impossible flowers. In part to the belief, unconsciously held, that nobody felt, or suffered, or imagined anything exciting before the remarkable epoch in which we ourselves burst upon the world, and that books dating from the last century must, therefore, reflect the dullness of their authors' lives. This belief is, however, erroneous; there were cakes and ale, and tears and laughter before ever you and I saw the light, and Captain Marryat, Charles Reade, Fenimore Cooper and Stevenson are, judged by the test of sheer excitingness alone, as thrilling as any authors who have added to this year's Wild West or detective stories, while *Wuthering Heights* is perhaps the most exciting book ever written. Which brings me to the Brontes.

I write about the Brontes partly because there has just appeared a new and cheap edition of their works,¹ handy to hold, pleasant

¹ *Books to read* see page 45



to look at, easy to read, and partly because they afford perhaps the most obviously striking manifestation of that queer thing we call genius.

Genius breaks out at unexpected times and in unlikely places, but it seems usually to have avoided women. So true is this that many writers have held that women are entirely devoid of imagination or creative power ; some have gone to the length of affirming that they have no souls - a common belief among the early Christian Fathers - while Schopenhauer, after watching an audience at a concert, roundly asserted that they had no sense of beauty. These opinions are no doubt extreme, but it is nevertheless true that, with one exception to be mentioned in a moment, women have produced practically no work of the first order in the realms of art and literature, that they have contributed little to science, and nothing to mathematics or philosophy. There are no doubt all sorts of reasons for this fact, and it may be that in the days to come it will be a fact no longer, but a fact for the present, with one exception, it remains.

The exception is the production of fiction. Jane Austen, the Brontes, George Eliot, and in our time Katherine Mansfield, are among the greatest imaginative writers in English literature ; they bear the true mark of genius, and, what is of even greater interest, none of their work (with the possible exception of that of George Eliot) could have been produced by men.

Why women should have achieved excellence in this particular sphere alone it is difficult to say. The subject is a thorny one. If, however, I may venture one generalization, it is that the excellence - and the lonely excellence - of women's work in fiction springs from and reflects a particular type of interest. Women on the whole are interested in different things from those which interest men. Men are curious about the world and the way it is made ; they get excited about politics, and madly excited about football ; they take up hobbies. Their world is a world of things, of ideas and of causes. Women, on the other hand, are chiefly interested in people - in people, that is to say, regarded as individuals. It is for this reason that in the sphere of fiction women excel. Their genius lies in the creation of individual characters.

Yet while all the characters of the great women novelists live with an abounding vitality, their women are always more life-like than their men.

Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte were three sisters, the daughters of a clergyman, Patrick Bonte, the rector of Haworth, a village near Keighley in Yorkshire. Charlotte (1816-1855) was the eldest, and, as her mother died shortly after the birth of Anne, it was upon Charlotte, aided by an aunt, that the cares of the household devolved. They were considerable. Money was scarce, the sisters suffered from chronic ill-health, and the father was infirm. There was, moreover, a brother, Patrick Branwell Bronte, passionately adored by his sisters, yet destined to bring only unhappiness into their lives. He had early shown artistic leanings, and the slender resources of the family were strained to send him to the Royal Academy as a pupil. Branwell in London sowed his wild oats not wisely but too well, spent all his money, and returned to Haworth a confirmed drunkard, to live upon the earnings of his father and the labours of his sisters, to spend his leisure loafing at the village inn, and to fritter his life away in sottish brutality.

All this was bad enough, and it was made worse by isolation. The Brontes lived utterly alone. Haworth is situated in the wildest and loneliest part of the Yorkshire moors ; it is a place of strong winds and sterile soil, inhospitable and lonely, yet a source of strength and consolation to those who, like the Brontes, had known it from childhood and regarded its bleak moorland wastes as their home. In spite of its loneliness they loved Haworth, and Emily, in particular, who has immortalized its scenery in her book, *Wuthering Heights*, grew so homesick in absence that her health was seriously affected, and it became a recognized thing between the other two sisters that, whoever else must go, Emily at least should stay.

The duty of going devolved chiefly upon Charlotte. A person more ridiculously unfitted for the post of governess it would be difficult to imagine. To put Charlotte in charge of naughty children was like trying to chop a block of wood with a razor.

She was frail, easily tired, absurdly sensitive, and so short-sighted that she habitually read with her nose almost touching her book, so that "when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose." Moreover she was shockingly uneducated. Girls' schools in the early nineteenth century were not exactly places of light and leading, and the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, to which Charlotte and Emily were sent, consistently underfed, overpunished, repressed and misunderstood the poor little wretches who were committed to its charge. Charlotte has held it up to universal infamy in her sketch of Lowood in *Jane Eyre*, where it stands with Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*, a lasting and painful memorial to the cruelties that were inflicted on defenceless children a hundred years ago.

With all these disadvantages Charlotte set out to make her way in the world. Somebody must earn money, and she, as the eldest and the least feeble of the sisters, took the duty upon herself. After a series of comparative failures as a governess she went as a pupil, and subsequently as a teacher, to a girls' school in Brussels. Her object was to add to her qualifications by acquiring a thorough knowledge of French. One can imagine her with her insignificant person and dingy clothes, her accidental ugliness, and limited experience, upheld by nothing but her terrific sense of duty, endeavouring to impose her personality upon the pert and fashionable misses who attended the smart Belgian boarding school. The story of her adventures and her ultimate success is told in *Villette* - to my mind the best, though not the most exciting, of her books.

It was in the same spirit of determination, in the face of every kind of discouragement, that Charlotte, Emily and Anne set about the task of writing.

Gifted with more than the normal child's power of make-believe, they had been precocious from the first. When Charlotte was fifteen the three sisters with the help of their brother Branwell were bringing out a monthly magazine to which they contributed their own stories and poems - with a circulation confined strictly to the staff. In after years all three wrote consistently.

Burdened with household tasks which kept them cooking and cleaning, gardening and washing up all day, and impelled by a sense of domestic duty which would never allow them to stop sewing before nine o'clock in the evening, this left only the hours between nine and eleven - when the rest of the household were in bed - for the discussion of their plans and the elaboration of their plots.

Emily, the wildest and most imaginative of the three, did the principal part of the cooking, and, to quote from Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Bronte*: "anyone passing by the kitchen door might have seen her studying German out of an open book, propped up before her, as she kneaded the dough ; but no study, however interesting, interfered with the goodness of the bread, which was always light and excellent."

What chance had women so circumstanced of making their mark in the world? They had neither influence nor friends. They knew nobody and had seen nothing. Their experience was confined to the commonplace incidents of a provincial rector's house. Yet through sheer power of genius and force of imagination they transformed these muddy materials into a fairy-tale, shot through with pity and terror, instinct with suffering and passion, yet suffused with a strange glamour and a beauty all its own.

Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* are the most famous of their works, stories so strange and wild that they have seemed to some to be the products of unbalanced brains. The heroine of *Jane Eyre* goes as governess into the family of a man called Rochester. Rochester has a mad wife, confined in a distant part of his mansion. He falls in love with Jane; Jane returns his love, but knowing him to be married, secretly leaves him. The mad wife escapes and sets fire to the house, and Rochester is blinded in trying to save her. Jane marries him and comforts his affliction. This bald statement of the plot suggests a shilling shocker. It can do no sort of justice to the glamour and wonder of the book.

Even more remarkable is *Wuthering Heights*. It is a book which catches you on the first page and holds you breathless to

the last. It is dominated by a character, Heathcliffe, who is not a man but a demon. He is the outcome of whatever it is in woman that vaguely and unconsciously regards man as a monster. "Why," asked Thackeray, "do our lady novelists make the men bully the women?" The question goes home. None of the Brontes' men are real; they are too strong, too passionate, too cruel, or too polite. But what male novelist, they might retort, has yet succeeded in drawing a woman. And the retort may be just.

I wish I had space to tell of the Brontes' efforts to get their works published, and of their reception by the world; of how Charlotte and Anne came to London to see their publisher and establish their separate identity, lost themselves and were afraid to cross the streets; of how hopelessly the reviewers went wrong over the authorship of the novels¹; of how they represented the timid sisters as ferocious and savage males, men who lived hard, swore hard and drank hard - one of them called Emily a "man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal and morose" - and of how, in spite of every difficulty and of the untimely deaths of Emily and Anne, the fame of the three sisters spread throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Their story is the most romantic in the history of literature, full of comedy and pathos, yet bearing witness to the indomitable spirit that dwelt within these weakly consumptive girls.

¹ They were published over the names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

Books to read

The Life and Works of Charlotte Bronte and her Sisters Haworth Edition on thin paper (John Murray)

Jane Eyre, Shirley, Villette, The Professor and Poems by Charlotte Bronte

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall by Anne Brontë"

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

Agnes Grey by Anne Bronte

In a green shade

OH, TO BE OUT OF LONDON NOW THAT SUMMER'S HERE!" The expression, I grant you, is commonplace, for, as Samuel Butler has pointed out, we tend when most roused to express ourselves in language of an undistinguished flatness; but the feeling behind it is none the less intense. The dinginess and squalor of our great cities, sufficiently distressing at any time, is intensified when the sun shines, so that, to a properly constituted mind, a fine day in town becomes the occasion for an agony of restlessness. Noise is more distracting in hot weather, strange smells assail the nostrils, and, when evening approaches, the over-heated air brings no relief to jaded spirits. Nerves begin to fray and people are testy and bad-tempered ; as one sits in train or tram the faces opposite seem so lined and harassed by small worries, or so vacant and stupid, that one is tempted to believe that the human race, destitute alike of joy and wits, is doomed to spend its life in perpetually hurrying from place to place in order that it may perform duties of no importance in offices where its spirit stifles. This, at least, seems true of the female part of it. The faces of the men are doubtless no better pleased, but they are hidden behind news-sheets, so that of the male part one gets an impression merely of rows of trousers and waistcoats, heavy, dark and ill-fitting, and ridiculously unsuited to the exigencies of the climate.

Of course, one is feeling the heat oneself, and one's outlook may be a trifle jaundiced in consequence. But the basic fact remains - no one is ever heard to whistle in a London street; and how rarely does one see a smile. The street, indeed, instead of being a centre of communal life, is a mere thoroughfare, through which the human ants hurry in a never-ending stream and from moment to moment evade destruction under the wheels of over-bearing cars.

Hustle, strain, anxiety, worry, no rest for eyes or ears or **feet**, and **no** escape from people! And then one remembers Davies's lines -

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

and makes up one's mind to follow those men, Thoreau and Whitman, Jefferies and Borrow, who gave up all the so-called delights of the town for leisure, for country sights and sounds, and for the ownership of their own souls.

Almost, but not quite, for always there is something that holds us back. We are afraid, for example, that we may be lonely. This fear is illusory. Under modern conditions, it is the town dweller who is lonely. "Straying from the wilderness that we call London, to the society to which we rightly affix the name of the country " ; so the late Mr Massingham begins one of his articles, and those who, like Thoreau, have turned their backs upon the town, have found no lack of companionship.

At the age of twenty-eight, in the year 1845, Thoreau left his township, and set up his tent in the forest by the side of Walden Pond in Massachusetts. His withdrawal was a definite protest against the artificiality and complexity of modern life. As the result of civilization we spend four-fifths of our waking life in getting the means to make life possible; we have only one-fifth left for living. As a consequence, most of us, through sheer lack of practice, make a terribly bad job of it, mistake the mechanism of life for the reality of living, and, being unable to

amuse ourselves, pay others to entertain us. It is not realized how recent is the modern conception of pleasure as something for which you must pay, on the assumption that you cannot provide it for yourself.

It was in something of this frame of mind that Thoreau made his withdrawal. "I went to the woods," he tells us in his book *Walden*, "because I wished to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life."

This is not to be done by multiplying interests and cultivating wants. The fact of being busy is not evidence of living; rather the reverse. "Our life," Thoreau continues, "is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, Simplicity, Simplicity! I say let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand."

Thoreau's renunciation of all that is supposed to constitute a civilized life did not pass without comment. Americans in 1850 seem not to have differed very markedly from Americans to-day, except that there were not so many of them, and they turned Thoreau into a public curiosity. Parties of sightseers drove out from Concord to visit the house in the woods - Thoreau would have as many as twenty at a time in his little hut - and although it was too early for picture post cards and "movie" pictures of the recluse, interviews were reported and souvenirs taken away. Everybody wanted to know if Thoreau was not lonely, especially in the rainy weather.

"Why should I feel lonely?" exclaimed Thoreau. "Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" The remark no doubt has a satirical intention; Thoreau had tired of a foolish question and answered it as it deserved. But, as he truly points out, society is commonly too cheap, and if we had more intercourse with natural objects and less with our fellows we should **set a higher** value on both. "I experienced," **Thoreau tells us**, "**that the** most sweet and tender, the most **innocent and encouraging**, society may be found in **any natural object.**" **And again:** "**While I enjoy the friend-**

In a green shade

ship of the seasons I trust nothing can make life a burden to me."

And if you want the same thought stripped of the somewhat edifying atmosphere - as of a moral platitude, with which even the best of Americans contrive to invest their sentiments - look up Borrow's *Lavengro* and hear that prince of gipsies, Mr Petulengro, on what makes life sweet.

" ' There's night and day, brother, both sweet things ; the sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things ; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother, who would wish to die?'

" ' In sickness, Jasper?'

" ' There's the sun and stars, brother.'

" ' In blindness, Jasper?'

" ' There's the wind on the heath, brother ; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever.'"

Walt Whitman, Thoreau's more famous successor, carried on his work. If ever there was a rebel it was this remarkable man. As a craftsman he broke all the acknowledged rules of his trade by writing poetry that knew neither rhythm nor metre, but was simply pieces of prose cut up into arbitrary lengths, as a moralist, or rather, as an un-moralist, he offended against all accepted beliefs by writing about the body as if it were neither wicked nor disgraceful; as a rebel, despising conventions and codes of all kinds, he lived a free, unhurried, unconventional life, as clerk, house-builder, agent, carpenter, journalist - never doing anything for long and often doing nothing in the country.

It is from the country that he derives the inspiration that, like a great fresh wind scattering the cobwebs of crusted habit and petrified belief, blows through his *Leaves of Grass*. Listen, for example, to the mood in which, leaving the town behind him, he takes to the open road :

" Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need
nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

It is in much the same spirit that our own English essayist Hazlitt, in his famous essay on Walking Tours, declares: " Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours* march to dinner - and then to thinking. It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy." Thrice happy Hazlitt; there were no motors a hundred years ago.

Richard Jefferies found his greatest sense of freedom on a hill; as he topped the Sussex Down he sloughed the skin of everyday life, and acquired a new self with which he sensed the existence of a new mystical world."

" By the time I had reached the summit" he writes, " I had entirely forgotten the petty circumstances and the annoyances of existence. I felt myself, myself."

For myself, I recommend, especially in this weather, bathing in a river, and then lying naked on the bank, with a cigarette between your lips. If possible there should be a beech-tree above your head and grass beneath your back, and you should be neither in sun nor in shade, but in a mixture of both.

Then, if you are lucky and have it in you, you may come to realise what Thoreau and Whitman, Borrow and Jefferies realized, that in the town you are unhappy, unless there exists a particular cause for happiness, and that in the country you are happy unless there exists a positive cause for unhappiness ; and then you are at the secret of the real difference between them.

Walden or Life in the Woods by Thoreau (Dent Everyman)

Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman (Dent Everyman)

Life of the Fields and the Open Air by Richard Jefferies
(Chatto & Windus)

Lavengro by George Borrow (Nelson)

Elections in literature

THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS PROPAGATE A PROPAGANDA IF YOU have the proper geese has been recognized in this country for some considerable time. It is, indeed, to our realization of this fact that we must attribute the origin of elections. If you are sufficiently knavish, and your hearers are sufficiently foolish, you can make them believe whatever you please, and bearing in mind the very great number of things that people do believe at these times, we must suppose that elections make people more foolish than usual.

If this view sounds unduly cynical, let me hasten to clear myself by saying that I don't believe it, at least not all of it, my reason for disbelief being that some electors - namely, those with whom I happen to agree - seem to me to be quite obviously less foolish than others ; but I mention it because all the great writers to whom I have turned for inspiration and entertainment on the subject of elections appear to have believed it with complete and joyous whole-heartedness.

In the nineteenth century, it seems, elections really were elections. None of your solemn speeches about principles, none of your mealy-mouthed complimenting of opponents, but honest straightforward abuse, oaths and mud and rotten eggs, beer and bribes and broken pates, eating and drinking, quarrelling and junketing, love-making and merry-making, were the order of the day, so that to the literary man, wondering aghast in his study what all the fuss was about, it really seemed as if **the world had** gone off its head. An election, in short, was an occasion for loosening the ordinary bonds and constraints of everyday existence, and **the** literary man may be excused for wondering whether this new democratic game was really worth the candle.

No doubt, too, he was a little envious. We none of us like to be left out in the cold when stirring events are afoot, and console ourselves as best we may by crying "sour grapes" at pleasures in which we do not take part—that is to say, by convincing ourselves that those who do take part are either charlatans or idiots.

But when all allowance is made for the aloofness of the literary man, and the envy of the outsider, elections in the nineteenth century, especially in the first half of it, do seem to have been something of a farce. Rotten Boroughs with a dozen electors sent two representatives to the House of Commons, rising industrial towns of 50,000 or 100,000 electors were voteless. The electors were shamelessly bribed, and passed the election in a state of torpor induced by drink which rendered them permanently incapable of understanding any of the issues placed before them.

These issues were always unreal, and the candidates who presented them were self-imposed upon the constituency. In no sense were they chosen by, or even known to, the electors; they appeared from the clouds, carpet-bag in hand, bribes in pocket, and, dropping speeches and small cash wherever they went, passed meteor-like through an astonished constituency. In addition to being bribed, you could, if a voter, be intimidated; there was no secrecy about the voting, and everyone knew who had voted for whom. If you voted for the wrong man you lost your job, and, as like as not, had your head broken for your pains.

No wonder the novelists regarded the elections with mingled amusement and contempt. But it is time they spoke for themselves.

The most famous election in literature is undoubtedly the contest recorded in *Pickwick Papers* between the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, and Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, for the honour of representing the electors of Eatanswill. Mr Pickwick and his friends arrive at Eatanswill on the eve of the election and identify themselves with the **Blue** party, who support the Honourable Samuel. His agent,

Mr Perker, introduces Mr Pickwick to politics with an account of the various dodges employed by him and by the rival agent for getting hold of the voters.

" 'Fizkin's people have got three-and-thirty voters in the lock-up coach-house at the White Hart.'

" 'In the coach-house' said Mr Pickwick, considerably astonished by this stroke of policy.

" 'They keep 'em locked up there till they want 'em,' resumed the little man. * The effect of this is, you see, to prevent our getting at them; and even if we could, it would be no use, for they keep them very drunk on purpose. Smart fellow, Fizkin's agent - very smart fellow indeed.' "

Mr Perker retaliates with " a little tea-party here, last night - five-and-forty women, my dear sir - and gave every one of 'em a green parasol when she went away."

Sam Weller throws himself into the contest with his usual enthusiasm.

" 'Well, Sam,' said Mr Pickwick, as his valet appeared at his bedroom door. . . . 'all alive to-day, I suppose?'

" 'Reg'lar game, sir,' replied Mr Weller; 'our people's a collecting down at the Town Arms, and they're a-hollering themselves hoarse already.'

" Ah,' said Mr Pickwick, 'do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?'

" 'Never seen such dewotion in my life, sir,'

" Energetic, eh?' said Mr Pickwick.

" Uncommon,' replied Sam; * I never see men eat and drink so much afore. I wonder they an't afeerd o' bustin'V

" That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here,' said Mr Pickwick.

" 'Wery likely,' replied Sam briefly.

" 'Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem,' said Mr Pickwick, glancing from the window.

