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THE OLD CONTEMPORARIES

THE OLD CONTEMPORARIES

by

E. V. LUCAS

' In moments of depression I try to remember that a foreign waiter said to me on one first of January : " Good years and good 'appy to you ! Good lock ! " '

OLD CLAUS

METHUEN & GO. LTD. *LONDON*
36 Essex Street W.C.

WARNING

In this book a large number of people, most of them, unhappily, dead, are men-

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TO

E. F. G.

THE OLD CONTEMPORARIES

I

BUT for Old Claus looking in from time to time in his casual way, correcting forgetfulnesses and recalling the past, which always, as one advances in years, becomes more interesting than the present—but for this I should have been lost in books ; and books, of course, should be not a high-road but a byway.

You see, Old Claus and I are the same age; and that means much. Contemporaries come first. Young people I like, now and then, if only to recognize in them, before the years tamed us into submission, the rebels that we ourselves once were ; but I don't like them for long. They bore me, and I am uncomfortably suspicious that I bore them. Contemporaries are best. The young for the young, and the ageing for the ageing : that is what I feel, and that is what the young feel, too.

THE CRITICAL YOUNG

You can see them getting restless. ' He's not a bad old boy, it's true, and his facts are useful; but Eve's waiting at that cocktail-party. . . .' That is what is going on in their minds.

Also they prefer made-dishes to saddle of mutton.

II

OLD Claus is a creature whom I seem to have known all my life, although only recently have we become intimate: since, in fact, I have taken so much more to retrospection. In earlier days there was too much to do, but latterly I have been ruminating, and Old Claus has helped. Without his presence I should have forgotten all kinds of things I now recall.

It was he, for instance, who forced on me the problems of heredity. Before that, I had not the time to ponder on them; it was sufficient to be fulfilling daily obligations. But Old Claus wants to know, and I now see that it is questionable whether any new trait of character or quality of genius has ever come into the world. Some hold that such manifestations can originate; others, that everything that we now have, we always had, but that, according as ancestral blood is mixed, a fresh shape, a fresh impetus, can be given to it. I do not pretend to have any views of importance; all I know is that in my forbears I can discern the seeds of most

human action, and that in my own case those seeds can be mingled.

If I am not, for instance, as sternly logical in daily life as my great-grandfather John Rickman, it is probably because there intervened between him and me such a sentimentalist as my mother could be. If to know all is to forgive all, so does familiarity with the ramifications of genealogy tend to tolerance ; but, none the less, I suspect that the rectification of human society calls for injustice.

In any case I am sure that if I were owed money by a humble creditor, and he arrived a few minutes late to make his payment, I should take the sum. But see how my great-grandfather could deal with such a situation, as often described to me by my remote cousin **John** Home, who had been his youthful pupil : **John** Home, who lived to a great age and knew Sussex like a well-thumbed book, but who never lost his awed respect for John Rickman and never tired of extolling his rigorous sense of duty.

You will find in my *Highways and Byways of Sussex* an account of John Horne, but I wrote that book too long ago—before I had in mind the real questions I wanted to ask him. It seems to be always a little too late.

In the eighteen-forties, the period of two of the anecdotes that follow, John Horne was an

inmate of John Rickman's house at Wellingham, learning the business of malting and brewing which was carried on at Lewes. It was many years later, but with a clear Quaker-like brain, that he recalled for me one ofthexamples of blended unimaginative precision and tyranny of which John Rickman was capable; and of which I, too, I suppose, should be capable, but for the dilution referred to : a dilution that, it is disconcerting to realize, might, under different conditions of heredity, not exist at all or might be gall unalloyed.

Let John Home be the narrator, and we will call the debtor Richard Blackman.

Richard Blackman, having at last succeeded in amassing the amount of his final obligation, £100, had arranged to be at Mr. Rickman's Lewes office at twelve o'clock next market day, to hand it over and get his quittance.

' Twelve o'clock came '—John Home is speaking—* and there was no Richard Blackman.

' " Let us start now," said John Rickman, as the horse was ready.

' " Won't thee give him another five minutes ? " I pleaded.

' " Let us start now," said John Rickman, gathering up the reins.'

(I remember so clearly how John Home used to act this : first the prosperous, self-righteous Quaker, speaking ; then his own reply ; then

looking like a horse. As I have said elsewhere, he could look like any animal in turn.)

'As we were crossing the bridge, who should run up to the gig but Richard Blackman?

' " I am very sorry, Mr. Rickman," he said, " but I was detained. I couldn't get here before."

' John Rickman pulled out his watch. " I can remember no appointment with any one on Lewes bridge at five minutes past twelve," he replied.

'" But here is the money, Mr. Rickman," said Blackman, proffering a bag.

' " I cannot do business on Lewes bridge," replied the maltster. " I will see thee in my office at twelve o'clock next market day " : and he whipped up the horse and was off.

' "John," he said, turning to me, "when we get home thee must take thy slate and work out what is a week's interest on £100 at five per cent." '

And here I may interpolate the statement that the Quakers of my early days rarely talked grammatically. My uncle Joseph Drewett, who was a schoolmaster, always said ' Thou knowest' —possibly because he was a schoolmaster and wished to behave, and to be known, as such—but the ordinary Quakers, even of good education, said ' Thee knows .'

That was one of John Home's stories. Another told how John Rickman, returning one day to Wellingham, met one of his daughters leaving

the house with what looked like a basket of food. He had, by the way, nine children : first there were four daughters, then a son, and then four daughters more.

' She told him that a poor woman, a gypsy, had been confined in a neighbouring ditch, and she was taking her some necessities of life.

' " Wait a little while," said John Rickman. " This needs thought," and he walked off to see where the woman lay. He then sent for two of his men, and the patient and child were carefully removed to another ditch a field or so distant and made as comfortable as possible.

' " Now," he said to one of the men, " thee go to the Parish overseer and say that a woman has borne a child just off my ground, and she should at once be taken to the Poor-house."

' He then returned to the spot where his daughter was waiting. " Thee can take the basket to the poor woman now," he said. " She is lying in the first parish meadow."

' It was one of these labourers who, when asked by John Rickman if he would like a glass of beer, was so foolish as to reply " I don't mind if I do ".

' " If thee don't mind if thee do," said the old precisian ; " neither do I " ; and the offer was withdrawn.

' If I have any tendency to self-protective prevision,' I added, ' it comes from John Rickman.'

' It doesn't matter who it is,' said Old Claus :

' but somewhere in his complicated system there is a vein of simplicity. It is, indeed, one of the oddest things to be noticed as one passes through life, meeting all sorts and conditions of men : this persistence of simplicity. Company-promoters, music-hall managers, cinema producers, Turf commission agents, political agents, barristers—even such calculating and sophisticated creatures as these are known to be are simple somewhere.

'John Rickman was simple somewhere.'

I agreed. ' There was a professional cynic, in other words a leader-writer, of my acquaintance,' I said, ' who was the strangest mixture of terror of being commonplace or in any way ordinary, horror of being taken in and caught napping, and the other ingredient.

'Meeting him one morning in the Strand, I was struck by his unusual attire. He was wearing a tall hat of obsolete shape, and, though not in black, he had a black tie, and a black band was on his sleeve.

' Falling into step with me, he told me that he was in great trouble : his little boy had just died—only six months old. The child had never been strong, but they had hoped to pull him through. The funeral was to be on Monday. He told this with an expression of complete dejection, but he was puffing away at his pipe all the while, and he was not displeased with

the leader he had just written—for he was on an evening paper and had finished for the day.

'Soon, however, I discovered that he was enjoying the distinction that his bereavement gave him. He had never before lost a little boy, and in the midst of his grief he was interested in the new experience.

'Not long after I had met and joined him, we ran into another acquaintance and he had to be told, too. What astonished one who has an acute dislike of repetition, even among old friends, was that, although I was within hearing, the journalist related the story in exactly the same words that he had used to me. He still wore his air of profound sorrow, but he still puffed at his pipe.

'And then we met another man known to him, and again he recounted his woe and allowed me to overhear.

'From having mourned with him, I began to envy. It was a wonderful thing, I thought, to lose a child.'

'This John Rickman and his wife Sarah Home of Arundel had,' I said, 'ten children, of whom Benjamina, who married Edward Lucas, was my grandmother. The others were the two single sisters, Rachel and Sarah, who survived well into my time and succeeded to Wellingham; Priscilja, Emily, Lucy and Mary, who all died young; Christiana, who married my grandfather's brother Jeffery Lewes; Richard Peters, the only son,

who became the father of the horse-loving lady of whom I am going to tell thee—I mean you ; **and** Matilda, born in 1799, who did not marry **and** died in early life.

' Matilda seems to have been one of John Rickman's especial favourites. I find among his letters this moderately playful missive, dated at Wellingham on the 20th of tenth month, 1817 :

John Rickman begs his Daughter Matilda Rickman's acceptance of the enclosed, a sum that will just pay for a *neat useful table-writing desk*—on which he hopes she will execute many useful entertaining and edifying epistles to her friends and relations.'

' So he was not all iron,[5] said Old Claus.

' Iron,'I said,' when his will was being brooked. It may even be that this very Matilda was the heroine of another story of John Rickman's unwillingness to tolerate even the most harmless breach of promise. At the close of a day's visit to Brighton, one of the eight daughters was to be called for at Royal Crescent at 5.0 to join the others in the carriage for Wellingham. As, however, Matilda (shall we say ?) was able to leave earlier, she walked slowly along the Lewes Road waiting to be picked up. The carriage duly came ; but did Matilda's father stop ? Certainly not. He was not John Rickman for nothing. As she had not been at Royal Crescent when, according to plan, the tyrant had called, she must now find her way back to Wellingham as

best she could ! Certainly twelve miles ! What a father !

' I cannot tell how sane I am,' I went on—' probably every one has idiosyncrasies—but there is no doubt that certain Rickmans have been odd. Even Captain Eric Rickman, the racing expert of the *Daily Mail,* who may or may not be a member of the family, can give untrustworthy tips ; but this other horsey Rickman, Mary Hannah, my father's first cousin, had an interest in steeds which reached far beyond stable information, for she dedicated to them a meadow on her property at " Spence's ", now called " The Grey House ", just outside Lewes on Mailing Hill.

' This lady had such a humane feeling for horses, that she would make an irresistible offer to any driver who seemed to her to be unsympathetic ; and then provide the overworked animal with pasturage and comfort for life, and after its death give it the honours of burial. The story went that astute costermongers and gypsies, wishing to makea little extra money, would flog their beasts near her gates, in spite of the notice set up there:

Uphill, whip me not;
Downhill, hurry me not,

hoping that the humane Miss Rickman would emerge purse in hand; which she usually did.

' It is also told how another Rickman, but in this case, being the wife of a Rickman, she became

the genuine article only by adoption—still, like leads to like—it is told how she once dressed up as a man in order to take part freely in the Lewes bonfire celebrations. I know this is true because I have seen the photograph of her in the costume. Not bad for a Quaker in the last century ! '

' No,' said Old Claus. ' But every family cupboard has its skeleton.'

' No case of skeleton here,' I protested : ' an eccentric, merely.'

' Very well,' said Old Claus; ' every family cupboard has its eccentric, who may, or not, expose, and even rattle, its bones. And a very good thing, too.'

' To return to Mary Hannah Rickman,' I went on, ' she not only maintained horses as pensioners, but she was something of a she-Centaur, too, hiring regularly from a Brighton job-master named Alfred Dupont, to whom, as a mark of esteem, she once gave a very handsome group of equine statuary. I wonder where that is now.

' Meanwhile here is the inscription she prepared for Charlie, not a pensioner, but a mount, and circulated in print ;

On the night before his death, Charlie was occupied, as usual, with his doll " Maria ", tossing and shaking it about as a puppy might.

On the morning that he died, had he not seemed, in

every respect, in perfect condition, his good, kind groom would not have thought, for one moment, of taking him out to exercise. He dropped dead on his way to the nearest part of the downs, when passing the residence of Mr. Stone, Mailing Mill, whence sympathy and help were kindly given. Providentially, his rider escaped death or permanent injury, though greatiy shaken and bruised.

Often and often has Charlie listened to language such as the following : " Oh, Charlie, you *think* you live on crushed corn, and bran, and beans, and warm linseed mash, and what Mr. Strudwick calls ' lovely bits of hay—as sweet as honey,' and the best of carrots, and delightful fresh green meat, when it's in season ; but you really live, *as we all do,* on *love.* It is love that provides everything you have ; it is love that makes life sweet to you, and that gives you courage and spirits and appetite and opportunity to enjoy it."

He was never over tired or worried ; and, owing to his mistress's invariable practice of sitting forward, and riding with one pommel only, he never knew the torture of a sore back or wither, at any rate after coming into her hands. As a lady's saddle is now usually furnished, the rider's seat is made almost absolutely, almost contemptibly, secure ; but being independent of accurate balance, it is so, sadly too often, *at the cost of the horse's back.* And it is, surely, only owing to the use of the " crutch " that ladies can follow the chase to the bitter end. May God hasten the day when it shall be impossible to human beings to

" . . . mix their pleasure or their pride
With sorrow to the meanest thing that lives ! "

Charlie's sweet nature and lively disposition and quick intelligence endeared him to all who had anything to do with him. He was always ready to appear at the door or window of his box with his happy, communicative face, to give a greeting to his friends ; and the sight of his vacant

place and his empty belongings causes an indescriable pang at the heart. But, remembering the pleasure which a kind Providence permitted him to have and to give, and considering how well it was with him in life and in death, *gratitude* is, as it ought indeed to be, the dominant feeling regarding him.

It is consoling to reflect that, up to the last, he felt perfect confidence in the kindness and good-will of all who had to do with him; that, up to the last, *he knew that he was loved.* Would that every horse, that all cattle and every domesticated creature, could feel and know as much !

In the first hour of April the 3rd, in a still air, just touched with frost, under the clear light of moon and stars, aided by flitting lanterns, by kind and gentle and skilful hands, the beautiful dead form was laid to its last rest in its long home.

'And this is the full text of the verses, the first two lines of which were blazoned on Mailing Hill:

Uphill—whip me not.
Downhill—hurry me not.
On level road—spare me not.
Loose in stable—forget me not.
Of hay and corn—rob me not.
Of clean water—stint me not.
With sponge and brush—neglect me not.
Of soft dry bed—deprive me not.
Tired or hot—leave me not.
Sick or cold—chill me not.
With bit and reins—oh, jerk me not.
When you're angry—strike me not.

'One of Mary Hannah's pensioners' tombs, I remember, was to reach the sky ; but her trustees intervened and the meadow where the horses are buried is now level again. Some day archaeo-

logists, digging there, may get heart-disease from "fheir *trouvailles.*

'To be nearer in spirit to her beloved animals, she wore, like one of them, a white stocking and a brown.

'Mary Hannah Rickman, as I have said, was the great John Rickman's niece, daughter of his only son. I cannot claim any kinship to the John Rickman who invented the Census and was a midnight associate of Charles Lamb, but Thomas "Clio" Rickman of Lewes, the satirist and free-thinking friend and champion of Tom Paine, was a first cousin of John Rickman of Wellingham, and therefore we shared blood. It was "Clio" Rickman who wrote the epitaph on Thomas Tipper, the Newhaven brewer, the last lines of which Lamb (misquoting as usual) used to repeat, with great gusto :

> He well performed the husband's, father's, part,
> And knew immortal *Hudibras* by heart.

According to John Home, "Clio" Rickman was always considered the black sheep of the family, and his children were also in disgrace, as children too often are. There were eight in all, and what names he gave them !—Clio Alfred Washington, Rousseau Loffts, Volney, Petrarch, Stanhope : all of them, you see, associated with rebellion or communism. But what became of them I cannot say—except Volney, who was drowned in a mill-stream when quite young.

' The great John Rickman, " Clio's " cousin, so John Home told me, while not unaverse to the society of the free-thinker, would not let him meet the Wellingham ladies, and therefore entertained him at the " Bear ".

' Another member of the Rickman family who had gifts,' I said, ' was Thomas Rickman, the architect, born in 1776. He also was for a while a Quaker and lived at Lewes, but he broke away and became a public character. He was twice related, for, another first cousin of John Rickman of Wellingham, he married John's sister, my great-aunt, Lucy ; which, as she was his cousin, Quakers didn't permit. He, therefore, married her in the Cliffe church and began there his defection. As an architect he is still known for his work on the study of Gothic, which went into many editions, and it was he, before the Ecclesiastical Commissioners imposed restrictions and took over the responsibility, who wrote to all the Bishops urging that a knowledge of church architecture was essential to an incumbent. A very sensible position to take up.'

' Carlyle,' said Old Claus, ' laid it down that every clergyman should write the history of his parish—to keep him out of mischief; but I like this idea of knowledge of architecture to come first. What a lot of vandalism such familiarity with stone would have spared us !'

III

I WAS talking the other day,' I said,' with one of our heirs of the ages—not yet living real life, still at Oxford—and he was pitching into the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection.

'" No one goes to the Tate, anyway," he averred.

'" Pictures," he maintained—pitilessly, of course —" should hang where people live, as their painters meant them to. They should represent their owners' taste. What could be more inhuman than the corridors of the National Gallery, with no sense of comfort or domesticity, and on the walls pictures brought unmeaningly together from all over the world—pictures painted, every one, for other places ; many for churches ? "

' Hertford House, he went on, was even worse, for there there was the pretence of a home : its rooms had once been inhabited.

' No, he'd take jolly good care that he never set foot in any Gallery ; and he looked in the mirror while he said this and rearranged his tie.

' So you'll never,' I said, ' see Titian's " Bacchus and Ariadne", or Turner's " Evening Star",

or Hogarth's " Shrimp Girl ", or " The Death of Procris " by Piero da Cosimo, or Whistler's " Nocturne ", or " The Philosopher " by Rembrandt, or " The Entombment" by Bouts, or " The Crucifixion " by Antonello da Messina, or " The Woman with a Fan " by Velasquez, or William Nicholson's " Lowestoft Ware" or John's " Smiling Woman ".

'" Except by accident in reproduction, I most certainly shall not," he affirmed.

'All right,' I said. 'That's that. But it wouldn't surprise me if in a few years' time you were found haunting all these places. Even the Tate. But not yet. Just now it is perfection you want. I began like that, but I have grown to respect compromise. Human beings, even if they had it, wouldn't know what to do with perfection.]

' But how refreshing, now and then, to meet the young and hear them fulminate ! And if they saw things as we buffers do, and talked about them as we buffers do, how surprised we should be ! Yes, and how shocked ! In fact, how we should avoid them !'

' I have met your intolerant young friend,' said Old Claus. ' His name is Legion. We all know them. Even worse, we are often called on to help them, for an exacting view of life can lead to unemployment. I have on my hands a relation who, without any definite machine in his

mind, always looks on me as the God who can emerge from one. I suppose we all have such dependants.'

'AH,' I said.

' Well,' said Old Claus, ' the joke about my particular specimen, and the thing I enjoy, is that he never loses hope. Broken to-day, he is resilient to-morrow. A bouncing ball. The last time he called for advice, I recited to him this fable.

' " Once upon a time, Vincent," I said, " there was a young man of parts who, while others did the first thing that came to hand, spent his time in looking round for insufficiently developed industries into which he could throw the weight of his remarkable intelligence and zeal; and in the course of his investigations he realized that no viticulturist was devoting his energies to growing champagne strictly for use in the christening of newly-launched vessels. Although plenty of champagne existed admirably fitted for this purpose, there was no specific brand on the market.

' " By the time the young man had borrowed enough money to acquire a plot of land on a rocky plateau between Epernay and Rheims, and had planted his vines, the shipbuilding trade had slumped to such an extent that steamers were lying up in every British harbour, while, should a British vessel need christening, patriotic zeal ordained that a bottle of some Empire beverage shall be employed."

' " If you think that applies to me,'' said Vincent, " you're fantastically mistaken."

' " It amused me to write it," I said.

' " You're lucky," said Vincent. " And now let me tell you something. You will be pleased to hear that I have made my debut as a professional man. I won't say as a wage-earner, because there was no money in it; but it proves not only that I can rise to an emergency, but that I am far more versatile than I thought, or you could think.

' " It happened last evening," he continued. " I went alone to a play which many of the leading critics had found intensely funny but which to me was so depressing that at the end of the first act I left and started to walk home. Critics often write like that and I often leave theatres like that.

' " In Chesham Place a door suddenly opened, and a small excited girl in her best clothes ran down the steps, rushed up to me and seized me by the arm.

' " ' Please come and help us,' she said. ' We're doing charades and there must be another character for the doctor, and if he were a total stranger it would be much more fun.'

' " Naturally, having read my share of crime and mystery stories, all kinds of suspicions passed through my mind ; but, having also read *The New Arabian Nights,* I allowed myself to be drawn in.

' " The little girl was frightfully pitched-into

by some of the older people, but after they had looked me over and decided that I wasn't a crook, and when the child, who was a masterful creature, had told them how my presence as an unknown quantity would keep the audience guessing, they threw themselves into it and I was thanked for being so amenable.

' " So I had a false beard hooked over my ears, and motor-goggles, and I wore somebody's fur coat, and I was told that all I had to do was to be called in and feel one of the other performers' pulse and look at his tongue, and make him say ' Ninety-nine', and behave, in short, like a perfectly good general practitioner.

