

SELECTED ESSAYS OF
E. V. LUCAS

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Arranged by
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INTRODUCTION

E. V. Lucas subtitled one of his best known anthologies, *The Friendly Town*, an opposite number, mainly in prose, to *The Open Road*, with the words 'A Little Book for the Urbane'. Apart from the witticism there was much in it that was characteristic of the writer: for Lucas was not only courteous and urbane but wrote particularly for urbane readers. He studiously avoided ever being didactic, sedulously avoiding any taint of the instinct for teaching. Everything that mattered was to pass on what was 'interesting' to himself—(he actually wrote an essay on the word saying what would he do without it)—pictures, places, books (to which his numerous anthologies bear witness), not to mention the pleasures of the table, on which he could dilate, cricket, and London clubs in considerable variety. Was he not known as the six-club man? All these things definitely intrigued him. What was more, he was always ready to enter into other people's enthusiasms as well as his own, and able to transmit them to others with a lightness of touch eminently suited to a widely read column on successive Sundays. He suffered no doubt from his addiction to ephemeral journalism which was the more paying proposition open to him. His taste did not lie in the direction of fiction so much as for biographies, books of personal reflections, and reminiscences of all kinds. His memory was prodigious, only equalled by his energy, never resting from a search in the British Museum and elsewhere for out-of-the-way discoveries on which to elaborate. His habit was to carry on his travels the complete *Dictionary of National Biography* for which he had a special box constructed to save the trouble of unnecessarily extensive packing. That would largely account for the amazing precision with which he could dot in the salient

points with regard to the authors he was constantly discussing.

Edward Verrall Lucas (more generally known to his intimates by the concise abbreviation 'E.V.') has been called many things in his time. Among them 'a prince of gossips' which is mainly true; 'a master of literary exactitude' from the fastidious nature of his style; 'a ubiquitous wanderer' from the charming guide-books he wrote; and, so typical of his manner, 'a quiet and easy elaborator'. This all points to the variety of types he could assume and is all couched in a complimentary vein as befitting a man who attracted and entertained a wide circle of readers, particularly on Sabbath mornings.

Perhaps his greatest admirer was Edmund Gosse, a critic of high repute in his day, who stated his opinion that since the death of R. L. Stevenson no one had been so proficient in the pure art of the essayist as Lucas—a compliment that possibly might not be paid concerning all that he wrote, for as a writer Lucas adapted his method with considerable skill to the audience he was at the moment addressing. His versatility in that respect was remarkable. It ranged from higher critical ground to such trivialities as might be held to be acceptable to the most casual reader of *Punch*. In fact his versatility may have proved a damaging factor in regard to his reputation.

It was for his marked felicity of style as much as for the variety of his subject that he appealed to so extensive a circle of readers. It was a style at once clever and studied which made everything he wrote lucid and, in a sense, precious.

It was not without reason that he was called by a discerning critic 'a sophisticated Elia'. Almost inevitably his name has been associated with Charles Lamb, chiefly because there was a similar element of quaintness in his outlook and the fact that he wrote a long anthological biography of that amiable essayist.

There is more than a grain of truth in the description that he was a follower and intense admirer of Lamb. But he was no imitator, as his style very clearly shows. In fact he had more than once pointed out that any attempt to imitate Lamb was a sure path to disaster. A disciple, yes: but no further. With that reservation in mind the 'sophisticated Elia' holds good. They had much the same whimsical and inquiring sense of things, the same love of letters, and with Lucas the love of writing for its own sake. The purely physical action of pen on paper was a real pleasure to him, and one catches a faint glimpse of that pleasure in the odd progress of his script as it straggled from the top left hand corner of the paper downhill towards the bottom right. What an expert would deduce from such a wayward curve might have a special interest for those interested in psychological research.

As to the 'sophisticated', that, too, is allowable; for Lucas was certainly modern in his methods and appreciations, although perhaps he would have found it oppressive to keep up with the latest trends.

E.V. was unmistakably an artist to his finger-tips in every word he wrote. Just as the art of painting has been whittled down to the simple definition that it is a matter of putting the right colour in the right place, so Lucas took to heart the advice given by Flaubert to Maupassant: 'Whatever the thing we wish to say, there is but one word to express it, but one verb to give it movement, but one adjective to qualify it.'

E.V. adopted this creed for his own use by insisting that in every sentence there is a preordained place for each word; in every sentence there is a place preordained for that part of the sentence which is of most significance. Audrey Lucas mentions that her father marked a novel of hers on this same principle. And what a number of marks it meant, she adds regretfully!

One cannot refrain from quoting an example of his criticism. In one place she had written the words: 'She left the house and began to walk briskly in spite of the heat.' E.V. at once emended the order to—'She left the house and in spite of the heat began to walk briskly.' The 'heat', it should be observed, was important as fortifying the 'briskly.' As the authoress rather plaintively remarks: 'Easy! Well, it is certainly obvious, once pointed out, but easy? Not in the least.'

To those who knew Lucas best, there was always a certain inscrutability peculiar to him, mingling, strangely enough, with his charm and universal popularity. What he said of Conrad might well have been applied to himself: 'I was never sure of him. Behind that eyeglass what was going on? Authors are like that. The pen is a very jealous taskmaster.'

This constitutional elusiveness was shown in the fact that no draughtsman ever quite succeeded in catching his likeness. Augustus John, Orpen, and Dulac all 'had a shot at my indifferent features', and failed. Even Rothenstein, after the most careful measurements and closest scrutiny only produced in the end 'a perfect likeness—of Beerbohm Tree'.