" 'Wery fresh,' replied Sam; 'me and the two waiters at the Peacock has been a-pumpin* over the independent woters as supped there last night'

" ' Pumping over independent voters!' exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.
 "' Yes,' said his attendant; ⁴ every man slept vere he fell down.
 We dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin\ and put 'em
 under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order now. Shillin'
 a head the committee paid for that 'ere job.'"

There is some good heckling in one of Trollope's Bassetshire books, *Dr Thome*. Trollope wrote an enormous number of novels, and wrote them by time-table - so many words to the hour. Considering the method, the results are remarkable. All the novels are good, and a few of them, called the Bassetshire novels, dealing with the lives and fortunes of people living in an imaginary western county called Basset, are classics.

Dr Thome contains a long and detailed account of an election. Apart from its intrinsic interest, the Bassetshire election is remarkable because it contains one of the first Labour speeches in literature. The candidates are Mr Moffatt, representing the county interest, and Sir Roger Scatcherd, a self-made man who, beginning life as a stone-mason, has made enough money as a builder of railways to buy a baronetcy.

Mr Moffatt is a man of independent means, his father having made a fortune as a tailor. He is ashamed of his tailor father, and every effort is made by his friends to keep his connexion with trade in the background, as being likely to endanger his chances. Sir Roger Scatcherd puts a new complexion on the situation by reproaching Moffatt, not because his father was a tailor, but because, *he* is not. He denounces him, in short, because, as Shaw would say, he consumes without producing.

" What has he done to entitle him to come here before you and ask you to send him to Parliament? Why; he isn't even a tailor. I wish he were; there's always some good in a fellow who knows how to earn his own bread. But he isn't a tailor; he can't even put a stitch in towards mending England's honour. His father was a tailor; not a Barchester tailor, mind you, so as to give him any claim on your affections ; but a London tailor."

It is difficult for us to realise the novelty of this point of view in the eighteen-fifties. Politics were regarded as a close preserve for the aristocracy. They were an occupation for those who

could afford to talk in public, in& for a candidate solemnly to denounce idleness as a drawback instead of a recommendation was unprecedented.

But to return to our heckling. Sir Roger Scatcherd's jokes about tailors cut more ice than ever Mr Moffatt's scissors cut cloth. For, when Mr Moffatt addresses the crowd, we get not only some first-class interruptions, but the first classical appearance in literature of the rotten *egg* (as a form of argument, of course; as a form of diet the rotten *egg* appears much earlier).

' Mr Moffatt, grieved in his soul, was becoming inextricably bewildered by such facetiae as these, when an egg - and it may be feared not a fresh egg - flung with unerring precision, struck him on the open part of his well-plaited shirt, and reduced him to speechless despair.

"An *egg* is a means of delightful support when properly administered; but it is not calculated to add much spirit to a man's eloquence, or to ensure his powers of endurance when supplied in the manner above described. Men there are, doubtless, whose tongues would not be stopped even by such an argument as this; but Mr Moffatt was not one of them. As the insidious fluid trickled down beneath his waistcoat, he felt that all further powers of coaxing the electors out of their votes, by words flowing from his tongue sweeter than honey, was for that occasion denied to him."

A less well known but equally diverting election occurs in Peacock's novel *Melincourt*. Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) was a retired business man turned author, whose witty and satirical books contain so much conversation and so little plot that they deserve to be called dialogues rather than novels. In politics Peacock was a Tory; he loved good food, good drink, good talk, and the classics, and maintained an uncompromising hostility to science, political economy, railways, missionary societies, hot air pretending to be oratory, self-advertisement societies, hot air pretending to be oratory, self-advertisement pre-pretending to be social uplift, sanctimonious piety pretending to be Methodism, and all the other shams, inventions, pretences **and** humbugs which flourished in the early nineteenth century.

In **the** *Melincourt* election Peacock is making fun of the system of Rotten Boroughs. The populous city of Novote, containing fifty thousand inhabitants, but with no representation in Parliament, is situated at a short distance from the honourable borough of Onevote. This borough, boasting one inhabitant only, Mr Christopher Corporate, sends two members to the House, who, "having no affairs to attend to for the borough, or rather the burgess, that did return them, were supposed to have more leisure for those of the city which did not." This arrangement is called the system of "virtual representation," and Mr Sarcastic, one of the candidates¹, waxes very eloquent on its advantages to the inhabitants of Novote.

"* Much has been said,' he tells the citizens, 'of the improvement of machinery in the present age, by which one man may do the work of a dozen. If this be admirable, and admirable it is acknowledged to be by all the civilized world, how much more admirable is the improvement of political machinery, by which one man does the work of thirty thousand! I am sure I need not say another word to a great manufacturing population like the inhabitants of the City of Novote, to convince them of the beauty and utility of this most luminous arrangement.'

" 'The Constitution,' Mr Sarcastic continues, 'says that no man shall be taxed but by his own consent; a very plausible theory, gentlemen, but not reducible to practice. Who will apply a lancet to his own arm, and bleed himself? Very few, you acknowledge. Who then, a fortiori, would apply a lancet to his own pocket, and draw off what is dearer to him than his blood-his money? Fewer still, of course; I humbly opine, none.' "

The candidates are duly chaired, beer flows, everybody gets drunk, there is a free fight, the cottage of Mr Corporate is set on fire, and the ancient and honourable borough of Onevote is reduced to ashes. It is, however, immediately rebuilt at the the ancient and honourable borough to go out of existence.

All this is excellent foolery, but the abuses it ridicules were none the less serious.

And when we come to a serious authoress like George Eliot we find **the** corruption and licence of elections treated with **the**

severest censure. Peacock's election is a caricature, and Dickens's a joke, but for a detailed and realistic description of nineteenth-century politics I would recommend George Eliot's *Felix Holt, Radical*. Felix is an idealist - he has the sympathies though not the doctrines of a Socialist - but, as the book proceeds, he grows into a disappointed idealist. It is the levity with which elections are conducted that finally causes him to despair of mankind.

George Eliot tells the same story of lying glibness and hypocritical pretensions, of politicians who find difficulty not so much in expressing their opinions as in believing the opinions they express, of electors whose votes are knocked down to the highest bidders, and of agents without scruple or honour - the story with which Dickens and Trollope have made us familiar.

Most tragic of all is the election in "Janet's Repentance," one of the three stories in George Eliot's earliest book, *Scenes from Clerical Life*, where a brutal husband forces a wife to work for the party whose principles she abhors.

We should not be depressed by these books. On the contrary, they are a cause for satisfaction in the present, and a source of hope for the future. In nothing is the advance of our political institutions so clearly discernible as in the contrast between our elections to-day and the orgies of drunkenness and lying which passed for such in the nineteenth century. The institution of the ballot-box is chiefly responsible for the change, and there is no better way of realising the debt we owe to the Chartist than to read the accounts of the elections in the great Victorian novelists.

Books for reference

- Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens (Thomas Nelson & Sons)
- Dr. Thome* by Anthony Trollope (G Bell & Sons)
- Melincourt* by Thomas Love Peacock (Routledge Peacock's Novels)
- Felix Holt* by George Eliot (J M Dent Everyman)
- Stories from Clerical Life* by George Eliot (J M Dent Everyman)
- The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* by Mark Rutherford (Fisher Unwin)

Ghosts and ghost stories

IT IS SIX O'CLOCK ON CHRISTMAS EVE. OUTSIDE IT IS ALREADY dark and the ground is white with snow (it isn't really, since we are in England, but we will suppose it is for the sake of the effect). The fire has just been heaped afresh with coal, or better still with logs, and is roaring up the chimney with a shower of sparks that would shame a firework display. The roaring of the fire and the moaning of the wind as it rattles the panes are **the** only sounds that break the silence ; the curtains are pulled, **the** company draws closer to the blaze and the stage is set for a ghost story. Which shall it be?

Be good enough to wait for one moment and I will tell you. But first, are you quite sure it is a ghost story that you want?

You think you do? Allow me to say, then, that yours is an extraordinary taste. Here you are on Christmas Eve in the bosom of your family! At this time more than at any other throughout the year you are absolutely safe, and, I hope, completely comfortable. The cares and anxieties of this world have for the moment withdrawn their hold, and you show your sense of release by asking to be thrilled by the terrors of another.

You want to be frightened, frightened enough to make the business of leaving the warmly lighted room a hazardous undertaking ; to start with apprehension at the touch of the cat who rubs against your legs on the dark staircase, and to be mightily glad that someone is to share your bedroom. You are not superstitious, and you don't believe in the supernatural? Of course you don't. None of us do. And yet, and yet, is there not a lurking suspicion, somewhere deep down inside you, that there may be something in it after all? None of us has ever seen a ghost; but we all of us know somebody who has. And

if it really is all moonshine, whence the delicious thrill of horror when the skeleton head, with eyes darting fire, emerges with a rattling of bones from the dark closet, and the annoyed feeling of having been sold when the head is found to be nothing but a mangel-wurzel, carved into the semblance of a face, with a lighted candle inside it?

I hate ghost stories with a natural ending. Out upon them! I am not superstitious, but I do like a ghost to be a ghost, and the fact that I do not believe in ghosts, and that all the best writers of ghost stories do not believe in ghosts any more than I do, does not diminish the pleasure I take in playing with the idea that there may be, at any rate in books, ghosts after all. It began at school. In common with most boys, I read *Dracula*, a story by Bram Stoker. It is about a man who every night turns into a vampire bat, sucks the blood from the throats of his victims, and so causes them to become vampires in their turn. *Dracula* gave me many sleepless nights. I don't recommend it for adult consumption. It is too crude and far too horrible ; only the nerves of a schoolboy could stand it ; but I mention it here because it was upon a taste formed thus early in life that my somewhat extensive reading in the literature of ghosts has been founded.

Ghost stories are of two kinds. The first and most obviously horrible are good old-fashioned bogey stories which tempt you to read on and on far into the night to see if there is a natural explanation. And, if they are worth their salt, there is no natural explanation: and, if you are worth yours, you are glad of it. This kind of story should be as natural and as realistic as possible. "Let us then," says Dr M. R. James, the modern expert in ghost stories of this type , " be introduced to the characters in a placid way ; let us see them going about their ordinary business, undisturbed by forebodings, pleased with their surroundings, and into this calm environment let the ominous thing put out its head, unobtrusively at first and then more insistently, until it holds the stage." Dr. James's stories are an excellent example of his precept. He has written three books of ghost stories: *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, *More Ghost Stories*, and

A Thin Ghost and Other Stories. Not only are his stories natural as well as horrible, but it is their very naturalness that increases the horror. Here are no white ladies carrying their heads under their arms, but ghosts thoroughly up to date, ghosts who use motors and are armed with telephones. One story begins with the appearance of an unaccountable advertisement in the window of a Finchley Road tram. The advertisement, in blue letters on a yellow ground, is engraved on the glass. "In memory of John Harrington, F.S.A. Died September 18, 1889. Three months were allowed," it runs. In another story a ghost, or a "something," intrudes itself into the oblong wicker-work frame surrounded with the usual curtain from within which the operator works a Punch and Judy show. The first intimation of anything unusual is afforded by the queer behaviour of the puppets, Punch, Judy, and the Clown, and the sudden disappearance of the dog Toby. Presently the whole apparatus takes to its heels and makes off helter-skelter down the street.

The most famous ghost story of this concrete realistic type is Lord Lytton's *The Haunted and the Haunters*. This is much the best of the many variants on the theme of the night spent in a haunted house. It is pre-eminently a story in which dreadful things happen. There is no subtlety of atmosphere here, but a series of appalling events, culminating in a perfect hurricane of horror, calculated to make the hair of the reader no less than that of the victim stand on end. It is good strong stuff and warranted to keep anybody from going to bed.

The stories to which I have so far referred (with the exception of the Punch and Judy ghost) will be found in a volume recently added to the World's Classics Series, entitled *Ghosts and Marvels*. The stories have been selected with great skill by Mr V. H. Collins, and of all the collections of ghost stories known to me, this is the fullest and most varied. It is a perfect feast of horror.

The second type of good ghost story relies not upon incidents but upon atmosphere. It does not definitely state horrors ; it suggests them. And because the writer concentrates upon the description of the victim's sense of fear, rather than upon the occurrences which cause it, it is always just possible for the

reader to ascribe the whole thing to a hallucination on the part of the victim - possible but not easy. Of stories of this type Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* is at once the most famous and the most powerful. The story is about two children who are possessed by the spirits of two servants who had charge of them in life. These spirits appear to the children, whose souls are gradually corrupted by the indefinable evil of their contact. The story is told by the children's governess, who is imbued with the sense that she is fighting for their souls against the possessing influences, and it is an understood thing between the children and the governess that neither party shall give the game away by admitting explicitly or implicitly that anything queer is afoot. Whether anything queer really is afoot, or whether the whole series of events is merely a figment of the governess's disordered brain, you can never be quite sure. In this doubt lies the chief attraction of the story. Each will resolve it for himself. He will get little help from the author.

Ghosts and Marvels collected by V H Collins (Oxford University Press)

A Muster of Ghosts collected by Bohun Lynch (Cecil Palmer)

Famous Ghost Stories by English Authors

collected by Adam Gowans (Gowans and Gray)

The Turn of the Screw by Henry James (Martin Seeker)

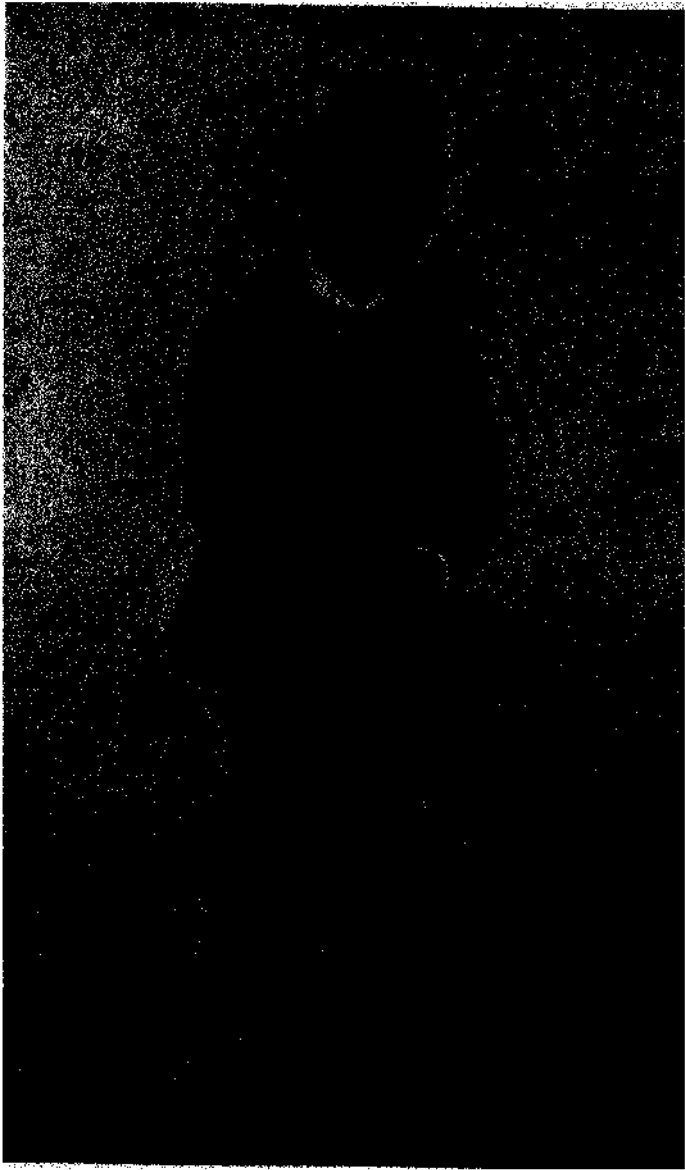
Ghost Stories of an Antiquary by Dr M R James (Arnold)

Thomas Hardy

AS YOU DESCEND THE ROAD FROM BOAR'S HILL, WHERE THE POETS live, into Oxford, you get a wonderful view of the city spread out below you. So thick is the cluster of its spires, so many the domes and towers it shoots into the sky, that, seen through the haze of a hot afternoon, it is for once that "city of dreaming spires" which figures in the guide-books, a title that seems so woefully misapplied when you approach it through the heart of the gas-works and yellow banks that guard the station.

Assuredly Oxford is a lovely place ; from the inside there is no lovelier in England, but it has accreted round it a scurf of factories, products of an industrialism which, no worse than its counterpart elsewhere, seems to take on an added squalidness in contrast with what it surrounds. From the southern heights alone it may be viewed with its beauty unimpaired, and it is from this side that Hardy's Jude first saw it when he came to Oxford from Reading - not to seek his fortune but to improve his mind. Books were what he craved. A gentle soul, born and bred among country sights and sounds, his ambition from the first had been to know something of the memorable things that great men had said and thought about life; and, though trapped into marriage with a brutal and unsympathetic wife, he had kept the flame of his desire burning bright amid circumstances that would have deterred a seemingly stronger man.

Now he was within reach of this city of his hopes. Money, it was true, he had none; but somehow he would manage to pick up a living - he had skill as a mason, he might even win a poor man's scholarship; such things he vaguely knew were possible - and, if he could only maintain himself, however simply, he asked



nothing more. Out of the store of her learning and culture the city would surely not grudge him the little he might be able to pay for. "Let me only get there," he had said, "and the rest is only a matter of time and energy." He knew that many came to Oxford and threw away the opportunities that a kindly fortune lavished upon them. But to opportunities such as these he did not aspire; he was well content if he were but allowed to pick up a few of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

But this was before the days of Ruskin College, of W.E.A. Summer Schools, in which working men from mines and factories live and study in Oxford Colleges, and of the professed enthusiasm of the rich for working-class education. To-day for one Jude there are thousands, and the loudness and insistence of their call have forced the ancient city to open her gates. It is only a crack as yet, but it is one through which now and then a working man may pass. Jude was born before his time; it was all very well for him to speak of Oxford as "the City of Light," "a unique centre of thought and religion - the intellectual and spiritual granary of this country," and to make the highly dubious suggestion that in Oxford the "silence and absence of goings on is the stillness of infinite motion." When it came to putting the matter to a test by applying to the heads of colleges for permission to enter as a student and to attend lectures, he received only one reply, which read as follows:

BIBLIOLL COLLEGE.

SIR,—I have read your letter with interest, and judging from your description of yourself as a working man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course. That, therefore, is what I advise you to do Yours faithfully,

T. TETUPHENAY.

And then Hardy introduces his characteristic stroke of irony. Prevented from following within the colleges the studies for which he had longed, Jude is set to work as a mason to repair

their outsides. It is as if one who wished to get inside the head and heart of his friend found his advances met by a barrier of silence, but were taken on as a hairdresser, and given the job of studying his scalp.

From that time onwards misfortunes innumerable crowd upon Jude. One of his children kills the others and then hangs himself, the woman he loves and has lived with returns to the husband whose very touch revolts her, and Jude himself slips back into the clutches of his hated wife.

All this is bad enough, and it makes *Jude the Obscure* one of the most terrible books in the English language. Yet it is in his insistence upon the irony of circumstance, rather than in the tragedies arising therefrom, that the note of Hardy's pessimism strikes most mournfully upon the ear. Ordinary men and women, as they go about this chequered world in which happiness and misery, good fortune and ill, are strangely, and it seems at times arbitrarily, mixed, are accustomed on the whole to take a view of life, the fruit of inherited wisdom or experience, which is based upon two positions both of which Hardy seems implicitly to deny.

They hold, first, that if things go badly they also go well; they do not, that is to say, go badly all the time. With time even a long spell of ill-luck is seen not to be entirely without its compensations. In other words, every cloud has a silver lining.

Secondly, they believe that there is some sense in which we are responsible for the conduct of our lives, that within limits we can make them well or ill, according to our actions and our deserts, and that a man who shows prudence, good temper, cheerfulness and courage will stand a better chance of winning happiness than he who exhibits the contrary qualities. In other words, as a man sows so shall he reap.