' " Naturally I got through it all right; but the joke was that the audience, who began by being puzzled, after a little while became frightened. I could see them through the goggles looking really scared and asking each other who it could be." '

' " Not a bad start for a story," I said. " The stranger, a man of compelling personality, remains to supper, becomes friendly with the family and changes everybody's life. Did they ask you to supper ? "

' " As it happens, they didn't," said Vincent. " But I was offered a drink. I shouldn't have stayed, anyway, because I wanted to remain a problem. But the interesting thing is that I now know that I could, at a pinch—mind, I say at

a pinch—go on the stage. In jolly parts, I think ; at any rate to begin with."

' So you see,' said Old Claus, ' that I have at any rate one relative who will never be an actor. But anyway he has become engaged.'

' Not really ? ' I asked.

' Certainly,' said Old Claus. ' Having no money and no prospects, he's going to marry. A poor girl, too.

' It's odd how rashly young people now run into matrimony. Looking ahead seems impossible. Take my landlady's daughter,' said Old Claus. ' For a long while she has been hovering between two young fellows named Sid and Bert, walking out with first one and then the other and sending her poor mother half crazy.

' I asked the girl what she was going to do about it. " Because," I said, " it's a very serious thing tying yourself up for life with a stranger. You ought to get to know something about him. To test him. Here you are, encouraging two at the same time, so that they both think you think them perfect, and all the while you know nothing about either of them except that they take you to the Pictures and cheap dances. That's no guide to the stuff of life," I said ; " because once you're married, cheap dances and the Pictures will very quickly disappear."

' She asked me how I knew so much when I'd never been married myself.

' " Lookers-on," I'm afraid I said, " see most of the game."

' " Well," she said, " tell me about these tests."

' " You should ask them to supper," I said, " and watch how they behave. One after the other. Ask one on one Sunday, and one on the next, and then compare notes. See whether or not they pass the salt, and attend to your mother, and if they open the door for you. Those are the things that tell. That's how to spot an unselfish fellow who'll look after you."

' So she said she would ; and the next week I asked her about the previous Sunday, when the first one, Sid, had come.

' " Did he pass the salt ? " I asked her, and she said he didn't. " Was he polite to your mother ? " I asked, and she said he was awful to her. " Did he open the door for you ? " I asked, and she said he never thought of such a thing.

'" It's going splendidly," I said, tickled to death, " and now we'll see what Bert's like next Sunday."

' " I don't think so," she said.

' " Why not?" I asked.

' " Because I've accepted Sid," she said.

* And there you are,' said Old Claus. ' Young people in love can't be taught anything. And, what's worse, you can't ever teach a girl to prefer the better man. The worse he treats them, the more they seem to like him. I give it up.'

IV

'JOHN RICKMAN,' I said, 'specialized in self-protection. It is a different kind of ancestor—collateral, not direct—who may have turned my thoughts towards food, not as a glutton but as one who resents everything that is not good and well-served ; although between him and the descendant who is now speaking came several intermediaries caring nothing about what they ate.

'This collateral ancestor was William Verrall, of Lewes, uncle of the Mary Verrall who married Richard Peters Rickman—the Richard Peters Rickman who was father of the John Rickman of whom I have told the usurious story. As his wife was John Rickman's mother, she was thus my great-great-grandmother.

'William Verrall, who seems to have kept the White Hart at Lewes between 1739 and 1761, in succession to his father Richard, acted also as agent or bailiff to Holies Pelham, Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Newcastle-under-Lyme, who lived then for part of each year in Sussex, either in Lewes, or at Bishopsgate or Laughton

or at Halland Park, a few miles north of Lewes, which is now merely a small farm.

' This Duke who, at Westminster and Court, was a second-rate statesman and to some extent a figure of fun, known by the nickname of " Permis ", and the steady foe and butt also of both Walpoles, Robert and Horace, was in the country a powerful and prescient nobleman, in one of whose mansions, William Verrall, as I have said, seems to have been a handy-boy or handy-man, as well, probably, as caterer, and who was always called in when the Duke entertained, with pomp and splendour and excess, his Sussex neighbours or dependants.

' According to the pamphlet *The Verrall Family of Lewes*, compiled by my brother Perceval, who, when in 1916 he was killed in the War, was on the way to becoming a fine genealogist, William Verrall was a Constable of Lewes as well as innkeeper.

' It was probably in very early life that Verrall was in the Duke's kitchen under its presiding genius, a chef named Clouet, who, some time before 1752, transferred his services to the Duke of Albemarle, our Ambassador in Paris, and, after Albemarle's death in 1753, entered the establishment of the Marechal Richelieu.

' Exactly when Verrall had worked with Clouet we do not know, but that he did, and that he wrote about him from personal memory, we

know very well, for in 1759 he produced his book *A COMPLETE SYSTEM OF COOKERY, in which is set forth a great variety of German Receipts collected from several Tears' Experience under the celebrated Mr. De St. Clouet some time since Cook to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle . . . Together with an Introductory Preface shewing how every Dish is brought to Table, and in what manner the weakest Capacity shall never err in doing what his Bill of Fare contains. To which is added a True Character of Mons. de St. Clouet.*

' That this amateurish work had at any rate one worthy reader, is proved by the copy preserved in the British Museum, with notes in the hand-writing of Thomas Gray of the *Elegy.*

' To me it is interesting, because it happens to be the first literary effort for print that any member of my family, howsoever remote, seems to have attempted.

' After re-reading the preface to this work, I am fortified in the belief that it is not from William Verrall that any writing qualities that I may possess were derived ; but, apart from his knowledge of dishes, he had a love of order that I have always wished to share. So, however, had my mother, who was a Drewett.

' Beginning with a great affectation of modesty —" To pretend to write for fame would ill become a person in my sphere of life (who am no more than what is vulgarly called a poor publican). 'Twould be an unparalleled piece of impudence

and wholly incompatible to reason and the nature of things "—Verrall proceeds to fill thirty-three pages with something strangely like self-glorification. It is not, however, unamusing : the conversations between himself and a maid-servant, Nanny, have a certain raciness, while the description of a dinner prepared by him for four guests, very ordinary middle-class Englishmen of that day, throws a vivid light on the capacity of our ancestors and, possibly, on the impaired digestions of so many of ourselves.

' I quote a little :

"What do you please I should get you, sir? " says I.

" Why, Will," says he, " I don't know. I think I have heard you talk of five and five, and a remove. Now," says he, " I should think three and three and two removes would be better." (" Ay," says I to myself, " put two fresh dishes upon the table, and leave one tore all to pieces, to keep up the symmetry of it.")

"Just as you like, Sir," says I, and for novelty-sake so 'tis to be.

Now he ordered me to provide just what I thought proper ; only that he should be glad of a soup-maigre ; and then set off.

Now I heard him say to his cronies, as he went along, " I know I shall like that soup-maigre because they always stuff it full of meat. Maigre," says he, " I suppose is French for meat; so in England we may call it a meat soup."

I went to market next morning, and provided what I judged necessary for their dinners, and took care to get enough ; for I supposed 'em to be good trencher men ; and about one o'clock dinner went up, the soup, three fowls and bacon, and a large shoulder of mutton. The soup they

eat all up, which was a very large old-fashioned pewter dish full; then fell aboard of the fowls, and demolished them, and so on to the mutton ; but before they had finished it a dispute arose about what meat the soup was made of. " Beef and bacon to be sure," says my old friend (and kept on eating like a ploughman). His right-hand man said he thought it was composed of rumps and burs.[1] He at the bottom took it *to* be made of a leg of mutton and turnips.

" Well, sir," says he, to one upon the left, " what think you of it?"

" Why, sir, I won't think of it at all : if I do I shall be sick, for I have eat too much of it."

At length they sent for me, and I decided it ; which surprised them. There was no other ingredients than about six carrots, as many turnips, and onions and herbs boiled to a sort of porridge, and strained through a cullender to a large quantity of toasted bread.

The next three things were a hare, a turkey (both baked, and spoiled, for want of a proper fire in the kitchen), and a plumb-pudding. There was no ceremony for clean plates ; but at it they went, just as they do at one of our country club-feasts ; the turkey was stript in a minute, and the poor hare tore all to pieces (for there was not a carver amongst them), and a most profound silence there was for a long time, except only a very pretty concert of growling, smacking their chaps, and cracking of crusts : when all was over with meat, plates were called for the pudding, which disappeared in about three minutes, though no small one.

The removers were then put on ; and that the beauty of the third course (as I call it) might be kept up, at each end was a sort of pudding, and in the middle the gibbet of the hare, and the skeleton of the turkey. . , .

[1] Rumps and burs are the tails fleec'd, and roots of the ears of a bullock ; a common perquisite of a journeyman-butcher or tanner.

' —So much for William Verrall, the innkeeper and my literary forbear, at home.

' I often go into the White Hart, at Lewes, which is opposite the Courts of Law, and wonder about those old times. With some care, in view of the invasion by the present, this house has preserved its past, and in the long narrow hall you will find in frames a number of ancient relics, in the form of letters and accounts and playbills, bearing upon the Lewes that has gone but is not so very far away. It is the nearest approach to the Boniface feeling that I can achieve.

' I have been also to Halland Park to see what remains of its grandeur, but there is nothing but the straight track, now in places overgrown, to Laughton, where the Duke had another house, and where he and all later Pelhams were buried ; vestiges of the garden wall ; and a magnificent stable, belonging to the period of William and Mary, hardly at all damaged, with a high roof and wide eaves and small red bricks. A Scotch farmer now occupies the new building, in which, I take it, are to be found such structural relics of the past as the neighbours did not loot and carry away.

'According to my brother, William Verrall came upon evil days and died a bankrupt.[5]

' That's all right,[5] said Old Claus, ' but you've read nothing about M. Clouet. That is what your uncle—'

'Great-great-uncle,' I corrected.

'That is what he promised,' said Old Claus.

'Well,' I said, 'here is the conclusion of the Preface, where M. Clouet appears.' And I read as follows :

I promised at the beginning to fix one never-erring chart to steer by, so that the weakest capacity shall never do amiss, though he mayn't arrive at once to that pitch of perfection equal to that of the celebrated Mons. Clouet. . . .

And now let my brother or sister cook come on clean and neat like my friend and patron Clouet, with two or three clean aprons and rubbers, and follow the rules laid down in the easy method prescribed in the following receipts ; and if it is not the most egregious blunderer in the world I'll be answerable for all that is done amiss. What my friend Clouet will say when he hears of this rash adventure of mine I cannot guess ; but this I'm sure of, he'll be my voucher that it is all authentic.

As to the character of that gentleman, much at this time must not be said : that he was an honest man I verily believe, and might I have leave to give him praise equal to his merit, I would venture to say he was worthy of the place he enjoyed *in* that noble family he had the honour to live in. Much has been said of his extravagance, but I beg pardon for saying it, he was not that at all, nay, so far from it, this I can aver, that setting aside the two soups, fish and about *five gros entries* (as the French call them) he has, with the help of a couple of rabbits or chickens, and six pigeons, completed a table of twenty-one dishes at a course, with such things as used to serve only for garnish round a lump of great heavy dishes before he came here, such as calves' and lamb's sweet-breads, sheep and lamb's rumps, turkey's livers, and many other such like things, of which, with proper sauces, he used to make as many pretty neat dishes.

The second or third great dinner he drest for my Lord

Duke, he ordered five calves' heads to be brought in, which made us think some extravagant thing was on foot, but we soon saw it was just the reverse of it; he made five very handsome and good dishes of what he took, and the heads not worth a groat less each. The tongues, pallets, eyes, brains, and ears. The story of his *assiette* of popes-eyes, the quintessence of a ham for sauce, and the gravy of twenty-two partridges for sauce for a brace, was always beyond the credit of any sensible person; so shall leave that untouch'd. The second course dishes, or *extrSmes*, he made as much difference in, I mean as to the expence, for what formerly (and that since my time too) made but one of most of them, he made two, and all prettier, because they were not so heavy. But I am afraid I shall launch out too far in encomiums on my friend Clouet; but beg to be excused by all my readers.

One thing more and then I'll leave him to his new master marshal Richelieu (for there I am informed he now lives as steward, or *maitre d'hdtel).* That I thought him very honest I think I said before, not only that, but he was of a temper so affable and agreeable, as to make every body happy about him. He would converse about indifferent matters with me or his kitchen boy, and the next moment, by a sweet turn in his discourse, give pleasure by his good behaviour and genteel deportment, to the first steward in the family. His conversation is always modest enough; and having read a little he never wanted something to say, let the topick be what it would.

' No,' said Old Claus, ' I don't see any likeness between your manner of writing and William VerralPs, but there is no doubt Verrall ate and that Verrall was your ancestor.'

' Collateral,' I corrected.

' William Verrall the innkeeper,' I said, ' had

a brother named Harry, or Henry, Verrall, also of Lewes, who, a friend of " Clio " Rickman, is said to have made the remark that set Tom Paine on those investigations into Divine Right and other mysteries which in those days got him into a bad name, but which have since made him something of a hero. At any rate Moncure Conway went to the trouble of writing his Life and editing his Works. Some one in *Ingoldsby*, I remember, was made to promise that he would

never again
Read Voltaire or Tom Paine
Or Percy Bysshe Shelley or Lord Byron's *Cain* ;

but now all is changed and Tom Paine is mild and sweet. Anyway, it was this collateral ancestor of mine, Henry Verrall, who on the bowling green at Lewes, probably the same that is so courteously used to-day, observed to one of the bowlers that" the King of Prussia was probably the best fellow in the world for a King, as he had so much of the devil in him ". Paine, who was then living as an excise-man in Lewes, heard this and was much interested. If, he argued, it was necessary for a King to have so much of the devil in him, Kings might very well be dispensed with, and hence, in time, the publication of *The Rights of Man*, followed by *The Age of Reason.*

' And your ancestor made the first remark,' Old Claus asked.

' Collateral,' I repeated. ' Yes. Harry Verrall, the brother of the cookery man, was, however, the direct ancestor of the late Arthur Woollgar Verrall of Cambridge, who knew all about Greek and all about Jane Austen. It was Harry Verrall's sister Mary (born in 1748) who, by marrying (in 1767) Richard Peters Rickman of the ClifTe, banker and brewer, became my own direct ancestress, for one of her eighteen children was the John Rickman of whom I have already told some stories.'

V

OLD CLAUS is never so attractive to me as when he is epigrammatic ; and he often is. In fact, some one said of him that most of his remarks were cues for songs. Recalling examples of his sententiousness, I can remember these :

A good description of a gentleman would be, that he came out of the top-drawer of God's tallboys.

There is no Mothersill for homesickness.

Is it possible that the invention of the alarm-clock was aided and sanctioned from above in order that the idea of death might become less unbearable ?

Nothing is so disastrous and sterilizing as a feeling of self-satisfaction. Call no man dead till he is happy.

No kind of philanthropist is so conscious of his virtue as the chauffeur who is helping another chauffeur.

Of a woman of limited intellect it was said that to know her was a very conservative education.

OLD CLAUS, APHORIST

The older I get, the more do I realize that everyone is right—and everyone is wrong.

If it were not for the advertisements in the Sunday papers, would there be any literary genius in England ?

There is no keeping pace with chance. One of the most interesting men I ever met was on a boat between Rio and Santos, a traveller in Worcester Sauce.

God made the walnut ; man made the pickle.

Who was it that called the Germans the Impenitentsia ?

There are few more dislikeable creatures than the mean man, now rich but still mean, who excuses his meanness by saying that he was brought up in great poverty, and therefore . . .

Woman is an unreasoning creature who, when she at last has secured a hat that suits her, buys another that doesn't.

There is no satisfactory answer to the question : ' As I leave the room, do they say also of me, " Thank God, that bore's gone " ? '

Funerals are terribly revealing occasions. They often mark the birth of friendship.

Early love forgotten can turn to love too late.

That we are going to get more common and vulgar is inevitable, since the more that education spreads, the more people will be able to read the papers.

GRADUAL DECAY

I once asked Old Claus why he was called as he is.

'Perhaps,' he said, 'because my mother used to read to us from Hans Christian Andersen, and after "The Tinder Box" I liked best the story of "Big Claus and Little Claus", and when I wanted a nickname I remembered it.'

'Which Claus,' I asked: 'Big or Little?'

'Old,' he said.

'Is that the true reason?' I asked.

'It will do,' said Old Claus. 'And certainly "Old" is right. Thirty times a day I am reminded of my increasing age. I see men limping, and I wonder how soon my legs also will creak and fail. Why are so many old men lame? And deaf, too? I say things to them that, until I shout them, are lost, and were never really worth saying at all. Why are so many old men deaf? I find myself more and more ready to go to bed, more and more in doubt as to whether I shall ever get up.

'No,' he said, 'it's a badly managed world. This gradual decay is all wrong. We ought to go on being well and strong and fit until three score years and ten, and then vanish. Lameness, deafness—bah!'

But he changed the subject immediately, as is his wont, and became very anecdotal, telling indeed several new stories. Too often silent with his cigar—a cigar indoors, a pipe out—or merely

commenting or asking questions, Old Claus is now and then vocal enough.

The first story was about a small boy who seems to be as capricious with his tears as any woman could be.

' A fairy story,' said Old Claus, ' was being read to him, in which a fox, on having his tail cut off, turned instantly into a handsome and eligible prince. (To say tail instead of brush is all right here,' added the snob, ' because it was the creature of the fabulist rather than of the huntsman.) When the principal incident of the transformation was reached,' Old Claus went on, ' the listener burst into sobs. He could not, he said, bear to think of the fox losing his tail that way.

' A few days later he asked for this story again, and his mother, taking the book, resolved so to edit it that all cruelty to animals should disappear. When, therefore, coming to the passage about the fox, she said that on being merely touched by a wand it turned into a prince, she was astonished again to hear sounds of uncontrollable grief.

' " But what are you crying for now ? " she asked.

' " You d-d-didn't read about chopping off his t-t-tail," said her son.

' Another new and true story which may please you,' said Old Claus, ' is from an artist. Touring Scotland with a brother brush and his wife, a

lady of unusual grace, they had a slight breakdown and were forced to stop at a roadside garage for repairs. As it would take about an hour, the two men went off to sketch, while the other member of the party, the Beauty, sat down to watch the work being done.

'When it was finished she asked how much the mechanic charged.

'He suddenly became self-conscious, ran his hands through his hair, squared his shoulders, and, approaching, said nervously that he would rather be paid by a kiss than by money.

'"Oh, no," she said—not perhaps with what in these easy-going days would be called logic, but at any rate she said it—"I couldn't do that: I'm married. My husband's over there."

'"Ah, weel," he replied, "Ah dinna ken ye were married. Then it will be thrippence."'

Old Claus went on to say that from another artist came this excellent example of the compliment-that-is-not-a-compliment, the censure-that-is-not-a-censure, take it whichever way you will. 'The portrait of the squire being at last finished and sent home (I say "at last" because you know what artists are), the old family retainer was called for his opinion. After gazing at the picture in silence for perhaps a minute, he delivered judgment. "It's wonderful," he said, "I never saw anything like it in my life." Having warned me that t

Old Glaus then added one about a small music-hall artiste whose turn consisted of himself and a performing duck. Performing animals of any kind—excepting perhaps sea-lions, who have now a place of their own—no longer create an exactly frenzied appeal, but ducks, in Stock Exchange language, have been very quiet. The agent, however, after a few weeks of failure, was able to telegraph an offer of four pounds a week at a provincial house. The answer was prompt. ' Too late, sorry have had to eat act.'

' Having come to me,' said Old Claus, ' from a man who vowed that the agent concerned had told it to him as having just happened, that story is probably a chestnut. Old, as we say, as the hills. How rare it is to be in at the birth of a really good thing !'

Concerning chestnuts, I may say that in a recent and very interesting book called *Beside Galilee,* I find the following analysis of the sense of humour, or rather perhaps the sense of laughter, in various nations. An Englishman (it was a Jew who was speaking) laughs at a joke three times : when he is told it, when he understands it and when he repeats it. A Frenchman laughs twice : when he is told it and when he understands it. But he never remembers to repeat it. A German laughs once : when he hears it. A Jew never laughs, because he has already heard it.

The author of the book himself adds to these : the American, who laughs once, half-way through the story when the teller pauses for breath ; but I don't find that very true. My own experience is that Americans don't laugh, partly for the same reason that the Jew doesn't, or because it doesn't accord with their idea of what is funny. Somewhere in mid-Atlantic the sense of humour changes.

Similarly with the Scotch, the only stories that they laugh at, or receive with a silent appreciation which in less reserved races is tantamount to laughter, are about the canniness of their own people.

I then told Old Claus that my godson, the sub-lieutenant, who is on leave for a few days from the shove-halfpenny board and his other Naval duties, had given me a really true dialogue between an illustrious admiral and a midshipman.

'And what is your name?' the Admiral inquired.

'Wills, Sir.'

'I wonder if you are any relation of my old friend, Captain Roderick Wills?'

'My father, Sir.'

'Your father? Then please remember me to him.'

'I am sorry to say he is dead, Sir.'

'Then remember me to him in your prayers.'

Having told me this story about the Navy, my

godson proceeded to pose me with what he called a psychological problem drawn from the Army.

' " You fancy yourself as a psychologist, don't you, Sir?" he began. (He always calls me " Sir," and I, wishing, even at such a distance, to participate in his glamorous career, always call him " Sir " in return.)

' " I wouldn't say that I fancied myself, Sir," I replied.

' " Anyway, Sir, you are a student of life, Sir ? "

' " I hope so, Sir."