The well-known cartoon by Max Beerbohm, on the other hand, was eminently successful. He was depicted in it as 'The Six-Club Man.' From a strong dislike to dining alone and a desire for agreeable companionship he was therein portrayed in conversation with members respectively of the Garrick, Athenaeum, Savage, Brooks, Fine Arts, and National Sporting Clubs. For each of these representations he was garbed in a strictly appropriate costume. In the last of the pictures he is seen in full sporting rig, a horse-shoe in his tie, conversing with a battered professional of the prize ring. The expression on his face throughout never changed for a moment, thus proving that even Max Beerbohm relinquished all hopes of obtaining a speaking likeness.

When he was sixty-three, E.V. decided to write an

autobiography as an occupation he could indulge in during a confinement to bed during an acute attack of lumbago. It was entitled *Reading, Writing and Remembering*, and very accurately the words describe its scope, summing up the main operations of his life. He had in fact a rare faculty for inventing original and ingenious titles. As a publisher he had many opportunities for helping his authors. Chesterton gratefully acknowledged his assistance in labelling one of his volumes 'G.K.C. as M.C.' (perhaps, for some, a title a shade too subtle). Another simpler, and more direct, was 'A Shilling for my Thoughts'—and undoubtedly cheap at the price. 'Tremendous Trifles' was also a stroke of genius for a book of outbursts from its massive author. For his own books (over 65 in number) Lucas must have experienced some degree of difficulty in indicating the nature of their contents. 'Visibility Good', 'As the Bee Sucks', and several others leave much to the imagination. In all there were twenty-six of the well-known small, dainty volumes; and it would tax the ingenuity of the liveliest brain to arrive at any distinctive definitions among them.

In the matter of *Reading* the extent of his anthologies indicate very clearly how wide was his acquaintance with the best of English literature. As to *Writing* he made it clear that no one could be more grateful than he for the fact that fate had allowed him the privilege of being able to turn what is so often called the drudgery of writing into a pleasure. As we have said, the mere physical act of putting pen to paper was for him a perpetual source of enjoyment. Indeed, to judge from the number of essays and articles which escaped from his ready pen he must have derived more than ordinary satisfaction during the seventy years of his life than usually falls to the average lot of professional scribes.

'For the greater part of my literary life', he said, 'I have been able to choose my own subjects and wrote nothing that I did not want to write or that I did not believe. Hence I

have driven the quill with no less contentment than other men drive trotting ponies or Bugatti cars. Few authors can have been so lucky as I in blending recreation with livelihood.' Occasions might occasionally arise when 'one's pen grates on the paper'. But probably, as he willingly admitted (and we may well believe him), he has suffered from this common complaint comparatively little.

The *Remembering* brings him to the most interesting part of his autobiography. He tells us that he came from a Quaker stock engaged in the farming, brewing, and banking industries. A few exceptions in more scholarly directions existed—among them a Verrall of Cambridge, a classical scholar from whom he derived one of his names, although, sad to relate, he himself had an insignificant acquaintance with the classics. Roger Fry, the artist and critic, was another relative from whom he may have derived much of his love of paintings and the frequenting of art galleries at home and abroad.

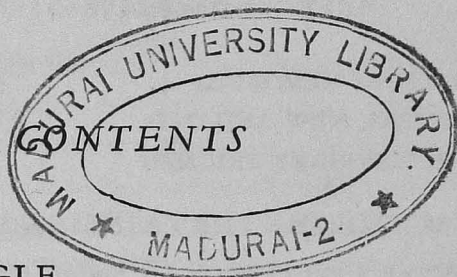
The things he remembered were largely impersonal, which partly explains what his daughter described as 'the bewildering jig-saw of E.V.'s character'. Certainly he does not enlighten the public very greatly on the more intimate matters of his life. In a Dedication of his first book of essays, entitled 'Domesticities', he left people to draw their own conclusions. He wrote this to a friend:

Because all books, I think should manifest
Their author's self, complete, north, south, east, west;
And here so much of me seems unexpressed:

Not great (Heaven knows!) nor curiously fine,
Nor aught, maybe, to help a single line,
Yet certain things more intimately mine.

Still, lacking these, I beg to give to you—
One of the kindest friends man ever knew,
Perchance, in reading, you'll deduce a few.

H. N. WETHERED



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The Human Angle



The Princess and Men

I WAS in Oxford Street, drifting slowly towards an appointment, when the dismal words 'Fun City', in large letters caught the eye over some derelict premises. Oxford Street is ordinarily so consistently businesslike and in earnest that I thought I might as well examine this frivolous stock-in-trade as any other, even though long experience has taught me how little the promise contains; and in I went. You know what 'Fun Cities' are: penny-in-the-slot machines, living photographs, fortune-tellers, football matches, try-your-strengths, and gramophones; ninepins, ring-throwing, cocoanuts, sweet stalls; with a few more elaborate side-shows, all at a penny, those in this particular one comprising a forlorn negro champion disarrayed for boxing a lean and dispirited white champion; a company of dwarfs; a palmist; and a troupe of wrestlers. All were to perform for a penny behind their grimy curtains, and iron throats were shouting the glad news.

I was coming out in a state of dismay induced by so much noise and negligibleness when another metal larynx urged upon me the duty of seeing 'the most beautiful girl on earth', who was not only that rare thing but also 'a picture gallery in herself'—the Princess Cristina, in short—and, looking up, I saw a poster of a tattooed lady, fortified by photographs which brought in the evidence of the truthful camera and suggested that, for once, the poster artist had not gone much further than fact. This was an interesting discovery; but there was something in these pictures of the tattooed lady's face, apart (I swear) from her eventful epidermis, which made

its appeal—a touch of wistfulness and not a little grace—and, the entrance fee being within my means, I paid it, and found myself among a dozen men, who had, of course, been urged thither by precisely similar motives.