Now in Hardy's novels there is no assurance that either of these things is true. To take the first point first, there are certain characters in his books to whom he metes out continual misfortunes unmitigated by one redeeming circumstance. Tess, Jude and Sue in *Jude the Obscure*, Fanny Robin in *Far from*

the Madding Crowd are pursued by a relentless fate which never for a moment lets them alone. In ordinary life some things turn out right and some wrong ; but these are people for whom everything turns out wrong. To put it colloquially, Hardy has a down on some of his characters, and what is more, having got his man down he hits him. This procedure is, I know, common enough in life, and though reprobated in individuals is regarded with approval among nations. But it is not the normal behaviour of God to man, and Hardy for some men makes it so.

Still more disturbing is the impression left by Hardy's novels that what happens is in no way due to man's will or forethought, but to the workings of a something which takes no account of either. We cannot, therefore, be praised when we do things well, nor blamed when we do them ill. It is one of the most remarkable things about Hardy's books that the tragedy springs time and again from some circumstance which nobody planned, which nobody willed, for which nobody is responsible, and for which nobody can be blamed. Things just happen that way. More than that, there is always about the circumstance that provokes the tragedy something diabolical and mocking. It is the right thing the wrong way round, as in the case of Jude repairing the outsides of colleges.

Here are three examples. In *The Return of the Native* Mrs. Yeobright's son, Clym, has made a marriage with Eustacia Vye, of which his mother has violently disapproved. After the marriage she desires to become reconciled and on a hot summer's afternoon walks across the heath to the cottage where Clym is living, to make the first advances. Clym, tired out by his morning's work as a furze cutter, happens to be asleep. Mrs Yeobright knocks. Eustacia sees her through the window, and Mrs Yeobright sees that she sees her, but Eustacia, thinking that Mrs Yeobright has come to visit Clym and not herself, is reluctant to open the door. Just then Clym, sleeping in the front room, turns in his sleep and cries, " Mother." Eustacia naturally thinking that he has waked, that he has seen his mother and will let her in, goes into the garden. Clym, however, is still fast asleep, and Mrs Yeobright-as the door remains closed - turns back

across the heath without rest or refreshment, and with grief and anger in her heart. In the course of her return journey she is taken ill and dies. Clym learns that his wife has seen his mother, misjudges her and quarrels with her, with the result that Eustacia runs off with her lover, Wildeve, and both are killed.

In *Far from the Madding Crowd* the body of Fanny Robin, who has died in giving birth to Troy's child, is to be fetched by Troy's order from the workhouse and buried in the village church, Troy so timing matters that the body may arrive in the afternoon and be interred at once without his wife, Bathsheba, knowing what is afoot. But a thick mist happens to spring up; those who are driving the cart containing the coffin are delayed on the road, and get drunk. Consequently the body arrives late and has to lie in Troy's house for the night. Bathsheba goes to it, discovers the occupant and how she died, and breaks with Troy in consequence of her discovery.

But the most famous incident is in *Tess*. Just before the date of her marriage with her lover, Angel Clare, Tess determines that she must tell him of that earlier incident in her life when she fell a victim to D'Urberville. She writes a note and puts it under his door during the night. But the carpet happens to be loosely laid, and instead of passing above it the note slips underneath and is never seen. Clare is thus left unaware of Tess's early misfortune until after his marriage, when the consequences of his discovery lead inevitably to the series of disasters which culminate in the tragedy of Tess's death.

Misfortune comes in all these cases not because anybody has erred, but because chance will have it so. In Hardy's Universe fate is all-powerful, effort and struggle unavailing, and the characters, helpless in the net of circumstance, are puppets twiched into love and war by some invisible showman who pulls the strings. That is not to say that the strings are always pulled awry; Hardy does not harry all his characters, nor any of them all the time. But, when things go right, they do so with as little rhyme and reason as when they go wrong. In other words - and this is what makes Hardy's Universe so terrifying - there is **no purpose** either for good or ill in things. The, Universe is funda-

mentally indifferent to human wishes, and life, an incidental throw-up, a mere eddy in the primaevial slime, passes across an environment which is alien and unheeding. From time to time the workings of this indifferent Universe further human endeavour; from time to time they thwart it; but they further it without intention and thwart it without malignity.

Hardy's attitude to the Universe is not unvarying. While the power behind his world is in general the blind, dumb, indifferent Thing I have described, from time to time he seems to think of it as possessing moral - or rather immoral - attributes, and then breaks out against it for its cruelty. He personifies it, in fact, in order to give it a piece of his mind.

This attitude appears most frequently in the poems for which Hardy is becoming even more famous than for his novels. Once, only, is it manifest in the latter, and that is in the famous passage at the end of *Tess* when Angel Clare and Tess's sister stand watching the raising of the flag which signifies her death. "Justice was done," writes Hardy, "and the President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess."

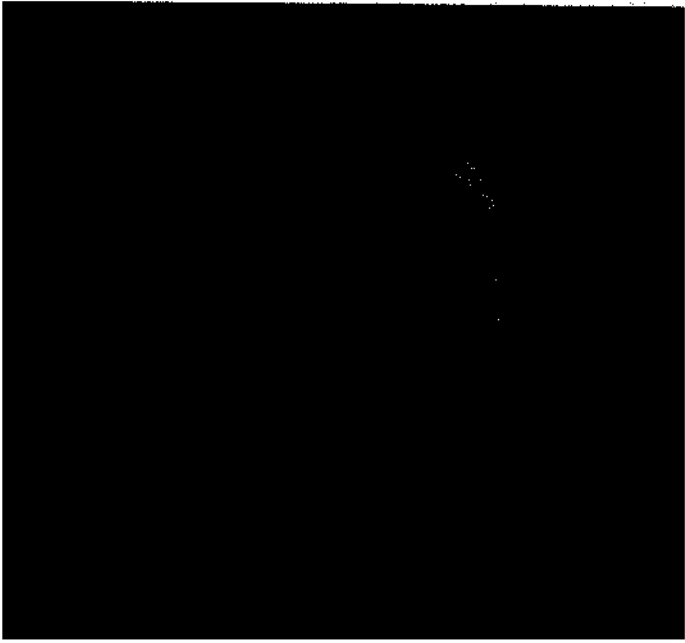
Hardy's complete works are published by Macmillan (Pocket Edition)
An excellent book on Hardy, by Harold Child, is published by Nisbet

W H Hudson

SOME OF US LOVE, AND ALL OF US PROFESS TO LOVE, THE country. In a few days' time we shall be paying it our Easter visit to refresh ourselves with the sight of its woods and fields and rivers. The country appeals to a part of our natures which modern civilization does its best to stifle, and the desire for country sights and sounds, and the instinctive need of occasional solitude, are none the less important because they are so rarely icknowledged. All this is true; and yet about our admiration for the country there is something self-conscious and artificial. It is thought that a love of the country is a sign of virtue ; like early rising, answering letters by return of post, or having baths, it is found only in the good.

But though we all love the country in theory, and some of us even visit it in practice - especially if it is springtime - taking the year as a whole we love it best in books. In real life it is too often damp, dull and rheumatically. Those of us who have had the hardihood to practise the simple life in a tent are only too eager to get back to the warmth and fleshpots of the town. Thus, though we love the country, we love it for the most part in imagination. " We are not in Nature," says Hudson ; " we are out of her, having made our own conditions, and our conditions have reacted upon us and made us what we are, artificial creatures. Nature is now something pretty to go and look at occasionally, but not too often nor for too long a time."

But if we have lost the capacity for directed and sustained delight in Nature, we can still appreciate it in others. Indeed, the very fact that our eyes are dim and our senses dulled causes us to look to others to recreate for us the magic we have lost. This, in brief, is what Hudson does for us; he makes us realize Nature, and herein lies the secret of his charm.



We poor dingy town dwellers, out of touch with Nature, who do not know a starling from a hedge-sparrow, are made to thrill with excitement over the diseases of the wasp, to feel genially shocked at the greediness of the mole, to follow with sentimental interest the wandering toad as he travels the miles that separate him from the place of his love-making, and to note with wonder that in a few hundred years earthworms have succeeded in burying the ruins of the Roman city of Silchester to a depth of several feet. I remember once reading in Hudson's book *Far Away and Long Ago* a chapter about thistles, about the cardoon thistle that grows on the plains of the Argentine Republic. I learnt how big it was, what it felt like, how rapidly it spread, how it stifled other vegetation, and I, who cared not two straws about the thistles of my own land, let alone the cardoon of the Argentine, read on entranced, like one in a dream.

Truly Hudson is a magician. How does he work his spell? Hudson achieves his effects, not by any one quality, but by a combination of qualities rarely - if ever before - found together. He was above everything a great personality. "With the passing out of W. H. Hudson," wrote Galsworthy, "the English-speaking world, perhaps the wide world, has lost its most unique personality. . . . He is quite irreplaceable. . . . No man, I think, has ever realized Nature emotionally so completely as Hudson, and no writer has been so able to pass on to others that emotional realization." In Hudson the artist and the naturalist met and were made one. He was a great observer, a great lover, and a great writer.

His powers of observation were the foundation for the rest. One of his books, *British Birds*, forms a permanent and original addition to our scientific knowledge. His patience was extraordinary. He would stand literally for hours watching birds, and the fruits of his observation are given to us in exquisite studies of bird-life of which *A Sick Blackbird* and *The Return of the Blackbird* are as good examples as any. But Hudson's power of sustained observation was made possible only by his **great** love for what he observed. If he saw Nature as a scientist, **he felt for** her as a poet. Nature herself seemed to him not only **the** most

lovely thing that he knew, but the most lovely thing he could conceive. "Spring's immortality was in me," he says; "ever-living earth was better than any home in the story which eye hath not seen nor heart conceived." "Whenever I found myself in a certain district," he says again, in *An Old Thorn*, "I would go miles out of my way just to look at a solitary old tree growing in a lonely place, and sit for an hour to refresh myself, body and soul, in its shade."

In *The Crystal Age*, the strangest, perhaps the most beautiful, Utopia that man has imagined, the inhabitants of the communal house suddenly leave their work and disappear on horseback for days together. The intruder from our world is told that autumn has come and the earth is clothed with such beauty that it would be sacrilege, betokening ingratitude to the Creator, not to leave the duties of everyday life in order to behold the colours with which He has enriched the countryside.

The third of the qualities so uniquely combined in Hudson is his gift of infecting his readers with the contagion of his own love. His writing appeals so deeply to the mind, the heart and the senses together, because of the uniqueness of his style—a style as clear and as fresh as a mountain stream; so clear, so fresh, and above all so natural, that he may almost be said to have had no style at all. "One can't tell how this fellow gets his effects," said Conrad; "he writes as the grass grows." When we take up a book of Hudson's, we seem not so much to be reading the printed word of one who was always remote, and has now gone beyond recall, as talking by the fireside to a friendly old man, very wise and pitiful, with an inexhaustible store of quaint anecdotes about bird and beast and peasant folk.

For Hudson is a great story-teller. He does not rail off or isolate his love of nature, but shows it through the medium of human interests and associations. Thus the naturalist shades imperceptibly into the observer of human nature, and we have Hudson the novelist, the teller of tales of the Argentine plains and of the lives of Wiltshire labourers.

And what a story-teller he is! Save only Hardy, I do not know his equal. *The Purple Land* might be called the best boy's book

of adventure, if it were not so much more. *Green Mansions* is an exquisite love story, so ethereal, so full of fancy, that one might suppose it a romance of some fairy world, were it not for the shock of the tragedy and terrible grief that brings it to a close. As to *The Crystal Age*, I should like to know what a good Socialist would make of it. Will those who read it tell me?

There is no tale told by Hudson which does not bear the unmistakable impress of his personality. Over them all broods a wistful melancholy, a sense of the suffering of life, of the transitoriness of beauty, and the cruelty of man and of nature. Alone among those who have loved Nature and written of what they loved, he never sentimentalizes about her. Never for a moment does he forget her callousness and indifference to her creatures. He tells us, for example, of the wasp that paralyses its victim by damaging its nerve centres, and then lays its eggs in the body of the victim so that the newly hatched larvae may have a supply of living meat to feed on.

One of his most moving stories is of a young cuckoo in a robin's nest. It wriggled and wriggled until it had succeeded in ejecting the eggs and young robins, which cramped its position and irritated its skin. One of the young ones fell upon a green leaf just below the opening of the nest, in full view of the sitting robin. "There it remained growing colder by degrees, hour by hour, motionless except when it lifted its head up to receive food and then dropped it again," until it died before the eyes of the mother robin, who never stirred to help it. The mother in this matter is a mere automaton. Once out of the nest, the young one is no more recognized by her than a coloured leaf.

Of the sadness and pity of Hudson I will give one more illustration, this time from *A Shepherd's Life*. In 1830 a number of Wiltshire labourers, driven to desperation by their inability to obtain food for themselves and their families, burnt a few ricks and broke a few machines. They were taken to the Assizes at Salisbury to be tried, and the country people gathered from the villages from miles around to hear the result. "From all over the Plain and from all parts of Wiltshire their womenfolk had

come to learn their fate, and were gathered, a pale, anxious weeping crowd, outside the gates. The sentenced men came out looking eagerly at the people until they recognized their own and cried out to them to be of good cheer. ' 'Tis hanging for me,' one would say, ' but there'll perhaps be a recommendation to mercy, so don't you fret, till you know.' Then another: ' Don't go on so, old mother, 'tis only for life I'm sent.' And yet another: ⁴ ' Don't cry, old girl, 'tis only fourteen years I've got, and maybe I'll live to see you all again.' And so on as they filed out past their weeping women on their way to Fisherton Jail, to be taken thence to the transports in Portsmouth and Plymouth harbours, waiting to convey their living freights to that hell on earth so far from home."

If anyone thinks of going to the country this Easter he can have no better companion than a book of Hudson's. Let him but read *Afoot in England*, or *A Traveller in Little Things*, and he will see more, hear more, and love more than he did before, and he will have made a friend for life.

Books specially recommended

Far Away and Long Ago The Book of a Naturalist Afoot in England

A Traveller in Little Things (Dent)

The Crystal Age The Purple Hand Green Mansions El Ombu (Duckworth)

R L Stevenson

STEVENSON ! THE VERY NAME CONVEYS AN ATMOSPHERE OF heartiness and manliness, of sanity and optimism, and virile common sense, and suggests cold baths and country walks -preferably in the rain. It is a guarantee of middle-class virtue and a standing rebuke to decadence, extremism, eccentricity, hysteria, emotionalism, madness, whether common or garden or genius, and things generally Russian.

It is strange that an author who took such pains to be manly should be read chiefly by women. It is strange, too, that his appeal should never have reached beyond the middle classes for whom he wrote. While I have seen Dickens and Scott, Tolstoy and Shaw, in many a working-class house, I have yet to see a Stevenson. And yet there is no lack of cheap editions of his works.¹ In these days you can buy him for one-and-sixpence, and far be it from me to say you will not be a better man for your purchase.

He may not indeed dwell upon the heights ; he may never penetrate to the depths ; and he may often deceive himself into thinking that he is at Nature's depths when he is only stirring the sunny shallows ; but he is a brave, sensible, genial fellow, an inexhaustible fount of common sense which he would have been the last to dignify with the name of wisdom ; and withal an exceedingly good, competent, and readable author, who wrote nothing that is bad, much that is exceedingly good, and can

¹ For example, there have just been published *Prince Otto, Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes, Virginibus Puerisque, The Merry Men* (Chatto & Windus)

Catriona, Black Arrow, Treasure Island, Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Collins) *The Master of Ballantrae, Familiar Studies of Men and Books, Treasure Island and Kidnapped, An Inland Voyage* (Dent, Everyman)

always be relied on for a rattling story of adventure or some entertaining gossip about marriage.

If I shall have seemed to some to have spoken with scant respect of the atmosphere of cold baths and heartiness, and the praise of robust and energetic manliness that pervade his work, my answer is that, whether these things be good or bad in themselves, in Stevenson they do not always ring true. Stevenson suffered all his days from prolonged and enfeebling ill-health. The record of his life is, indeed, little more than that of a pilgrimage from Scotland to California, from California to the South of France, from the South of France to Australia, and from there to the islands of the Pacific in search of some relief from the sickness that so continually assailed him. In 1890 Stevenson came to rest at the island of Samoa, where the last four years of his romantic and restless life were spent in the enjoyment of better health than he had ever known.

The fact that he was a chronic invalid has an important bearing upon his outlook on life. The illness to which he was prone was followed by long periods of physical prostration ; much of his writing was done when he was scarcely strong enough to hold the pen, and represents a victory over the weakness of the body than which none is more heroic in the annals of literature. But the fact that he was forced to exercise his will to overcome weakness that would have deterred a less determined man caused Stevenson to place perhaps an exaggerated value upon the very qualities that he lacked, and to cry up physical strength and the virtues of fitness not because he had experienced their joys, but because he had not.

The point is important, since in later years Stevenson's worship of physical hardness led him to join forces with his friend Henley *in* an ill-considered attack upon the luxuries and languors of peace. Living at the close of a generation which had *known* no great war, these literary men lightly invoked it as a remedy for the ill-humours of a peace too prolonged. The trumpet sounded from the study, and war was invited to purge and purify the decadence of youth.

It is something of this spirit in Stevenson which still causes him

to be quoted by fierce old men who think that the country is going to the dogs. I wonder if they ever pause to think that it is an invalid who inspires them. But I have done with carping and turn to praise.

Stevenson's works fall into two main divisions: there are the essays and the tales of adventure.

The essay is perhaps the most intimate of all forms of literature; it is a very mirror for the personality of the writer, and lets us into the inmost secrets of his heart. The essayist must have humour, pathos, good sense, wisdom and, above all, a mastery of easy and familiar writing. A dull man cannot write amusing essays; a charming man can never bore. And Stevenson was a particularly charming man. He fascinated all who knew him. The romance of his life, the pathos of his fight against sickness, the fascination of his manner and the sweetness of his disposition won every heart, and made him the most attractive literary figure of his generation. His essays are an extension of the man.

My own preference is for the volume *Virginibus Puerisque*, and of the collection it contains the three papers that give it its title are of the very best. They are on marriage and falling in love, and Stevenson's treatment of the subject glows with the light of a mellow wisdom expressed in the most exquisite phrases. Truths that we had half suspected but never expressed greet us on every page.

"But the rule is none the less certain: if you wish the pick of men and women, take a good bachelor and a good wife."

And then there is the famous passage that begins: "In all that concerns eating and drinking, company and climate and ways of life, community of taste is to be sought for. It would be trying, for instance, to keep bed and board with an early riser or a vegetarian. In matters of art and intellect I believe it is of no consequence," proceeds to a proof that differences in opinion on politics, art and intellectual matters are not crucial—they may even promote interest in the home—and ends with the terrible warning: "Lastly (and this is, perhaps, the golden rule) no woman should marry a teetotaller or a man who does not smoke."

This last strikes a note which runs like a dominant motif

through all the harmonies of the essays. There is a dislike of eccentricities, fads and extremisms of all kinds, a distrust of those fellows who regard life as a diving-board upon which they stand permanently poised ready to go in off the deep end, and an insistence on the duty of cheerfulness and the cultivation of the golden mean. It is better to be a good fellow than a fanatic, even if you happen to be a fanatic in the right.

"And it is more important that a person should be a good gossip and talk pleasantly and smartly of common friends and the thousand and one nothings of the day and hour, than that she should speak with the tongues of men and angels ; for a while together by the fire happens more frequently in marriage than the presence of a distinguished foreigner to dinner."

The futility of human endeavour, the absurdity of taking ourselves so seriously as to imagine that in the eyes of the infinite, or even in the judgment of to-morrow, it matters a toss what we achieve or in what we fail, is the burden of the essay, *An Apology for Idlers*, and of what, to my mind, is the best of all Stevenson's short stories, *Will o the Mill*, which will be found in the collection entitled *The Merry Men*.

"Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, desk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality ; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite, and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation."