' " Then let mc put a case, Sir. Very interesting. A French General, Sir, meeting an officer who had lost one arm, noticed that he was wearing only an inferior decoration.

' " If you had lost the other arm as well," the General said, " you would be wearing the Croix de Guerre, which would not only tell everyone what a brave man you are, but would obtain for you preferential treatment in restaurants."

' " The officer immediately drew his sword and cut off his other arm."

' " Good heavens!" I cried. " What a gesture ! "

' " Yes, Sir," my godson proceeded. " Now comes the psychology, Sir. What would you say, Sir, was the officer's controlling motive ? "

"I thought for a while. " Well, Sir," I said, " I'm sorry, but it wouldn't surprise me if it were gluttony."

' " Indeed, Sir," said my godson. " And perhaps you will now tell me, Sir, how, having only one arm, the officer could draw his sword and cut off the other ? " '

I had been had. There was no psychological problem ; it was a common Gun-room catch.

Although common, I then confessed that I had tried it that afternoon, as skilfully as I could, on a man at the Club.

' Here,' I said, as casually as possible, ' is rather a nice question for you to consider' ; and I then recounted the incident, to which he patiently listened.

' " Now what," I said at the end, " was, do you think, his chief reason for such an act ? "

' " There was no act," said the man at the Club. " A man with only one arm can't cut off the other like that. His only chance of getting rid of it would be to push it into a sausage-machine or a printing press." '

' That reminds me,' said Old Claus, ' that a little girl tried to get me the other day with the riddle about the Oxford scholar coming from St. Ives—just fresh to her but far too ancient to me—with which we used to pose our companions six decades ago.

He took off his hat and drew off his gloves.
Now what was the name of that scholar?

Even if I had not my life-long knowledge of the answer, I should probably have guessed it by

reason of the crossword puzzle's revived cult of the "hidden" word. But, like a true gentleman, I dissimulated so that the child might have her moment of victory.

'How could I do otherwise when I still have the liveliest recollection of such triumphs as fell to me when I found an infant less well informed than myself as to the perilous problem of Adam and Eve and Pinch-me, and scored accordingly? That was almost my last success.

'The persistence of these ancient catches—for my young friend, I found, knew as much about Adam and Eve and their dangerous companion as I did—is yet another proof of our devotion to tradition. No one, I take it, not even Mr. Milne with his enchanting ingenuity, invents new jokes of this kind; and just as our great-great-grandparents when they lay in the cradle were set to chuckling and squirming over "This little pig went to market", so will our great-great-grandchildren squirm and chuckle.

'But what I would like to know,' Old Claus continued, 'is who first invented the game? And then, how did all the mothers and nurses come to learn it? How did the glad tidings spread to every corner of the Empire? and how long did it take? That is a problem indeed.'

"Finally, let me tell you,' I said, 'how a Clerk in Holy Orders removed from me the other day no less a sum than five shillings.

' " Do you fancy yourself as a speller ? " he asked.

' " Of course I do," I said.

' " Will you back yourself," he asked, " to spell correctly, in the space of half a minute, three ordinary English words of five letters each ? "

' " Of course," I said.

' " How much ? " he asked.

' " Five bob," I said.

' " Not more ? " he asked.

' " I think that's enough for you to lose," I said.

' " Very well," he replied, taking out his watch. " Now then, ' Siege '."

' " S i e g e," I spelled.

' Seize was his second word.

' " S e i z e," I spelled.

'" Wrong ! " he said.

' " What do you mean ? " I replied. " It's not wrong. Seize. E before I always when——"

' " Time's up," he said, putting back his watch. " Five shillings, please."

' " But," I remarked, " you never gave me the third word."

'"Oh, yes, I did," he said. "'Wrong.' Wrong was the third word." '

VI

AS you never knew,' said Old Claus, ' any of those forbears who wrote—William Verrall of the cookery book, or Harry Verrall, who encouraged Tom Paine, or "Clio" Rickman, who adored Tom Paine and composed satirical verses and the epitaph on the Newhaven brewer, or Thomas Rickman, the author of the work on Gothic architecture—who would you name as the first literary influence in your life ? '

' I should guess,' I said, ' it was Samuel Drewett, my mother's younger brother. I guess so because it was he who gave me, when I was fifteen, the *Essays ofElia,* I had met with Lamb earlier than that, in 1879 I think, in his " Praise of Chimney-Sweepers " quoted in *The Ackworth Reader* ; but this was the first time I owned the book : a sixpenny edition, I remember, with the author's portrait on a highly-polished paper cover. When I was fifteen Samuel Drewett gave me also *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and was delighted to find that I had bought with my own pocket-money at a bookstall *Cakes and Ale* by James Hannay.

'He used to quote with relish passages from Ovid's *Art of Love* in translation, and from Matthew Prior. It was he also who gave me my first real picture: a water-colour by John Varley.

'These things, however, I have told more than once. You will find this exciting uncle in *Reading, Writing and Remembering,* and under pseudonyms in *Landmarks* and *The Barber's Clock,* and probably elsewhere, for from companionship with him I date everything that really mattered. As for *The Barber's Clock,* I fear that it anticipates quite a deal of what I am now saying; but as that was professedly fiction, and I am now telling the truth, I don't really mind. How cross I used to be, I remember, when instead of talking, my uncle improvised on the piano, or played Verdi or Sankey, or even was so treacherous as to go to sleep! His powers of sleep were abnormal.

'But except as the reciter of Thackeray's "Little Billie" and Breitmann's ballads I cannot remember that he ever urged me to do more than use my eyes. "Hans Breitmann solved de infinite," he used to murmur, "as one edernal shpree."

'My first writing for an audience that I can recall was done in 1883 or 1884 for the Essay Society of the Quaker school at Saffron Walden: first a prose description of a dormouse that had

died and been ceremoniously interred ; and next, in verse, the account of why the Great Bear's tail is long. The subjects only I remember ; I have no copies.[5]

'Why was the Great Bear's tail long?' Old Claus asked.

'Through pulling him up to his place in the sky,' I said.

'And it was a Saffron Walden master named Billings,' I continued, [c] who set me to making water-colour drawings of autumn leaves and pen-and-ink reproductions of Giacomelli's tail-pieces of birds. Amusing but mechanical.

'And yet,' I remarked, after further thought, 'Samuel Drewett was a literary influence, too. Much later, when he became Travel Editor of *The Queen,* he printed in that paper some Things Seen which I wrote in Italy, and he was very cross because I had used as a comparison the whiteness of washing on a line.

'"Never," he said, "refer to washing."

'And I never did again, although with other and later writers washing, not always clean, has become prominent and popular.'

References to Samuel Drewett remind me that forty years ago I was a poet. At any rate, I have found in an old box a copy of some verses I sent to his two daughters, Muriel and Norah, when, living in exile in Neuilly, they were in the teens. Forgive me if I quote them. Since, forty years

ago I was another creature, I can do so without shame or vanity :

To M. and N. in France
(with Christmas greetings).

At school each other boy you'd see
Was mad about Philately.
Their albums never left their sight,
They bought and swapped from morn till night,
And through the night they dreamed of Heaven—
A shining place where all the Blest
An English 1847,
The rare Mauritius, possessed.

I now have joined this Brotherhood.

Contemptuously aloof I stood,
And doubtless should have stayed so still,
But for your cards of kind goodwill.
They turned me upside down completely,
So sweetly are they stamped, so sweetly !
And hence, all changed in mind, I vow,
Dear distant cousins mine, that now
Stamps have begun to speak of you,
Why, I must start collecting, too.

N.B.

The postmark was from each omitted ;
But, thank the Fates, I'm nimble witted,
And in a trice amended this,
With, cousins mine, a kiss, a kiss.

Dec. 19, 1895.

Since then Muriel has died, leaving an English daughter and a French son ; but Norah, married

to a fine violinist of Hungarian parentage, named Geza de Kresz, still flourishes.

' Yet with all his enthusiasms,[5] I said, ' I should not call my uncle my true inspiration. I call my first intellectual stimulus Charles Edward Clayton, a Brighton architect and relation of mine by marriage, whose primitive settlement in the Weald three or four miles north of the Dyke became, during the impressionable years from seventeen to twenty-two, my spiritual home.

' In any but the coldest months, when the family remained in Brighton, there were few Sundays on which I did not make the journey to this hospitable camp. When it was very fine, I would even walk there by night. Through the lovely dawn.

'Clayton was one of those quick-witted men who, with vivid versatility(excel greatly in nothing, but can add to all.) He could draw a little ; he could write a little ; but his special gift was a universal intelligence. I used to call him the cleverest man out of London.

'He was also a close observer, an excellent mimic in that most endearing medium, the Sussex dialect, and a very humorous narrator of his experiences, of which—as adventures come to the adventurous—he had an endless supply. But, most of all, he was the best reader-aloud I have ever heard. In this, which is to me a fatiguing practice, he never tired, nor did his listeners.

' It was at his feet that I first met with Corporal Terence Mulvaney, Stanley Ortheris and Dinah Shadd ; with Bob Cherry, Ginger Dick, and the Night Watchman; with Abdullah the Adite and the Poet of Panopolis.

' Not that his reading was entirely among short stories : but for mixed audiences those were best. It was he, for example, who introduced us to Baron Von Ottringel and the other Caravanners, and in more serious mood, to *Dagonet the Jester* in Malcolm Macmillan's fantasy.

' Clayton not only encouraged me to write, but when from time to time I had amassed enough verses—I had nothing to do with prose in those days—for albums, it was he who designed frontispieces for the books. Several of such collections I still possess, exhibited, so shy I was, only to one other reader—to Neville Figgis, who was also beginning to question and to write, and who, I remember, once started me on a new course of satire by reciting, after once hearing them, Adrian Ross's lines on W. T. Stead and the Maiden Tribute.'

VII

IT is often not till long afterwards that one learns the significance of what at the time seem to be trivial occurrences, and life is of course full of them. And now and then they become so serious that they actually change and mould characters. I am certain, for instance, that never since I was, at the age of twenty-two or so, mysteriously but gravely misjudged by another friend, contemporary with Clayton and following closely on Figgis—and one whom I thought very close and understanding—have I come to any fellow human being with quite the old acceptive candour. Never.

I am referring to Vincent Brown, the novelist, who died early in 1933.

When, at the age of twenty-one, I joined the *Sussex Daily News,* the only other non-shorthand writer was Brown, and we were thrown much together.

Brown, by some ten years my senior, was a thickset Scotchman with a noble brow, refined features, a musical voice with a wide range, and a laugh that above the roar of the presses could

be heard anywhere in the building : in fact, all over Brighton.

Every minute of the day and night that he could spare from his work for the paper, which was mainly descriptive, Brown devoted to writing novels in a beautiful small hand. Although for a long while he had no success with them, he was not dismayed ; and at last in John Lane he found a publisher, with, I think, a story called *Ordeal by Compassion.*

Every one who can remember Lane will recall his enthusiasms, and the genius of Vincent Brown was among them. Not only was Brown an amazing discovery, but he was amazing because Lane had discovered him. Other publishers were in time substituted, but Lane was the first and most excitedly vocal. Among Brown's later novels were : *Old Silence, Rosanna Returns, The Disciple's Wife, The Glory and the Abyss, Mayfield, The Dark Ship, The Celestial Critic, His Mother's Honour, The Wonder-worker, The Vulgar Lover, Venus and the Woodman, The Sacred Cup, The Lost Shore, Mrs. Grundy's Crucifix,* and *Two in Captivity.*

Never shall I forget Edward Garnett reading aloud *Two in Captivity* as though it were an intentional parody of the sensational novelist.

' But Brown means seriously everything that he writes ! ' I protested.

' Not this ! ' said Garnett, going into a new ecstasy of laughter.

That, however, is beside the lamentable point.

These books won for Brown a certain amount of approbation from readers ; but he was not for the great public : he was at once too much occupied with self-abnegation and the Christ-like qualities or aspirations which, as an author, he found in the humble and too poorly-informed as to the manners of the rich, about whom he had much to say. His books were perhaps too largely allegories, proceeding from a profoundly idealistic mind ; but to him they were real and they had to be written.

I knew him in 1889, 1890 and 1891 ; and the fact that when he died, suddenly, in January, 1933, he was still on the *Sussex Daily Mews* and still writing novels without success, is a sufficient proof that, although he had industry and was undefeatable, he lacked as a writer something else. Whatever wider ambition he may have fostered, was cancelled by his knowledge that in Brighton he had a safe job and could count on preferential treatment. Also, no one was likely to be knocking at his door, as, in Fleet Street, would be continually the case.

Naturally much of a solitary, Brown lived in two rooms in one after another of those little houses in which the smaller streets of Brighton are so rich, with landladies who adored him but were not convinced that he was quite sane. Next to writing, his passion was walking, and

on any fine night, and many that were wet, we used to leave the office in the early small hours and walk together to the Kemp Town end of the Front, and back to the western lawns, he talking all the while, in his sweet enthusiastic voice, of life and its secrets and of books, until at Hove, where I lived, I would leave him to return alone.

Much that he said I knew already, but he liked to instruct. He rejoiced, too, in the superiority that, in the presence of a representative of the town-bred middle classes, his nearness to the soil—his father had been a gardener at Glen Almond—conferred upon him ; and I was hardly less an object of his arrogant derision than an intelligent disciple. But I was devoted to him, enchanted by his mixture of Rabelaisianism and saintliness, of pity and scorn, by his delights and his contempt.

And his laughter was so desirable that I toiled to provoke it, even to writing very elaborate burlesques of three or four of his novels.

Whether Brown's peasant origin was more a source of pride or of regret, I cannot say ; but he never forgot it and could obtrude it in a most uncomfortable manner, particularly as, often without reason, he credited every one with an inborn snobbishness concerning such things.

I am writing about him as he was in those distant days, since, from reasons which will be

apparent, our intercourse ceased when I left Brighton at the end of 1891—or as a matter of melancholy fact, before that time. For to Brown's combative sensitiveness I owe one of the most bewildering and unhappy experiences of my life and my earliest real disillusioned knowledge of the proverbial kittle-kattleness of folk.

In the course of very diversified duties on the paper, I had, on the occasion in question, been all day at Plumpton steeplechases, and then was due at the theatre to see a play and write about it.

While I was waiting at the box-office for my seat-ticket, it seems that Brown was standing near, although I saw him not, nor during the evening ; but when I reached the office that night, I found on my desk a note in his hand saying that after the way I had behaved to him he would never, except in the course of office work, speak to me again, nor would he reply if I addressed him. Seeking the editor, I found that Brown had returned in a white fury, had accused me of cutting him and had delivered his ultimatum.

Not only did I deny the accusation, but went on to aver that, even if I desired to cut anyone, I should lack either the assurance or the courage ; which was true then, and I am sure is true still; but Brown was not to be instructed or pacified : he knew.

How long the feud—although so far as I was concerned it was not a feud but a misery—

lasted, I now forget: certainly three or four months ; nor how it was ended. But a time came when we resumed relations, outwardly friendly but never on the old footing.

To him I remained one of the snobs so detested by him, so capable of letting others down. To me his whiteness had become tarnished. In spite of all his insight he had made an irreparable mistake and I could more easily understand why his novels failed.

But the cup was beginning to be poisoned.

VIII

ALTHOUGH I could not have known John Rickman, two of his daughters, Rachel Rickman and Sarah Rickman, my great-aunts, were very important figures in my early years. I have said that there were nine children in all : first, four daughters, then one son and then four daughters more. One of these was Benjamina Rickman, who became Benjamina Lucas—Benjamina being a style, like Gulielma Maria, my maternal grandmother's, very popular with Quakers.

Of this large family, two daughters alone, in my time, were the inheritors of Wellingham House, and of these Aunt (really great-aunt) Rachel, although blind during most of her long life, was the dominant sister who investigated all and knew all. Whether Aunt Sarah, who to me, in the eighteen-seventies, eighties and early nineties, seemed to be the soul of gentleness and sweetness, with her caressing voice and soft brown eyes and peach-like complexion—whether she was wholly an angel on earth, or was capable of impatience, I never knew or suspected then ; but I often wonder now.

Aunt Rachel had none of the same honey and beauty. She was fixed usually in her chair, solid and commanding, with her cane beside her : her large, strong features and sightless eyes, beneath a Quaker cap, listening to everything, hearing everything, planning everything, while Aunt Sarah moved about like a dove and, like a dove, cooed.

Indoors they wore the finest Quaker clothes ; and out of doors in their great barouche, with two horses, their clothes again were perfect, as, with grey silk bonnets and rustling gowns, off they went to Meeting at Lewes or to visit the poor of the neighbourhood.

They were as untouched by the world almost as though they were in a nunnery ; yet, in spite of this detachment and placidity, a day at Wellingham was one of the events of our young lives, eagerly to be looked forward to, and looked back upon with excitement.

The pleasant white abode to which we journeyed still stands, almost exactly as it was, but in alien ownership. How soft the lawn was and how tiny its button-mushrooms ! And how we used to run first to the summer-house in the corner of the garden to look through the four windows typifying, according to their prevalent colours, the four seasons !

As I have said, if Rachel and Sarah were my great-aunts and John Rickman, their father, my

great-grandfather, it was because their sister and his daughter, Benjamina, married Edward Lucas. This grandfather, who had lived, at a critical time for me, at Luton as the resident partner in the Hitchin and Luton Bank of Sharpies, afterwards absorbed by Barclay's, retired to Brighton and died when I was six; but I have a very distinct recollection of his appearance and his kindly interest in his little namesake. He was gentle and generous, and one of the stories told of him, and already told by me more than once, but important here, is that when he had been detected by my vigilant and frugal grandmother in encouraging a persistent and probably undeserving cadger who infested the neighbourhood, and was sternly forbidden to give again, he saved the situation, and his face, by placing the coin in his hand behind his back, so that, although it was no longer actually tendered, the oblation might still be received. This was one of his weaknesses, although I doubt if he would go so far as Maurice Baring does in one of his many books, and say that one should always give to beggars—since who knows but that they are our Lord in disguise? Quakers are not so poetical as that.

It was also told how my grandfather pressed a sovereign in the tiny palm of each of us as soon after we were born as he was allowed to see us, and how, while my elder brother

Alfred held his firmly, I let mine fall to the ground.

It was he also who placed a shilling in the pocket of our first knickerbockers : an act of mercy which I continued to ascribe to the tailor until a sufficient series of disappointments showed me that that is not how tailors are made.

Edward Lucas, who was born at Hitchin in 1803, the son of Joseph Lucas, brewer and banker, was educated at Hitchin and sent in due course to Brighton as an apprentice to a Quaker provision-merchant named Isaac Bass. His indentures, signed and sealed on the twenty-fourth day of seventh month, called July, in the fifty-ninth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the Third, which is 1819, are before me as I write. In them Isaac Bass covenants to instruct his apprentice in the Art of a Tallow-chandler and Grocer, for seven years ; while the youth on his part agrees not to waste his master's goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any-one, nor to contract matrimony, nor to play cards or dice, nor to haunt taverns or playhouses.

As a matter of fact, the seven years, with all these engaging temptations, were never served, for when another Sussex Quaker, Thomas Lid-better, a shipowner and wharfinger at South-wick, retired early in the eighteen-twenties, the business was bought for Edward Lucas by his father; he was established there, and the Art

of Tallow-chandler and Grocer was abandoned for ever.

And at Southwick he remained, bringing up a large family, until he was persuaded to join the family Bank and settle at Luton. And it was while he was living at Luton, in one of the houses in Park Street, that his son Alfred, my father, fell in love with Jane Drewett, living in another and smaller house in Park Street, and married her, on May 22nd, 1866, at the Friends' Meeting-house at Hogsty End.

It amuses me to record to-day that they went for their honeymoon to Stresa, and that their first home together, at Eltham, they called ' Stresa Villa'. My brother Alfred was born in it on April 16th, 1867 ; I was born in it on June 12th, 1868, and almost immediately afterwards we moved to Brighton. But ' Stresa Villa', no longer so called, still stands, in Wellington Row, a few yards from Eltham Palace.

And this reminds me that if the world knows far too much about Eltham it is partly my fault. For wherever I go abroad, I have to record that I was born there.

Referring to the guide-book, I find that Eltham in Kent is famous for its Palace, a moated residence of the Kings of England from Henry III to Henry VIII, with a magnificent Banqueting Hall of fifteenth-century oak. Having recently visited this Hall, which is again in

perfect condition, I can testify to its beauty and also to Eltham's popularity among householders, for it and its neighbourhood have been so intensely built upon that they now practically join London.

But it is neither the Palace nor the bricks and mortar that keep Eltham so much in my mind, but the fact that wherever I am when abroad, in every ship or aeroplane, in every hotel, I have to write on a slip of paper, for the information of the police, its name. For there is apparently nothing that the police of Europe want so much to know as where I was born : and I was born there. They also want to know the day on which I was born, and where I now live, and my age (which they could deduce), and my sex, which they ought to guess, too, and my occupation and my nationality ; but I could leave those details out and nothing would matter. Yet if I left out Eltham in the county of Kent, the officials and the reception-clerks would, I feel certain, rebel and even waste away.

I suppose there are slips of paper by the hundred—or almost by the thousand—on which I have stated, in block letters, what my surname is, and in less formal letters, what my Christian names are, and that Eltham in Kent was the place of my birth ; but as to what has happened to these slips, whether written unsteadily in conveyances or quietly in hotels, I have not

the faintest notion. Is there any after-life for them? Has anyone ever seen them collected and borne away to the police-station? Once there, does the staff, ravenous for the information they impart, fall instantly upon them? I hope so, for it is then that Eltham would come to its own. Look here *(voila)*, I can imagine one of them saying—the one with the shortest cigarette: too short for a man with such a big moustache—look here, you fellows *(copains)*, there is an Englishman at the Grand Hotel who was born *(ne)* at Eltham. (Eltham would give him a little trouble, and he would divide it thus—Elt and ham, dropping the h.)