The Princess herself was on the platform, shivering under an overcoat, waiting to begin, which she could not do until the metal larynx was mercifully mute. She stood motionless, looking at nothing, and the camera had not lied. Or, if it had, it was on the other side, for she was more attractive than it stated. Her features were delicate and regular, her mouth noticeably well cut, although her lips were perhaps a shade too thin; her eyes were at once candid and melancholy. The larynx stopping, she got to work instantly; stripped off her overcoat, revealing bare chest and arms, very shapely; and, in a cockney accent with a transatlantic hint, began her speech of introduction.

Her shoulders, arms, and what could be seen of her bosom were wholly covered with those blue-and-red designs that appeal to tattooers and tattooed and to no one else: dragons, ships, intertwined flags, true love knots, daggers, snakes, Buffalo Bill's head. These, one by one, she pointed to and explained with a mirthless humour and that want both of real shame and false shame which can so astonish and abash the onlooker, calling us impartially 'boys' the while, and never looking at anyone individually. The glories of the upper regions having been exhibited, 'Now, boys,' she said, 'I'm going to give you a treat,' and proceeded to disclose her legs, which turned out to have practically the same patterns as the rest of her.

But it was not the tattooing that was interesting; it was herself. She was so utterly a machine—so detached and disinterested, and, as I say, mirthless, her wistful, sophisticated eyes never lighting to her tongue, and never caring to investigate a single spectator's face. Years of public exhibition, together with the facetious or familiar comments of

certain units of the many knots before her, had done their work, and men to her were men in a special sense of the word. I will not say enemies, but necessary evils: foolish, inquisitive creatures who had got to be kept their distance, and, while entertained, repelled. Watching her, one had the feeling that she was by far the best thing there. Watching her, high on her little platform, above us all, unique in the possession of these trumpery indigo markings (no doubt inflicted upon her early in youth by foresighted parents), the promise of displaying which had brought day after day, year after year, in the New World equally with the Old (for the tattooer obviously had worked with a cosmopolitan eye), these curious little crowds of which I now made one, I realized suddenly what the prevailing expression on those refined features was. It was contempt. The Princess had summed us up; she knew men through and through; and if there were any exceptions (which was unlikely), was too clever to admit it. For the really clever people never admit exceptions: they generalize and succeed.

Any doubt there might be on this score disappeared later; for she produced a bundle of sealed envelopes, which, from the nature of their contents, might not, she said, be sold to ladies, and must not be opened inside the building; and these she offered at a penny each with a portrait of herself thrown in. We all paid our pennies and filed out, eager, as the pretty, tired, and very chilly Princess knew, to discover as quickly as possible, unobserved by each other, what we had got. . . .

My envelope contained a piece of paper bearing these words: 'Great respect from everybody do persons get that are born on this day; they are open-minded, intelligent, and thoughtful, make good friends and partners, are very loving to the opposite sex.'

Bores

IT requires a sense of superiority, assurance and self confidence, to write about bores at all, except as one of them. But since your true bore is always unconscious of his borishness, and indeed usually thinks of himself as the most companionable of men, to write as one of them is to acquit oneself of the stigma.

None the less, at some time, I fear, everybody is a bore, because everybody now and again has a fixed idea to impart, and the fixed ideas of the few are the boredom of the many. Also, even the least self-centred of men can now and then have a personal experience sufficiently odd to lose its true proportions and force him to inflict it over much on others. But bores as a rule are bores always, for egotism is beyond question the bore's foundation stone; his belief being that what interests him and involves himself as a central figure must interest you. Since he lives all the time, and all the time something is happening in which he is the central figure, he has always something new to discourse upon: himself, his house, his garden, himself, his wife, his children, himself, his car, his handicap, himself, his health, his ancestry, himself, the strange way in which, without inviting them to, all kinds of people confide in him and ask his advice, his humorous way with waiters, his immunity from influenza, his travels, the instinct which always leads him to the best restaurants, his clothes, his dentist, his freedom from shibboleths, he being one of those men who look upon the open air as the best church, his possible ignorance of the arts but certitude as to what he himself likes, his triumphs over the income-tax people. These are the happy men, these world's axle-trees.

(I have been referring to bores exclusively as men. Whether that is quite just, I am not sure; but I shall leave it there.)

Bores are happy largely because they have so much to tell and come so well out of it; but chiefly because they can find people to tell it to. The tragedy is, they can always find their listeners, me almost first. And why can they? Why can even notorious bores always be sure of an audience? The answer is, the ineradicable kindness of human nature. Few men are strong enough to say, 'For Heaven's sake, go away, you weary me.' Bores make cowards of us all, and we are left either to listen and endure or to take refuge in craven flight. We see them in the distance and turn down side streets or hasten from the room. One man I know has a compact with a page-boy, whose duty it is, whenever my friend is attacked by a certain bore in the club, to hasten up and say he is wanted on the telephone. An ingenious device, but it must not be worked too often; because my friend, though he can stoop to deceit and subterfuge, would not for anything let the bore think that he was avoiding him; would not bring grief to that complacent candid face. For it is one of the bore's greatest assets that he has a simplicity that disarms. Astute, crafty men are seldom bores; very busy men are seldom bores.

Of all bores the most repellent specimen is the one who comes close up; the buttonholing bore. This is the kind described by a friend of mine with a vivid sense of phrase as 'the man who spreads birdlime all over you'. A bore who keeps a reasonable way off can be dealt with; but when they lean on you, you are done. It is worst when they fix your eyes, only a foot away, and tell a funny story that isn't funny. Nothing is so humiliating as to have to counterfeit laughter at the bidding of a bore; but we do it. The incurable weakness and benignancy of human nature once again!