This is scarcely a doctrine of quietism, since Stevenson bids us busy ourselves in getting the best out of life, but for goodness* sake, he seems to add, let us not get excited about our endeavours, or dignify them with fine names ; that, indeed, is to provoke the gods to laughter. Toleration and good humour are the gospel according to Stevenson, and among many more pretensions there have been few so eminently sensible.

Of the books of adventure I have no space to write, except to say how good they are. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and my own favourite, *Prince Otto*, are classics. Written to amuse boys, and to pay the butcher, they have become the delight and

relaxation of sages. There is a gaiety about them, a sense of movement, and a high romance that carries the reader dashing along with never a dull page until the last.

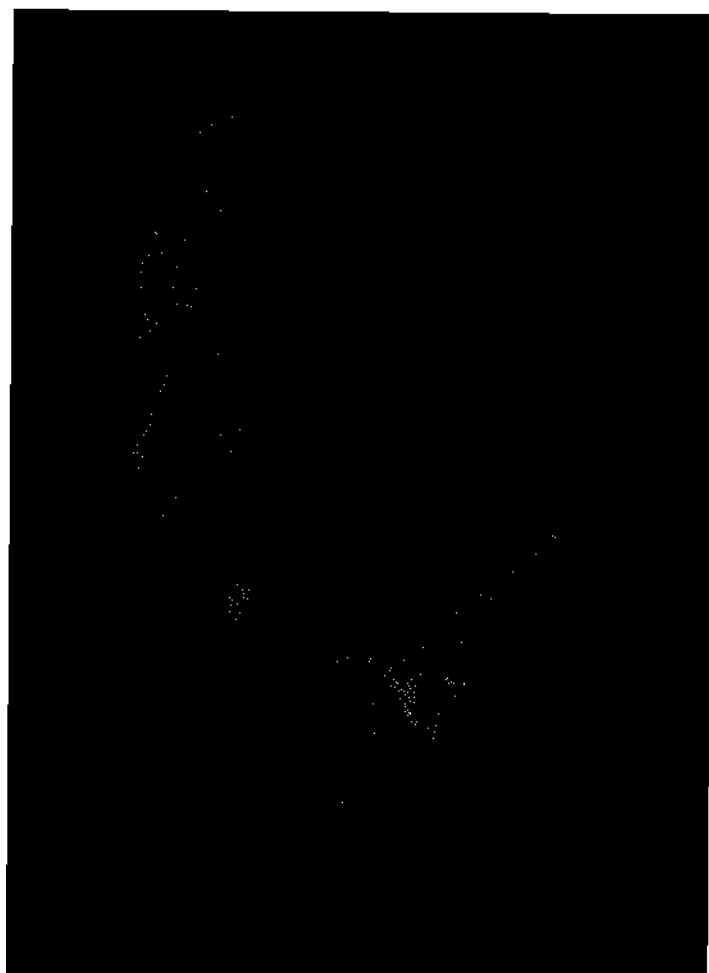
And yet Stevenson wrote them to order, to meet the demands of tradesmen. "Another Butcher's Boy," he called *Black Arrow* in a letter to Henley, and because of its archaic diction spoke of it as "Tushery." "Tushery by the mass! Ay, friend, a whole tale of tushery. And every tusher tushes me so free, that I may be tushed if the whole thing is worth a tush." Whatever he may have been, Stevenson was not puffed up about his own work

The Universal Mr Wells

MR H G WELLS HAS ENTERED SO MANY FIELDS, AND IS SO pre-eminent a figure in all of them that whether to take him as novelist, short-story writer, historian, prophet, social analyst, pamphleteer, maker of Utopias, or weaver of scientific romances, I hardly know. There are so many Mr Wellses, and each is so attractive, that to choose one is to insult the rest. As the fountain-head and culmination of all the rest, there is finally Mr Wells, the national institution, one of the "sights" of England, whom a foreigner like Karel Capek feels it is his duty to visit together with cathedrals, Hyde Park, the Lake District and the East End. Ought I not then to pay my respects to Mr Wells as a personality, to write of his home at Little Easton in Essex, his hospitality, his love of games, his library and his unending flow of conversation on every subject, from the nature of the Deity to the stoppages in his drains? And what conversation it is too! Enriched with knowledge garnered by the most restless and energetic mind of our age, enlivened by the constant play of wit, it is now grave, now gay, **now** hesitant, now dogmatic, but always various, full of anecdote and terribly addicted to the pun.

But I have planned my course, and already I find myself digressing; for I have determined to consider Wells under two aspects only. I want to write first of his immense ordinariness, **and** secondly, of his power of reflecting and expressing the inarticulate movements and tendencies of his age.

The use of the word "ordinariness" in connexion with Wells



seems at first sight to demand explanation. There is a quality about most greatness which marks those who possess it as men apart. It is not that they are cleverer, or profounder, or more clear-sighted than you or I; they are simply different. Men like Goethe, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Shaw, however much they may differ among themselves, have this much at least in common, that they all differ profoundly from the man in the street. Their thoughts are not his thoughts, the things they consider important are not the things he considers important, and their reactions from any given set of events are unexpected and unpredictable. It is just this quality of unexpectedness that has made the great man so bitterly resented by other men of his time.

Now nobody has ever resented Wells in quite this way, and the reason is that Wells's greatness lies not in his difference from, but in his enormous likeness to, ourselves. Supposing that we took a common or garden person like you or me, raised his brains to the nth degree, quickened his vision and marvellously increased his energies, we should produce a person not very different from Mr H. G. Wells. Wells, in a word, is a glorified edition of ourselves; his history is our history, and the world as he sees it is the world as we shall see it to-morrow. Even his appearance is ordinary. "He resembles a farmer, a worker, a father and everything in the world," says Mr Capek. In his novels he has told his story again and again; it is the story of a man who, starting in the lower strata of society, has by his inherent greatness raised himself to a position from which, looking down upon the rungs of the ladder he has ascended, he can survey the whole structure of his time; and in surveying it he reveals it to us. Hence his life and activity may be taken as symbolical of the life of his times.

Thus Wells's chief characters - Kipps, Mr Lewisham, the younger Ponderevo in *Tono Bungay*,¹ and Mr Polly - enthrall us because they are so exactly like ourselves.

Take that wonderful passage at the end of *Kipps*, when Kipps

¹ *The History of Mr Polly, Kipps, Tono Bungay, The New Machiavelli, Boon. Mr Britling and Men Like Gods* are Wells at his best.

and Ann go for a row on the canal. There is a brilliant sunset, and Kipps, who has been rowing, lets his oars rest and sits pensive and silent, dumb with the beauty of the evening.

" 'Artie,' said Ann.

" He woke up and pulled a stroke. ' What?' he said.

" ' Penny for your thoughts, Artie.'

" He considered. ' I really don't think I was thinking of anything,' he said at last with a smile. ' No.' He still rested on his oars. ' I expect,' he said, ' I was just thinking what a Rum Go everything is. I expect it was something like that.'

" ' Queer old Artie!'

" ' Aren't I? I don't suppose there ever was a chap quite like **me before.**'"

Thus Kipps, overcome by natural beauty, sits inarticulate and, as it were, ashamed. Could there be a better commentary on our civilization, which has so little use for so uncommercial a proposition as a feeling for beauty in its drapers' assistants that it leaves them unable even to understand what ails them when they see their first sunset?

It is in this power of rendering common people, a power which he possesses as a gift of nature, as one who, being essentially of them, feels with them and for them, that Wells is like Dickens. He is, indeed, in many respects Dickens's direct lineal descendant. There has been no one since Dickens who could write broad comedy and farce with quite the natural gusto of Wells, no one who has created such a gallery of memorable comic characters. *Mr Polly* is a book entirely in the Dickensian manner. The wedding feast of Mr Polly and Miriam Larkins, the motherly moist affectionateness of Mrs Larkins and the Misses Larkins, the resentful grimness of the hollow-toothed Uncle Penstemon mindful of his mushroom beds, and the disastrous consequences of the over-eating of the boy Punt, form a scene of riotous good humour for a parallel to which we must go back to *Pickwick Papers*.

The intense ordinariness of Wells equips him better than any of his contemporaries to describe and record the change that

came over our world somewhere about the beginning of the twentieth century. The end of the Victorian age was like the bursting of a dam. As Wells himself puts it, Queen Victoria was like a great paperweight that for half-a-century had sat on men's ideas, and when she was removed they began to blow about anyhow. Morals were getting laxer, home life was breaking up, the churches were emptying, the young were rushing about in side-cars and going unchaperoned to dances, the countryside was seen to spread with villas like pink mushrooms in a night, and the middle-aged knew even less, and wondered even more, than usual what the world was coming to.

Of all this surge of change and unrest Wells was the mouth-piece and the epitome. The changes in his feelings represent in a concentrated form, because they *are*, the changes of his time. And so we get those wonderful portraits of the break-up of an old world and the coming of a new one at the beginning of *The New Machiavelli* and *Tono Bungay*, portraits which at the same time convey a realization of that strange fraud of modern life which is the pretence that there has been no change. *Tono Bungay* begins with a description of Bladesover, a country house dominating its village, where the way of life has remained the same for centuries, and over all the new chaotic world of suburb and business and office, which flings people up and sets their whole life - birth, marriage, possessions, happiness - at the mercy of mere chance, broods the spirit of the old order, living a life apart from that of its time, refusing to realize that its dominion is gone.

The characteristic of the new world that has grown up within the framework of this obsolete society is disorder. Nobody planned it, nobody willed it, nobody even wanted it; it just happened; and ever since he made his entry into literature as the social historian of its happening, Wells's writing has been one sustained plea for order and purpose in society. And because he has been brought to believe that those who have grown up in an individualistic, haphazard world are unfitted for life in an ordered society, he has come in later years to pin his faith to the young and to devote himself more and more to the work of education.

Mr Wells is a great man, a great novelist, and a great historian, but, above all a serious, earnest thinker, profoundly moved by the disorders of our time and passionately anxious to pave the way to a better world; and it is to the task of making easier the coming of this world that his life has been dedicated.

Mr Wells (*continued*) and some others

FOR SOME, READING IS A DIVERSION COMPARABLE IN KIND TO NAP or shove-halfpenny, which may beguile the tedium of hours in which there is nothing better to do.

There are others, however - and they are not all fools, even if they be highbrows - who look to literature for something more than this. It is for them a commentary upon existence, enabling them to find in life more than they found there unassisted, more food for thought, more incitement to curiosity, more scope for sympathy. In particular a writer may interpret for them the spirit of their age. Taking them mentally by the hand, as it were, he will put into words what they have dimly felt but have never been conscious of feeling, and pass comments which they realize to be true directly they are read, and realize, too, that they have somehow known before they read them.

It is this service of guide, revealer and commentator that Mr Wells primarily performs for us in his latest novel, *Christina Alberta's Father* (Cape, 7s. 6d.). In it he takes and introduces us to the strange, muddled, post-war world of London and its suburbs, a world infinitely complicated and enormously fluid, tells us of the despair and disillusion that followed on the frustration of the old hopes, tells us, too, of the new hopes that have come to take their place.

A novel by Wells is like a dinner of many courses: all are good even if some do not mix. Passing by the story, comparatively unimportant, about a little laundryman crushed by his wife, who on her death reacts into megalomania, believes himself to be Sargon, king of kings, calls his disciples, is put into a lunatic asylum, is rescued- and dies of pneumonia, let me describe the

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chief dishes in this rich and varied feast. First and foremost there is the Mr Wells who is for ever busy guiding us about the age. In Christina Alberta, the laundryman's daughter, he presents us with the intelligent emancipated women of the period, who, having kicked all her parents' moral and intellectual furniture out of the window and been too busy as yet to put up curtains and stuff cushions of her own, is feeling the resultant draught, in the form of lack of aims, lack of safeguards and lack of convictions.

"She did not believe in respectability, Christian morality, the institution of the family, the capitalist system, or the British Empire. . . . She favoured Bolshevism because everybody she disliked abused it, and she hoped for a world-wide revolution of an entirely destructive and cleansing type."

Christina Alberta is a type; she can be met with anywhere to-day, and she symbolizes the rebellion of youth against the beliefs and evasions of the last generation. But while Christina is unable to see beyond the conventions she denounces, one of the other characters suddenly discovers that he "is in the advent of a new age, a new age that was coming so fast that there hadn't been time ever to clear the forms and the institutions of the old age away. They weren't reversed or abolished, they weren't overthrown, they were just disregarded. Which was just why it was possible to get along for a year or so without noticing the tremendous change everything was undergoing."

Another and a different Mr Wells now comes forward to tell us why the new people were disregarding things - a mystical, almost religious Mr Wells, who believes in the mind of the race and the participation of each individual life in a universal life. At the end of the book there is a tremendous discussion, running into some twenty pages, on the purpose of evolution and the function of the individual life in fulfilling that purpose. Roughly, each man has two stages of being: the first is a primitive, savage, self-seeking creature, concerned only to gratify his personal appetites; the second is a social animal who, as the species develops, grows increasingly conscious of his participation in the life of the whole. The object of **education** is **to make the indi-**

vidual aware of the continuity of his life with that of the social life and self, and to induce him to subordinate himself to it.

This subordination involves in the last resort the submergence of purely personal concerns, such as fame, ambition and even love, in the performance of the special and appointed work which, as a part of the whole, one must do in the interests of the whole.

"What matters more and more is the work one does. What matters less and less is our personal romance and our personal honour. . . . Soon it will matter nothing to a man or his work to know that he will probably die in a ditch misunderstood. So long as he gets his work done."

This very briefly, is the point of view of the men and women who stand for Mr Wells on the threshold of a new age. Politically it is that of Socialism.

Thirdly, there is Mr Wells the propagandist, the man who wrote *This Misery of Boots*, and has so cogently and so frequently convicted his generation of muddle and of sin.

It is the position of lunatics in asylums, and more particularly the treatment of suspected eccentrics in the observation wards of hospitals, that now arouses his indignation, and he has never used his pen in a better cause. The helplessness of the suspected lunatic brings out all that is worst in the natures of those who have to deal with him. When he complains, the word of the dullest and most corrupt attendant is preferred to his most earnest asseverations, and, if he is not mad to begin with, the constraint, the injustice and the company of the insane quickly make him so. Wells's hero passes into the darkness of this underground world.

* He is handed over to the control of under-educated, ill-paid, ill-fed and over-worked attendants. . . . He is almost always kept in a state of bodily discomfort, always rather ill from the ill-prepared and sometimes tainted food, and much incommoded by clumsy drugging, and particularly by the administration of violent purgatives. . . . He has excellent reason for fearing many of his fellow-inmates and for a servile obedience to the attendants in charge of him. . . . So with no possibility of **redress the poor lunatic will be roughly handled, badly fed and coarsely**

clothed, and night and day he will have no other company than the insane."

And finally there is the jolly, humorous, sunny, larky Mr Wells, whom no amount of indignation on the part of the other Mr Wellses can depress, and no mystical philosophy submerge. He is more in evidence in this book than he has been for some time. Through it the spirit of Mr Polly breathes again, expressing itself in deft touches, queer situations, peculiar and felicitous words and intimate asides. Harold Crumb eating macaroni at Popinetti's, Miss Solbe playing patience at the Petunia boarding-house, the spooning of Miss Hossett on the beach at Sheringham, and the Bohemian party at Lonsdale Mews are as good as anything Wells has ever done in this line - which is to say that in this line they are better than anything done by anybody else, always with the exception of Wells's lineal ancestor, Dickens.

A great book this, crammed full of good things, and, for those who are not afraid of Wells discoursing about the universe in general, as valuable for its thought as for its laughter.

Three other books are before me, each in a different way an escape from reality. Not that they are any the worse for that - all, as a matter of fact, are excellent - but after the Wells one feels that they call for something less serious in the way of criticism, so that I have less sense of injustice in the comparatively little space I have left for them. David Garnett's story¹ is about a seaman who marries a negress, the daughter of an African king, brings her to England and settles down as the landlord of a Dorsetshire village inn. The story tells of the reaction of the neighbours to the black woman and her children, the kindness of some, the uncharitableness of most. It is told with a charming, almost naive, simplicity, which nobody knows so well as the author of *Lady into Fox* how to affect.

There is nobody living who can write better short stories than Mr Bullett. Each is a little gem, a perfect work of art rounded, flawless, exquisite¹. His range is wide, the characters being drawn equally from the dullest of the suburbs and the most raffish of the would-be artists. He is peculiarly adept at creating an atmos-

¹ *The Sailor's Return* by David Garnett (Chatto & Windus)

phere of horror, and portraying **the** psychology of children. **The** title story, telling how a father wins the love of a child from a jealous, stupid and exacting mother, is the best of all.

Eleanor Farjeon's short stories are good-but not so good*. She, too, is at her best in the portraiture of children, and there is a vein of sheer fantasy in her work that is unlike anything else I know. But the stories are a shade commonplace after Bullett's, and there is nothing to equal her masterpiece, *Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard*.

¹ *The Baker's Cart* by Gerald Bullett (Lane)

² *Faithful Jenny Dove* by Eleanor Farjeon (Collins)

How to write and how to write badly

THE OBJECT OF WRITING IS TO SAY SOMETHING WE WANT TO SAY - in other words, to convey meaning. This, which should be an easy task, is considered by most people to be fraught with difficulty. Writing is thought to be a complicated and highly technical craft, not to be undertaken except by those who have first been initiated into its mysteries and mastered its technique. So much at least is indispensable for the writing of books, articles and essays. Letters are somehow different; letters are only a way of talking on paper, and are, therefore, outside the mysterious pale of writing proper.

It is my lot to lecture to a class whose members are obliged to write me an essay once a fortnight. The labour of extracting these essays is Herculean. Every sort and kind of excuse is made to escape them: Snooks is working overtime, Jones has forgotten how to spell, Brown does not know how to express himself and Robinson has married a wife and cannot spare the time to write. One day I had an idea. I asked Snooks and the rest to write me not an essay, but a letter. The letter was to tell me how they liked the class, what they thought of the other members, what suggestions they had to make for improving the lectures, and what - here I concealed the Gregory powder in the jam - they thought of the subject set for the last essay. The effect was magical; everybody suddenly found his 'pen and, blossoming into expression, gave me the very thing I had been unable to extract when I asked for an essay.

By this experience I was convinced of a truth I had often suspected, **that all the talk about style and form and quality of**

expression in writing which agitates literary circles is simply highfalutin bunkum, designed to hoodwink people into the belief that writing is much more mysterious than it really is, by those whose living depends on the maintenance of the mystery, and that, if the plain man would only take the trouble to say quite plainly what he thinks, good and even easy writing would be the inevitable result.

Yet this is just what the plain man will **not** do. **When, for** example, he wants to write to the papers, and considers it incumbent upon him to adopt what he calls a literary style, he thinks that the desired result is to be achieved by using two or three words when one would normally suffice ; thus he calls an oyster " a succulent bivalve," a barber " a tonsorial artist," and says " the delectable Duchy" when he means Cornwall. These unfortunate expressions are based upon a false belief, the belief that the object of writing is somehow different from the object of talking, and that, whereas it is the business of the spoken word simply to convey meaning, the business of the written word is to create what is called a literary effect. This false belief is due to two causes.

The first is the poison of journalese. We may agree that the world is sometimes exciting; it is equally clear that sometimes it is not. But although the world can please itself in the matter, the journalist has no option. Whether we are in the midst of a great war or an August silly season his obligation to be bright, witty and stimulating, and to produce a bright, witty and stimulating paper, remains the same. And if nothing happens to excite or amuse he must make his words do for themselves what events refuse to do for him.

Hence the characteristic of journalism is constant over-emphasis. One way of achieving this emphasis is by the use of unexpected and striking words. Thus the cricket reporter will say " the sphere struck the uprights " when he wishes to report the fact that the ball hit the stumps. Another method is by gross over-expression, and by gross over-expression I mean the introduction **of flowing and highly charged phrases which are altogether**

disproportionate to the importance of the event or to the sincerity of the writer's **feeling**.