Or are the slips, merely a sop to bureaucracy, disregarded altogether? And, even so, are they kept for ever or after a while destroyed? Supposing, in a perverse mood, I wrote that Eltham was in Northumberland, could it possibly get me into prison? Supposing I invented everything and said in block letters that my surname was LOCUST (as my schoolfellows used to think), and that my Christian names were Ebenezer Varicose, and that I was aged thirty-five and a woman, and that my occupation was that of a snow-shoveller's labourer, and that my nationality was Abyssinian, and that Eltham in Kent was the one place in the world where (like Homer) I was not born, what would happen? Would the joke be detected, and how soon? Not on that

night, I guess, but long after I had passed on to another inquisitorial home-from-home. But if it were at once detected, what would happen? Would there be another war?

It is not only the European police that know about me and Eltham; all the scrutinizers of my passport know it as well, for Eltham in Kent figures there, too. When they examine me so narrowly with my passport in their hands, is it to see if I resemble the photograph (which I am thankful to say I have long ceased to do) or to see what a man who was born at Eltham looks like?

Eltham! I cannot get away from it, although, in fact, to get away from it was apparently the first thing I did, for we left (I have been told) while I was still in arms. A futile evasion: I was born there.

Although I preserve my grandfather's indentures, my own, binding me for five years to a Brighton bookseller, have vanished. It is more than likely that directly they came again into my hands, I destroyed them, in an outburst of relief that the period of servitude, under which I had been so restive, and, in a way offended, was over.

That my grandfather's master, Isaac Bass, was an egoist of commanding character, as Quakers often were, the following passage in a very interesting book called *Unknown Brighton*, by George

Aitchison, proves. The part or parcel of land referred to, was, I should say, the district in which Isaac Bass's house and shop and other property were situated : all about Market Street.

It was not an age, be it remembered, which was too squeamish about disturbing other people's vested rights. Drastic treatment was meted out to another tenant in this ' part or parcel of land ', where Widow Jenkins lived undisturbed. A relative of Widow Jenkins, one Jenkins, the coppersmith, erected for himself one of the freak houses which seem to have been fairly common in eighteenth-century England. To the house Jenkins added a turret, crowned with a cupola. As a supreme distinction, he covered the whole exterior with scallop-shells.

Jenkins, the coppersmith, set great store by his scallop-shell house. Early in the nineteenth century there came along a certain Quaker, a sturdy gentleman of the name of Isaac Bass. He was something of a local Napoleon. He took certain of the ancient streets in this district in hand and drove thoroughfares through them with the ruthlessness of a Haussmann. The scallop-shell house stood in the direct way of one of these new roads. Isaac Bass went to Jenkins, the coppersmith, and bade him name his price for the egregious house. But his * Prithee, friend ' was of no avail. Jenkins was one of the obstinate Sussex breed—the breed whose family crest is a pig and whose motto is * We wunt be druv .' To Jenkins the scallop-shell-covered house was the acme of the architectural glories of Brighton. Moreover, it was his home. He would not sell.

Isaac Bass, however, was a diplomatist, who ought to have been called Jacob.

One fine day a smartly turned out coach and four halted outside the scallop-shell house. Jenkins was invited to step inside and come for a drive to London.

Overwhelmed with the honour, the honest coppersmith

got inside, and drove in state to London. He also drove in state back again. When he returned, he rubbed his eyes and thought he was dreaming. The scallop-shell house was gone ! It had, like the baseless fabric of a vision, faded, leaving not one shell behind. While Jenkins was enjoying his ride in state to London, Isaac Bass had removed the entire house, shells and all.

One wonders [Mr. Aitchison concludes] whether in the Meeting-house not far away the doughty Isaac ever felt called upon to expound the story of Naboth's vineyard.

I have mentioned Isaac Bass merely on account of his place as a first employer in my grandfather's life. To Edward Lucas there could be nothing more distasteful than such inconsiderate high-handedness as Bass had practised ; he was no overrider of other people's rights, no seeker of wealth or power, although a certain amount of wealth came to him.

Among old letters I find one from him written soon after he had settled down at Southwick and was making good. The day is 12th month, 19th, 1824, and it is the first to this recipient, his sister Sarah, that he ever wrote. This circumstance, he says, would to many ' appear very strange, and indeed I do not know that I can give a satisfactory reason for never having done it ere now. Perhaps it is because we have never been sufficiently in each other's company to render letter-writing an interesting task, and according to present appearances this will hold good for some time to come, but as I am an

advocate for epistolary correspondence amongst Brothers and Sisters, I am determined at length to set aside this frivolous reason, & trusting thou wilt excuse this lengthened prologue I shall accordingly begin'.

Edward Lucas, who was then twenty-two, passes on to tell, not at all in the present-day manner, of two recent deaths. 'Thou has most likely received the intelligence of the decease of Aunt Ball and Daniel Brown of Hitchin. Aunt seemed gradually to sink away and at last quietly expired. It was but a few days after her burial that D. B. was seized with a fit of Appoplexy which by means of bleeding abated considerably & there appeared some prospect of his recovery —but the attack returned in a short time, and before his daughter could come from Ware he expired.'

Not so do our own old beans convey such information.

At the end of the letter, after the account of a terrible storm at Southwick, is a reference to brother Charles at Brighton, which reminds me that Charles Lucas was living in that town serving his apprenticeship to John Glaisyer the chemist—or chymist, as his son, Thomas, who afterwards married Phebe Lucas, always used to say. Of this Uncle Charles, who never married and spent his last years in retirement at Brighton, near his brother Edward's in Buckingham Road,

CHARLES LUCAS

I have only a very dim memory. I can recall his white hair, his housekeeper Rhoda, his small dog and the atmosphere of desiccated birds and butterflies in which he lived. He seems to have begun early as a naturalist and taxidermist, for I find the following letter written to him by his father and my great-grandfather, Joseph Lucas, the Hitchin brewer, on ist month, 29th, 1824, which, with true Quaker paternal feeling, combines interest in his hobbies and his spiritual welfare.

I do not think I sh. have addressed a few lines to thee this Evening, near on the stroke of eight o'clock—but that I wish'd the enclos'd to be forwarded by tomorrow's Coach, & I did not like it shd. go unaccompanied with somewhat of this sort from one of us, & the lot seems to devolve upon me. Thou wilt I expect herewith receive a very fine mallard, which thy friend, Edward Burr, bought for thee on third day last, and which Jeffery was fearful to experiment upon ; the moor-hen of same date is also sent entire ; the pheasant which is a beautiful one, with some extra tail feathers from another thy brother had in readiness these 2 or 3 weeks ; & the other birds & two squirrels [which] occupied the time of last Evening in preparing. I hope they will prove acceptable & some merit is due to Jeffery for his exertion herein.

I have a fine specimen of the green woodpecker brought me **a** few days after ; but in a state hardly fit to send thee ; therefore sent it immediately to John Sims. He brought it home last First Day and paid us a friendly little visit; it is finish'd in capital stile, & forms an embellishment to our parlour mantle.

Thus much for birds **and** bird stuffing. I cannot however

quite drop the subject without expressing a hint that I hope these (in themselves) harmless occupations do not improperly interfere with the time that may belong to thy master or engage too much of what may [be] deemed thy own, which might be occupied to more advantage to thyself.

Your shooting excursion hath not been followed by another, thy brother Joseph having, I believe, almost shaken hands therewith for this season ; the young tradesman is pretty frequently engaged with his malting concerns, but as barley is so much advanced in price I fear it will afford him but small profits.

I was thankful to see you return without accident from your day's sport, havg. read in the newspapers of many serious accidents from such causes. Our respected neighbour Thomas Bates of Offley was just about the spot of your action abt. a fortnight ago, on horseback, & as the landlord & some others were coursing he took a run with them ; but his Horse becoming restiff, rear'd up, & came down upon him ; whereby his leg was broken & otherwise he was so bruised that he died in abt. 3 days ; a great loss to his family of 12 children, & much regretted by his acquaintance ; amongst whom he was well esteemed. Thus we see on what a slender thread our lives are suspensed ; great watchfulness and circumspection are needful therein, that we may be found in a good degree of readiness for the summons ; whenever it may be sent to our Houses. . . .

I understand thy brother Edward hath ere this left for Southwick ; I have 2 turkeys as usual which intend sending shortly—I may also say that I have been looking for intelligence in this way from one or other of you for this fortnight past. Why could not my Charles have put his pen to paper. I hope my dr. son is taking every opportunity in his reach to improve in his occupation, especially as time is passing rapidly away ; and more earnest are my desires that herein he doth not in any manner depart from the plain & simple & excellent manners of his religious profession.

Depend upon it, my Lad, they will ever stand the test of time & experience ; & great advantages have all those, who wisely circumscribe their conduct thereto.

I am sorry *to* remember so *little* of this Uncle Charles, nor can I say what became of his collections. Nor did I ever meet the uncles, Jeffery Lucas and Joseph Lucas, who are mentioned here.

When Edward Lucas decided to become a banker, he transferred the ship-owning, coal and timber business to his son-in-law, Robert Home Penney, my uncle, who moved into the Southwick house and for many years reigned there in his stead, and, in fact, the firm of Penney & Sons is still there. First the Southwick home, and then the Penneys' home at 'Highcroft', which in the eighteen-seventies my friend Charles Edward Clayton built for them off the road between Brighton and the Dyke, became second homes to us, and Sidney Rickman Penney, the second son, is still one of the closest, and certainly the oldest, of my friends.

In those old days the Lucas and Penney vessels sailed the seas, where now they cleave them with screws, and one of my earliest recollections is a visit to the *Alice Hawthorne* at Southwick to witness the firing of S O S rockets.

I remember, too, that portly overseer of the company, Cap'n Edward Poole, or Ned Poole, who, home from his ancient element, had, like so many Southwick dwellers, settled into amphibi-

ous retirement, with a flag-staff in his garden, but who, when the Shoreham Harbour trustees bought from the Poole Harbour trustees the tug *Telegraph,* emerged from his rusticity to go down to Poole and bring her to Southwick ; and I remember how I was one of the party who came back in her.

It was a great time for Cap'n Poole to be on a bridge again, and a great time for us, who only had heard of his nautical prowess, to see his twenty stone on duty there. We took the course outside the Isle of Wight, where the waves are, and the last thing I can recall is the light of St. Catherine's Head as Cap'n Poole bestowed me in one of the ship's boats, with half a grimy pepperfrrint-cake from his waist-coat pocket to ' settle my hash'. It settled it very quickly, and when we were berthed at Southwick, in the small hours, I was well again.

As for ' Highcroft', apart from the welcome indoors, and its pictures of the sea by a painter named Jenner whom my father had discovered, and in the hall cases of birds and George Cruik-shank's lithograph, ' The Worship of Bacchus ', with its terrifying object-lessons in indulgence in drink (for ' Highcroft' was a stronghold of total abstinence, and both Canon Wilberforce and R. T. Booth used to stay there)—apart from this, I remember it chiefly for Sidney's taxidermist room, and Robert's observatory with the large

reflecting telescope, and my first lawn-tennis racquet (then spoon-shaped), and my first bone-shaker. Happy days !

And not least happy were they when Sidney and I would walk to the Robinsons', an old Quaker farming family, at Saddlescombe, and be among wild things. Saddlescombe, the farm in the valley to the north of the Dyke, still stands much as it was, but it is in new ownership, for the Brighton Town Council are the landlords, and in new tenancy ; but, in spite of an occasional passing car, it is remote and unharmed. The Downs, naked or shaggy, are around it. The hawk hovers there, the nightingale sings, the fox prowls.

To return to my grandfather Edward Lucas, two sayings of his that bear upon food used to be quoted, but whether they were of his invention I cannot say. One of them stated that butter should always be served with cheese—as it now automatically is, but I suppose was not then—because whereas bad cheese ' demands it', good cheese ' deserves it .' The other was to the effect that a pear is ripe only for a quarter of an hour.

Whether borrowed or invented, these remarks prove my grandfather to have thought about the table. If no reference to wine has come down from him, it is because, like so many Quakers of his time, he was a teetotaller.

But by no means all abstained ; while many were willing to provide alcoholic beverages for others. There are brewers on both sides of the family. John Rickman was a brewer and maltster, and both Edward Lucas's father, Joseph Lucas, and uncle, William Lucas, were brewers, and William Lucas's son Samuel succeeded him.

Edward Lucas must have thought me, even at that early age, marked out for a life among books, for when, on his last birthday, in 1874, instead of receiving gifts he gave them ; mine was Longfellow's *Poems* in a sumptuous volume. (I have told of this before more than once, but again timeliness makes me repeat myself.) History relates that I burst into tears and for a very long while could not be pacified. The reason was not so much that my present was a book, or that, even then, I suspected Longfellow not to belong to the divinest choir, but that all the other children had something real, something worth while, tool-boxes or paint-boxes : fascinating things, not of the spirit.

IX

I HAVE shown how my great-uncle William Verrall of Lewes wrote a cookery book. My grandfather Lucas does not seem to have had literary hobbies, nor are his letters anything more than lucid ; but two of his cousins, sons of his uncle William Lucas the Hitchin brewer—Samuel Lucas, to whom I just now referred, and Francis Lucas—dabbled in the arts : Francis, who ultimately reached the Bank by way of the law, being a poet, and Samuel, who remained a brewer, an artist. You may read about them both in Mr. Reginald Hind's book *Hitchin Worthies,* where many of Samuel Lucas's paintings and drawings are reproduced, some in colour ; while this author's *History of Hitchin* is enriched in the same way.

But for Samuel Lucas's ready pencil, as active as any camera of the present day, we should know far less of the Hitchin notabilities and characters in the middle years of the last century; and the mystery is how he found any time to brew. In looking at his work, one has to remember that when he was born, in 1805, Quakers had been discouraging the arts for a hundred and fifty years, and this attitude, Mr. Hind suggests, may

account for the cold and subdued nature of his colour. But he contrived to make some very attractive pictures, which, apart from their artistic appeal, are of value as transcripts of rural life. As early as 1828 he had a painting on the line at the Royal Academy. Gradually, however, and wisely, for he mixed his oils badly, he came to look upon water-colour as his true medium, leaving more than seven-hundred specimens behind him.

Hitchin does not seem to value the past as she should, and one seeks in vain for a museum or picture-gallery ; but in one of the rooms of the Union District Council hall may be seen Samuel Lucas's masterpiece of caricature—a large oil-painting of a synthetic market day, with all the characters of the time delineated. A lively work. Not Hogarth and not even Haydon, but lively. What it needs is a key.

I have on my wall one of Samuel's water-colours, a gift from his daughter Matilda, and others I have distributed ; while it was partly for the pleasure of gazing at his oil-paintings that I used to frequent my great-uncle Thomas Glaisyer's house at Brighton, for he had several, among them a gypsy's camp and an old poacher. This great-uncle, who had married Phebe Lucas, sister of my grandfather, and was the father of Alice, who married Charles Edward Clayton, was a collector of engravings, and often have I watched his eyes moistening as he turned over his Vostermanns.

FRANCIS LUCAS

I doubt if a Quaker upbringing and education as recent even as sixty years ago, later than Samuel Lucas, was a good preparation for anyone who was to be closely associated with the arts. Through mixing only with one's own people, the family and relatives and others of the sect, one can acquire narrow prejudices and self-righteousness ; one can too rapidly disapprove, too grudgingly tolerate. It is bad for anyone when he believes himself to enjoy a monopoly of honesty.

Samuel Lucas I could not have known, for he died in 1870, but I once had a very pleasant half-hour with his brother Francis just after his *Sketches of Rural Life* had been published by Macmillan in 1889. The same qualities of observation and love of the country that one sees in Samuel Lucas's pictorial work are to be found in his brother's verse, and we may safely assume that they were a legacy from their father, William Lucas, whose diary, recently published by Hutchinson and edited by G. E. Bryant and G. P. Baker, is full of delight in nature, and who, by adding the cares and hazards of farming to his other duties, had many opportunities of watching the ways of birds and animals.

The following lines from the beginning of a poem called ' The Shepherd ', in *Sketches of Rural Life,* have much sympathy and charm, and indicate Francis Lucas's nearness to the soil :

'THE SHEPHERD'

Shepherd, what of the night?
Shepherd, what of the night?
Oh! the night is cold and the night is long,
But the fold-yard lies knee-deep in straw
And the ewes are hearty and the lambs come strong,
And as many couples as ever I saw,
And God's great flock is out on high,
And only He can count them all;
He watches, and leads them through the sky,
And none of 'em wander and none of 'em fall.
And He watches too my winter fold,
To bless the young lambs born in the cold,
And to show 'em the way to their mother's teats,
Which swell with milk warm, sweet, and new.
Oh! sir, it puzzles my simple wits,
And I thank the Lord the long night through
For his goodness to the lamb and the ewe.
We shepherds that are out o' nights
We see God's wonders more than most:
The thousand thousand lights
That in the day are lost.
We see His shining messengers
That glide about among the stars,
And the crimson flush and the golden gleams,
And the pale streamers, shooting high
Along the bridge of the northern sky,
That come and pass away like dreams.
And what good shepherds saw and heard
One winter's night long time ago
Is written in God's holy Word.
For simple shepherd folk were first to know
When the great Shepherd came to dwell below.[1]

[1] Some lines from this poem, attributed bluntly to 'Lucas', stand as a motto to one of the chapters in a story by Charles Kingsley.

Francis Lucas was, I remember, very kind and encouraging to me, and I caught a flash or two of his wit, which was constantly providing Hitchin with good things to repeat. One of his best jokes was, I think, his remark on the Quakers' Yearly Meeting, then held in Bishopsgate Street, to the effect that the ' Silence there was such, that the drop of one-eighth in Consols was clearly audible .'

Of this Yearly Meeting in London I remember little, for before 1892 I could not get to London, not even for the Royal Academy, and by that time I had cooled towards the Friends ; but I have most vivid recollections of the Meetings at Brighton, at Hitchin, at Ackworth and at Saffron Walden, and most vivid perhaps at Hitchin, where the sexes were segregated and we often spent the whole period of an hour and a half in silence broken only by sighs and coughs. At the head of the meeting sat James Hack Tuke, with acidulated features which, as the minutes wore on, we more and more narrowly watched, against that instant when, turned towards William Ransom, they would faintly relax as he proffered the hand for the shake that terminated the session.

When, the other day, I went into the Hitchin Meeting-house, I found few changes. There were not so many of the white pitch-pine benches as in my time, when the boys from the ' Woodlands ' School filled many, and the sexes now mingle,

and there is a piano ; but there were no other intrusions of modernity.

If William Ransom and James Hack Tuke no longer shake hands to dismiss the session, it is because both of them lie in the Friends' Burial Ground across the road. I fetched the key and stood by their graves, each marked by the pattern grassy mound and the pattern head-stone. There they assemble, these headstones, in this leafy garden, a true haven of peace. It is here that old Hitchin is to be found. But oh, how numerous are the dead Lucases ! And in that little Burial Ground beside the Meeting-house at Lewes—nothing like the spreading Hitchin garden—how numerous are the dead Rickmans ! But there was, the other day, this difference, that the Hitchin names are distinct, whereas the sea-air that reaches Lewes from the Channel has made many of the graves there undecipherable. The great John Rickman's name I spelled out, but with difficulty.

In the Brighton meeting the handshake, also eagerly awaited, was exchanged by Daniel Pryor Hack and Marriage Wallis—but at Brighton there was little silence. Daniel Pryor Hack, setting aside his sugar-loaf topper and looking like death, woefully intoned his beliefs and fears ; Marriage Wallis exhorted and comforted, and the rank and file followed. Hats were, in those days, still worn throughout the ceremony, excepting during prayers, but I fancy that such conventions have

gone. At Hitchin not only did we wait for the spirit to move, but singing was still forbidden ; whereas on the Brighton premises singing was permitted and definite preachers were announced by leaflet.

In common with the young Bloods of the Society at Brighton, I used to make every effort to secure an end seat with an arm, and I still feel resentment mingled with pride when I remember how one Sunday—I mean one First Day—a commanding stranger in a large high hat suddenly appeared and, although I had made room for him to pass, prodded me into a second place and settled himself in my corner.

There was something about him that compelled obedience, and glancing at him I realized why, for it was none other than John Bright, an occasional visitor to Brighton to see his daughter Lillie, who married Bernard Roth.

And it was the Brighton Meeting that gave us a family story, for when once my small youngest brother found himself sitting next to Fanny Hack, an elderly Quaker spinster full of good works, and he began to nod, she drew him towards her, whispering ' Thee may lean .'

X

I SUPPOSE,' said old Claus, ' that the likeness to God which one was able to trace in the lineaments or character of one's father, had some association with anthropomorphy. There was at any rate a time when to the child the father stood for God.'

' I don't think mine ever did,' said I.

' So much the worse,' said Old Claus, ' for you. Fathers,' he went on, ' are curious people, and there is danger that they are finding themselves in a rather perilous position. In the past they were considered too highly : whatever they did, no matter how wrong, was right. But to-day the..pendulum seems to be swinging too far the other way and there is a tendency in the young to be funny about them, patronizing to them, or even scornful. I have heard bitter young things remark that they didn't ask to be born. That's not too good, is it ? '

' No,' I said, ' but there's no doubt that, among all the other changes, the attitude to parents has varied. Particularly to fathers. If there are any more Mr. Fairchilds, I should like to see them.'