Then there is the bore who begins a funny story, and although you tell him you have heard it, doesn't stop. What should be done with him? Another of the worst types of bore is the man who says, 'Where should we be without our

sense of humour?' He is even capable of saying, 'Nothing but my unfailing sense of humour saved me.' There is also the man who says, "'Live and let live," as my poor dear father used to say.'

There was once an eccentric peer—I forget both his name and the place where I read about him—who had contracted, all unconsciously, the habit of thinking aloud; and in this world of artifice, where society is cemented and sustained very largely by a compromise between what we think and what we say, his thoughts were very often at variance with his words. One of the stories in the *Memoirs* in which I found him describes how he met an acquaintance in St. James's Street, and, after muttering quite audibly to himself for a few minutes as they walked side by side, 'Confound it, what a nuisance meeting this fellow. I've always disliked him. But now that we have met I suppose I must ask him to dinner,' he stopped and said with every appearance of cordiality, 'You'll dine with us this evening, won't you?' Well, as a sheet of armour-plate against bores, I don't think we could do much better than cultivate the habit of thinking truthfully aloud. Unless we can do this, or train ourselves to be downright offensive, there is no remedy against bores. Except total evasion. No bore ever says, after no matter how many hints, 'I'll avoid that man in future; I know I bore him.'

So they will always flourish. But if a certain famous weekly humorous paper were to cease publication (distasteful and incredible thought!) there would automatically be a decrease in bore topics, because then no one could any longer repeat those sayings of his children which are 'good enough for *Punch*'.

The Patients' Dilemma ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

'WHAT *may* one do?' is a question much in my mind. Ethically, no; I have very clear ideas as to the answer when matters of conduct and conscience are involved, even if my own course of action seldom coincides with them; but what is bothering me is the extent to which one should give way to temptation, to be careless, in material directions.

'Ah, my dear,' says guardian angel, number one, after a searching scrutiny of your tell-tale features, 'you've been sitting up late again. Those poor eyes of yours!'

'Don't pretend to deny it,' says number two; 'you were at another of those big dinners last night. I can always tell.'

'You've been smoking too much,' says the third (ought any man to have so many tutelary spirits?). 'I know by the way your hand shakes.'

And they all finish in the same words by asking for a promise that there shall be no more of it. 'Do, do promise me,' they say.

To which you reply, 'But why? What would you have me do? Always be in bed by ten? Give up smoking? Become a teetotalter? Refuse every invitation?' For conviviality, to them, is the unpardonable sin.

The gay and insouciant Nat Goodwin, the American comedian, when his doctor told him that he was ruining his health with wine, women, and song, promised, characteristically, to give up singing. The doctor no doubt laughed; but these jealous, watchful protectors of ours won't be fobbed off with a joke like that. They want a full undertaking, if possible signed and witnessed and stamped at Somerset House.

It is kind of them to take so much interest in us, it is flattering to us: but I wonder how wise they are, really. To begin with, what is it that we are saving ourselves for? For

the whole idea is that we must be careful to some end. Longevity would seem to be the goal; but who would live to be eighty by dint of a repulsive frugality and self-denial when he could still be jolly and see seventy-nine?

One of the most annoying things about excess of any kind is not that it injures oneself, or at any rate impairs one's faculties, if only momentarily, but that other persons can be as reckless as they wish and escape consequences. A very short night now and then can be a kind of stimulant; I have often felt all the better for it, more alert and more certain of a particularly good sleep in consequence; but after two short nights running it is possible to be played out. This is an annoyance, but, since I know the rules, not an intolerable one. The intolerable annoyance is the knowledge that my friend F. L. never requires more than five hours' rest, and therefore never goes to bed till two or three. With such a constitution the old joke about lengthening one's days:

The best of all ways to lengthen our days
Is to take a few hours from the night—

ceases to be a counsel of imperfection and becomes true.

Then there is M. M. is one of those amazing creatures who can drink champagne for dinner, follow it with port, follow that with old brandy, and later in the evening be found clear-headed and bright-eyed with a large whisky-and-soda in his hand. I cannot manage these blends. My organism, without being delicate, is not robust enough; and if I were to take them I should awaken next morning full of gall and self-reproach; my breakfast would look like a menace and my desk like a condemned cell. Yet meanwhile M. is gay and serene, in his bath singing Pippa's song or words to that effect. My own limitations cause me bitterness, but the true source of grief is the thought of M.'s disgusting immunity. For each of us wants to be capable of all. The

result is that M., when he is warned by his guardian angels of the folly of mixing, has the right merely to laugh.

And so with the other lures to which we fall—it is not so much our failure to remain unaffected by them, as the capacity of our friends to get off scot-free, that is so exasperating.

But nothing is ever said to us about food, although I am sure that there are many things which we eat that are as injurious as honest wine or whisky. Underdone beef, for example, can be death; but who stops us eating it? No one. Strawberries are full of the acid that makes for gout, but no one says, 'I'm sure, dear, you eat too many strawberries.' And of what use are the doctors? They either first find out what we want them to tell us and tell us that, or they subscribe blindly to the great drink and tobacco heresy. 'No champagne,' they say; 'no red wine; no white wine; whisky-and-soda if you feel you must have something. And two cigars a day, mind, not more.' And all the while we may be ruining our systems by eating the wrong things or taking too much exercise, or even be the victims of coffee or tea!