Supposing, to take an example quoted by Galsworthy (*On Expression*), we want to say, "The cat was on the mat," and having nothing else to say, and a yawning half-column of space in which to say it, determine to make the statement of this simple fact carry as much weight in the way of eloquence and emotion as we can manage to pile on to it. Then, if we are clever at our job, we shall say: "Stretching herself with feline grace, and emitting those sounds immemorially connected with satisfaction, Grimalkin lay on a rug whose richly variegated pattern spoke eloquently of the Orient and all the wonders of *The Arabian Nights*.*" If we are not clever at our job we shall succeed in being not impressive but merely funny, like the American journalist who, wishing to report the fact that a mother was dead, sought to arouse emotion by announcing that "the hand that rocked the cradle had kicked the bucket."

All this is bad, as bad as bad can be. It is vulgar, it is an offence against simplicity, and it is a foe to all good writing. And, since there is no reason at all why we should go out of our way to acquire the habit of journalese, let us, when we sit down to write, take a solemn oath to say exactly what we mean and to say nothing more, to use the simplest words that will serve our purpose, and to use as few of them as we can.

But there is another cause for the belief that writing is something more, and something more important, than just talking on paper. Many authors, anxious to exalt the mysteries of their trade, have maintained that writing is an art—in the sense in which the painting of pictures or the composing of music is an art. As an art it possesses a definite technique; there is an appropriate diction to be learned, judgment exercised in the selection of words, tricks of harmony and rhythm to be mastered. In a word, there is the acquirement of *a style*, and unless the author has first mastered a style his writing will be of **no value**.

The belief in style as a thing which is valuable in itself independently of the meaning it conveys, was. very prevalent at

How to write-badly

the end of the last century. The so-called decadents, led by Oscar Wilde, cared much more about the way in which a thing was said than about what was said.

Samuel Butler has a delightful passage in his famous *Notebooks* on this attitude to writing, which he regards as pretentious cant:

" I never knew a writer yet who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable. . . . Men like Newman and R. L. Stevenson seem to have taken pains to acquire what they called a style as a preliminary measure - as something that they had to form before their writings could be of any value. I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style, have never thought about it, and do not know or want to know whether it is a style or whether it is not, as I believe and hope, just common simple straightforwardness. I cannot conceive how any man can take thought for his style without loss to himself and his readers."

He goes on characteristically to add: " I have, however, taken all the pains that I had the patience to endure in the improvement of my handwriting. . . ."

In other words, a man's style should be like his dress. It should be as unobtrusive and should attract as little attention as possible. Butler is here voicing a conviction which I feel very strongly. Provided that a man feels genuinely on a particular subject, provided also that he has got clearly conceived in his head what he wants to say on that subject, provided, too, that he is careful to say only what he has clearly conceived and nothing more, then, if he has a sufficient knowledge of grammar and the laws of syntax, his thoughts, when he comes to put them down, will automatically express themselves in the mould which we call good writing, while the enthusiast, whose feeling is not merely genuinely but fanatically intense, may unwittingly break out into great writing.

"A true original style," says Shaw, "is never achieved for its own sake. . . . Effectiveness of assertion is the beginning and end of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style, and can have none ; he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry

him. Disprove his assertion after it is made - yet his style remains."

No man living writes better English prose than Shaw ; no man has a more true, original and effective style.

Yet surely, I shall be told, you will admit that there is music and beauty in words. Two men may feel equally strongly, and think equally clearly, upon a given subject, yet one will express himself with a passionate and moving sincerity that will carry conviction, the other in the cold, colourless terms of a Government Blue Book. Should we not aim at achieving that quality, whatever it may be, that clothes with beauty the words of the one, and eschew the official bleakness of the other? To this question I shall endeavour to suggest an answer in a further article.

Books for reference

Art of Writing by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Cambridge University Press)

On Expression by John Galsworthy. Being the Presidential Address to the English Association 1924 (Oxford University Press)

How to write well

ON THE LAST OCCASION ON WHICH I WROTE ABOUT STYLE I committed myself to a proposition which has seemed to most to be platitudinous in so far as it was true, and untrue in so far as it was not obvious. "Think clearly," I said in effect, "say plainly what you have clearly conceived, and good style will automatically result." But what of beauty, I was asked - of the music of phrases, of the quality that makes one man's words thrill us to ecstasy, while another's leave us unmoved? Surely these things exist, and if they do, should not we endeavour to cultivate them?

I admit the existence and the value of these things, but I do not think that we should consciously seek them. If we do, they will elude us. If a man writes clearly and simply, and avoids both mannerisms and imitation, what he writes will bear the unmistakable impress of his own individuality, so that his words will ring with the peculiar quality of his temperament and vision. If there is beauty in our thought and originality in our views, these qualities will inevitably appear in our expression of them.

Now, just as you cannot make your personality interesting by trying to be original, so you cannot make your style, which is an expression of your personality, interesting by trying to emphasize it or beautiful by trying to adorn it. People who think about themselves, and the effect they are making, succeed only in becoming self-conscious and affected. By the same token authors who take thought for their style, and the effect it is producing, succeed only in being stilted and unnatural; they drop into mannerisms and acquire affectations.

Thus Meredith (1828-1909), though his style rises at times to heights of nobility and eloquence, is a great sinner in this

respect; he writes: a girl "at chew upon an apple," when he wants to say: "a girl chewing an apple." This is mere affectation, and in moderation is tolerable, but at his worst he achieves monstrosities, such as the famous phrase, ** a rotifer astir in the curative compartment of a homoeopathic globule."

Meredith's object here is to produce a striking effect by an unusual phrase. There are, indeed, all kinds of dodges for securing striking and vivid effects. When used sparingly and with restraint these invest a style with vivacity and freshness. The danger is that we shall overdo them.

One of **the** commonest is the use of long and many-syllabled words when short, simple words would do as well. The greatest writers often do this, to their shame. Dr Johnson (1709-1784) is one of them. Thus, to take an instance quoted by Mr Pocock, he makes one of his young ladies inform us that "she had not passed the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship, and the joys of triumph, but had danced the round of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of applause; had been attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly and the vain, and had seen her regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love."

The use of long and pompous words is bad, just as the resort to literary dodges is bad, because it is an offence against nature. When you are writing you should be yourself, and affectations offend just because they are not the self, but a something deliberately tacked on to the self.

Hazlitt (1778-1830), one of the masters of English prose, tells us that "to write a genuine, familiar, or true English style is to write as anyone would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes." And, again, on file use of common, as opposed to precious, words he says: "I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but **that** it is the stamp of custom alone that gives their circulation **a value.**"

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" We are mighty fine fellows, nowadays," said Stevenson, in **his** essay on Walking Tours (*Virginibus Puerisque*), " but we cannot write like Hazlitt."

Stevenson, for all that he was a finished and polished stylist, would have been a better writer if he had followed Hazlitt's advice more closely. The function of art, he held, was to conceal itself. In other words, one ought to take great pains in order to appear to be taking no pains at all; but the attempt to appear natural by artifice is not naturalism. It is rather two removes from nature.

So that he may learn not to aim at literary effect the would-be writer should keep a diary. The essence of a diary is that no one should read it but the author. Now, the writer does not wish to impress himself - at least, we trust not - and therefore in a diary he may hope to be not only as truthful but as natural as possible. The value of the diary, not only as a form of self-expression but as a training for style, lies in the fact that the diary-and in this it is unique among literary productions - is written simply and solely because the author wants to write it. It is a sort of safety-valve, the natural outlet for a personality.

The *Diary* of Samuel Pepys (1632-1703), the most famous of diarists, is written in a style which is absolutely unique and entirely personal. It is not a polished style, sometimes it is not even a grammatical style, yet it is so fresh, so vivid, so revealing and so robust, that it invests the trivial incidents which Pepys records with an interest which no historian has been able to *give* to the contemporary events of national importance that Pepys does not even condescend to notice ; it has caused the *Diary* to be read with delight and amusement by those who care not a button for what Pepys had for his dinner, or what his wife said to him in the course of their perpetual squabbles.

One other diary I must mention. It is the *Spiritual Diary* of one Dr Rutty, and I speak of it here because it carries to their logical conclusions those characteristics of intimacy and expressiveness which I have praised, and in so doing caricatures them. Di Rutty was a divine whose stomach was constantly at war with his religion. When, as usually happened, his appetite won, Dr

Rutty suffered not only from indigestion but also from his conscience, and we have entries such as: "A little swinish at dinner." Dr Johnson used to chuckle over the *Diary* of Dr Rutty.

What, then, are the rules for good writing? They amount to very little. I will quote Mr Pocock's excellent book for the most obvious: "Observe accurately, think clearly, choose the right words. . . . be as fresh, brief, and original as you can - and, above all, do not be afraid of being natural.'

But there is no golden rule for good writing, just as there is no golden rule for good living. Writing is expression of the man; one man's meat is another man's poison, and one man's excellence another's snare. And the great writer may break all the rules and yet remain a great writer.

To return, then, to the question with which I began this article: What of the music and beauty of words? Do I take no account of these? I reply that they are valuable indeed, but that they must be suffered to come of themselves. If they refuse, then no amount of trying will make them. Good architects decorate a construction; they do not construct a decoration, and if you aim directly at Beauty you will miss her. You cannot take the kingdom of beauty by storm any more than you can command a pleasure at will. Happiness is a flower that surprises you, a song which you can hear as you pass the hedge, suddenly, simply, rising in the night and dying down again.

And so it is with Beauty. Beauty is not to be captured by direct assault; she is away round the corner, ready to dart out and enter our lives when we are busily engaged in doing or achieving something else.

We have only to take one or two examples of perfect harmony of thought and phrasing to see how impossible it is to bring them within the framework of a formula, how completely they mock at our rules. Take this of Shakespeare's:

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid ;
Fly away, fly away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

What does he say? " My girl has jilted me; I want to die." Yet that commonplace sentiment is conveyed with a beauty which makes us catch our breath. Or this of Coleridge's (1772-1834) from *The Ancient Mariner*:

The moving Moon went up the sky
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.

The beauty of lines such as these is like a fragrance, a subtle essence. Try to capture it, bottle and label it, with a view to fetching it out when you want to distil some more, and you will find it has evaporated, wafted beyond reach or recall.

And, finally, to the truth of my contention I call the great stylists of our age, Bernard Shaw, Joseph Conrad and W. H. Hudson, the naturalist, to bear witness. The beauty with which their writing is enriched has not been sought, or even summoned, but has come spontaneously and of its own accord to clothe the words of a man preaching Socialism, of a man telling a story and of a man absorbed in the wonders of Nature.

Books for reference

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The Art of Literary Study by H. B. Charlton (Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons)

The literature of war

SHAW HAS SAID THAT THE ONLY THING THAT CAN INDUCE MEN to unite is the one thing they all know to be wrong, and that is war. He refers, it must be presumed, to men's actions ; but his remark, as it stands, is equally true of their writings. Despite the fact of their unity on both heads, however, there is a marked difference between men's practice and their precepts; for whereas they unite to act in defence of war, they unite to write in its disfavour. All the great writers who have made war their theme seem either to have mocked or abused it. The exceptions are men like Tolstoy, in *War and Peace*, or Macaulay, who, their object being to describe rather than appraise war, are content, when their picture is complete, to leave us to our own reflections ; and a few writers at the end of the last century, men for the most part feeble in health, like Nietzsche and Stevenson, who endeavoured to make up in vigour of sentiment what they lacked in robustness of person, and sang the praises of war to a generation tired of a long peace.

Men set a false value on those qualities *in* which they are lacking : weak men worship strength, timid men violence. Such men flourish at the end of an era of peace. Hkting their own weakness, they attribute their lack of vigour to the generation which produced them, abuse it for softness and luxury, and invoke war to save it from decadence.

Thus Nietzsche, a neurotic who suffered from perpetual ill-health and finally drugged himself into insanity, wrote:

" If ye cannot be saints of knowledge, then I pray you be at least its warriors. War and courage have done more great things than charity. . . . One will have to pardon my occasionally chanting the pan of war . . . although it comes along like **the**

night, war is nevertheless Apollo, the true divinity for conserving and purifying the State. . . . For nations that are growing weak and contemptible, war may be prescribed as a remedy, if indeed they really want to go on living. National consumption as well as individual admits of a brutal cure."

In the same strain Coleridge complained of peace as a time in which "all individual dignity and power is engulfed in courts, committees, institutions," while society was "This benefit **club** for mutual flattery"; and Henley wrote in a similar vein.

Thus arose the disinfectant theory of war. The blood poured out by the combatants is hailed as a stream of Condyl's Fluid, which will purify society and purge the body politic of its humours. It does not appear that this view has at any time been shared by combatants. It was, however, for a short time popular among civilians in this country at the beginning of the recent war.

While Nietzsche and Henley, dons and dyspeptics, have bleated of the glories of war, the great men of literature have attacked it tooth and nail. Their methods fall roughly into two classes. They satirize war and show its absurdity or they denounce it and reveal its horrors. War is an Aunt Sally for the shafts of their wit or a target for the thunderbolts of their wrath. Continental writers on the whole have preferred irony to invective; English writers have proceeded by the more direct method of denunciation. The French are the greatest masters of irony, and Voltaire and Anatole France, with the occasional assistance of Swift and Shaw, have made war eternally ridiculous. War is the begetter of heroism, and feats of courage and endurance have invested it with glamour. Yet what is heroism but a form of fear? The brave man fears the reproaches of his conscience, the reputation of cowardice, and the disgrace of his regiment more than he fears the bullets of the enemy. In case, however, these deterrents from flight are not sufficient, discipline is invented as a prop to courage. The object of discipline is to make the dangers attendant upon so-called fear greater than those which must be faced by courage, and it does so by substituting the certainty of

being shot for those who refuse to go over the top for the probability of being shot for those who consent.

Speaking through the mouth of M. Bergeret, Professor of Latin, in *The Wicker-Work Woman*, Anatole France tells us that:

"With soldiers, as with all crowds, the ruling passion, the predominant thought, is fear. They go to meet the enemy as the foe from whom the least danger is to be feared. Troops in line are so drawn up on both sides that flight is impossible. In that lies all the art of battle. The armies of the Republic were victorious because the discipline of the olden times was maintained in them with the utmost severity while it was relaxed in the camp of the Allied Armies. . . . Soldiers have never marched except under the pain of death."

Half-a-dozen conscripts shot each day to encourage the others, as Voltaire puts it, cause heroism to become sufficiently frequent to ensure victory. Shaw, touching nothing from which he does not strip the adornment, strikes the same note. "There is only one universal passion," says Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny*, "fear. Of all the thousand qualities a man may have, the only one you will find as certainly in the youngest drummer boy as in me is fear. It is fear that makes men fight; it is indifference that makes them run away." Bravery, in short, is simply year of the results of cowardice.

The instruments of warfare fare no better at the hands of the satirists than the motives which inspire their use. There is a passage of delightful irony in the second satire of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which the hero, after descanting on the marvellous efficacy of the weapons used by civilized men to destroy each other, offers to let the King of the Brobdingnagians into the secret of the manufacture of gunpowder. The king is overcome with horror at Gulliver's description, is amazed to find that "so impotent and grovelling a creature" could entertain such base ideas, and protests that though nothing delights him to much as new discoveries in art or nature, "he would rather lose half his kingdom than be privy to such a secret."

" 'A strange effect of narrow principles and short views!' Gulliver comments. ' That a prince possessed of **strong parts**,

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great wisdom and profound learning, endowed with admirable talents . . . should, from a nice unnecessary scruple, whereof in Europe we can have no conception, let slip an opportunity put into his hands, that would have made him absolute master of the lives, the liberties and the fortunes of his people."

Here Swift hints not obscurely at what he considers to be the most fruitful cause of war. As Thrasymachus said long ago in Plato's *Republic*, it is to the interest of the rulers to make war because it keeps their subjects quiet. "In armed nations it is easy enough," says Anatole France, "to preserve internal peace." By the mere process of dressing the village firebrand in a sergeant's uniform, instead of a peasant's blouse, you transform a rebel thirsting for liberty into a tyrant persecuting and bullying in the interests of law and order. Hence the value of war as a weapon of statecraft and the consequent refusal of rulers to initiate disarmament, a refusal based on their desire to command an army instead of governing a nation. Hence, too, the deliberate glorification of war, and the inculcation of patriotism by all politically advanced societies, as a result of which, as Anatole France puts it, "men consider it the primary social duty to kill their fellows according to rule, and in civilized nations the glory of massacre is the greatest glory known."

Coming to the direct assault upon war, we find that it is denounced upon two main grounds: it is immoral and it is cruel. The resort to war rests upon the assumption that if you have a quarrel with your neighbour the only way to prove yourself in the right is to kill off as many of the other side as you possibly can. In war-time God is on every side at once. Hence, whatever the motives which lead a State into war, it is always possible to represent them as a noble resentment of injustice and a high-minded resistance to unjustifiable aggression. It is this moral hypocrisy which goads Swift to fury. It is the causes for which nations go to war rather than its horrors which provoke his most savage attack. In the final satire of *Gulliver* the hero explains to his equine master how wars come about.

*• Sometimes a war is entered upon because the enemy is too strong, and someti/nes because he is too weak . . . it is a very

justifiable cause of a war to invade a country after the people have been wasted by famine, destroyed by pestilence, or embroiled by factions among themselves. . . . For the above reasons the trade of a soldier is held the most honourable of all others, because a soldier is a Yahoo hired to kill in cold blood as many of his own species, who have never offended him, as he possibly can."

So far we have avoided the cruelties of war ; yet these naturally bulk largely in its literature. Thus Voltaire, in *Candide*, after playing delicately with war for two or three pages, grows suddenly tired of mocking heroes and ridiculing romanticists, and breaks out into a vivid description of war's horrors.

At the close of battle Candide, who had " trembled like a philosopher, and concealed himself as well as he could during the heroic butchery," determines to decamp while " the two kings were causing the *Te Deum* to be sung in each of their camps."

" After passing over heaps of dead or dying men, the first place he came to was a neighbouring village in the Arabian territories, which had been burnt to the ground by the Bulgarians, agreeable to the laws of war. Here lay a number of old men covered with wounds, who beheld their wives dying, with their throats cut, and clasping their children to their breasts all stained with blood. There several young virgins . . . breathed their last; while others, half burnt in the flames, begged to be despatched out of the world. The ground about them was covered with brains, arms and legs of dead men. Candide made all the haste he could to another village, which belonged to the Bulgarians, and there he found that the heroic Arabs had acted the same tragedy."

It is a commonplace that the Great War produced no book commensurate in size with the greatness of the subject. The stage was too big, and the figures too crowded, to permit of that unity of treatment which a work of art demands. Tolstoy, had he lived, might have done justice to the theme, but Tolstoy, mercifully for him, was in his grave, and his three-volume novel, *War and Peace*, still stands supreme in the imaginative literature of war.

Where modern writers have excelled is in the terrifying vivid-

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ness of the pictures which they have painted of the horrors of war. Two extra centuries of civilization seem to have increased man's sensitiveness, if not his sense, and though modern writers cannot improve upon Voltaire in his description of the suffering war involves they occupy themselves with it more exclusively. "War" - as Boon says in that queer book *Boon*, by the fictitious Reginald Bliss, introduced, and maybe written, by H. G. Wells - "war with modern machines is a damned, great, horrible, trampling monster, a filthy thing and an indecency." And that is just how we moderns seem to take it.

The French writer, Henri Barbusse, in his book, *Under Fire*, has depicted the life of the trenches with a stark realism that omits nothing and gilds nothing. His compatriot, Georges Duhamel, under the ironical title *Civilisation*, has written what is perhaps the most painful book in the whole literature of war. It is an account of the sufferings of the wounded at the dressing-station, on the operating-table and in the hospital; it tells us how men receive the news that they will never walk again, or that they are blind for life. So shattering in its completeness is the answer of Duhamel's book to Nietzsche that never again, one feels, will men be able to wish for war to divert them from the dullness of peace. Nor will they, until the next generation arises.