' I don't know how the statistics run,' said Old Claus, ' but I suppose that most fathers die when their children are too young to have outgrown a sense, in their presence, of immaturity, inferiority, even fear. The father is a mysterious being for whom chiefly the house is planned. He comes and goes and provides the money. He has odd friends who make jokes that only they can appreciate.'

' Like ours,' I remarked.

' Yes,' said Old Claus. ' His hair thins. He gets stouter. His dressing-table is increasingly covered by medicaments. He takes to glasses and loses them. And as the child grows up, the father grows down, and indeed why not? The father's work is done; with his wife he has completed what nature intended him to do.[5]

' You are referring,' I said, ' to fathers who are selfish.[5]

' To most, I'm afraid,' said Old Claus. ' Fathers there are who sink themselves in their descendants, but it is often doubtful if that is to the descendant's advantage. Nature probably intended each generation to look after itself. Some fathers that I know are of the patriarchal type, and they and their families are amiable together, but they fill no place in the life of such of their children as can think. These children, having made a choice of the excellencies in them which they intend to inherit and reproduce, let them go. **Or that is**

what they think they are doing. But you and I, of course, know that they can't pick and choose, that they are not free agents.'

' Do you think that a father and a son can ever be wholly in sympathy ? ' I asked.

' No,' said Old Glaus. ' I don't. I wish I did. The father can think so, but he is deceiving himself. Mothers and sons can be much closer.'

' It was certainly so in my case,' I said. ' I got from my father very little but knowledge of what to avoid. I may have got much that I could not help, but, consciously, from his self-protectiveness I learned something different, and from his piety without works to be too much the unbeliever. If you want me to be scientific,' I continued, ' I can now state that my father was a spoilt child and he grew into a spoilt man, impatient of everything that did not go his way. Brought up under my grandfather naturally to succeed to a partnership in the Hitchin Bank, he wore out the patience of those in authority, and particularly, I fancy, of James Hack Tuke, by neglecting his duties and prolonging his holidays, and, when still quite young, was at last advised to make his career elsewhere.

' From that time onwards, with an indulgent father behind him, he had no full-time occupation, but acted as agent for Insurance companies and Building Societies—the kind of work that an enterprising man adds to his real task in life ;

and even then he allowed my mother to do far too much for him, with little acknowledgment and no reward. He also, I regret much to say, allowed a dislike of Hitchin, and especially of every one connected with the Bank, to ripen into hatred ; and had not one of the owners of the "Woodlands" school, there, been his brother-in-law, I am sure that Alfred and I should never have become pupils.

'For his seven children he had a spasmodic affection, elevating us one by one to the position of first favourite and then deposing us, but I cannot recall any generous action on his part. Not one shilling of pocket-money did he ever give us, even at the beginning of terms. A lonely and censorious man, he had no close personal friends—at any rate none came to the house—where he was mainly silent and disapproving, but he greatly delighted in people of a lower social order than himself who, detecting his weaknesses, laid themselves out to flatter him. With them he could, I believe, be exceedingly charming.

'Late in life—he died of a malignant disease when he was only fifty-five—he found other extra-mural comfort in the Salvation Army, with whom he worshipped and even marched, and whose new barracks he provided with foundation-stones, receiving in return wooden trowels gaily emblazoned with symbols of blood and fire. Such

spiritual exaltation as he received at those cordial services fell from him, however, on his doorstep.

'Now and then, to our intense relief, he would go off on short or long journeys—once to America, once round the world—but usually to take part in an election campaign, always on the Liberal side, for as a partisan he was an extremist and rarely spoke of an untruth except as a "Salisbury".

'He and I had little in common, and less and less as the years went by. Thinking about him now, in the light of maturity and more, I can see that he was a very unhappy man; but I doubt if anything could have been done for him. Least fitted to be a father, he had seven children; least fitted to do anything for others, he had an overworked wife, whose deafness needed the kindest solicitude; demanding perfection from every one and everything about him, he was continually in a state of exasperation at the world's shortcomings.

'He could see nothing but black or white. People who smoked, drank, wore evening dress and voted Tory, were blacks; the only whites were the opposite.

'As an example of his curious inability to think of the needs of others, I may say that he used to take one or two of us regularly to Brill's Baths in Brighton, not to learn swimming, but to stand in the gallery and watch how enjoyable he found it. And but for his desire to be bowled to, and to hit the ball all over the place, he would not have

made my brother and myself, when only very small boys, members of the Sussex County Cricket Club. His favourite time for practice was before breakfast, when there was no one else to help, and the fatigue of bowling and fielding was, to two small boys, great; but as our tickets gave us the right to see any match, and even to sit in the Pavilion, we were amenable. His passion for cricket was indeed his most human quality.'

'Well,' said Old Claus, 'you inherited that directly enough, anyway, and it has been a great comfort to you. You must give him credit for that.[5]

'I do,' I said. 'I owe him also an escape, the value of which I cannot overestimate.'

'How?' Old Claus asked.

'Well,' I said, 'can you see me as a bank-clerk and ultimately as a banker? Yet had my father behaved himself with proper industry and decorum, and pleased James Hack Tuke, and in due course have become a partner, it is possible that I should have followed him and become a partner too.'

'That's all right,' said Old Claus. 'He was, you see, functioning. Part of a father's duty is to bring up his son. This can be done—in fact there is no escape—either positively or negatively; and in your case you profited—and therefore the State may have profited—by what you were avoiding. He was probably much more agreeable

company than you thought,' Old Glaus added, ' but you didn't hit it off.'

' Very likely,' I said. ' Another case of contemporaries understanding each other best.'

' Again, like you and me,' said Old Claus.

' Exactly,' I said. ' But since every one knows we are coevals,' I continued, ' please don't say too much about our increasing years, or there will be talk of my age.'

' Well,' said Old Claus, ' as you can't deceive yourself, I don't see why you should worry about deceiving other people. Truth is best; cards on the table are best. And also,' he added, ' they save time and trouble. But to return to your father,' he said, ' I suppose that he could be ironical ? '

' Could he not! ' I replied.

' And your mother, being a woman,' said Old Claus, ' had no use for irony.'

' None at all,' I said. ' She couldn't understand it. Even to the last, she took everything at its face value, although with her children she could make allowances.'

' How like England ! ' said Old Claus. ' Ironical father, matter-of-fact mother : result, discord.'

' But why,' I asked, ' do they never realize this when they are engaged ? '

' Because they are engaged,' said Old Claus, ' and therefore thinking of other things. And when did you and he have your first real break ? '

he asked—' because,' he added, ' ironist and ironist don't get on either, at any rate when they are of conflicting generations, the older of which is inclined to be jealous.'

' On the night of Queen Victoria's Jubilee,' I said. ' My brother Alfred and I first watched an ox being roasted whole, somewhere at Hove, and then walked to the Dyke to see the bonfire, and walked back. When we returned, in the small hours, both my parents were waiting, and my father accused us of keeping my mother up in a state of anxiety. How, he asked, could they sleep when we might be dead ?

' Suspecting this affection for his normally neglected wife to be insincere, and, as the street door had to be left unlocked, his real anger to be caused by postponement of his own bed, I was no doubt offensive. Speaking probably from what Meredith calls one's " cold attics ", I unburdened myself of an indictment which had been accumulating for several years, meticulously enumerating all; and nothing was ever the same again, and I was very glad when I could escape to London lodgings.'

' Well,' said Old Claus, ' that's one way of remembering a Jubilee. I wonder if, in any other house, Queen Victoria's fiftieth year of reign brought such painful enlightenment. What,' he asked, ' did the next, the Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, do for you?'

'Nothing that I can recall,' I said.

'And the Coronation of King Edward?' Old Claus asked.

'At the real one,' I said, 'postponed from the false one when the King had appendicitis, I added fuel to the fire above Crockham Hill in Kent. At the Coronation of George V, in 1910, when I was living at Kingston near Lewes, I was the host of all the villagers at a feast, and at night, on the top of Kingston Hill, I lit the beacon. I thought of all these events—the home-truths of 1887 and the flames and dancing of the others, as I stood on the top of Ashdown Forest on May 6th, 1935, and watched the bonfires being kindled all along the South Downs and in the weald. As it was foggy, they were only smouldering points of red, but they were terribly suggestive and reminiscent.

'Well, so life goes on,' I thought. 'Queen Victoria is dead, King Edward is dead, my father is dead, my mother (who, however, as her own mistress among her children, matured into increasing happiness and fun) is dead. But George the Fifth, for the moment the proudest man on earth, is still living. And so am I.'

'And what about your mother after she was a widow?' Old Claus inquired.

'Oh,' I said,' we became great contemporaries, wherever she was. When she lived at Teddington, in my eldest sister's house, I used to go down

regularly to take her Hampton Courting, as we called it, and in correspondence we regularly exchanged anagrams. Now, of course, the cross-word puzzles have set anagrams before every-body, but in those days their solution was almost a Quaker prerogative.'

' She liked being with you ? ' Old Claus asked.

' I hope so,' I said. ' I did what I could to make her. All my life I have been expected to phrase the revolutionary things that others only feel ; and she was one who enjoyed them.

' After she died,' I said, ' I was given a letter addressed by her to her children, in her beautiful clear hand, in which, after instructions as to cremation and a simple service, she said, " I hope through our Father in Heaven's mercy, we may all meet again. I write this now in my sitting-room, quite alone." Although for a while she left the Quakers and joined the Established Church, she returned to the early fold and lies in the Friends' Burial Ground at Esher. But whatever changes she made in her external faith, she was always a Fundamentalist.'

XI

IT was soon after the far too frank account which I had given of my father, that, hearing that Old Claus was ill, I went round to sit by his bed.

He looked wrong but was getting better.

'There was a time,' he said, 'when I thought I was for it. I knew because, when I asked the doctor and he assured me I should recover, he looked so thoroughly dishonest. I could tell he was lying, or at any rate that he feared the worst.

'As it happens,' he went on, 'he was, for once, right, but it set me thinking about lying, especially after what you had told me about your father and the "Salisbury", and I was reflecting only this morning how odd it is that after any number of slang words for lies, we have returned to the original. Do you remember how as boys we used to call a lie a "whopper"?'

'Of course I do,' I said. 'Or "cram".'

'Yes,' he said, 'or "cram". There was even a joke about the business-men's messages to their wives, saying they were detained at the office, being known as "tell-a-crams".'

' I remember,' I said.

' Well,' said Old Glaus, and now ' we just say " lie " once more. I doubt if, in the nursery, " fib " is any longer used.'

' What did you think about, besides untruths, when you knew you were dying ? ' I asked. ' The next world ?'

' No,' he said, ' oddly enough I didn't. I found myself thinking of this one, and, inferior as it is, very regretfully, because I was remembering things I hadn't done and now should never have a chance to do ; and, I tell you, that kind of remembering is no fun. Do all you can while there is still time : that's my advice.'

' I have always been told,' I said, ' that one's last hours should be spent in preparing for eternity—in making what is called a good end.'

' No doubt,' said Old Claus. ' But no one can control his thoughts, and mine went backward, not forward. What do you think was occupying my mind to the exclusion of all else ? But you couldn't guess. A dish of morilles. You know morilles, I'm sure : that feathery fungus which we probably call poison and avoid, while the French are serving it up hot in milk and loving it. A feathery fungus, in flavour far beyond even the best field mushrooms ? '

' Yes, I've had them,' I said. ' I had them first at a place called Nantua, high up in France near the Swiss border.'

' Good, aren't they ? ' Old Claus asked.

' Very,' I said. ' More than.'

' Then you'll be able to appreciate my dying thoughts,' he went on. ' The only thing I could think about was the first time I ever saw morilles. They were brought to me, black and insanitary-looking, in a swagger Paris restaurant by the maitre d'hotel himself; uncooked, heaped up on a dish. " For you," he said. " They have just come in. Delicious ! " " What are they ? " I asked. He said they were morilles. " Fresh. For you. Delicious ! " But I didn't dare. Having always been a coward about strange fungus, I waved them away. Even at the risk of damping any honest fellow's excitement—which one hates to do—I refused. Ass.'

' Aren't you talking too much ? ' I asked.

' Yes,' said Old Claus. ' Of course,' and continued. ' That was the first time I had seen morilles. And then a year or so later, again in France, I stopped at a small mountain inn for lunch, and as part of a rather meagre meal a great bowl of them was set before every one, and being very hungry and seeing the others eat them without fear, I ventured, too. " Delicious" is not the word. They made a glutton of me.'

' Never ! ' I exclaimed.

' Yes, I repeat: a glutton. But at the same time they soured my nature ; for from that moment onwards I have never been able to forget that

the first time I saw morilles I refused them. And that is why I could think of nothing else the other day, balanced as I was between this world, where morilles grow, and the next, where they probably don't. After all, there's no impiety in it. The good God ordained morilles, just as he ordained Thomas a Kempis. And here am I, approaching seventy, and I've eaten them only once.'

'I too,' I said, 'only once. But I've tried often to get them and found them out of season. "Je n'ai plus," the waiter has said, in that explosive final manner that the French employ and so enjoy when they are disappointing you. You know it?'

'Don't I!' said Old Claus. 'A Frenchman is never so happy as when he is out of stock.'

'And now,' I said, 'you will proceed to live for ever.'

'I am going to,' said Old Claus, 'and we both know why. All the same,' he continued, 'I read the other day a remarkable epitaph. I don't know where it is, but it runs :

Here lieth one who continued! his life's work : he sleepeth,

and it has been much in my mind. Comforting, too. This little life is rounded with a sleep. We wake up very gradually from the first, and most of us sink readily into the next, no matter when the dustman comes. A few there are who rebel,

but it doesn't matter. So far as I have been able to observe, and I am supported by the experience of a busy elderly doctor, most persons who have reached years of discretion are ready to die. Either they are lonely, or disillusioned, or weary of pain, or, most commonly, cannot sleep and look on the grave as a trustworthy bed.'

'True,[5] I said. ' You remind me of what Arbuthnot, the physician, said of Queen Anne. "I believe sleep was never more welcome to a weary traveller than death was to her".'

*

XII

'THERE are people,' Old Claus resumed, 'who build up their characters on the basis of a dreamy retired childhood filled with make-believe, and there are people who develop slowly, gathering impressions from day to day. You seem to me to be of this more ordinary class. At any rate, you have no such recollections of the remote past as I find in that immense compendium of childhood's beginnings called *Early One Morning*, by Walter de la Mare, which I have just been reading. There the child is truly the father to the man or mother to the woman; but so far as you have divulged, the child in you was sterile. But,' he added, 'you left Eltham, of course, too soon, for anything to have clung.'

'I was always told,' I said, 'that I was born with a caul and that June 12th, 1868, was so clear and warm that I was carried into the garden on that very day. You may perhaps take that fact into association with my earliest memory, which is of watching the alternating shadows of cloud and sunshine chasing each other over the

ceiling and wishing it was always fine. Later, no doubt, I expressed the belief, common to most reasonable creatures, that rain should fall only at night. Indeed, I am still devoted to that theory, the dispersal of which needs a good deal of conventional rhetoric.'

' In this book of de la Mare's,' said Old Claus, ' and I wish he had spent less time in reading and digesting what others have said, so as to leave more in which to write his own poetry, every one is precocious. The young Anthony Trollope, for instance, even in his tenderest years, had to behave learnedly in the presence of his father, while his father shaved, and his head had to be placed so conveniently to Trollope senior's that should an error or false quantity occur, the infant's hair could be pulled without interruption to the paternal toilet. Did no incidents like that mark your childhood ? '

' None,' I said. ' Either my memory has gone or my childhood was without any high lights ; certainly without any paternal encouragement. I can remember nothing that was intellectually or spiritually valuable or unusual. I can, however, remember trying to influence our nurse to push me always in a certain direction, because we then, on New England Hill, passed hoardings where Batty's Nabob's Pickle and Mrs. S. A. Allen's Hair-restorer were glorified, and because in a different way I had a passion for both pictures.

I adored the Nabob because he squatted so gaily, and his upward look towards the dainty on the fork was so rapturous, and I loved the lady with the long, long locks, in Mrs. S. A. Allen's poster, because she was beautiful.

'That's a long time ago,' I added, 'but the art of the hoarding does not seem to have advanced, although to-day it serves the interests chiefly of alcohol and tobacco. There is nothing now as jolly as the Nabob, who, I take it, if he were revived, would be shown drinking beer or whisky, or smoking, or both, and revelling in his pursuits. In those distant days we seem to have taken the excellence of malt for granted; but to-day, when we are all, of course, nearly sixty years better, we have to emphasize it.'

'And that is all?' Old Claus asked.

'Absolutely,' I said.

'No night fears?' he asked.

'I can remember none.'

'No doubts of immortality?'

'None that I can put a date to,' I said, 'but I recall hearing very early of the Venerable Bede's terrifying image of the shortness of human life—the glimpse of cheerfulness which a bird gets as, out of the dark, it flies swiftly across a crowded, lighted hall, and then is lost in the dark again. I admit that that touched a chord. I can't say when I first heard it—how young I was, although I feel sure very young—but I have never forgotten

it. " No more nothing " was the phrase that, when in despair, I employed—" no .more nothing ".'

' Not a very hopeful theologian,' said Old Claus.

' Never,' I replied. ' Why, I cannot explain,' I added, ' but I associated this forlorn prevision of negation with pretty chorus-girls. While I was finished they would still be merrily footing it and smirking: "no more nothing". That annoyed me exceedingly as well as struck a chill.

' The first dead person I ever saw,' I said, ' as I have related, was a master at Hitchin when I was ten. For what reason we all filed through the room where the body lay, I cannot now decide. Just an impulse on the part of one of the heads of the school, Cranston Woodhead, I suppose, for there were no after lessons bearing upon the chances and transitoriness of existence. If as much trouble were given to reminding the child of the inevitability of death, as of the excitements of life, no harm would be done. But being brought up, as we are, to think ourselves immortal, we naturally push into the background the bogey of dissolution. As one of my favourite music-hall singers used to put it:

The Good Book says
We're a long while dead—
So have a good time.'

'I heard her, too,' said Old Claus. 'A mulatto, wasn't she? The whole chorus ran:

Have a good time,
Have a good time,
Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you,
Have a good time whatever you do.
The Good Book says
We're a long while dead—
So have a good time.'

'Well,' I said, 'if we're going to compare notes on music-hall singers, there's no ending.'

'True,' said Old Claus. 'But all the same, you may as well tell me the first popular song you heard.'

'I can't give you the exact order,' I replied, 'but they were three altogether—" Tommy, make Room for your Uncle", "Over the Garden Wall" and "My Grandfather's Clock". All, I suppose, in the early seventies.'

'And your first music-hall performance?' **Old** Claus asked.

'At the Oxford at Brighton,' I said. 'Near the Theatre, in New Road. It's now, of course, rebuilt and a cinema: one of the countless cinemas in that town. But in those days, the eighties, it was a stronghold of variety, with a chairman at the chairman's table: a tall thin man with a dyed moustache who, I fancy, lived at Southwick. The Bloods drank with him and stood him drinks.

'The turn that I can distinctly recall was that

of Stebb and Trepp, two Germans, for that was at the time when the Germans entertained us : thirty years before they killed us. Stebb, a stocky blonde Teuton, very strong, after swallowing a cigarette and emitting first the smoke and then the cigarette again, danced furiously with an artist's lay-figure, which, at the end, turned out to be Trepp, who was spare and dark, with such a genius for affected limpness that most of us had been taken in.

' That was my first music-hall, to which my uncle Samuel Drewett took me—and I remember thinking it a daring experience—and Stebb and Trepp were my first music-hall heroes.

' My first music-hall singer, also at the Oxford, was George Beauchamp, a confidential and apparently half-witted droll, with an enormously wide mouth and a foolish smile, who, had he succeeded in resisting the temptations besetting such a career, would have been a great success in London. If superficially he was like any one to-day, when crooning has become more than singing, and sketches are preferred to songs, he resembled Flanagan, but he had not Flanagan's naughty ingratiating innocence.

' Early impressions remain,' I continued, ' and I am still more conscious of George Beauchamp than of many I have seen since—coarse though he was, or perhaps because he was. And certainly because he was a novelty. My mind is full of

better memories, but snatches of his songs too often crowd them out. There was one about discovering after marriage that his wife had a wooden leg, the kind of brutal fun that we English like.

> She's not the slightest use to me,
> She's half a woman and half a tree,

he used to sing. It seemed to me horrible, but the audience roared and it stuck. I can quote to myself Viola's lovely lines in *Twelfth Night*:

> Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
> And call upon my soul within the house ;
> Write loyal cantons of contemned love
> And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
> Halloo your name to the reverberate hills
> And make the babbling gossip of the air
> Cry out " Olivia ! "

I can quote to myself the most beautiful passages from Wordsworth, from Swinburne, from Tennyson, from Keats, from A. E. Housman, but all those other common odds and ends insert themselves, too. I frequently find myself repeating Newman's " Lead, Kindly Light " :

> And with the morn those angel faces smile
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile;

the phrase:

> And underneath are the everlasting arms,

haunts me ; but in the same moment I can recall the lines :

She'd an india-rubber lip like the rudder of a ship,
And I tell you she was mad,

as Beauchamp sang; and at all kinds of unsuitable seasons such words press through. We can never tell what is going to vanish, what is going to dig itself in.[5]

' No,' said Old Claus, ' we have no control over memory. Its woof and texture are an irresponsible muddle, where gold and brass alternate, and no question is so difficult to answer as the one : Where do they hide, the things we remember when we can't remember them ? '

' That is certainly a poser,' I said, ' but I wish you would tell me too how England got its reputation for good taste. So far as my observation goes, our audiences are deplorable. In the mass we seem to be—and increasingly so—less cultured than most of our neighbours, less understanding, less witty, far less tolerant and quite as salacious, if not more. No nation is without characteristics that one does not like, but some have fewer than others ; and one of the reasons why I go so often to Paris is because it is a city without either bookmakers or newspaper posters, two of our best English possessions to escape from.'