Apart altogether from the fact that one man's poison may be another man's meat, there are two reasons why too much thought can be given to the care of one's health. One of these reasons is a factor which all our solicitous censors consistently overlook, and that is that we are a part of a highly organized civilization. We live under such conditions of artificiality and stress that what would be fatal excess or excitement to primitive man is part of our routine. In a city such as London, of stone streets, electric light, petrol-driven cars, tubes, smoke, fog, paper-boys, continual noise, and hot and seasoned food, life, to be natural, must be feverish and forced. Man was probably intended to subsist among green and trees, to go to bed because it was dark and rise because the sun had already risen, to walk, or to ride on horseback, to eat roots and fruit and to drink from the spring. Even a drop of whisky or half a cigarette might

cause him woe and disturbance and certainly would be bad for him; but in a world in which spirits and tobacco play such a rôle as in ours it is time to take their existence as granted: even to consider them essential and at any rate to minimize their peril. Where all is hectic and strident, rapid and fatiguing, narcotics and stimulants have their appointed tasks.

But its artificiality is not the only thing that civilization offers as a palliative for a certain intensifying of one's way of living. Look also at its dangers. What is the use of laboriously and against-the-grain striving for old age if one of a million skidding motor-buses at any moment may lay you low?

And there is still another and far deeper reason for suspecting the wisdom of our disciplinary mentors, and that is the treachery to the community which can proceed from excessive self-protectiveness. The man who is so painstakingly cautious about doing his own body no harm seldom does anything for anyone else.

The Rogues ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

ARTISTS in fraud are always with us, but it is unusual to meet with three good examples in one week. Yet I have just done so. I had drifted into a billiard saloon in the West Central district, where there are many tables, including French ones without pockets, and I noticed two men playing. Their game was indifferent, but they themselves were so difficult to place that I was interested. Not bookmakers and not dealers of any kind, but a type, distinctly Hebraic, between those callings. They were carefully dressed, but very common, and they had both time and money, for here they were idling as early as half past four.

They left before I did; and passing out soon afterwards

into a busy street I found myself looking into one of those shops from which the windows and door have been removed in order that sales by auction may be the more easily carried on in them. The auctioneer was shouting in the rostrum, and behold he was one of the billiard players! Pictures, busts, watches, jewellery, and ornaments were the stock, and a gaudy pair of vases was being put up. There was hesitation in bidding, and at last a voice offered five shillings. After a few languid bids the vases were knocked down to this speculator, whom I could not see, for a pound.

'Some people think these sales are not genuine,' the auctioneer said, 'but I give you my word they are. Some say that these bids are made by our own friends, just to encourage the others; but it is untrue. You, sir,' he added, turning to the successful bidder, 'you have never seen me before, have you?'

We all looked towards the gentleman in question, and a displacement of heads permitted me to see him clearly.

'You've never seen me before, have you, sir?' the auctioneer inquired again.

'Never,' said the man.

It was the other player in the game of billiards.

That was on a Thursday. The next day I met by chance an old acquaintance, in whose curiosity-shop in the seaside town that I was now visiting again I had, twenty and more years ago, spent far too much time, drawn thither partly by a natural leaning towards pictures and books and pottery and all the other odds and ends which come from every corner of the earth and all ages to make up the stock-in-trade of such places, but more by the personality of the dealer. Nominally he was a goldsmith and jeweller, as every great artist in Italy used to be, but actually he was an amusing loafer. He sat at a little vice, with a file in his hand, and did nothing but talk. He passed his fingers through his bushy iron-grey locks, glanced at the reflection of his bright eyes and ruddy cheeks

in the mirror—there was always a mirror—and talked. His pet illusion was that he was Byronic. He had for revealed religion a scorn which he thought Byronic, although it was really of the brand of Foote and Taxil; he had for the moral code a contempt which he thought Byronic, although it was merely the most ordinary self-indulgence. But Byron having been loose in such matters, he was looser with a greater courage. He had a mischievous, sardonic view of the world which he thought was Byronic, but which was quite genuine and belonged to his nature. Nothing gave him so much pleasure as to watch the swindlers of his secondary profession at work. We used to discuss poetry and painting, but above all the riddle of life, and on his part always destructively. It was a very school for cynicism, this little shop, where nothing, so far as I knew, was ever sold and I was the only habitu  . He had an adopted niece, aged about seven—a pert, pretty little creature whom he spoiled utterly; he had a complaining wife who had no patience with his treatment of his niece, his Byronic airs, his verbose sloth or his prevailing gaiety, and affected none. He also had a retinue of complacent servant-girls whom his tropes and flashy theories delighted.

Such was my Byronic friend in 1887 to about 1890; and I must confess not often to have thought of him since; and then last week, on this flying visit to my old town, I saw him again. He was bending over a portfolio, but I knew his back at once. His hair had become white and a little thinner; but everything else was the same: the ruddy cheek, the sparkling eye, always lighting up at the originality of some world-old denial or affirmation, the Byronic open collar, the Byronic neck-tie. He did not recognize me at first; but instantly afterwards he resumed the intercourse of twenty years before; although now it was I who was the older, not he. With him time had stood still. The only change in his talk was a tinge of embitterment, not that he had failed financially,

but that his friends had left him. The complaining wife was dead, nor did his references to her dim his brilliant orbs; but his adopted niece—it was her and her husband's hostility to himself that he found such a pill. The old burden, 'After all I had done, too,' rolled out once more, that phrase which summarizes so much of man's dealings with man and perhaps more of woman's dealings with woman.

He soon checked himself, however, remembering my ancient tastes, and clutched my arm. 'What a world!' he chuckled—'what a world! I'll show you something—something to interest you. It's not far,' and he pulled me along to the window of an old picture-shop. 'Hush,' he said, 'be careful: walls have ears; but just look at that painting there, that portrait. What do you make of that?'

It was a woman's face, obviously eighteenth-century, of the period, say, of Ramsay and Reynolds. She glimmered at us through layers of grime and blister. 'When do you think that was painted?' he asked.