Books for reference

Candide by Voltaire (Chapman & Dodd, The Abbey Classics)

Gulliver's Travels by Swift (Nelson)

Arms and the Man and *The Man of Destiny* by Bernard Shaw In *Plays Pleasant* (Constable)

The Wicker-Work Woman and *Penguin Island* by Anatole France (John Lane, The Bodley Head)

Descriptive works

Beyond Good and Evil by Nietzsche (N. T. Foulis)

War and Peace by Tolstoy (Everyman, Dent, 3 vols.)

La Campagne de Russie by De Segur (Nelson)

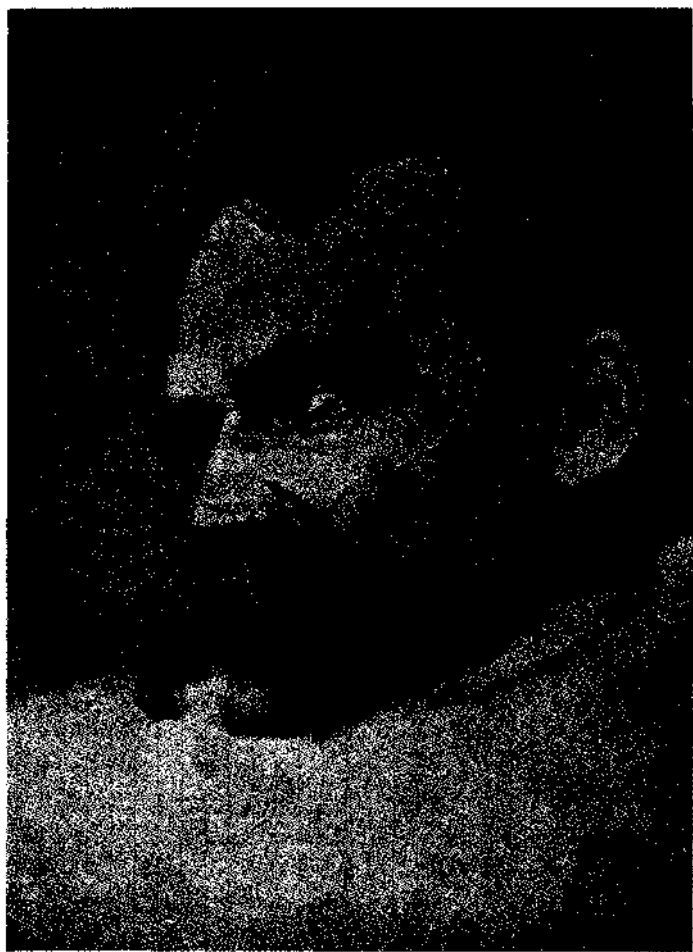
Nietzsche and the war

EARLY IN THE WAR I RECEIVED A NUMBER OF REQUESTS TO deliver lectures upon Friedrich Nietzsche. It was generally believed that Nietzsche was a philosopher who had had something to do with the causes of the war, even if he had not actively planned it, and, as I was supposed to know some philosophy, it was hoped that I should be able to demonstrate his complicity.

If asked how an obscure philosopher could have engineered a European cataclysm, the man in the street would, I imagine, have replied that it was notorious that the war was the outcome of what he had been taught to call *Kultur* and the Prussian spirit; that this spirit was tyrannous and ruthless, and strove to impose itself upon the whole civilized world, and that, in order to achieve its purpose, it was prepared to consign the weak to the wall and whatever opposed it to perdition. This spirit was the direct outcome - indeed it was the embodiment - of Nietzsche's amoral conception of the superman, and it was against this spirit that the Allies were fighting.

It being proved that Nietzsche had caused the war, a bookshop in the Strand proceeded triumphantly to label with the words, "Euro-Nietzschean War," a shelf of military books, and everybody proceeded to mix up the half-mad poet with a contemporary, militant, fire-eating, *Morning Post* little German don known as Treitschke.

As a lecturer on this subject I cannot resist the conclusion that I was disappointing. The whole notion of the influence exercised by philosophers upon contemporary events appeared to me to be arrant nonsense, which nobody who had ever spent five minutes in the company of an accredited philosopher - not to speak of having made the most superficial acquaintance with **his**



works-could seriously entertain for one moment. So far as Nietzsche himself was concerned, I was compelled to point out that his works were, in the highest degree, mystical and obscure; that even the most careful student, who had soaked himself for years in Nietzsche's thought, had the very greatest difficulty in discovering his meaning, and that to the casual reader, and still more, therefore, to the reader with the intelligence of the average militarist, his writings were for all practical purposes unintelligible; that the clear-headed German public and the commercially-minded German publishers had shown their sense of his unreadability, and implicitly protested against his philosophy and the language in which it was expressed, by allowing his works to fall into such complete neglect that when, just before the war, a German professor wished to deliver a lecture upon Nietzsche's philosophy, he was obliged to send to England for an English translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*, having found himself unable to obtain a single copy in Germany.

As for the Prussian spirit, Nietzsche was of Polish descent, and proud of it, and the esteem in which his contemporaries held him may be judged from the fact that, being unable to procure a hearing or make a home in Germany, he spent the last twenty years of his life as an outcast wanderer over the face of Europe. For the rest, Nietzsche was a dyspeptic weakling who suffered constantly and incurably from his eyes, his stomach and his head, and during the last ten years of his life was, to all intents and purposes, mad.

So much for Nietzsche as a person. As for the bearing of his views upon the causes leading to the European War, he was a convinced internationalist. The man of the future, towards whose evolution all the forces of the present were, in his view, tending, would be not a citizen of any country, but a citizen of all. Of the great men of the past, the forerunners of the Superman-of stich men as Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Schopenhauer: the nearest approaches to supermen the forces of evolution have yet been able to contrive - he tells us that "only in their simulations, or in their weaker moments, in old age, perhaps, did they belong to the.' Fatherland * - they only rested from them-

selves when they became ' patriots.' " Nationalism and national jealousies were anathema to Nietzsche.

" This ridiculous condition of Europe *must* not last any longer. *Is there a single idea behind this bovine nationalism!* What positive value can there be in encouraging this arrogant self-conceit when everything to-day points to greater and more common interests?"

The notion that Nietzsche caused the war thus seemed to me to have no relation to fact. It was indeed a maggot bred in the fevered brains of men who, face to face with disaster, clutched at any scapegoat upon which to fix the responsibility they were anxious to ward off from themselves.

Yet there is no smoke without a fire, and it must be confessed that there was not a little in Nietzsche's writings - more especially in his famous doctrine of the Superman - to establish in the minds of the few who had read him not, indeed, a connexion between Nietzsche and the Great War, but an attitude to human life and human values favourable to war in general. In order that this attitude may be defined, it is necessary to say a few words on the doctrine of the Superman.

So far as the physical universe is concerned, Nietzsche held what is known as the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. According to this doctrine the universe contains a definite quantity of energy. This energy is of a purely material kind, and, though its incidence may be altered, although, that is to say, the play of forces in which it expresses itself may vary, the sum-total of energy remains constant. The universe must, therefore, during an infinity of time go through " a calculable number of combinations in the great game of chance which constitutes its existence." Every combination must in the past, at some time or other, have been realized and will be realized again ; and this not once but on an infinite number of occasions. Reduced to its simplest terms the doctrine comes to this: **the movement of the universe is circular; everything that has been will be again; there is no finality and no goal; and, since there is no goal, there can be no progress.**

This conclusion is sufficiently depressing, but it **must be remem**

bered that it applies only to the material universe. It does not, or at least it need not, apply to human life. Evolution is working, or can be made to work, towards the production of a higher type of life. Man is apt to regard himself as the final form of organic life. This belief is mere human conceit; it is also a delusion. If all other forms of life have contributed to produce man, then man himself must prepare the way for the coming of something greater than man. This something greater than man is what Nietzsche calls the Superman.

Now it is important to remember that Nietzsche is the most incoherent of writers, and that the doctrine of the Superman, conceived towards the end of his life, when his mind was already clouding, never assumes clear or definite shape.

Nietzsche first conceived of the Superman as an individual modelled sometimes upon Napoleon, sometimes upon Schopenhauer, and again upon Wagner. Later, however, it becomes clear that he had in mind a race of individuals, or a certain type of individual. Vague as the conception is, one or two points are plain. The coming of the Superman is not fatalistically determined; even if it be true that come he must, human will, effort and aspiration have their part to play in determining his nature. We must prepare the way for the coming of the Superman by living a certain kind of life.

In the second place, his superiority to ordinary men is not to be expressed in terms of happiness. "Evolution does not make happiness its goal." The special characteristic of the Superman lies rather in his possession of will and in his exercise of power. "A stronger kind, a higher type must come to light, which has other conditions for its origin and for its maintenance than the average man."

To facilitate the coming of this type men must be strong, hardy and ruthless. They must hate everything that makes for feebleness and Acquiescence, eschew comfort and contentment, and fight like the devil a Christianity which panders to men's weakness, and saps self-reliance by bidding us seek succour from above. Passion for power is the driving force behind evolution; it tramples on the weak in order to magnify the strong, while

altruism, since it is the weak who chiefly need our help, is merely a device for perpetuating the weak at the expense of the strong, and compassion, which would have us feel everybody's toothaches as though they were our own, a needless and wasteful dissipation of energy. "Suffering is the source of greatness. . . . Be not considerate of thy neighbours," says Nietzsche, and again: "Become hard."

Now it is clear that these qualities upon which Nietzsche lays stress are called most fully into action, and receive their greatest value in public estimation, in time of war. I referred in the last paper to the Condé's Fluid theory of the war, and quoted a passage from Nietzsche in which he extolls the purifying influences of hardship and danger. "War and courage," he says, "have done more great things than charity . . . live your life of obedience and war."

Nietzsche talks in this strain not so much from a perverted admiration of pain and suffering as goods in themselves as from a dislike of coddling. He cannot endure men who fuss overmuch about their bodily health and comfort. It is in the same vein that Plato in his *Republic* condemns the methods of doctors who devote their skill to keeping people in perpetual ill-health. "Kill or cure" should be the motto of the medical profession. If a man's body is too diseased to permit him to perform a useful function in the State he were better dead. The chief result of advances in medical science is to enable us to keep alive numbers of useless persons whom previous civilizations had the sense to allow to die.

But where Plato says, "be hard in order that you may be useful," Nietzsche substitutes, "be hard in order that you may be powerful." Meekness and sympathy are the virtues he abhors, and he condemns the familiar ideals of peace and gentleness, of kindness and humility, as expressions of what he calls "slave morality." In his book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, he divides humanity into two classes. In the first place there are the Supermen, an ideal type existing in embryo in a few exceptional individuals. For them morality is meaningless, they do what they choose and what they must at the bidding of the evolutionary

urge to develop their natures, which is the Will to Power. For the rest, for the herd, there remains the kind of life which will give them the sort of happiness of which they are capable - happiness, indeed, being all that they are fit for. In order to win this ignoble happiness they have invented slave morality. This is the morality of utility ; it says, do this and you will prosper, refrain from doing this and you will avoid the censure of society. Virtue is merely the habit of acting in a way of which society approves.

Christianity sets its seal on this morality ; by extending its rewards into the next world, and there prolonging them into eternity it bribes men to act in the way which will bring them most advantage in the end, appealing to their desire for peace and security whether in heaven or upon earth ; yet these are the rewards of slaves, to be won by humility and self-abasement, the virtues of slaves. Thus Nietzsche denounces Christianity as " the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion for which no means are too venomous, too underground and too petty. . . . I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind."

Economic determinism

KARL MARX BELIEVED THAT ECONOMIC FACTORS WERE OF decisive importance in determining historical events. The precise meaning which should be attached to this assertion has always been the subject of acute controversy. It is possible that he meant, as some of his more extreme advocates have maintained, that a man's actions always and in all respects spring, whether he knows it or not, from his desire to obtain money. It is more probable, however, that all he wished to assert was that, if you looked closely enough, you would find that it was not love, religion, jealousy, ambition, or the wish to make the world better, but simply the desire for economic power on the part of a governing group, which caused to happen whatever did happen. Even this view seems difficult to accept. To take only two of the motives just mentioned: love and religion are recognized as factors of enormous importance in men's private affairs ; why, then, should their influence cease to operate in the policies of nations, which are, after all, only men's public affairs?

It is estimated that competition between rival religions has been responsible for more wars than any other single cause, and of these the most numerous and the fiercest have been waged between sects representing different versions of the religion of peace. Men have fought to maintain their right to turn to the East during the recital of the Apostles' Creed, and have died in thousands over the question of whether the words "and the Son " should or should not be inserted in the Nicene Creed.

Unless, therefore, we are to suppose that the scope of the

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economic motive is to be extended to cover the expectation of pecuniary benefits in the next world, as well as in this one, the Marxian analysis of the causes of what are called religious wars breaks down. Personally I think it is doubtful whether Marx would have consented to any such extension; he did not believe in heaven, which he considered a bourgeois invention.

Marx, however, possesses in Mr Veblen a most powerful and persuasive disciple. Mr Veblen, we are told, is America's most trenchant critic of established institutions, and in his three books, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, *Absentee Ownership*, and *The Vested Interests and the Common Man* (now obtainable in an edition published on this side of the Atlantic),¹ he applies Marx's economic interpretation with consistent brilliance to every phase of social life. Of these books, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* is much the best.

According to Mr Veblen practically all the characteristics of upper- and middle-class society are to be attributed to what Adam Smith called "man's unlimited passion for ostentation"; and, since the lower classes, owing to the inherent snobbery of the human race, spend most of their time in trying to be as like the upper classes as their circumstances allow, what is true of the upper classes is true in a less marked degree of society as a whole. Whether society is heading for heaven or hell, the poor are always at the tail of the procession. If, therefore, we want to know what are the forces which make society what it is, although we shall find them most clearly displayed for our investigation among its upper strata, we may rest fully assured that what we find to be true there will be true in a greater or less degree all the way down the scale.

What then are the forces whose working Mr Veblen detects? They may be summed up under two general formulae, which Mr Veblen calls "the law of conspicuous consumption," and "the law of conspicuous leisure."

Men do not desire merely to possess wealth; Croesus on a desert island would be as wretched as, and more powerless than, a beggar. What men desire is to be known by their fellows to possess it; they want, in short, to advertise the fact that they

are rich. This they do by consuming goods and wasting time as publicly as possible.

This is the thesis which Mr Veblen applies with extraordinary ingenuity to every department of social life. The position of women, the wearing of top hats, the measurement of ladies* waists, the betting propensities of commercial travellers, the conviviality of printers, the production of books with uncut edges, the peculiar spelling of the English language, the breeding of pedigree dogs, the study of the classics, the use of the cap and gown at universities - these and a hundred other phenomena are shown to be expressions of the working of the laws of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure.

Let me take two instances to show the manner in which Mr Veblen applies his thesis, the conception of what constitutes beauty and duty in a women, and the wearing of top hats.

It is not only in his own person that a man may be seen conspicuously to consume. Conspicuous consumption by persons known to be maintained by him will serve even better to demonstrate his possession of wealth. Vicarious consumers - that is to say, persons consuming on behalf of and at the expense of somebody else - not only consume more than the person himself, but consume more publicly. Hence we get the retainers of the feudal era, the lackeys of the Victorian, and the butlers, parlour-maids and chauffeurs - each with their special livery or uniform to indicate the fact that they are consuming in the service of another - of the present day.

But the chief of the troop of vicarious consumers is and has always been the wife.

Now, from what has been said above, it will be readily seen that the element of waste is essential to the conspicuous consumption both of goods and leisure. There is no merit in consuming what you cannot do without - even the pauper does that. Nor is it creditable to work at useful employment * the navy does no less. Futility and wastefulness are, therefore, important assets in the vicarious consumer; and it follows that the wife, as the chief of the man's retinue of vicarious consumers, gradually increases in value as she increases in uselessness. Hence arises

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a new standard of female beauty, which requires a woman to display a wasp waist, grow minute hands and feet, cultivate a ridiculously soft skin, and be visibly ready to faint at the slightest demand upon her energies or emotions; and of female accomplishment, which establishes crewel work, pen painting, antimacassar-making and leaving cards on her friends in the afternoon as the only occupations suitable to her gentility. Hence we get the ideal of the nineteenth-century European lady.

With the twentieth century the amount of consumable goods produced by society increases to a hitherto unprecedented extent. Two results follow. In the first place, the rich become so rich as to place their women beyond the reach of any conceivable imputation of vulgarly productive labour; in the second, the superfluity extends so far down the social scale that the wives of the lower-middle and upper-working classes are now able to afford in some measure the waste of time and goods which has formerly been the exclusive privilege of the lady. The result is that the business of being a lady in losing its exclusiveness loses its charm.

Hence the *lady* goes out of fashion, and with the twentieth century we revert to the more primitive ideal of the *woman*. The standard of female beauty changes accordingly, and to-day we admire women who make no pretence of having waists and do not disown the possession of hands, feet and other material attributes of their persons. Men's idea of what is beautiful in women changes, therefore, with changes in economic circumstances.

So, too, in the matter of headgear. Here I will quote Mr Veblen himself:

" So, again, it may be remarked that, considered simply in their physical juxtaposition with the human form, the high gloss of a gentleman's hat or of a patent-leather shoe has no more of intrinsic beauty than a similarly high gloss on a threadbare sleeve ; and yet there is no question but that all well-bred people (in the Occidental civilized communities) instinctively and unaffectedly cleave to the one as a phenomenon of great beauty, and eschew the other as offensive to every sense to which it can appeal. It is extremely doubtful if anyone can be induced to

wear such a contrivance as the high hat of civilized society, except for some urgent reason based on other than aesthetic grounds."

And the real reason in Mr Veblen's view is to be found in the uselessness and inefficiency of the topper. Nobody who did not have money and time to waste could afford to indulge in an article so completely above any imputation of being either useful or beautiful.

Mr Veblen's applications of his thesis are both amusing and profound. They lead him to the conclusion that the theory which supports private property to-day rests upon the assumption of an economic order which has passed away. In other words, the standards of value set by the leisure class, according to which commodities and pursuits are honoured in proportion as they are wasteful and unproductive, appropriate as they were to an economically competitive system of society, lose their justification when the collective organization of industrial resources begins to take the place of private bargaining. In other words, with the coming of Socialism we shall say good-bye to the classics, the topper, the gentleman, ladies' waists and the leisure class. Meantime economically productive capital is better than capital which is merely parasitic.

All this no doubt is true, but the conclusion seems a trifle commonplace after so intriguing an analysis. Most Socialists would agree to the abolition of the topper and the leisure class (although they might make reservations about the classics and ladies' waists) for reasons other than those which Mr Veblen draws from his analysis. But is it after all necessary or even desirable wholeheartedly to accept this analysis?

"Cheap and nasty," says the housewife, "I won't have it." But is it cheap because it is nasty, or nasty because it is cheap? In Mr Veblen's view the things we think beautiful, good and true depend in every instance on the things we have first thought pecuniarily valuable. This is no doubt often the case, but it is by no means always so. Herodotus tells of a barbarian tribe who considered it to be a filial duty to consume their parents when they reached the age of sixty, in order that they might not

be a burden upon the community. Mr Veblen would probably hail this example as being both literally and metaphorically an instance of his theory of vicarious consumption. We, on the whole, entertain different views with regard to the proper treatment of parents, and, when they are too old to work, prefer to feed them instead of using them to feed ourselves. Is this, too, an example of the law of vicarious consumption, or even of conspicuous consumption? The instance is in part a frivolous one, yet it suggests that people do sometimes do things because they consider them to be their duty, even when this duty is pecuniarily disadvantageous. Men do not always do what pays them, nor even what they think will pay them. Courage, honour and devotion, lost causes and forlorn hopes, would be alike meaningless and inexplicable if they did.

Mr Veblen's analysis, like that of Marx, ingenious as it is, is too simple. It fails to provide for the complexity of human motive, a complexity which reflects and springs from the inconsistency of the human heart.