' But you wouldn't live out of England ? ' Old Claus asked.

' Never,' I said. ' Not even to avoid paying income tax.'

' A long digression,' remarked Old Claus;

' but now tell me how you came to know about chorus-girls.'

' That is what I cannot explain,' I said. ' Quakers didn't go to theatres, and the new kind of illustrated paper, reading from left to right, had not been invented. The only not proper paper that I saw—for we took *The Friend* and *The Christian* and later *The Boy's Own Paper* and *St. Nicholas*—was an occasional copy of *The Police News*, which my father brought home to read about some case of the moment, probably Bradlaugh, or *Modern Society*, which, to my mother's disapproval, he read from magenta cover to magenta cover—first, however, removing those indications of independence and defiance.

' Coming to think of it,' I went on, ' what a number of things were not invented until my time ! I am not even sure of electric light, which I first saw, and even myself switched on and off, in a Swiss hotel when I was twenty-one. There may have been electric light here, but it was not yet universal. There may have been telephones, but they were very rare. And typewriters were very rare, too. But not until I was nearing thirty was there the moving picture, and not until I was older were there motor-cars, and not until I was ten years older was there the talking picture, and only the other day Radio came in to contract the world and Broadcasting to vulgarize it.

' When I was a child, to be photographed was

an event; and look at photography now. I was in at the birth, too, of gramophones and aeroplanes; while I hear that television is upon us. But I doubt if we are any better off. Certainly there has been no other Shakespeare or Dickens.'

'Still,' said Old Glaus, 'you can console yourself by realizing that penny-postage, that great progressive boon, has gone.'

XIII

' A LL Quakers were in those days fruitful,' Old Claus remarked.

Yes I said, ' fruitful or natural, whichever you like to call it. Contra-conception has come in too recently for any one to see what its influence will be.

' Certainly not good, I should guess,' I continued, ' even if families are sometimes too large. My great-grandfather, as I have said, had nine children. My grandfather Lucas had seven ; my grandfather Drewett had seven at least; the Penneys had eight; my own parents had seven. But whereas, so to speak, I was brought up in an atmosphere of midwives, I now belong to a Club whose premises are above a series of india-rubber shops, one of which has for sign, just over our door, something about Birth Control. Times truly have changed.'

' Yes,' said Old Claus, ' and the foolish part of it is that with the motor-car's demand for victims, our birth-rate ought to rise. What with contra-conceptives on the one hand and road accidents on the other, there will soon be no one left.'

' But not in our time,' I said.

' No,' he said, ' not in our time. What a relief that is ! But tell me,' he went on, ' about those fruitful, or rather natural, families—were they all right ? '

' Those that grew up,' I said. ' Yes. There were some idlers, but apart from Aunt Rachel and Aunt Meta, both of whom were blind, I can't remember any defectives ; and as for Aunt Rachel, she was far more penetrating than those who can see.'

' They all, in fact, made their way ? ' Old Claus asked.

' Well, I won't go so far as to say that,' I said, ' but I expect that on the average they did as well as the picked children—one son and one daughter, for choice—which the new parents produce. In England, of course, we muddle through. There is no system that we follow. The prolific have muddled through, helped by those who were more successful.[5]

' Then you are on the side of large families,' Old Claus asked.

' There has not been much time to compare, I said, " but I should guess they are the natural thing and therefore more often right than not; and of one thing I am certain, and that is that they are more fun. How many children my maternal grandfather, William Drewett of Luton, had, I am not sure, but I can account for seven,

one of whom was my mother, and one my Uncle Sam—all different, but all with very marked character, while my Aunt Lucy, who married Norman Sheppard of Hitchin, was compact of fun. But as their father, my grandfather, died before I was born,' I continued, ' I cannot express any opinion as to his influence.'

' How glad you must be, you atavist,' said Old Claus, ' because I know you prefer the best or most noticeable qualities to descend from the distaff side.'

' Only because they do,' I said. ' Fathers are too detached : it is mothers who breed and bear and bring up.'

This William Drewett of Luton came from Huguenot stock, when the family name was probably Drouet. All I know of him is that he was a miller and baker and was an active minister in the Society of Friends.

My maternal grandmother, *nee* Pattison, I knew, however, well, for her long and very useful life continued after I was grown up. There must be many left in Luton to remember Mrs. Drewett's treatment and cures. She was celebrated there and in the neighbourhood as an unqualified doctor, and three of her remedies were famous: her cough medicine, her rhubarb mixture (amazingly unpleasant), and, above all, her ointment—' Grandma's Ointment' as we called it.

Many times I was her guest in the little house

at 54 Park Street, with the white crochet blinds upstairs, and downstairs blinds of close black or dark blue netting impenetrable from the outside ; and * The Gardener's Daughter ' by Frank Miles over the drawing-room fireplace; and in the sitting-room the heavy Josephus from which she read aloud after breakfast, and the illustrated history of Max and Moritz, or ' Green Boy book ', with which I began my perusing career.

I saw her also every day or so in 1876 or thereabouts, when I was at school at her daughter Phebe's in Rothesay Road. It was a mixed school, with only half a dozen boarders, and I should guess that supervision was lax. Phebe Drewett had brought from Annonay, where she had stayed in a French family, a German friend named Magna Sieverts, to teach music, and Magna quickly fell to Samuel Drewett, who was then living with his mother, was managing one of the many straw-hat factories in the town, and was introducing modern ideas, many of his followers being youths who belonged to his evening club.

I was very young at that time, but I seem to have seen much and remembered much. I remember very clearly my grandmother in her black dress and white shawl and her quiet, unhastening, efficient way : always doing something, baking her wonderful brown bread, making a pork pie (shaped like a turnover and completely

obsolete in these inferior days of juiceless meat and Plaster of Paris crust), mixing with secret rites her ointment, or retiring with a patient to the little room known as the surgery. But she never hurried or forgot her dignity. I hope there are some at Luton who still remember her ; I should like to talk with them.

My grandmother, whom I used to visit until I was in the late twenties, had an old servant named Ann, with a high Bedfordshire voice, with whom, like so many elderly mistresses with elderly maids, she was continually bickering ; but never to any real loss of temper. Ann, I must admit, was trying, for her memory was short where my grandmother's was exact; but she was not spared.

At breakfast my grandmother would suddenly ring the bell—a copper bell with a loose handle.

Enter Ann, a little flustered.

' Look at the table, Ann,' her mistress would say, ' and see what thee have forgotten.[5]

Ann would look and look, while I was longing to prompt her. ' Ann, you old duffer, the salt/ I wanted to say.

After a while Ann would give it up. ' Fm sorry, m'm, but I don't miss nothing.'

* If thee look in the cupboard, Ann, thee'll find the salt.'

Although Mrs. Drewett preferred Josephus to the Bible, she was no rebel, and indeed the sim-

plicity of her trust in verbal scripture often perplexed me. She believed, for example, as her daughter, my mother, did, that on that distant reuniting day we should actually and physically reassemble for judgment, and this macabre idea struck her as ' nice '.' Nice ' was indeed one of her favourite words. She thought certain articles of food ' nice'; she also, I remember, thought it ' nice ' that Jesus Christ should have been crucified between two thieves.

* Yes,' said Old Claus, * I often watch with delight the power over people that epithets can exert. " Nice " is still popular, and at any rate it is better than " marvellous 'V

* Quakers have always been partial to it.' I said. * They also say, or used to say, " nicely " when you asked them how they were. " Nicely, thanks." The opposite of " rather poorly ".

' Nothing of a scholar herself,' I said, * among my grandmother's cousins, sons of her aunt Elizabeth Pattison, were Jeremiah Homes Wiffen, translator of Tasso and librarian at Woburn Abbey to the sixth Duke of Bedford, and Benjamin Barron Wiffen, who knew Spanish and wrote the lives of the early Spanish reformers. Both went to Ackworth.'

The only one of my grandmother's relatives that I knew was her sister Phebe Pattison, a strong-minded, independent old lady with a commanding nose, who for many years had been

attendant and friend of the Ashby family at Staines, and who, when, with my father and my brother Alfred, I called on her in 1888 or so, on our way by boat from Oxford to London, gave me the first sovereign I had ever consciously received. That is the best generosity—from a poor relation, or from one whom the world would so describe.

Luton, I understand, has greatly changed and is now almost another London, but as I remember it, it was a country town, small enough for Vyse's siren to be heard everywhere. Once a year there was a Statute fair which filled the central streets with stalls and booths and naphtha lamps, and in one of these booths was a Fat Lady who, I shall never forget, kissed my schoolfellow, my cousin Arthur Sheppard, because he was so pretty. I remember, too, the Fifth of November bonfire, and how we used to lean over a certain railway bridge to see the Scotch express roar by ; and I remember a weekly visit on pocket-money day to the pastrycook, next to Inwood's, for a sausage-roll, and to Webber's or Webling's for penny conjuring tricks, and more frequent visits to my uncle's office in the hope of a stray penny. And I remember stealing apples with Herbert Lockhart from the store-house in the garden of my grandfather's old house in Park Street, which the Lockharts had taken, and sitting with poor Lionel Lockhart, that tuber-

culous victim, in his bedroom-prison and envying his accuracy with an air pistol.

The Lockharts' house was immediately opposite the footpath to the fine old Luton church, and I remember that while I was at Rothesay Road there was one of the Spring-heeled-Jack scares and no one would walk alone along that path at night.

I don't claim that anything I did at Luton in those days bore later any fruit, but they stand out very clearly.

'You never can tell/ said Old Glaus; 'we never know at the time, as you yourself have said, what is significant and what isn't. But I take it you learned something?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I learned, and once learned sadly; for when we all went over to Bedford one day, to see the Bunyan statue, and I was expecting another fair and another Fat Lady, I learned that "statue" and "statute" were two different things; and it was at Rothesay Road, when in disgrace, that I crept into Fraulein Sieverts' room and borrowed her *Children of the New Forest* and *David Copperfield* in the Tauchnitz edition.'

'Quite enough,' said Old Glaus. 'You were learning.'

XIV

OLD GLAUS gave the leg of the Cub arm-chair a vicious kick, which I rather fancy—and indeed hope—hurt his toe, and sat down with a scowl.

'And the particular grievance?' I asked.

'I hate this time of year,' he said. 'I hate autumn. I hate it because summer's gone and winter's coming. I hate it because underclothing becomes a problem and I've got to think of an overcoat again. I hate it because it always gives me a cold. I hate it because there are no more cricket reports to make the paper readable, and columns will now be filled with this clumsy football. In fact I hate it.'

'What time of year do you like?' I asked.

'I like the spring,' he said.

'But don't you catch cold then, too?'

'Always,' he said. 'But I don't mind, because there are daffodils and primroses and it's on the way to summer, and I like summer. It's the end of summer I hate. The days shortening instead of lengthening. The leaves falling instead of breaking their buds. The morning chill in the

air. The loss of interest in the barometer. Have you ever thought what a tragedy that is—when you don't care what happens when you tap the barometer? When, in fact, you don't tap it at all?'

'I always tap it,' I said. 'I like fine days in autumn and winter as much as those in summer. Doesn't the sight of reddening woods please you?'

'Not a bit. It means decay.'

'Nor the scent that comes out of the morning mist?'

'No,' he said. 'More decay. I want summer.'

'But surely there are compensations?' I said. 'Oysters?'

'I never touch them.'

'Partridges?'

'I like them once or twice, but not to excess.'

'Pheasants?'

'Overrated food.'

'A leg, grilled for breakfast,' I suggested, 'with red pepper?'

'Yes, possibly. But I can do without it. I don't really care for anything at breakfast except bacon. But, of course, bacon is best at odd times when you don't expect it.'

'Anyway, you're in a bad humour,' I said.

'I am,' he replied, 'and it's all because of the season. I shan't be in a good humour again till April.'

'I wonder how you'd like a tropical country,' I remarked, 'where it's hot all the year round?'

'I shouldn't,' he said. 'That's not what I want. I don't want anything abroad. I loathe abroad. What I want is that England should be hot all the year round, and I believe that most people, unless they shoot or hunt, would agree with me. Ask the next men that come in. Ask them what their attitude is to the end of summer. Here's Grayson; ask him.'

'"Oh, Grayson,"' I said, '"we're having an argument about the season of the year. Claus says he hates the autumn. What do you say?"'

'"Me?"' said Grayson. '"I hate it, too. And for a very good reason: my cook came to me this morning, all over smiles, to say that the coal-cellar is nothing like so full as she thought it was, but unfortunately last week was the end of the Summer Prices."'

'There you are,' said Old Claus. 'And that opens up another question. Fires. Disputes about fires are now going to break out all over these islands. "Isn't it time for a fire?" "Surely you don't want a fire yet?" Ah! here's Peters. Ask him.'

'"Oh, Peters,"' I said, '"we're having a little argument about the present time of year. End of the summer and all that. These men both hate it. What do you say?"'

'"Of course I hate it,"' said Peters. '"It's the

time of year when Society ladies announce in the Personal Columns that, on account of change of plans, they are prepared to sell their minks or sables, which cost several hundred pounds and are as good as new, at an enormous sacrifice." J

'Well,' I asked, 'how does that bear on the question?'

'"Your wife shows you the advertisement,"' said Peters.

'Now you know,' said Old Claus.

'Well,' I said, 'cheer up. Think of Gregory. Gregory had a wonderful device to enable him to forget everything but his own magnificence. He both slept badly and suffered from the indictments of himself. At about 3.30 a.m. Gregory used to wake and put himself in the box and prosecute himself and give himself an awful time. Until he invented a way out.

'This is what he did. Imagining himself to be about to die, or rather to be already dead, he wrote a number of flattering obituary notices about himself; not merely the official notices that are published the day after an eminent man dies, but those little supplementary testimonials in *The Times* which are contributed by people afterwards, who often sign only their initials or call themselves "A Friend". You have seen them constantly: "A.B.C." writes, "C.L.G." writes, "A Friend" writes, and then the eulogium.

'Well, in the ordinary way—so far as I know,

but spiritualists will correct me if I am wrong —whoever reads these praises, it is not the person that called them forth. But in Gregory's case their only reader was that person.

' He kept a bunch of them in a drawer beside the bed—all printed, as though they were cut from newspapers—and in the darkest hours of human life, which are at night in the autumn, he read them and was comforted.[5]

' Do you mean to say,[5] Old Claus interrupted, ' that even though he wrote them himself, and knew so completely he wrote them himself—and about himself—he found them solacing and encouraging ? '

' Immensely,' I replied.

' Amazing ! ' he exclaimed.

' Not at all,' I said. Poor human nature's desire for appreciation is such that it will swallow anything. " Granted I wrote them myself,[55] Gregory used to say, " does that make them utterly suspect ? Why should not they be true, too ? If I wrote about you, I should be truthful; why not then when I write about me ? "

' " I give it up," I said. " I have no such enviable powers. But read me one or two.[55]

' " With pleasure," Gregory said, and taking some newspaper-cuttings from his pocket-book, he chose three or four. He always kept an assortment with him, he said. Who could tell when they might be needed ?

' He put on his glasses.

' " The first happens to be about my funeral," he said ; and he began :

'" There were probably never so many people as assembled yesterday at Golder's Green crematorium, to pay a last mark of affection, admiration and respect to the late Mr. Gregory Blank. Although the deceased gentleman, with his constant thought for others, had directed that no flowers should be provided, but that the money that might be spent in that way should be given to hospitals, the floral tributes were both numerous and splendid."'

' " And that kind of stuff cheers you up? " I asked.

' " Prodigiously," he said. " But not so much as this." And he began to read again. This time it purported to be a tribute by Lord Hugh Cecil, who wrote to the effect that it was with a peculiar sense of grief that he read of the death of his old friend, Gregory Blank.

' " I didn't know you knew Lord Hugh Cecil," I said.

'" I don't," he replied, " but I've always admired him, and I know he wouldn't say what he didn't mean. Shall I go on ? "

' " I suppose so," I said, and he proceeded to read what Lord Hugh Cecil had so conscientiously written :

'" Through all the years that we have been intimate, I cannot remember a single instance where his judgment was at fault. We may not have seen eye to eye in everything, and particularly in ecclesiastical matters, but there was no one whose opinion I valued more highly.'"

'And that guff put him to sleep and in a right state of mind?' Old Glaus asked.

'Absolutely,' I said. 'Why not?'

'No reason at all,' said Old Claus. 'But it's no use to me: I can't deceive myself.'

'Well,' I said, 'every one to his own taste. The thing is to get to sleep, for nobody ever profited by small-hour questions and recriminations. I personally have recourse to the poets. It is not what they intended, but that is how I use them, both serious and comic, both Gray and Gilbert. I have found the "Elegy" and "Etiquette" equally serviceable, and now and then I add to my repertory. What do you think of this as a recent find:

> How brew the brave drink, Life?
> Take of the herb hight Morning Joy,
> Take of the herb hight Evening Rest,
> Pour in pain lest bliss should cloy,
> Shake in sin to give it zest—
> Then down with the brave drink, Life!'

'You must let me copy that,' said Old Claus. 'Who wrote it?'

'Nobody seems to know,' I said. 'I wish I did; I should like to read the author's other works.'

XV

'"W" WENT,' I said, 'to too many schools—to I nine in all—and to the best of them too early: to the "Woodlands", at Hitchin, of which Cranston Woodhead and my uncle, Joseph Drewett, nicknamed "Dapper" or "Per", were the owners. That was in 1878 and, the usual difficulty arising—a dispute over extras—I was then sent from it to Ackworth, in Yorkshire, where the girls—for there was a female side—were called lasses.

'At the "Woodlands" the flower of Quaker youth was to be found, and on Sundays we might eat at breakfast any delicacy upon which we had spent Saturday's pocket-money—usually boiled eggs with our initials on them—and once John Bright, fishing in Scotland, sent to his son Philip, who was a boy there, a twenty-five-pound salmon of which all partook; but at Ackworth, at eleven, the boys fought for crusts called "skinnocks", and at the principal meal the meat plate remained for pudding, having been cleaned by the diner.

'At Ackworth, also, broad Yorkshire was too much talked, and I did not like it; but I liked

to watch Joe Mills (who has just written a long life of this same John Bright) hitting left-handed to square leg, and A. E. Binyon (who now lectures) gracefully defending his wicket; and I still seem to hear Wilfred Whitten (known all the world over as "John o' London'') reciting, now thunderously, now sweetly, the music of " The Bells ".

' And at Ackworth there was no liberty, whereas at Hitchin we had a football ground, a cricket ground, a paddock, a shrubbery with a long pond of fish in the midst of rhododendron clumps, and a playground. I never pass by a box-wood hedge, even after all these years, without seeing again that shrubbery and being aware of its scent. In the paddock was a great bed of violets where lizards hid. Linking the paddock to the shrubbery was a tunnel, with shells and fossils on the walls, in patterns. That was in 1877 and 1878. What is there now?

' I know, for I was at Hitchin again the other day, this year 1935, returning from a Test Match at Nottingham which the rain destroyed, and I was made very sad. Aware of its many motor-buses and its noisy streets and the addition to its old houses of new commercial facades, Hitchin seemed to me to be trying wilfully to be rural. A cattle market was in progress, and a hawker was selling at the gateway sixpenny canes with which drovers might incite bullocks or dealers slap their

legs. Every inch of space had its waiting car. There was nothing to eat.

'I did my best to reconstruct the past. I wandered up the yard, off Bancroft, where the "Woodlands" playground used to be, partly now a parking place for bicycles and the home of odds and ends. The great house, empty, was under alteration; the schoolrooms had gone or had been converted; a portion of the garden and some of its fine old trees remained; on the site of the paddock and the romantic tunnel leading to the fish pond and the box hedges, have been built new educational premises where scholars quake not. A grey-haired gardener who boasted of his knowledge of old Hitchin was found to have memories only of forty years; and of what use are they? I was thinking, and wanting others to think, in terms of 1878.

'In Bancroft I found "Gentleman" Jeeves's house, and James Hack Tuke's house, still as they were, but Maria Feltham's was empty, and the Hermitage, opposite the school, is now new shops. In the Square, however, there are familiar signs. The Bank is there, although with the name of Barclay on it; the lavender-water distiller, Perks, is still there, and the bookshop of Paternoster and Hales is still there, although Macmillans' show-case, with the desirable "Golden Treasury" in it, has given place to novel thrillers. It was Hitchin all right—and all wrong.