'Oh, I don't know,' I said. 'Seventeen-eighty perhaps.'

He doubled himself up with wicked joy. 'What a world!' he exclaimed. 'Three weeks ago! What a world!'

'Nonsense!' I replied.

'Truth,' he said. 'I know the painter.'

He again pulled my sleeve and we retired to a passage. He looked fearfully round and drew from his pocket a creased page of a magazine. It was an art magazine of recent date, and the plate represented another eighteenth-century lady. Underneath was printed 'Newly discovered Romney'.

He leaned against the wall and squirmed. 'Same man,' he gurgled at last. 'Same man. I watched him paint it. What a world! Lord, I don't want to die yet!'

The Jolly Good Fellows ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

FINDING myself alone in London one night recently, I wandered into a large and exclusively English restaurant not far from the juncture of Kingsway and Holborn; and there I lingered long over a very late dinner or early supper, while one by one the other guests vanished. A time came when I realized that save for the waiters I had the place to myself—a condition of things which suited the somewhat anti-social brooding mood into which I had fallen, when suddenly the muffled strains of a familiar chant took my ear, and I was aware that at a banquet in one of the many large private dining-rooms of the building one of the company was being toasted, and all the other guests were on their feet singing to the prescribed tune the form of words prescribed for such occasions. Everyone knows it.

The sound brought the scene before me as vividly almost as if I were there. I could see the honoured guest sitting a little confused under the compliment, its cloying sweetness so long and embarrassingly drawn out. I fancied him not quite knowing where to look, toying with a fork or his cigar as some kind of solace or support; while the others, each holding a glass, roared out this almost national anthem, beaming upon him as they did so, or laughingly catching each other's eyes.

So I saw the scene first, considering the recipient of the honour a novice and rather proud of his popularity; but then it occurred to me that he might be no novice at all, but one inured to the flattery—it might have been his portion for years, for there is something chronic about jolly good fellowship—and so far from faltering beneath the unction, he might be criticizing a fancied want of cordiality and comparing the occasion with others to its disadvantage; might even under his brows be detecting here and there a silent

mouth or a satirical glint in an eye; might be appraising too curiously the volume of sound, or speculating on which of the singers—all inferior men to himself—was, by being the next guest so honoured, to diminish the homage, until, as the evening wore on and the compliment had been too often repeated, it would have sunk to a mere perfunctory ritual. (He, however, was the first).

And I wondered a little, too, as to who began this particular song, for such things are always the work of one man. Occasionally, I remembered, the proposer of the toast himself gives the signal for musical honours (as they are called), but more often it is some warm-blooded, impulsive fellow among the crowd. I seemed to see him—one of the confident men with a voice full of assurance whom in one's looser moments one envies so—holding up his hand and beginning the long first note, 'Fo-o-o-r,' and the others gradually joining in with 'he's a jolly good fellow,' and launching the litany once more into being. And was there ever a case, I wondered, where the rest of the company had refused to join in? and if so, how did the initiator bear it? Do such men feel affronts? To me, who can be daunted by the smile of a total stranger in the street (and he probably thinking of something else), this is an interesting question. And as I reached this point in my idle thoughts, once again the chant sounded, and I realized that already the honour had begun to lose its fine edge. There was danger that the place was about to be overdone with jolly good fellows.

Thus sitting there, all alone in my solitude, I went on to wonder what it means to be a jolly good fellow: how they do it: what alterations in one's own speech and habits, for example, would be necessary before one also could become a target for this festive concerto. Must not one be rather underlined, rather powerful, certainly no friend to anonymity? And with one's preference for individual treatment and dislike of generalizing conventions, should one like it if

it did happen? All men being different, there seemed to be something wrong about so universal and indiscriminating a form of compliment; but perhaps the jolly good fellows are all alike.

My thoughts wandered on to the jolly good fellows' wives. Were they jolly too? And good? Would they be proud and happy when their husbands told them the news of to-night's triumph, or would they have still another problem to solve as to the incomprehensible nature of man? Or would they forestall the news by sarcastic comment: 'Well, I suppose you were the usual jolly good fellow again? It's not so difficult at public dinners as at home, is it?'

And I wondered, too, if there were any men in the room near me who had long nourished the ambition to be sung at like this, but could never contrive to be jolly enough; or at any rate who lacked some quality—perhaps influence—to procure the ecstasy. There may be men—so little we know of each other—who have died lamenting the loss of this manifestation of success. There may be generous creatures who have begun these musical honours—sounded the first note tentatively or with confidence—for scores and scores of fellow-diners, and by their very generosity (for it is an obliterating quality) have been themselves overlooked all their lives.

Possessions



SOMEONE has offered me a very remarkable and beautiful and valuable gift—and I don't know what to do. A few years ago I should have accepted it with rapture. To-day I hesitate, because the older one grows the less does one wish to accumulate possessions.

It is said that the reason why Jews so often become fish-mongers and fruiterers and dealers in precious stones is

because in every child of Israel there is a subconscious conviction that at any moment he may be called upon to return to his country, and, naturally wishing to lose as little as possible by a sudden departure, he chooses to traffic either in a stock which he can carry on his person, such as diamonds, or in one which, being perishable and renewable day by day, such as fruit and fish, can be abandoned at any moment with almost no loss at all. Similarly the Jews are said to favour such household things as can be easily removed: rugs, for example, rather than carpets. I have not, so far as I know, any Jewish blood, but in the few years that are left me I too want to be ready to obey the impulse towards whatever Jerusalem I hear calling me, even should it be the platonically-loved city itself, although that is unlikely. Without possessions one would be the readier also for the longer last journey. Naked we come into this world and naked we should go. Nor should we wilfully add to the difficulties of leaving it.