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WHATEVER WE MAY BE, WE MODERNS ARE NOT CONCEITED. Whereas the Victorians saw in the process of evolution a continual ascent, believed in the ultimate perfectibility of man, and talked of progress because, by the aid of a few scientific discoveries, they had established a society which mistook comfort for civilization, we are sceptical about progress, roundly denounce our civilization as a fraud, and are so doubtful about our moral superiority to the amoeba that we are prepared to suspend judgment on the question of whether we are higher **or** lower than that interesting creature, until we can obtain the opinion of the other side in the shape of the views of the amoeba himself.

Certainly the war has had a chastening effect, so that, writing under its influence, the one object of our most advanced thinkers appears to be to show modern man up as a preliminary to dressing him down. Instead of the noble and exalted personage in whom our fathers delighted, they present us with **a** being whose animal nature, unenlightened by wisdom, possesses just enough knowledge to make him a nuisance to himself and a danger to his fellows, while University lecturers in search of his prototype profess to find him in all the fools and failures of antiquity. Lord Haldane called him Daedalus, Mr Russell Icarus, **and** now Dr Schiller dubs him Tantalus.

Tantalus inhabited the classical equivalent for hell. Permanently hungry, he reached at seductive fruits, only to find them snatched from his grasp; infinitely thirsty, he essayed to drink, and the water vanished into thin air. The Tantalus of **legend** was **served** in this way because of the anger of the gods, who **wished to punish** him for his presumption; **but** in **Dr Schiller's allegory it**

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is **no external deity** who is **to** blame. The modern Tantalus victimizes himself; and he does so because of his ignorance and **folly**.

But do we not learn through the errors of the past? Can we not draw upon the accumulated experiences of our fathers? Professor Dendy, with the simple faith of the man of science, says "Yes." Parents accumulate surplus energy which they hand on to their offspring. This surplus energy constitutes a supply of inherited capital which enables each generation to start life better equipped than its predecessors. Consequently each generation "is enabled to carry on its individual development a little farther," and we have a formula for progress.

Dr Schiller, with the disillusioned wisdom of the philosopher, says "No." From the strictly biological point of view Professor Dendy's contention may be true. But man has long ceased to develop biologically; he is even decaying - witness the state of his toe-nails and appendix - and the only development that matters is development in wisdom and understanding. Here growth is inhibited by the wickedness of professors, who snatch the fruits of the tree of knowledge from the very mouths of the hungry aspirants.

Mr Maxton holds that Oxford and Cambridge are moribund institutions. Dr Schiller goes further: Oxford and Cambridge are not dying, but most regrettably alive. Owing to **the** existence of vested interests in learning and the possessiveness of professors, who, having staked out their claims in different departments of knowledge, will, naturally enough, have no squatting on such valuable property, "educational systems become the chief enemies of education, and seats of learning the chief obstacles to the growth of knowledge"; owing, further, to the laziness of professors and their refusal to teach what is new - "the power of the professor is revealed not so much by the things he teaches as by the things he fails or refuses to teach" - the wisdom of the past is used as rubbish is used to choke the experiments **of the present, so that we start** life no better equipped than our fathers.

As a consequence, **the** moral and social sides **of our natures** have developed scarcely, if at all. We are tamer, **perhaps, than**

the savage, because we have lived longer in society, and better at disguising our feelings, but we are no nicer at bottom.

"Alike in morality and in morals," says Dr Schiller, "modern man is still substantially identical with his Palaeolithic ancestors. He is still the irrational, impulsive, emotional, foolish, destructive, cruel, credulous creature he always was."

This is bad enough, but it is not the worst. Modern civilization is more dangerous than savagery, for two reasons. In the first place, through the invention of science it has enormously increased man's power of hurting and ultimately of destroying himself; in the second, through the invention of birth control it has introduced a progressive deterioration of the human stock. The feeble-minded breed, the intelligent do not; and the consequent increase in undesirable population, once held in check by conditions which doomed one baby in three to destruction and by the resort to wars to get rid of the surplus, but now encouraged and perpetuated by the improvement in public health and the spread of pacifism, threatens to inundate the whole earth "with the teeming millions of mediocrity." We are none of us mediocre, at any rate to ourselves, and the prospect of universal mediocrity is sufficiently unpleasant. But even this threat pales into insignificance before the tremendous warning of Dr. Schiller:

"The biological penalty attaching to social promotion is racial extinction. Thus the ultimate reward of merit is sterilization, and society appears to be an organization devoted to the suicidal task of extirpating any ability it may chance to contain, by draining it away from any stratum in which it may occur, promoting it into the highest and then destroying it. It is exactly as though a dairyman should set in motion apparatus for separating the cream from the milk, and then, as it rose, skim it off and throw it away."

A couple of additional touches from Professor Dendy and our picture is complete.

The breaking down of national barriers and the spread of internationalism lead increasingly to racial intermarriage, and the earth will be inhabited by a race of mongrels. Mongrels are

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as **undesirable among men as they are among animals. Hence the world will get worse instead of better.**

Civilization, encouraged by Socialism, endeavours to eliminate the struggle for existence by substituting co-operation for competition. If there is no struggle for existence the process of natural selection will fall into abeyance, and like aristocrats, plutocrats, and other kept animals, we shall deteriorate through the removal of the incentive to effort and the necessity of development. Hence once more the world will *get* worse instead of better.

In spite of the almost malicious glee which both writers appear to feel in darkening the future, both are hopeful. This hopefulness appears to us strange, the more so since the remedies proposed seem almost trivial after the alarming diagnosis. Dr Schiller thinks Christianity would save us, but dismisses it as impracticable, and pins his faith to birth control and the growth of psychology. Professor Dendy looks askance at the former and knows so little of the latter that he proposes as substitutes for birth control, and as a deliverance from evil, emigration and the segregation of the unfit. These modest proposals, however, **seem unlikely to stave off the ruin** which our authors foresee.

Three possibilities emerge:

- 1 Either things are not as black as they are painted ;
- 2 If they are, there must be some remedy which has occurred neither to Dr Schiller nor to Professor Dendy;
- 3 If there is not, then our civilization is doomed, and mankind about to relapse into a new period of savagery.

Readers will be able to determine which possibility is most likely according to their temperaments and their hopes.

Tantalus : or The Future of Man by F. C. S. Schiller (Kegan Paul)
The Biological Foundations of Society by Arthur Dendy (Constable)

Universal histories

WE ALL OF US REMEMBER THE KIND OF HISTORY WE WERE taught at school. It was a queer sort of stuff, that aimed at doing two things ; it endeavoured in the first place to nourish us on a diet of facts, and in the second to provide us with a set of correct opinions.

The facts consisted of isolated pieces of information. They told us the year in which William I. came to the throne, the Christian names of Edward III.'s wives, and what Henry VIII. had for his dinner on his fortieth birthday. In addition to the facts there were a number of legends. We were informed that one Clarence was drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine, and **that** George III. wondered how the apple got into the dumpling. The legends were more interesting than the facts, but were probably untrue.

Why we were told these things we did not know, and it is probable that our teachers knew no better than we did. Certainly we had no notion of what sort of people they were about whom these facts were recorded; we knew nothing of the lives they lived, the customs they observed, or the civilization they achieved. History, indeed, seemed to have little to do with people; it was full of kings and generals, of great men and of bad men, but of common men, who were neither great nor bad, it had nothing to say. To judge from the number of battles that figured in these records, the great men and the bad men, the kings and the generals, were a bloodthirsty lot, usually at each other's throats; but the extent to which the wars affected the civilian population was a matter on which history was silent.

Since **the** facts we had accumulated meant nothing **to** us, we

forgot them as soon as we conveniently could, with the result that we grew up into men and women, and, what is more, into citizens governing a great Empire, and we knew nothing about history at all.

But our history teachers were not content that we should get our facts right; our opinions had to be right as well. Right opinions in this connexion means patriotic opinions. It is necessary that the young citizen should think his country deserving of support into whatever quarrel she may enter ; her history, therefore, should be such as to win his admiration.

Since the histories of most countries are in the main disreputable, this result is achieved by a process of wholesale selection. Heroic episodes are magnified, discreditable ones omitted. We hear, for example, of how we won France under Henry V., but not of how we lost it under Henry VI.

The facts concerning the battle of Waterloo are well known, and there is a fair measure of agreement among historians as to the respective parts played by each of the three armies engaged. Nevertheless, the English child believes that Wellington beat the French unaided, the Prussians arriving only when the battle was practically decided ; the German child that the English were within an ace of defeat from which they were saved only by the opportune intervention of Blucher; the French child that Napoleon had practically won the battle, that in a certain sense he did win it, and that he was prevented from enjoying the fruits of victory only by a series of unforeseen coincidences so remarkable that no human being could have contended against them. These differing beliefs naturally result from the different selections from the facts upon which the children of the three nations are nurtured.

Within the last half-century, however, there has come into the world a new kind of history. It deals with peoples rather than with king!, it records movements and tendencies rather than births and battles, it tries to tell the truth rather than to manufacture opinion, and it is universal and not sectional.

By saying that it is universal I mean that it begins at the beginning-H. G. Wells's history starts some two thousand million

years ago, when the earth, a red-hot nebula spinning in space, was first thrown off from the sun's mass, and ends with the Genoa Conference of 1922-and it endeavours to recount the history of all countries instead of treating the world as a background to the history of one.

Now this universality in history is extremely valuable. It enables the reader to see the events of his own age, which taken by themselves, appear to be of overwhelming importance, in their true perspective. Hitherto even the best historians had limited themselves to special periods or to particular countries. Grote had recorded the history of classical Greece, Mommsen of the Roman Republic, Gibbon of the decay of the Roman Empire. Within its limits each of these histories is a masterpiece, yet with regard to everything that falls outside them it is silent.

The best modern histories confine themselves to going over minute pieces of historical territory with a microscope, on the assumption that it is better to know one or two things accurately than to have a superficial knowledge of many. This assumption is clearly untrue. It is essential to get a bird's-eye view of the whole territory before settling down to study any part in detail, and historians who concentrate on one tract and ignore the rest are like men who would draw up an Ordnance Survey map of an English county, but forget to mention that it is a county of England.

But how is a universal history possible? Can so much be brought within the confines of a single book? Only if the writer selects, and what he selects will depend upon what he thinks important. What he thinks important will depend again upon his likes and dislikes, his preferences and his prejudices. Hence any history which is not a mere record of facts will be an intensely personal and individual affair, reflecting the mind of the writer at the same time as it records the passage of events.

Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man* is a cast, in point. He was struck by the fact that Africa was commonly supposed to be a continent apart, lying right outside the main stream of the world's affairs, and he wished, therefore, to write a history of Africa showing how profoundly Africa had affected the world,

first through the influence of its religions, secondly through the growth of the slave trade. But in order to demonstrate the extent of Africa's influence on the world Reade found himself led insensibly into describing the world as well as Africa.

Moreover, he had read Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and was an ardent convert to the theory of evolution. He wanted to unfold the great chronicle of life, from those first living specks which floated about on the scum of the intertidal shores to the scientific achievements of the nineteenth century. His enthusiasm for evolution led him into violent hostility to revealed religion. Man, he held, was not a degenerate angel, but a promoted ape, and those who believed in a personal God, a Fall, a Heaven and a Hell were falsifying the teaching of evolution. In his history, then, Reade tries to describe the origin of religion as an outcome of fear, and to exhibit it as a phase through which man passes during the period of his adolescence, but with which he will be able to dispense when full grown.

What Reade calls, therefore, "this long and gloomy period of the human race," by which he means the religious period, will come to an end as soon as men achieve liberty and learn to regulate their lives by reason.

Reade's anti-religious sentiments caused his book to be universally execrated by the pious reviewers of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it sold like hot cakes. It was an entirely new thing in histories. Not only did it regard the whole of history from an African angle, in itself an unprecedented thing, but it really did begin at the beginning and end at the end. An additional attraction was Reade's wonderful style. He is witty, eloquent, extraordinarily clear and never dull.

At any moment you may come across a passage such as: "Animal heat is solar heat; a blush is a stray sunbeam; Life is bottled sunshine, and Death the silent-footed butler who draws out the cork." And his account of the slave trade and of the agitation for its abolition is one of the most moving things in history.

The Martyrdom of Man is a book everybody should read, and it costs only 2s. 6d.

The greatest of universal historians is H. G. Wells. Everybody has heard of *The Outline of History*, many of us have read it. It was followed by the briefer *Short History of the World*, of which the Labour Publishing Company have now produced a cheap edition at Is. 6d. without any omissions from the text.

I am not going to pretend to review the *Outline*. I know that each expert on a special period, jealous, perhaps, of a man who insists on using his eyes instead of peering through a microscope, says that Wells is inadequate and misleading on his period, though he is no doubt very good on other people's periods, and I know that despite the experts the *Outline* is a very great book.

There are, however, just two points upon which I wish to touch, as showing the value of universal histories in general and of Wells's history in particular.

The first is, that a universal history must of necessity be a history of movements rather than of individuals. Thus we get rid of the taint of kings and generals from the very beginning. Wells, for example, has a vivid chapter describing the Mongol invasions which in the thirteenth century established an empire that stretched right across Asia from China to the Black Sea. Perhaps because he is something of a nomad himself, Wells is extraordinarily good and vivid on the periodic incursions of nomadic outsiders, and the attention which he bestows upon them is one of the distinguishing features of his history. But whereas others have dramatized the Mongol leaders, Jenghis Khan and Tamurlane, Wells is concerned to describe the habits of the people, the effect of their impact upon the older civilization, and its reaction upon the Mongols themselves.

In the second place, Wells gives us for the first time a proper historical perspective. We get things "oriented," as it were, and the effect of this orientation is to make us realize the novelty of civilization. It is an episode, one among many, the latest in the career of man, just as man is the latest episode in the career of the earth. "It is barely a matter of seventy generations between ourselves and Alexander"; "half the duration of human civilization, and the keys to all its chief institutions are to be found before Sargon I. (2570 B.C.); yet man is thousands of

years older than the earliest institution, and for millions of years **before man** there was life.

It is **this newness of** civilization that in Wells's view affords **the chief hope for the** future. The facts of evolution are undoubted ; life began as an eddy in the primeval slime ; it culminates to-day in **the** brain of Mr Wells. But some, while admitting the process, have doubted the progress. Mr Wells, however, has no **doubts**. Evolution for him is progress, and when we point to the wickedness of man, his selfishness, his political childishness, his inability to behave himself or to keep his hands off his neighbours, Wells has simply to emphasize his youth. Civilization is in its childhood, and we are mere babies, with the instincts of babies, to whom, however, science has opened a vista of infinite possibilities.

History, in short, for Wells reveals to us " a being at first scattered and blind and utterly confused, feeling its way slowly to the security and salvation of an ordered and coherent purpose."

Books to read

The Martyrdom of Man by Winwood Reade (Watts)

The Outline of History by H. G. Wells (Cassell)

A Short History of the World by H. G. Wells (Labour Publishing Co.)

A little philosophy

I The non-existence of matter

'WHAT RIDICULOUS NONSENSE! YOU DON'T MEAN TO SAY YOU are going to write that sort of stuff in *The New Leader!*'

The speaker, a well-known figure in the movement, anxious for the reputation of the paper, was referring to philosophy. I had mentioned that I had been reading a book entitled *Contemporary British Philosophy*, in which sixteen of our most eminent philosophers had expressed their beliefs about the Universe. I said that, so far as I could gather, while they disagreed on every subject on which disagreement was possible, there was one point on which most of them were unanimous, and that was the non-existence of what is commonly called matter. Chairs and tables, houses and taxi-cabs, were not, they thought, things which really existed in the Universe. It was this belief in particular that my friend had stigmatized as ridiculous nonsense, and it was the suggestion that this should form the subject of an article in *The New Leader* that raised his indignant protest.

I pointed out as mildly as I could that the belief might or might not be nonsense, but that a large number of thinners, whose intellectual capacity exceeded both his and mine, had held it; that all those who had reflected for any length of time on this subject had flirted with it even if they had not embraced it; and that, as it was, to say the least of it, an unusual- and somewhat startling belief, it might interest readers of the paper to learn what, if any, were the grounds for holding it.

My friend dismissed these remarks with one word; "Fiddlesticks!*" He then went on to say that men returning in the

evening from a hard day's work had neither time nor patience for that kind of stuff. Philosophy was all very well for those who had nothing better to do. Meanwhile, if I liked to inflict this rigmarole upon my unoffending readers, it was my funeral and not his. Whereat he sniffed and went to bed.

He may be right, but I swore to him that he was wrong, and so, to save my own face, I must write this article to put the matter to the test. If people find the subject not wholly devoid of interest, they will, I have no doubt, write me letters which will convince him. But I warn them that, if they do, I shall return to the subject in later articles.

What, then, if any, are the reasons for supposing that material objects do not exist?

If I press my tongue against my teeth and ask myself the question, "What is it that I experience or am aware of?" the usual answer would be, "I am aware of my teeth." But is this answer correct? Is not what I really experience a feeling in my tongue, a feeling caused, perhaps, by the contact between my tongue and my teeth, but nevertheless a feeling which is located in my tongue? Supposing I press my fingers against the table, is what I experience the table? At first sight it would seem that this is the case. Later reflection, however, suggests that the thing which I immediately experience - that which, as we say, I feel - is a sensation in my fingers, a sensation in this case of hardness, of smoothness, and of coolness.

To take another example: let us suppose that I stand two feet away from the fire. I experience heat, and I say that the heat is in, or is an attribute of, the fire. If, however, I approach nearer to the fire, so that the distance that separates me from it diminishes from two feet to two inches, the sensation of heat grows in intensity until it passes insensibly into one of pain. Does that mean that the pain is in the fire? Clearly not. Yet the pain is only a more intense degree of the heat. It seems to follow that the heat was no more a quality of the fire than was the pain, but that each was a feeling or sensation of mine.

Let us now suppose that a colour-blind man and I, who have normal vision, look at the same carnation. I see a green carna-

tion and he sees a blue one. Does that mean that the carnation is at the same time both blue and green, or does it mean that the different colours which the carnation appears to have are not qualities of the carnation at all, but are projected into it, as it were, by our respective sights? If the nerves of my eyes are of such-and-such a character, I see green; if they are of a different character, I see blue. Differences of colour appear, therefore, to be due to differences in the seeing qualities of those who observe the object which is said to have the colour. But the colour is not a quality of the object, any more than the heat was a quality of the fire.

Let us take as a further instance an object's size. The leg of a cheese mite is so small that no human eye can, except with the aid of a microscope, discern it. Are, we, then, to suppose that the mite is also unable to see his own leg? This seems unlikely. If, indeed, it were the case, the mite would be unable to take care of his leg, to clean it, to use it effectivly, or to remove it from impending danger. It can hardly be doubted, then, that the leg of the mite does appear to him, and, what is more, probably seems as large to him as our own legs do to us. What, then, is the real size of the leg of the mite? It appears to have different sizes according to the nature of the eyes that look at it. To the mite's eye one size, to the human eye plus a microscope another size, to the human eye plus a telescope none at all. Does it not seem to follow that size is not an attribute of the object, but is a quality dependent upon the conditions of our observation, and the nature of the instrument with which we observe?

What is true of size is true of shape. What is the shape of a penny? Most people would say that it is circular; yet from many points of view it appears oval. From whatever point of view we regard it, its shape differs. Is not the shape, then, also dependent upon our angle of vision?

So far, my aim has been to give instances showing that the qualities which objects appear to possess do not belong to them in their own right, but are, as it were, projected into them by us. Now let us attempt a little interpretation.

Here science comes to our aid, and explains to us what *it* is that

happens when we see something. A physical object sends out rays of light which, after travelling through the ether, touch the nerves of the eye. Here they produce a disturbance which may be compared to the ringings of a bell, and this bell-ringing is conveyed along wires-which are our nerve chords-to the brain. When it reaches the brain we become conscious of it, and the result of the process is that, as we put it, we see the object. But if we ask what it is that we really experience, it is not the object at all, but the bell-ringing or, in other words, the nervous disturbance in our brains.