' An old " Woodlands " boy, later than I, came to me the other day with photographic groups, asking me to identify them, but my year was lacking. There were boys, however, that I knew: my cousin Robert Alfred Penney, who was famous for his strength, and who died in 1935 ; the two brothers Bax—Norman Bax and Willie Bax—Norman, dark, quick and elusive at Rugby, Willie fair, gentle and apathetic ; the two brothers Marsh—Bedford Marsh, who now and then surprised me by placing my initials on a Sunday morning egg (the best form of unexpectedness !), and Edward Marsh, still living and a collector of china, with whom I was confined in the sanatorium. It was while we were there, getting clear of scarlatina or some other youthful malady, that we took to painting ; but the school's real artist was Arthur Richardson.

' I remember,' I went on, ' Cranston Woodhead's loss in popularity after taking two or three of the older boys into the orchard to join him in shooting swallows—for we felt that, although powder and shot were glorious, swallows should be allowed to live. This, however, did not prevent us from trying, with a catapult, in the shrubbery, to get golden-crested wrens. These catapults, I should say, were made for us, with our own materials, at fourpence each, by the " Orange boy " who, with his basket, came every day after lunch to waylay us as we left; while for chocolates we

went to the sweet-shop almost next door, adjoining, I fancy, Maria Feltham's. Maria Feltham was a wealthy old Quaaker lady who invited some of us to tea and displayed her pet marmoset. Our other female friend was Miss Feldwick, the most comforting and comfortable of school-matrons. I called on her on a visit to Hitchin four years later, when the "Woodlands" had become Isaac Sharp's. She was as kind as she had always been, and full of horror, I remember, at what she called " the Pheonix Park " murders.

' On the opposite side of Bancroft, next to the Seebohms', was a school annexe, an old house behind pollarded trees, where some of the boys slept, and where often, on fine evenings, they let down to the pavement heated pennies to burn the fingers of the avaricious, or pennies tied to a string which could be pulled back at the critical moment.

Among other boys I can remember a fast runner named Burgess, known as " Harry Spasms " ; and Eustace Lee, the head of the school, tall, handsome, and laughing, who was the first contemporary I ever saw spin a sovereign of his own ; and two Gadburys, one of whom was known as " Badger " ; and a Christie from Chelmsford ; and, of course, my brother Alfred ; and my cousin Arthur Sheppard, whose parents' generosity at the Bank made up to us for the neglect we received from the Hitchin Lucases; and

Herbert Tebbutt, who had the best of the school's bicycles—all high in those days ; and the lengthy stooping Clement Ord ; and Henry Lawrence, one of the masters, who, as I remark elsewhere and have described in *Landmarks*, died while I was there : and Eustace Frith, whose firm's photographs made Old England everywhere known ; and an Irish contingent, with, I think, an Allen and a Pirn among them ; and Jack Robinson; and I cannot of course forget my aunt, Joseph Drewett's wife Annie, whom—for she had some kind of palsy—we saw as little as possible, chiefly when abstracting walnuts from the great tree in front of her windows, but who was of the kindest nature. With the unpitying directness of the schoolboy, she was known as "Annie Shakes".'

'And what,' Old Claus asked, 'did you bring away from the "Woodlands"? Did you read anything there?'

'I can remember nothing,' I said. 'Not a book, not a word. It made me, I think, fastidious, but only when the Ackworth contrast set in, and I have never forgotten the pleasure in finding that, all unknown to me, Bedford Marsh had provided me with an egg. That, I am sure, told me something, which I try never to forget, of the value of surprise in life.'

XVI

I'VE been having more trouble with my dependent, Vincent,' said Old Glaus. ' The latest thing is that he thinks he can write. Writing, at any rate, is a way to make a living, and so I said, " Excellent! Why not? "

' " But what am I to write about? " Vincent asked.

' " You should decide on that first," I said. " I'm no author, but I have always fancied that the impulse comes from within."

' " But wouldn't it be a good way," he asked, " to look around and see what subjects had not been treated and then tackle one of them? "

' " A very good idea," I said, " but I doubt if it will answer the purpose. So far as I can judge, not only is every subject treated, but two books on each come out at the same time."

' " But, if one were intensely topical," Vincent suggested, " one could get in first."

' " You could hardly hope to beat the newspapers," I replied.

' " No," he said, " they're a bore."

' But, on the other hand, I reminded him, they

are ephemeral. They live only for a day, whereas Vincent would write for posterity.'

' " True," he said, and once again I realized that irony had been wasted.

' " One of the few books that don't exist and that I want to read," I went on, " is *The Lives of Lottery Winners.* There's a good theme, if you like. I don't know whether you've noticed, but the winners, or at any rate the only winners we hear about, are always in humble circumstances. The rich have no chance. It has even been said that to ensure any luck at all one must first open a fried-fish shop. In France they are saying you must first move to the Midi, which is much the same thing.

'" Look," I continued, " at the lotteries they've been holding in Paris, where, although millions of francs have gone to the buyers of tickets, the Government has netted sixty per cent, of the subscribed funds. One of the winners was a barber at Tarascon, and there are two profitable lines for you here, Vincent: one, the profession of barbers as a whole—talkative friendly men with their listeners always at a disadvantage—Figaro, Sweeney Todd, Leander Tweddle ; and, secondly, Tarascon, the home of Tartarin—what a magnificent spash Tartarin would have made had he won such a fortune—his boasts, his banquets and so forth ! In real life," I continued, " the barber of Tarascon seems to have intended to remain at

his post, shaving, clipping, talking, applying friction, perhaps providing the ladies of the vicinity with those permanent waves which so frequently have to be renewed ; while, in the flush of success and excitement, for a day or so he treated every client alike: free. But afterwards he decided to be a swell, and I read that he bought a chateau, probably from some impoverished French nobleman.

' " That's one winner for you," I said. " At another drawing of prizes the first fell to a mechanic of Marseilles. He had bought, like the barber, one ticket only, and he had forgotten all about it until, on his way to work, he stopped at a cafe and was congratulated by the innkeeper."

' " But I don't know where my ticket is," he said.

' " That doesn't matter," said the innkeeper, " I made a note of it. You'll find it right enough."

' And he did. He neither went to his work nor, in his haste, paid for his drink, but rushed home to tell his wife. In short, the brick came down once more.

' " What do you mean," asked my nephew ; " the brick came down ? "

' I sighed. " That's the worst of talking to the young," I said. " They remember nothing. There was a very good comic song," I explained, " long before you were born, called ' The Brick Came Down.' It was an Irish song about some

labourers on their way to work on a Monday morning, and as it was a fine day, and porter and idleness seemed more attractive than toil, they decided to throw a brick into the air, and if it stayed up they would go to work and if it came down they would take the day off. They were prepared, in fact, to abide by what it did. Well, it came down."

' " I see," said Vincent; " and that was funny ? "

' " We rather liked it," I admitted sadly.

' " But of course it came down," Vincent went on, mercilessly. " It had to come down; a brick is heavier than air."

' " True," I said, with a sigh or even a groan. " Perhaps that was the point."'

It was here that I interrupted Old Claus.

' That's one of the troubles with our young men,' I said ; ' they know nothing of the past. They are not interested in it, or if they mug it up, it is only to destroy and not to reconstruct. That is why it is so difficult to help them. In fact they don't care about the past at all. Old things mean nothing to them and I guess that their new gods are often false. Just as an example, take this. The other day I was making a few notes on the history of cricket, and in the course of them wrote that Fennex was the master of Fuller Pilch. It seemed to me incredible that any one should have heard of neither. But the perfected

script which came back from **the** typist said that the master of Father Pilch was Fenner. **And** there you are. Something has occurred to deprive the past of all its interest.'

' True,' said Old Claus.

' As a rule,' I continued, ' if they want to write, they want to write novels, intimate novels, where you are bound very soon to find the word " sadistic ". It is partly to say " sadistic " that they write, and partly, having got themselves into a mess, to see how they stand. There's no reason why we shouldn't keep an eye both on what is happening and what used to happen ; but it is not their way.'

' The War,' suggested Old Claus.

' I expect so,' I said : ' the stock scapegoat. And if, despising prose,' I continued ' they write poetry, it isn't decent and it doesn't rhyme or scan.'

' And,' said Old Glaus, ' they dress vilely, and hike with girls who usually wear spectacles, take insufficient changes and no combs, and sunburn easily.'

' What are your nephew's clothes like ? ' I asked.

'Awful,' said Old Claus. ' The oldest. Directly there is the least heat, he forswears collars arid wears shorts and pull-overs. The world seems to be full of knees, and knees are always ugly.'

'I used to despise a dandy,' I said, 'but I'm **not** sure I shouldn't respect him if I saw one now.'

'Yes,' said Old Claus, 'but don't forget the advertisement in *The Times—The Times,* if you please—which says that you can hire a complete outfit for Ascot for twenty-five shillings.

'To resume about Vincent and lotteries,' he went on, 'I told him about that other man, an early example, the Italian who won the Irish prize and had to go to law. I read somewhere he had not derived much happiness from his good luck. But, of course, the whole point of the book would be the after-effects of sudden wealth, whether good or ill. In any case I should like to read it. *The Lives of Lottery Winners*—yes, a really interesting theme.'

'"It doesn't interest me," said Vincent; "not for a book. But I think I'll buy a ticket."'

'Respecting lotteries,' I said, 'I have a friend in the country whose existence has been made miserable by being constantly rung up and told that Paris wants her. It is a compliment, in a way, to be wanted by Paris; and were she a few years younger, and the world many centuries younger, she might of course win an apple, or be in the running for it, or by her beauty she might launch a thousand ships.

'"What number do you want?" she asks. And it is her number all right, and once more her hopes are raised, for, of course, having no Paris

friends, she is to be told that her ticket has won. But it always ends in the same way : the number is right but the Exchange wrong, the Exchange wanted being Horam and hers being Horsham, both in Sussex ; and once again she has a few words with the pleasant Frenchman at the other end, who apologizes for them—them being the telephone-operators—and rings off.

' It's no use,' I said to Old Claus, ' you can't help people. They come to you saying they want help and then they don't profit by what you say. I mean, of course, those people who don't really have any initiative. The others are all right, but then they rarely ask advice : they act. I too have these barnacles, but I can't do more than make idle suggestions. The industries that I commend, which also are certain, they reject. Ready-made clothes—look at the money there ! Every one must dress. Every one is vain. But no. " Vulgar," they say. I then mention food, for every one must eat. But no. " Vulgar," they repeat.'

XVII

'WHAT about Ackworth?' asked Old Claus. 'What did you learn there?'

'At the time,' I said, 'I thought this hard northern experience was wasted, but I see now that two charges falsely preferred against me there—one that I malingered in order to enjoy the tea and toast and seclusion of the matron's room, and the other that I dared an engine-driver to run over me—caused me to weigh more attentively other people's words: in fact, to become on occasion suspicious—although never suspicious enough.

'It was at Ackworth, too, that I first wrote, but not for public consumption: a brief manual on the game of cricket, which is I know not where. I also felt sure that clean plates were important and that girls (of whom I went for many years in dread) should not be called lasses.'

'And next to Ackworth?' Old Claus asked.

'Well,' I said, 'for a while there was an interregnum, for I had a bad knee and was sent to Church Farm at Angmering in Sussex to lie up and recover. I think the trouble was called

synovitis. The farmer was Sextus Vernon Clark, who had moved to Angmering from Kingston-on-Sea, where we had stayed during a summer or so and where I had seen, as you will afterwards learn, Miss Jane. I was at Angmering for three months, leading an idle life, learning to drive, collecting birds' eggs, shooting with a real revolver and with a real bow and finger-tips, wondering if drinking were truly as depraved and intoxicating as I had been led to believe, and wondering also if it were possible that only a narrow company of Wesleyans or Baptists were of the elect. For the Clarks were exclusive Nonconformists. Most of all I used to hear the R.C.s abused—one of the local priests (for we were near Arundel, a stronghold of the Old Persuasion), named Father Keating, being invariably known as Father Cheating—and I used to wonder if R.C.s were of necessity devils too.

'The chapel favoured by the family was on the road from Angmering to the station, high on a bank, and I remember the services, and the absence of the liberating handshake for which the youthful Quakers so longed ; and I remember also the big man of the congregation, a burly handsome farmer named Bushby, and the fidelity with which his dog, left outside, watched the door.

'But the biggest man of all in this neighbourhood was Sir Henry Fletcher of Ham Manor

'1 doubt,' said Old Claus, ' if you went to Red Hill in vain.'

' I remember also,' I said, ' that when there was a question of the boarders joining a dancing-class, the parental verdict was No, a decision I have always regretted ; and that not only did a member of the Linnell family (who had sat on William Blake's knee) teach us drawing, but that he showed us the ugly house with no blinds on the west side, which his father, John Linnell, had built on Recliffe Hill, and where he died. This seemed to bring me much nearer to art and artists than I had yet been, and to pave the way, when I was fourteen or fifteen, for the gift of the Uttle picture by John Varley, another friend of Blake, of which I have spoken.'

' You have told about John Varley,' said Old Claus, ' and now here is Blake, too; but you haven't explained how you came to like pictures so much.'

' I think we are being too early,' I said. ' Love of pictures came later. But with the exception of Thomas Glaisyer's " Samuel Lucas's", and the " Clem Lamberts" that the Claytons had, and the "Jenners" my father collected, I think that certain water-colours by Jules Lessore, which in the late eighties Daniel Hack showed me, were most inflammatory. They had a radiance that I often thought about, and I was interested in Lessore because he was

living in the old family house at Southwick.'

Old Claus looked disappointed.

'I'm sorry,' I said. 'Had you wanted it, I could have invented a childish enthusiasm for Constable. But no. Before pictures entered into my soul I had to go to Holland to write a book.

'The first real artist I ever knew personally was Clem Lambert of Brighton, who could catch the atmosphere of the Sussex river valleys so vividly. But I knew by sight another hero of the brush, George De Paris, who conscientiously reproduced our cathedrals, while the Hon. Hugh Rowley, painter of fans, and Mrs. Freeman Gell, a sculptor, were other Brighton artists who were on terms with the gods. But I could not imitate.

'I never,' I continued, 'could paint anything worth looking at. How galling it is for a man with no extraneous gift to meet with successful versatility! Or is it? I mean, or should it be? I received a shock the other day when, at a picture-show by modern artists, I came across a little green landscape, full of charm and life, and found against it in the catalogue the name of a friend of mine, distinguished in the world of surgery and sport, but never to my knowledge a manipulator of hogs' bristles.

'Since two people are always having the same name, and since it seemed unlikely that a busy

surgeon could paint so well and keep the secret, I dismissed the idea that it was the work of Simon Pure and forgot about it. But a day or so later, meeting that genial and accomplished operator and telling him about his gifted double, I found that it was indeed this Simon Pure who all the while had called for his brush and called for his paints and set this lovely little section of England on canvas.

'Cordial as were my felicitations, I could not avoid a pang of envy. Why should he, who in addition to his curative work was a golf-champion, suddenly discover—as he had done during a period of convalescence—that he could paint, while I, who would give everything for that power, and am not unobservant, or insensitive to natural beauty, cannot draw even a recognizable table?

'Why should I not give his name? Sir Harold Gillies, or, as his friends call him, "Giles".

'And then, later that very day, whom should I meet, to fill my cup of bitterness, but little Madame Trefle, just over from Paris, filled with self-pity because her bottier, the only bottier in the world, had been such a pig as to sell his business and retire. Her dainty feet had become to him nothing! "And how do you think," she asked, lifting her pretty hands towards heaven, "how do you think he spends his time?"

'I might have known the answer but I failed to suggest it.

' " He paints, my dear. I ask you ! Paints."
" What do you mean?" I asked. "Houses?"
' " No,'' she said : " pictures."
' " And what kind of pictures ? " I asked.
' " Like Corot," she replied.'

XVIII

' A[ND] the next school?' old class a

' The next school,' I said, ' is memorable, because it was there that I began, and finished with, Greek. To have no Latin worth speaking about has always seemed to me deplorable ; but the loss of Greek is tragic, no less. To have been snatched from this school so soon, and then, after eighteen months of retrogression, to have been articled to a bookseller—that surely was a blunder and shame. But let us forget most of it.

' It was at Dr. William Porter Knightley's at the Western College in Montpellier Road, Brighton, that I met Xenophon, only to lose him again.

' Dr. Knightley I remember as a magnificent figure of a head-master : tall, with a vast pink face, white whiskers, a high hat and black clothes, who waddled rather than walked. His title of Doctor came from the College of Preceptors.

' One of his daughters, who lived at Bolney in Sussex, used to send him poultry, and once when my mother, who, as I have said, was deaf, dined

with the Knightleys, the Doctor commended the fowls, because they came from Bolney. "No," said my mother—and it was she who told the story, which was long used against her—" I don't find them bony at all."

' Among the Western College pupils were ordinary boarders, day boys, and parlour-boarders, very select, with pocket-money and their own common-room and far too much license. Two of Wilson Barrett's sons were among the parlour-boarders, and a Greek, and an expensive youth named Pearson.

*I was a day boy, but I dined with the rest, when those who had arranged for it drank beer poured out by a dignified old soldier wearing gloves that were not always as white as they began. It seemed to me immoral for boys to be given beer.

' Thompson, a Scotchman, a master who held the championship for putting the weight, took his duties very lightly. When he thought the coast was clear, he substituted Shakespeare or Ouida for what we were supposed to be learning, and read from them aloud. Another master was the Rev. Arthur Gill, who afterwards became Rector of West Wittering, in Sussex, and one of whose sons, Eric, is now famous as a sculptor and designer of lettering, and another, Macdonald Gill, is an architect and also a letterer.

' Once at any rate I must have spent the week-

end at the school, for I remember Mr. Gill, who was supervising our Sunday occupations, telling me that the book I was reading—the *Ingoldsby Legends*—was not suitable to the Day of Rest. " All the same," I replied, " it was written by a clergyman."

' I relate this, although I have told it before, as a score ; what I am now going to divulge, for the first time, is a disgrace. It was while I was at the Western College that R. T. Booth conducted a Blue Ribbon campaign at the Dome, and, as a good teetotaller and the son of teetotallers, I was led to a service, coming from it very consciously adorned with the badge of abstinence. When, however, the next day, the boys at school (one of whom was a brewing Mellersh from Reigate), who had no reverence either for such tenets or for such public glory in them, called me appropriate names, I tore it off for ever. There were still three or four years to run before I tasted alcoholic beverages and found them good, but I wore no more blue ribbons.

' Cowardly, I suppose ? ' I inquired.

' Yes,' said Old Claus. ' But if you knew it' was cowardly, and winced accordingly, and never without wincing saw a blue ribbon on anyone, it is all right. But can't you remember deriving any benefit from the Western College? Did it do nothing else for your character ? '

' Well,' I said, ' it was there that one of the

masters asked me which I preferred : to be last man in the First XI or captain of the Second, and I chose to be captain of the Second, and we had, in the north-east corner of the County Ground at Hove, a successful season.

' Those were the days when Nathaniel Burchell, to whom all boys were potential or actual ball-stealers, was the groundman, and Host Juden kept the inn, and constant visitors at the bar were George Stubberfield, a veteran professional in need of employment, and poor "Jumper" Juniper, the Sussex one-eyed, fast, left-hand bowler, who was too soon to die. I remember how readily Thompson would accompany Pearson for a shandy-gaff, and how often " Jumper " and " Stubby " found themselves included in the invitation.

' It was at the Western College that, hearing that Henry Fawcett, the blind statesman, was a guest of Henry Willett, the collector, whose garden adjoined the College playground, I climbed to the top of the giant-stride hoping to catch a glimpse of him. I suppose that a commentator like you,' I remarked to Old Claus, ' could find something suggestive there ? '

' Surely,' he said.

' As a matter of fact,' I continued, ' I should call Henry Willett more important, for from my earliest days I remember the delight which was given to me by the promise that in our walks we

should go to the Brighton Museum, and this was less for the pictures and the coins and the stuffed birds and fossils and the wonderful clock that exposed its works, than for the Willett collection of pottery, all English and all bearing upon life. Of these plates and jugs and chimney ornaments, these ceramic celebrations of pugilists, preachers, monarchs and murderers, I never tired.

' To this moment, closing my eyes, I can see the representation, which at that distant time amused me so much, of the cow at whose horns and tail the rival litigants tug, while into the bucket rushes the rich milk which the lawyer educes.'

XIX

UT other boys ? ' Old Claus asked. ' At all these schools were there no boys to admire ? '

' I can't recall any,' I said. ' There were some fine athletes, such as Peggy Burlingame, who, although he had a club-foot, was a perfect swimmer. There were passionate cricketers, such as Herbert Sewell, who was always accompanied by his bat. There was the sumptuous Eustace Lee with his sovereign, and I remember at Dr. Knightley's a young Collard, one of the piano family, whose burlesque talks could keep us all laughing. But anything influential I miss ; any boy who was brilliant and original. Perhaps they were there, but I was too shy to mix or too blind to recognize them.

' Not till my last school, Saffron Walden, did I ever think of journalism, but three of us there, the other two being Walter Bayes, the artist, and Graham Hill, who I think became a dramatist, produced a periodical broadsheet. I have forgotten even its name ; but I know that but for reading *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* we should never have begun it. And that brings me back

to an old contention that there is nothing new in the world, only rearrangement. I remember Saffron Walden also,' I said, ' because it had a maze, like Hampton Court, and a museum which proudly possessed not only an elephant stuffed, but the articulated skeleton of one. Very impressive until you heard the local story, which said that one of those gigantic creatures, belonging to a travelling circus, having died there, the frugal curator set it up twice.'