I was lately led by its owner, rebuilder, and renovator through the rooms and gardens of a Tudor house which, with infinite thought and discretion, has been reclaimed from decay and made fair and debonair. At every step, indoors and out, was something charming or adequate, whether furniture or porcelain, whether flower or shrub. Within were long cool passages where through the diamond panes sunlight splashed on the white walls, and bedrooms of the gayest daintiness; without were lawns, and vistas, and arrangements of the loveliest colours. 'Well,' my hostess asked me, 'what do you think of it all?' I thought many things, but the one which was uppermost was this: 'You are making it very hard to die'.

I had a grandfather who, after he had reached a certain age, used birthdays as occasions on which to give away rather than receive presents; and I am sure he was right. But I would go beyond that. The presents which he distributed

were bought for the purpose. I would fix a period in life when the wise man should begin to unload his acquisitions—accumulating only up to that point and then dispersing among the young. Ah! but you say, why be so illogical? If possessions are undesirable, are they not undesirable also for the young? Well, there are answers to that. For one thing, who said anything about being logical? And then, are we not all different? Because I choose to cease accumulating, that is no reason why others, who like to increase their possessions, should cease also. And again, even I, with all my talk of renunciation, have not suggested that it should begin till a middling period has been reached; and I am all for circulating *objets d'art*, too. I should like a continual progression of pictures and other beautiful things throughout the kingdom, so that the great towns could have the chance of seeing the best as well as London.

So far am I from withholding possessions from others, that as I walked down Bond Street the other day and paused at this window and that, filled with exquisite jewels and enamelled boxes and other voluptuous trifles, I thought how delightful it would be to be rich enough to buy them all—not to own them, but to give them away. To women for choice; to one woman for choice. And a letter from France this morning mentions a variety of possessions which carry with them, in the trenches, extraordinary and constant pleasure and consolation. The writer is a lady who works at a canteen in the big Paris terminus for the front, and she says that the soldiers returning from their leave often display to her the mascots and other treasures which are to comfort them in their vigils and with which they are always well supplied. Sometimes these possessions are living creatures. One soldier recently produced from a basket a small fox which he had found and brought up, and which this lady fed with bread and milk while its owner ate his soup. Another had a starling. A third took out of his pocket a

venerable handkerchief, which, on being unrolled, revealed the person of Marguerite—a magpie whom he adored, and who apparently adored him. They were inseparable. Marguerite had accompanied him into action and while he was on *permission*, and she was now cheering him on his return to the danger zone—if any one zone can any longer be specially honoured by that term. She was placed on the table, where she immediately fell asleep; at the end of the meal the poor fellow rolled her again in the handkerchief, popped her in his pocket, and ran for his tragic train. But for the companionship of Marguerite his heart would have been far heavier; and she was thus a possession worth having. But the ordinary ones? No. They encumber and retard.

Of Being Somebody Else ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩

WALKING along Oxford Street the other day, I was aware of a new kind of cheap photographer's into which people were pouring as though it were a cinema and Mr. Chaplin were on view. And, after examining the specimen photographs in the frame by the door, I joined them, not for the purpose of facing the camera, but to observe young men and women in the entertaining pastime of escaping from the fact, or, in other words, of assuming more agreeable identities than their own.

For the novel characteristic of this studio is that for the trifling sum of one shilling it provides its patrons with six post-card photographs of themselves in fancy dress; or, as a leaflet before me states, a shade too loosely perhaps for Lindley Murray, but with perfect clarity, beneath a list of scores of costumes, 'Every customer ordering six post cards for 1s. are entitled to use which one of these garments they think best, free of charge.' What a privilege! The list is

exhaustive. It begins with Cowboys, goes on to Cowgirls, Indian Chiefs, Indian Man, Policeman, Pierrots, Mexicans, Nuns, Whittington's Cat, Quaker Girls, Jockeys, Gent's Evening Suit, Gipsies, Highwaymen, Priests, John Bull, Cricketer, Old Maid, Harem Skirt, Father Christmas, French Soldier, Aviator, Costers, Beefeaters, Buckingham suit, Nell Gwynne, Ladies' Evening Dress, Ladies' Tights, Boxer, King, Clown. The organization is perfect. First the queue, then the ticket, then the choice of costume from the wardrobe upstairs, then the donning of it behind a screen, performed with infinite giggling when it is masculine and the wearer a girl, and then the taking of the photograph, which I can assure you is not allowed to occupy more than a few seconds. The only weak spot in the concern is the delay in developing and printing, for the client has to wait a day or so for the glorious results. Still, as a variation upon the drab routine of twentieth-century city life, not bad, is it?

Judging by specimen photographs of the happy masqueraders, the cowboy costume stands very high in favour and is the most popular male dress for young women. These are to be seen also in many varieties of man's attire, even to that of the police, looking for the most part smirkingly self-conscious but wholly satisfied. That no one would ever be taken in as to their sex matters nothing. A wooden horse of high mettle, obviously by a sire and dam with classic sawdust in their veins, lends verisimilitude to the cowboy illusion, and it is amusing to see this very recognizable noble animal turning up again and again in the picture, always under perfect control. Some of the new Army doctors, who by the regulations are forced to wear spurs but have never spurred anything in their lives, might, by the way, like to know of this placid charger. They are certain to wish to distribute a few photographs of themselves.