The brain, then, is like a lighted screen in a dark cabinet. The outside world sends messages along our nerve chords, which are thrown upon the screen in the form of pictures, or representations, of the objects which send the messages. What we know are always the pictures and never the objects.

Thus, when we think we are experiencing the qualities of objects, what we are in fact aware of are the sensations these alleged qualities produce in us. It is for this reason that people see and hear things differently. Just as when we tried to touch our teeth we only felt our tongue, just as the warmth of the fire, the colour of the carnation and the size of the leg of the cheese mite all turned out to be things which were in ourselves and not attributes belonging to the fire, the carnation and the cheese mite's leg, so it can be shown that all material qualities are really sensations of ours, lighted pictures thrown on the dark screen of our minds by the objects existing in the external world.

But if we take all the qualities which an object possesses and show them to be sensation's of ours, what is left of the object? Is there, in fact, any object left at all? A chocolate is brown, soft, sticky, and sweet to the taste. If we abstract the qualities of brownness, softness, stickiness and sweetness, what remains? What is it that had these qualities but now has them no longer? The obviout answer is the chocolate minus its colour, consistency and taste. But is this residue anything at all? Supposing that it is, it will still be only in virtue of those qualities which we have still left in it that we shall be able to know it. Without these remaining qualities it would be nothing.

If, then, we strip away all the qualities of an object, there is literally nothing left. There is, that is to say, no substratum of matter in which the qualities, as it were, inhere - which acts, that is to say, as a foundation of the qualities, but which is itself without qualities. An object, then, is the sum-total of the qualities which it can be found to possess. Since, as we have seen, these qualities can all be resolved into the ideas, impressions and sensations of the person who knows them, it follows that objects are parts of the minds of those who know them. They form a collection of ideas and sensations in our minds, and, as such, they cease to exist when they are not being known.

Matter, therefore, is an illusion, and the external world of objects, brought into being by our acts of perceiving and knowing, goes out of existence, so far as we are concerned, when we cease to perceive it. It may, of course, still exist in the mind of some other person who perceives it, but if nobody perceives it at all, not even God, it will cease to exist

This doctrine, known as Subjective Idealism, was most cogently put forward by the English philosopher, Bishop Berkeley, who lived during the early eighteenth century (1685-1753). He summed it up by asserting that the existence of things consisted in their being perceived, by which he meant that, since things only existed in the minds of the persons who perceived them, when they were no longer perceived they ceased to exist. Hence Berkeley's famous assertion, one of the most celebrated remarks in the whole of philosophy:

"Some truths there are so near and obvious that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, viz., that all the choir of heaven and furniture of earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind - that their *being* is to be perceived or *known*."

Berkeley claimed that his doctrine was nothing but sheer common sense. The world at large has not shared his view, yet most philosophers, while not in all respects accepting it, have been Idealists¹ of one sort or another. They have held, that is to say, that reality is fundamentally mental in character, that

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nothing exists which is not in some way known, and that a world of external material objects existing independently of the perceiver is an illusion. I am not myself an Idealist, and I do not agree with Berkeley's conclusions. At the same time I find them very difficult to refute. I hope, therefore, in a later article to describe some of the reasons which have led philosophers to take a contrary view, and, in deference to my friend, to consider why we should bother our heads about the matter one way or the other.

¹ The word "Idealist" here has nothing to do with "ideals" as we understand them. It is derived from the word "idea" and conveys Berkeley's doctrine that the only things we know are our own sensations and ideas.

* * *

Books for reference

Theory of Vision and Other Writings (especially the three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous) by Bishop Berkeley (Dent, Everyman's Library)

A Treatise on Human Nature by David Hume (Dent, Everyman's Library)

The Problems of Philosophy by Bertrand Russell (Williams & Norgate Home University Series)

Introduction to Modern Philosophy by C. E. M. Joad (Oxford University Press, World's Manuals)

A little philosophy

2 *What do we perceive?*

MY LAST INCURSION INTO PHILOSOPHY PROVOKED A SHOAL of letters. The writers of these letters, while expressing every sort and shade of opinion, concurred in the main on three points. First, that my friend was talking nonsense when he said that philosophy was nonsense ; secondly, that, nevertheless, the philosophy of Berkeley which asserted the non-existence of matter *was* nonsense ; and thirdly, that the subject was exceedingly interesting and should be pursued in another article.

With regard to propositions one and three, I am in agreement with my correspondents. With regard to proposition two, I think I am in agreement with them, but am not quite sure. Since, however, it is the business of the philosopher and the politician to argue on any side of any question, I shall do my best in this article to give reasons for the belief in the existence of an external world. Whether it is a world of matter is another question, upon which readers must endeavour to make up their minds at the end of the article.

First, however, let me try to remove a misconception. Berkeley did not say positively there is no such thing as matter. What he did say was that we never perceive or know matter. Whenever we do try to know it, our own sensations and ideas intervene between us and it (if, in fact, there is an *it*), so that what we do in fact know are sensations and ideas of our own.

Now it may, of course, be true that the world is full of things which we not only never do know or can know, but which are different in kind from everything that we do know or can know. We do not, it is admitted, know that it is not full of such things.

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But the fact that we do not know that it is not, is no reason for supposing that it is. Thus, I do not know that the planet Venus is not inhabited by long-eared jabberwocks who spend their time in doing purple quadratic equations. But the fact that I do not know this does not seem to me to afford a ground for believing that Venus is inhabited by beings of this type engaged in this peculiar kind of occupation.

Similarly the fact - if it is a fact - that nobody has ever known or met with a piece of matter, although it does not positively entitle us to say that matter does not exist, does give good ground for supposing that the universe is peopled only with the things we do know—namely, sensations and ideas. That at least I take to be Berkeley's point.

But is it a fact that the only things we know are our own sensations and ideas? The answer to this question is a difficult one, and it is not made easier by the fact that whatever the things that we do know may be, they are almost certainly not the chairs and tables in which most people believe. A moment's examination will show that this is the case.

Let us suppose that we place a shilling upon the table and look at it from the edge of the table. What we shall see is a shining elliptical something. Furthermore, from whatever position we look at the shilling (excepting only from the one position which is perpendicularly above the shilling) the shape of this something will continue to be elliptical, the ellipse varying in degrees of fatness and thinness.

Now a shilling is supposed to be circular; it follows, therefore, that, since what we see is elliptical, what we see is certainly not a shilling. Now let us suppose that I look at the shilling from a distance of a yard and you look at it from a distance of ten yards. What I see will certainly be larger than what you see. From this it seems to follow, first, that each of us is seeing something different; and, secondly, since the shilling has a constant size, that neither of us is seeing the shilling. Let us further suppose that a florin is placed on the same table as a shilling, and that I look at the two coins from a position which is considerably nearer to the place where the shilling is than it is to

the place where the florin is. The thing, whatever it may be, which I see in the place where the shilling is, will then be larger than the thing which I see in the place where the florin is. But the florin is larger than the shilling. The same conclusion appears, therefore, to hold - namely, that whatever the things are that I am seeing they are certainly not a shilling and a florin. What, then, are they?

To this question many philosophers, in fact most of those who do not agree with Bishop Berkeley, answer that they are sense data. The term "sense data" may be translated "things given to the senses," and by it is meant whatever it is that we actually and immediately experience by means of our senses when, as we say, we see and touch an object.

Now everyone would admit that when I look at what is called a table I do not see the whole table. What I see at most is two of its legs, the surface, or rather a part of the surface of its top, the edge of the top and possibly the corners at each end of the edge. The rest of the table, the greater part of which I do not see, is supplied as it were by an act of mental addition to the part I do see. Suppose I try through my other senses to make further acquaintance with the table, I shall feel something that is cool, smooth and hard, if I press my hand against the top, and hear a sharp rapping noise if I strike it with my knuckles. What, then, I *actually* experience when, as I say, I know or experience a table is a series of distinct isolated *things* - a patch of colour, in this case brown, a corner, a rap of sound, a cold something, a smooth something, and so on.

Now it is to these *things* that we give the name of sense data ; and the important point to notice is that it is collections of sense data, and not chairs and tables, that we actually meet with when we try to experience the outside world. The chairs and tables are not experienced; they are constructed by our minds on the basis of the sense data which are experienced.

Now, since we never meet with chairs and tables, but only with sense data, it is clear that we have no reason for supposing that chairs and tables exist. We do not, of course, positively know that they do not exist, but if we apply the argument about

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the jabberwoks on Venus, we shall see that there is a strong presumption against them.

How is it, then, it may be asked, that everybody believes in them? How do they come to be constructed? It is clear that if, after having made my observation of the alleged table, I slightly change my position and again observe it, the collection of sense data which I shall experience will be quite different from the former collection; and if twenty other people are observing the table from twenty different points of view, it is also clear that each will experience a set of sense data which is different from the sets of sense data experienced by me and by the other nineteen. In other words, the '* table ' (which I put in inverted commas to indicate its mythical character) will appear different at each place from which it is looked at. Now each of these sets of sense data, and each different appearance of the table, has as good a right to be regarded as being the table as the set or series which I originally experienced, and the appearance which was presented at my first point of observation.

The table then is *each and all* of the twenty sets of sense data which are experienced at each of the twenty points of observation ; and since, from whatever point of view the table is looked at, a different appearance will be presented, we may define the table as the complete system of appearances, or sets of sense data, which the table, if it existed, would present to all possible points of observation.

These sets of sense data are collected together in accordance with the laws of perspective and in virtue of their close resemblance to each other, and the result is what we call a table. A physical object, then, has no real existence; it is like a scientific law or formula, a shorthand method for collecting together under one heading innumerable sets of sense data experienced at different places, which, though distinct from each other, are yet so alike that they can be called the sense data proceeding from one and the same imaginary thing. In just the same way we speak of "humanity," not because a thing humanity really exists, but because the word "humanity " is a convenient shorthand formula for referring to all those beings (not only those

who have existed and do exist, but all those who may exist hereafter) who are sufficiently alike to enable them to be grouped together as men.

A thing, then, is nothing more nor less than a set of sense data, and each sense datum has an equal right to be called an aspect or appearance of the thing. Thus the shape of the shilling is the series of shapes, both elliptical and circular, which it presents to all possible points of observation, and the colour of the flower is all the different colours which it will appear to have to people with every kind of vision looking at it from every possible place - that is to say, both to people with normal vision and to people who are colour-blind.

We are now in a position to frame our answer to the Idealism of Berkeley. Berkeley, arguing from the fact that the same thing appeared different to different people, concluded that what they experienced was not an external thing at all, but was simply their own sensations and impressions. Since I can see a tulip red when a colour-blind man sees it pink, and since it is difficult to suppose that the same tulip is both red and pink at the same time, it seemed to be a natural inference that the colour of the tulip - that, namely, which was actually seen - was a product of the conditions under which it was seen, was, in fact, part of and one with the seeing of it.

What was true of colour was true of shape, of size, and of all other qualities. And if it is a fact that I and the colour-blind man are both looking at the same thing, of which we obtain different views, it is hard to resist Berkeley's conclusion. But, according to the analysis given above, we are not obtaining different views of the same thing: we are literally looking at different things. And since each person sees a different member of the collection of sense data which constitutes what is called the tulip, it ceases to be a matter for surprise that each person should get a different impression of what is called "the object."

Once we can see our way to explain how it is that different people see what is called the same thing differently, the chief reason for supposing that we know only our sensations or ideas disappears.

What do we perceive?

It is, I think, important when considering this question to make a distinction between our knowledge of a thing and the thing which we know. It is necessary to emphasize this apparently obvious distinction because of a confusion introduced by the usages of ordinary language. We constantly speak of "bearing a thing in mind," or "having a friend in mind," when what we mean is not that the thing or the friend is actually in our minds, but simply that a thought of the thing or of the friend is in the mind. Now, once the distinction between thought and thing is admitted, it can be shown that all the arguments brought forward by Idealists to show that what we know depends upon the nature of our nervous system, or the character of our vision, fail to apply to the object which is known, but do apply, and apply only, to our knowledge of it. Hence the object is something different from our knowledge of it, and the existence of the external world is saved.

How on this basis an act of knowledge can ever take place, how a something which is mental can ever bridge the gulf which separates it from what is material, how, in short, mind, if it be different from matter, can ever "get" at matter in the sense in which knowing it implies, is unfortunately one of the most difficult questions in either science or philosophy.

Books for reference

Problems of Philosophy Bertrand Russell (Williams & Norgate)

Mysticism and Logic (chapters 7 and 8) Bertrand Russell (Longmans)

Philosophical Studies by G. E. Moore (Kegan Paul)

Introduction to Modern Philosophy by C. E. M. Joad (Oxford University Press, World's Manuals)

A little philosophy

3 *How to be happy*

AS TO THE DESIRABILITY OF HAPPINESS THERE CAN BE NO two opinions. Those poignant words of the popular song, *I Want to be Happy, Don't You?* evoke an immediate response in every breast, and philosophers, condescending for once to approve, instead of ridiculing, the yearnings of the human heart have held the attainment of one's own personal happiness to be the object of all human activity. The unselfish, they say, are merely those who happen to get more pleasure from giving pleasure to others than from directly pleasing themselves, and even the martyr, who goes to the stake for his convictions, only consents to endure five minutes' agony in an earthly fire in order to escape an eternity of torment in an infernal one. Self-denying goodness is, in short, a kind of insurance; the premiums are paid in the form of self-mortification in the present and the policy is drawn in the shape of eternal bliss in the hereafter.

The elevation of these views leaves something to be desired ; but it was those most respectable and English of philosophers, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, who held that the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number was the object of society and the duty of the individual, virtue being merely that kind of conduct which promoted the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

So far so good, but it must be admitted that it is not very far. The difficulty begins as soon as we proceed to inquire what happiness is and how we are to attain it.

There are various definitions in the field. The philosopher Aristotle advanced what is known as the doctrine of the mean.

How to be happy

Do everything a little and nothing overmuch and you will be happy. Develop every side of your nature; give your mind, your body and your soul free and equal play; work, sleep, drink and eat, think, smoke and make love, lose your temper on occasion, but not too often, indulge your senses when you are minded, but not too much, worship God, but don't abase yourself before Him, help your neighbour, but don't prefer him to yourself, take every pleasure as it comes, but take care to desist before you have had enough, hold any belief that attracts you, but never to the point of being ready to die for it, gratify your tastes, but avoid satiety like the devil - and you will be happy. A good doctrine this, but meet for the middle-aged rather than for hot-headed youth.

Others have held that happiness is chiefly to be found in doing what our ancestors have done from time immemorial; for these activities, they say, there is an instinctive longing in our blood. Pray a little, hunt a little, fight a little, dig a little in the earth, boast, and sing together in chorus, make love and go on the sea in ships, be sometimes alone with Nature and never too far from her - and again you will be happy.

Shaw tells us that the secret of being happy is not to give ourselves enough leisure to wonder whether we are miserable or not, advocating a full life and a manifold of duties. But he also, through the mouth of Mrs Knox, in *Fanny's First Play*, warns us that if we have not "that happiness within" we may spend our whole lives in pursuit of the things that are thought to make men happy and it will avail us nothing.

"That happiness within" appears to consist in, and to depend very largely upon, the lack of most of those things which bring happiness from without, so that we approach within measurable distance of the doctrine of the ascetic and the sage, that happiness is an affair of the spirit, hindered rather than helped by the busyness of the mind and the well-being of the body. Happiness, it seems, involves, in any event, an element of renunciation. There are some things we must give up if we would grasp it. Some things! But precisely what things?

To this question there is no agreed answer; men know how to

build machines, to do sums, to make money and to soar into **the** sky; they know that if oxygen and hydrogen are associated the result will be water; but for the production of happiness, **the** greatest of all goods, the recipe is not known.

The subject, moreover, is hedged about with paradox and **beset** with surprise, and, though we may not know how to secure happiness, we can at least expose some of the pitfalls which lie in the way of its attainment. Because of these pitfalls the road to happiness is indirect. Much as we desire happiness, we may not go straight to it. This is a paradox which happiness shares with beauty and with sleep. In the case of most of the things which we desire, we believe that the harder we try the more likely we are to obtain them. Many people hold, though falsely, that there is nothing a man may not win if he is sufficiently determined to win it. "Where there is a will there is a way," they say, and even though there be no way to the moon, for the common run of things the proverb contains its grain of truth. But with happiness it is **not** so.

Happiness may not be sought directly, a fact which all seekers after pleasure persistently ignore. The kingdom of happiness, like the kingdom of beauty, is not to be taken by storm, any more than it is to be purchased by dollars. Hence millionaires and society leaders range the world in vain and restless pursuit of that instinctive satisfaction which comes to artists, workers and some tramps unsought. Set out to seek happiness and it will elude you: throw yourself body and soul into your work, devote yourself to some cause, lift yourself out of the selfish pit of vanity and desire, which is the self, by giving yourself to something which is greater than the self, and on looking back you will find that you have been happy. Happiness, in short, is not a house that can be built by men's hands; it is a flower that surprises you, a song which you hear as you pass the hedge, rising suddenly and simply in the night, and dying down again.

From all of which it is clear **that we know** very little **about** happiness, much less, indeed, than we could wish to; we cannot get it quickly when we want it; we find **that the price we have to pay for it outweighs the value of the happiness we have**

bought, while, as poets and moralists, under the heading of the vanity of human wishes, are never tired of telling us, we find that the things for which we have longed do not, when obtained, bring the happiness we expected.

No, assuredly the recipe for the production of happiness is not known. Which brings me at last to Dr Dearden's book in the hope that he may provide it. *The Science of Happiness*, it is called, and the title, you will agree, is sufficiently encouraging, the more so since Dr Dearden approaches his subject with all the confidence of a medical man, who is already the author of a book on *The Technique of Living*. Now let me say at once that he has written an eminently sane and sensible work, full of good advice and judicious tips, and if we could but follow the advice, and adopt the tips, I have not the slightest doubt that our happiness would be increased.

But, as with most advice, so with Dr Dearden's ; the trouble is not that we do not agree that it is good advice, but that we do not follow it. What is good for man was discovered long ago ; what remains to be discovered is how to make him do what is good for him.

And so it is that the excellent Dr Dearden, while telling us much that is excellent, tells us little that is new ; so old, indeed, are the goods he has to offer that I am afraid they are even a little trite.

For example, married men are much nicer to their wives if they have plenty of men friends, and can spend an occasional evening at the club. Of course they are; even their wives know that, although they do not always act upon the knowledge. If you are angry, and a woman, have a good cry; it will relieve your emotions and you will feel better. Worry is due to introspection ; if you did not think about yourself you would not worry. What is more, say I, the worst of being worried about yourself is that you get worried about being worried about yourself. Very well, then, says Dr Dearden; "lose then for ever this habit of introspection and self-analysis." If you ask how, the answer is, by giving your mind to other things. "Plan out your day in advance," therefore, "and adhere to it." Excellent, as also is

the advice: "Get up when you are called at once and with gusto."

Some of Dr. Dearden's exhortations read like advertisements for Kruschen salts. Of such is the doctrine of "the Morning Beam." It is for those given to dejection or slackness, and is as follows: "On rising from your bed go to your looking-glass and force yourself to greet with a beaming smile that curiously complex fellow who is yourself . . . it is perfectly true that you cannot be happy to order, but you can *pretend* to be happy at any rate . . . let your Morning Beam include every possible gesture of face and body which you can devise and accomplish to express your elation at the moment."

Somewhat later in the book Dr. Dearden has some excellent precepts for married happiness, the adoption of which should go far to empty the divorce courts. But really, I think he will have to revise his doctrine of "the Morning Beam," or he will mar more marriages than he saves. As a cure for depression in general he bids you "Throw up your head, square your shoulders, and tell yourself aloud, and in a cheery, confident tone of voice, that you are, fortunately, aware of the cause of this emotion, and aware, also, of how to dissipate it at once."

No, Dr Dearden, it really will not do. Like the lady in the song, I want to be happy too, and I wish you could tell me how But you haven't.

**This book was set in Linotype 9 point Times New Roman.
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