'And later?' Old Claus asked. 'While you were in that book-shop ? '

' I can remember no one in it,' I said, ' who had a single idea in his head, except Graham Aylward, who made me read Meredith. The world, I quickly found, was the inheritance of the mediocre, and the paths of irony, unless carefully watched, led but to the danger zone.

' But, as I have said elsewhere, it was a priceless advantage to have the run of a Circulating Library that had begun in the eighteen-hundreds and preserved many of its books. And it was there that once, in a panic of self-preservation involving another and innocent youth (who behaved nobly), I told my worst lie. I have never forgotten it, and indeed still tingle.'

' An excellent thing,' said Old Claus, ' to recall your lies and still tingle. Do you tell none, now ? '

' Only,' I said, ' to those who deserve them. Never as exculpation.'

' Then you learned,' said Old Claus.

' As a matter of fact,[5] I said, ' I was too much driven back on myself. Quaker upbringing and native shyness had much to do with it. It was long before I felt at ease with strangers, and even, after my first newspaper days, when I went to University College, I could be natural only with a very few—such as Lyndhurst Giblin, a self-conscious thinker and iconoclast, now an apple-grower and statistician in Tasmania ; and Charles Goring, doctor, philosopher and disciple of Karl Pearson ; and, of course, W. P. Ker, the scholar and critic and all-wise.'

' So far as I can count,' said Old Claus, ' we are still three schools short.'

' I am sorry,' I said, ' but I can't derive anything from them. The first was Elizabeth Ball Prideaux's in Buckingham Place at Brighton, a mixed school for youthful Quakers, in a corner house that still stands : but beyond the fact that Miss Prideaux had a round face and little grey curls and strongly magnifying spectacles with gold rims, I can remember nothing remarkable about her. When we were good she rewarded us with sweets like sovereigns, which she kept in a bag for the purpose. At eleven o'clock we played, with disgust, a game called He. I was once so naughty that I was tied to the post of a metal bed, but I succeeded in pulling it to whatever part of the room I wished ; and once we sat

round a tablecloth on which Miss Prideaux poured quicksilver from a bottle, and I have thought quicksilver beautiful and mysterious ever since. I recall nothing else.

'Another Brighton school was Alfred Clark's, also in Buckingham Place, a boys' school, which I remember chiefly for the unappetizing mid-day meal and for the presence of one boy who, playing on my addiction to carpentering, not unmixed perhaps with cupidity, led me all the way to Park Crescent, to sell me "a saw for three-pence". When there, having collected the money, he handed me a slip of paper bearing the words "He loves too much who dies for love". This, he assured me, was a "saw".'

'So it was,' said Old Claus.

'Yes—but——,' I remarked.

'A useful lesson,' said Old Claus.

'Finally,' I resumed, 'I went for three months to my cousin Polly Drewett's, at High Wycombe, but of this I recall only such incidents as had no connection with scholasticism; such as a visit to a paper-mill; a visit to a chair factory; a visit to the cave at West Wycombe and to the ball on the church top; and conversations, long but rather one-sided, with a tame raven in the brewery yard next door to the school. Of the golden grain from which the bread of character is baked, I remember nothing.'

'You never know,' said Old Claus. 'That raven may have said something very important.'

XX

OLD CLAUS has supplied a partial solution of the problem as to what aged taxi-drivers used to be before they became taxi-drivers. While, the other day, he was on his way in a cab to some London address, the usual block occurred, and he found himself beside a mounted policeman whose horse, in spite of the converging traffic and every kind of startling noise, was a statue of immobility. After a few minutes Old Claus lowered the glass and asked the officer what was the secret of such discipline ; but before he could reply, the venerable driver of the taxi, who had heard the question, cut in. ' Simultaneous happlication of leg and rein, Sir,' he said.

You see, at any rate, what one driver had been before he took to taxi work. A cavalry man.

As another example of shrewdness, I told Old Claus of the reply made to a friend of mine, a clergyman, who has quite recently moved to another parish. In conversation with his new but extremely venerable sexton-verger-gardener, he said, ' And there's one little thing I wish you'd

do : I wish you'd let it be known in the village that I am short-sighted. I shouldn't like any parishioner I didn't recognize to think I was being rude.'

The old man looked at him for some moments in silence. Then he said, ' I'll do my best, Sir. I can see this isn't your first living.'

' Referring to the Cloth,' said Old Claus, ' a Rector in an unapostolic fury is rather fun, and I am still chuckling over my brother-in-law's anger as the other day he stamped up and down his beautiful cloistered garden, where no angry word should ever be uttered, calling for vengeance to descend upon his florist's head. And why? For what I must concede is a sufficient reason : for supplying last autumn, under the style of Darwin tulips, bulbs that, without any exception, have turned into flaming striped varieties more proper to the beds surrounding a petrol station or belonging even to a municipality.

' To desire a forest of slender stalks, each bearing a chalice of red, purple, and mauve all in delicate shades—to spend the dark winter months in anticipating their distinguished loveliness—to watch day by day the leaves slowly but steadily emerging from the earth—and then,' said Old Claus, who sometimes talks like a book, ' to find them blossoming so garishly : this is a blow indeed, and I don't wonder at Eustace's mortification and rage.

' 1,' continued Old Claus, ' who by the mercy of circumstances have but two or three hyacinths in glasses, and those really are the property of the cook who thinks that master likes such signs of spring—even I should be angry if bulb-sellers treated me like this : good English bulb-sellers, not ingenious Dutchmen luring us by circulars in comic English ; sometimes, I suspect, wilfully comic.

' The bore is that there is no redress. Eustace must either let them remain and offend his eyes, or he must horrify his gardener (who thinks these far prettier than any of them Darwins) by ordering their instant eradication. As a matter of fact, I doubt if he would, when it came to the point, dare to root them up. That would be atheism, if you like. To destroy tulips in full flower would be to have the village in arms : none too reluctantly either, for I have grave doubts if Eustace is as popular as he believes himself to be. But is any parson ?

' I am wondering now,' said Old Claus, ' how many other sensitive gardeners all over England who go to the same firm for tulips are at this moment suffering similar tortures. For it is very unlikely that the mistake was confined to my brother-in-law.

' The poor Rector ! ' Old Glaus resumed. ' He seems not only to have trouble with his nursery-man, but Royalty has disappointed him. I had

a letter this morning in which he says: "I missed a chat with the Duke of Kent on Saturday. After much correspondence and trouble to verify the age of our local oldest inhabitant, I notified His Majesty's Secretary and she got a Royal letter and the Duke called at the cottage graciously, but the relatives omitted to notify me—'Blow, blow, thou wintry wind, &c. !'—so I was not there ! Never mind, there's One above what knows! The old lady was, I am told, silent and grumpy, but her youngest son, aged eighty, whom she calls 'the boy', played up all right. Just off to the Diocesan Conference." '

And so we reached letters and letter-writing, always an amusing theme, and I told Old Claus how some one writing to me from Italy said that the custodian of Petrarch's house, as she shows the rooms, recites from the sonnets to Laura; and do they, my correspondent asked, recite Shakespeare's sonnets when they show you his birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon?

Not in my experience; and the fact that they don't, and that the Italians do, emphasizes one of the differences between the two races.

I could imagine nothing less likely than to hear the guide to a show-place in England murmuring:

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give !

But I recalled an odd thing happening on one of my visits to Ann Hathaway's cottage. It was on an afternoon in early June, in, I think, 1922, and we were being shown round by an elderly housekeeper. Suddenly she was called away by the telephone. Ann Hathaway's telephone !

On her return, wreathed in winning smiles, she said, ' Perhaps you would be interested to know that " Captain Cuttle" has won the Derby !'

' Letter-writing has, I know,' said Old Claus, ' fallen into disrepute and probably will never come back, its enemies being the decay of manners and the convenience of the telephone, of which, although we have discovered it for ourselves, the G.P.O. is always reminding us. But there are occasions when it is very unwise not to take the pen in hand, even for the briefest message, and I have just heard of one ; and if you are interested in any young schoolboy, listen carefully to the following true and tragic story and lay the facts before him.

' There recently died in London an elderly merchant of great wealth who, it was always understood, was making a favourite grandson his principal heir. When, however, his will was read, it was found that this boy had been left only a small legacy.

' His mother, naturally much upset, asked the

lawyer what was the reason. " I'm sorry," he replied. " I did all I could to prevent the alteration, but your father couldn't forget or forgive the fact that your boy didn't write to thank him for his last Christmas present." '

And then Old Claus told how a young friend just home from Africa, where he had been helping to build a church for the Nyassalanders, wrote to him saying that the schoolboys there, directly they begin to get some English education, want an English name, and that they choose it in odd ways. One boy, for instance, on his staff, who was called originally George Pindi, chose his from a book he was reading at the time that the great decision was reached, taking it not from the author but from the publisher's imprint, and emerging as George Oxford Press Pindi. Other publishers are possibly similarly honoured.

One of the letters from George Oxford Press Pindi ran : ' I was always preyed to help **you** in your way when you was going to your home in England. Please will you sand me that rain coat which you used to wore when you was here because here the rain started to rain? God may give you his grace do not forget to sand me rain coat.'

That's the kind of way we talk when we are together and I am not being forced into auto-biography. For no matter what our main occupation may be, we are always on the look-out **for**

odds and ends of life and convert them into challenges. Lest we weep, perhaps, we hasten to laugh.

'I will tell you,' said Old Claus, 'something that really happened last week, but which, since you are an old reader of the comic papers, you will refuse to believe. A defect having displayed itself in the h. and c. service in a country house, the plumber was sent for. He arrived, from the nearest town, six miles away, examined the installation and returned the next day with the necessary new pipes. He could not, however, get to work, and I will ask you to tell me the reason.'

I plunged into thought.

'You can't?' exclaimed Old Glaus. 'I thought you couldn't. Well, believe it or believe it not, he couldn't get to work because he had forgotten his tools.

'This,' Old Claus added, 'convinces me that all mothers-in-law are censorious, and all kippers laughable, and all sausages are made of mysterious ingredients among which pork has no place.'

XXI

AS no book of reminiscences is nowadays complete without a story of the War, let me tell one : a favourite, by the way, with the late Alfred Sutro. I can vouch for its truth, although there is no need to lay emphasis on that quality, because the War was so incredible that we may as well believe everything we hear about it.

The scene is the Marne in 1916, after two years had gone by. In an old chateau there, abandoned by its owners, who were taking refuge in Paris or on the Riviera, or possibly had followed the French Government to Bordeaux, a hospital had been installed near Sermaize-les-Bains by a philanthropic Englishman—more precisely a Scotchman—wishing to do something for the French peasants and wanting to be sure that his money went where he meant it to go. This end was ensured by the friend who controlled it: an Englishwoman with a sense of management and a warm heart. I knew them both.

The institution was modest but necessary. It had some thirty to forty beds and seven or eight assistants, male and female, all English except the cook and a kitchenmaid or so ; and its purpose

was to care for the children of the district—and even of Rheims itself, whence they were brought in under fire—who were injured or had been made homeless by the foe.

The chateau was a solidly built mansion, perhaps two hundred years old, standing in its own grounds, with a long, dark avenue leading from the main road, some quarter of a mile away, straight to the steps of the central doors. Sitting on these steps one could see the whole length of the avenue and even catch a glimpse of cars dashing past the gateway, or the smoky blue coats of marching soldiers. There were large plane trees in the park, in which the orioles uttered their liquid notes, and a little river, deep enough for swimming, formed one of the boundaries. A pleasant enough retreat if it were not for the desolation all around ; the aeroplanes continually droning in the sky ; the sound of distant bombardment ; and the fluctuating population of poor little maimed and frightened children crying for their mothers.

One hot August day, as the chatelaine (from whom I had the story) was resting, after lunch, in a deck-chair on the steps, she noticed a woman coming down the avenue. The woman, holding a large straw hat before her, was advancing slowly, with every sign of dejection and weariness. Arrived at the foot of the steps, she asked to see the patronne.

'I am **the** patronne.'

'Then may I speak to you in private?'

'But certainly.'

The events that were then unfolded followed a course not unfamiliar in Peace time but more than common in War.

The woman was the wife of a French farm-labourer who had been called up at the outbreak and had received no leave since. For two years he had been in the trenches. Earlier, except for occasional outbreaks of his jealous temperament, **she** and he had been happy in their marriage, and their children were three in number. She now lived on in the cottage, working in the fields: a typical French peasant, sunburned and sagging.

But upon the ordinary disenchantment of her class a new misfortune was imposing itself. When a regiment had come to the village some four months ago, a soldier had been billeted at her cottage. Life was lonely; she had become fond of him, or at any rate he did not displease her, and by a wretched mischance she was now enceinte. It was terrible. Her husband was a man of ungovernable temper, and should he discover it—and he might as easily come home to-morrow as never—he would kill her. As for the soldier, he had passed on to the Front and out of it all.

She would have gone long since to Chalons or Bar-le-Duc, the two nearest big towns, to consult

a doctor, but she had no money. What was to be done? Would not the patronne, who had a dispensary with many bottles, give her the necessary drug?

Such drugs, the patronne pointed out, do not form part of the equipment of a children's sanatorium; but even if she had anything, she could not and would not give it. Her hospital had not been endowed for such purposes. She would, however, as woman to woman, supply the money for the visit to Chalons; and with the notes grasped in her hand, the poor creature, still dangling her hat before her, step by step threaded the avenue and vanished into the road.

Three or four weeks later she returned to the chateau to describe her failure and to ask this time for something stronger than the first potion—something that would remove her own life, too. She could not face the disgrace in the village, let alone the chance of her husband's fury. Already she had tried to drown herself in the river, but had lacked courage. She had actually entered the water, the night before, but had crawled back to her purgatory.

The patronne was, of course, again firm, although sympathetic, and the wretched woman dragged herself up the avenue once more, with no prospect before her but public shame and a husband's vengeance. How would he kill her? she wondered. Would he strangle her or cut her throat?

Would he shoot her, or plunge his bayonet into her dishonoured breast?

That is the first part of the story.

'By the way,[5] I asked the Lady Bountiful on her next brief visit to England, a year later, 'what became of that poor soul you told me about who was going to have a baby and tried to turn you into a criminal? *

'O, it's the most extraordinary thing!' she replied. 'She's the happiest creature you ever saw.'

'Happy?'

'Of course.'

'Then she got rid of it, after all?'

'On the contrary, she was safely delivered.'

'But I thought that was the thing she most dreaded.'

'It was, but you see she had twins.'

'Twins? Could twins fill anyone with joy, least of all when they're illegitimate and the mother goes in terror of her husband?'

'But they did! You see, by French law a man with five children is exempt from military service. Well, these twins having brought the family to the statutory number, a telegram was despatched to the husband in the trenches telling him not only that he was again a proud father—doubly so, indeed—but free, and he came hurrying back, so glad to be quit of the glory of fighting for his country that he embraced his wife without a word of reproach.'

XXII

'YOU are interesting,' said Old Claus, ' but no one can write an autobiography that's satisfactory. For one thing, there is a reluctance—insuperable, and probably rightly so—to tell all. Then there is the practical impossibility of telling even nearly all, because a whole library would be required. Directly the process of selection comes in, untruthfulness is present. We record only what -we like and leave out the rest. Your own book, *Reading, Writing and Remembering,* is a case in point.'

' True,' I said. ' But I don't think I pretended it was more than a selection meant to entertain.'

' Anyway,' said Old Claus, ' it left a lot out, and my theory is that almost nothing happens to a child—and it is as a child that we receive the most important impressions—that does not count. When you were little, there must have been incidents which burned themselves into your personality and had a lasting influence ? Surely ? '

' Searching my mind,' I said, ' for the untoward outstanding events of those early days, I find two that certainly left their impress. The first

occurred when I was about five or six and its mixture of the ludicrous and the frightening was perhaps unique.

'My nurse and I were walking along the Brighton Front at a point very near the place where the *Skylark* used to be hauled up, when there were shouts from the beach and I saw, running towards the sea, a tall clergyman dressed entirely in black with a tall silk hat on his head. As he ran towards the sea he was pursued by a screaming woman and half a dozen fishermen : but he got there first, dashed in and disappeared, and for a minute or so all that remained of him was his tall silk hat bobbing up and down on the waves.

'Such was now the crowd collected at the water's edge that we missed his actual rescue, but in course of time he was led back, soaked and dejected, while the screaming woman—who turned out to be his nurse, for he was a mental case—walked by his side admonishing him, with his hat, his tall silk hat, dripping with water, in her hand.

'Although I was alarmed and frightened, I don't think this strange happening would have made much impression on me had we not been told that the clergyman was mad. That adjective put a different complexion on the event, and for a very long while I rarely got through the night without witnessing the scene again, and

being conscious of the tall silk hat bobbing on the waves.

' Often as I go to Brighton, I never forget that early scene.

' Three or four years after this I was to meet with madness again, and again madness associated with the sea—but of the gentlest variety. I mention the circumstance because it formed the subject, a decade and more later, of my first effort at descriptive character-writing.

' The family had the annual habit of staying for a month or six weeks in the country—at a farm for choice—and one year, when I was about eight, our choice was a remote farm-house at Kingston-on-Sea, on the edge of the salty levels between Worthing and Littlehampton, where the pebbles mingle with the grass, and tamarisk makes a hedge, and the two most exciting flowers are the Yellow Horned-poppy and Devil's Bugloss.

' In addition to the farmer, the members of the household were his wife, his small son, and his wife's sister, known as Miss Jane, who was what is called queer, and who for me had a profound fascination, no matter what distraught thing she did, but particularly when, as she used every afternoon, she strayed across the flats to the sea and waded in. Sometimes she would be standing in it, ankle or even knee high, motionless for an hour or more, talking either to herself or to the universe.

'When, in January, 1893—or, more rigidly speaking, in First Month, 1893—my old schoolfellow Wilfred Whitten and I started a magazine for Quaker readers called *The Essayist*, one of my own contributions consisted of some lines on Miss Jane, under the guise of Miss Anne, which must have struck any readers who then saw it as a debt to Walt Whitman.

' The material, however, was my own.

' Still another episode of madness and the sea—always the same sea, the English Channel—I have to record, and this also led to some very uneasy nights. There came to Brighton from the North to enter one of the Quaker businesses, a young man whom I will call merely S. : a pleasant and rather serious youth, some three or four years older than I was : say twenty-one to my seventeen.

' Of what we chiefly talked I cannot remember, but not of the next world : more likely of those who play cricket in this. Judge then of our horror when we learned that S. had got up at dawn one morning, had only partly dressed, walked or run all the way from Brighton to Worthing, muttering wildly, and, with his arms outspread, and his face lifted to the sky, had there jumped off the end of the pier, to have his legs broken on the rocks below.

' At the inquest, certain evidence as to hallucinations being forthcoming, it was proved that

S. was liable to fits of religious mania. This had been all unknown to me and I found it very disturbing. It would not indeed surprise me to know that from that hour I too began to die.

'This tragedy occurred, I suppose, as long ago as nearly half a century. Oddly enough, I found, early in the year 1931, in a book called *Christine* by the Franco-American writer Julian Green, who is still a young man, a short story entitled " The Pilgrim of the Earth " which might be the inner spiritual history of poor S. and explain all, and which has a not dissimilar ending.

'We die a little,' I said, 'when any of our friends die. I died when my brother Alfred was struck down by sunstroke at Cape Coast Castle. I died when Samuel Drewett died. I died when my brother Percy was killed in an advance in the War. I died when Charles Goring died. I died when a few years later my mother died —although she was happy and full of years, eighty, and slipped across the border, quietly, in her sleep. I died when Lady Colvin died and Sidney Colvin died. I died when Charles Clayton died. I died when W. P. Ker died.

'I died when Harry Irving died. He was a capricious, ironical man, capable even of cruelty, but I rejoiced in his company, whether in his home or out of it. I died when Ewan Agnew, cut down in early life, died. I died, although I knew him only slightly, when Edgar Wallace died. I

died when my cousin Muriel died. I died when poor Gerald du Maurier died. For all his wrong-headedness and unfairness to me, I died when Vincent Brown died. I died when, last year, St. John Lucas gave up his long struggle. I died when, only the other day, that splendid creature, Arthur Watts, crashed in the Alps in an aeroplane disaster.

' We are always dying.

' But most of me died when my best friend died. Her death, indeed, made my own, whenever it comes, seem something to be desired : certainly not dreaded.

' At first she seemed to be near : hovering, just out of reach, but near, watchful, solicitous. Yet I could establish no relationship.

' " If only I knew what you know," I used to say.

' " If you with your strong will are not here, no dead can return," I used to say.

' " Or did you," I asked, " as well as that fragile worn-out body, die ? "

' " They tell me," I used to say, " that dogs are clairvoyant, but your dog cannot find you either. He searches, but in vain, and comes back to me perplexed, frustrated and questioning. Yes, and affronted ; for you have never disappointed him before. His eyes are bigger than **ever** and full of tears.

' " If you are here," I used to say, "you would

let me know. In some way. But I have discerned no sign. I have looked in your mirror, but only my own reflection was there. I was hoping for yours, too, behind mine."

' " I have had so many letters about you," I told her, " and all true. From odd unexpected people as well as our friends. From one or two people that you didn't like, but who turn out to have had the deepest feeling of admiration for you.

' " Surely," I used to say, " if any of the dead can communicate with the living, you would communicate with me."

' But no. Nothing but silence. Nothing but a world made drab by the absence of her.'

NOTE

Although the greater part of this book has never been printed before, there are interpolations from articles in *Punch*, for permission to incorporate which I am grateful to the proprietors of that paper.

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