I have made only a selection from the costumes supplied. I might have added many more, such as naval officers and Red Cross nurses, both of which, I am told, are in great demand. I might, too, have mentioned the one that after the 'Buckingham suit' (which is perhaps merely a euphemism for Court dress) is most perplexing to me. This is described curtly as 'draper'. Who on earth wants to spend a shilling to be photographed as a draper? And what is a draper's costume? I have seen thousands of drapers, but they did not differ from haberdashers, tailors, chemists, or hotel clerks. Dan Leno's shopwalker is probably the type selected—poor Dan having also confused the two functions; for a shopwalker only walks the shop, whereas the deathless figure invented by that ever-to-be-mourned comedian acted as a salesman too.

That the studio is a success was inevitable, and I expect a great crop of imitations. For it is based on a sound knowledge of human nature. Its originators know life. Everyone who has ever been a child remembers the excitement of dressing up. No game without dressing up in it could compare with one in which a father's tall hat, a mother's best dress, and a hairy hearthrug were introduced; and very few of us ever cease wholly to be children. As the poet says, 'we are but children of a larger growth'. Throughout life, for most of us, to be somebody else is the thing. Well, at this studio young people who are no longer children play at being children once more. After working all day as clerks, or shopmen, or typists, or domestic servants, how delightful to come here and evade destiny by masquerading as highwaymen, bush-rangers, queens of the carnival, dreadnought commanders, and George the Fifth courtiers! Better still, how tonic to the self-esteem to be taken in the act of complete mastery of a spirited horse! And what pictures to send away! What gallant portraiture for the provinces!

And—if we only knew—what an invigoration of ordinary life for a while! I like to think that the effect upon a little lodging-house drudge of having been a queen of the carnival long enough for the evidence of the camera (which cannot lie) to be secured, cannot wear off at once. Surely she carries her head a shade higher in consequence, and bears the censure of her mistress with increased fortitude? I hope so: I believe so. And I can imagine a general toning-up of self-esteem in many a shop-bound youth in the knowledge, abundantly furnished by these post cards, that were he really the rightful possessor of a naval uniform he would not disgrace it, but pursue the *Schmutzige* *hund*, or whatever German cruiser came his way, as resolutely and effectively as Sir David Beatty himself; and this being so, in spite of fate's embargo, he does not do his less illustrious work any the worse. And many a seamstress might with more composure view her inability to be smoothing the pillow and winning the heart and hand of a wounded officer if her eyes could now and then be refreshed by furtive peeps at herself in a Red Cross costume, and see how well she would look as a nurse (her true vocation) if only the gods were kinder.

The strength of this studio is that in it the gods can be made kinder—momentarily.

Enthusiasts



IN turning over the pages of *Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack*, best of year-books, for 1919, I came upon the obituary notice of a monarch new to me, who died in April of the preceding year at the age of six-and-forty: George Tubow the Second, who reigned over Tonga and was the last of the independent kings of the Pacific. As to the qualities of head

and heart displayed by the deceased ruler, *Wisden* is silent; to inquire into such matters is not that annalist's province. George Tubow the Second won his place in *Wisden's* pages because he was a cricket enthusiast and the head of a nation of cricket enthusiasts. 'His subjects became so devoted to the game that it was necessary to prohibit it on six days of the week in order to avert famine, the plantations being entirely neglected for the cricket-field.'

It is perhaps chiefly among the players of games that the wildest enthusiasts are found, and particularly of cricket. Golf can afflict its victims seriously enough, but I doubt if it ever exercises cricket's dominating spell. I have never heard of a golfer sleeping with his clubs; but there was a boy at school who carried his bat about with him all day, and then took it to bed with him. And it is not only the players of the game, but the watchers, the students, too. There were other quite small boys at this school (I was among them) who knew every detail of county cricket, could pick all-England elevens, and were acquainted with the initials of every amateur. (Those were the days before professionals had any initials, unless they chanced to be brothers.) The newspapers existed for us only in summer, and existed then only because they reported cricket matches. Wars, earthquakes, rebellions, assassinations, were mere padding. Some of us have perhaps grown out of this frenzy; others retain it and still turn first to the cricket reports, and think of Lord's as a more desirable place than St. Stephen's, or the Oval than the bosom of our families. For cricket relaxes her grip very reluctantly.

Politics can utterly mould a man's mind and actions into a state for which enthusiasm is the kindest word. I do not mean statecraft or legislation—those functions are usually carried out by any but enthusiasts—but politics as party conflict and the rivalry of personality, politics as bound up with public meetings and speeches. A near relation of my

own sank much of his native capacity in the pursuit of this excitement. That he should be interested in the progress of an election in his own borough was natural enough; but he went far beyond that. He would travel any distance to be present at a by-election at a place with which he had not the remotest connection—his joy being to make one of the audience who in the natural course of event would hiss and groan at the name of Salisbury and exult and wave and cheer at the name of Gladstone. Gladstone he had never met, nor had he read him; but he admired his features and his collars and believed that he could do no wrong; and it was meat and drink—more, *foie gras* and Clicquot—to be with those who also were true believers and hear him extolled. Portraits of the G.O.M. were all over the house; while anyone who exaggerated or made any kind of questionable remark or terminological inexactitude was said to have told a ‘Salisbury’.

The one-idea’d enthusiast as he gets older can be rather a pathetic sight. I remember, in 1889, being taken, at Godstone, to an inn to see the landlord, a ‘character’, whose principal claims to distinction were an ill-controlled temper and an unbroken record of over fifty visits to the Derby. He was inflamed and infirm, and a very truculent fellow; but he had his adherents, who hung upon his reminiscences of the race (which, the older you become, the more often was run in a snowstorm); and his one hold on life was the belligerent, passionate purpose of seeing it again. This (with a series of bloodshot imprecations) he vowed to me he should do, for many years to come; and, for all I know, he did. But to this day I think of him with a kind of shudder, so malignantly self-centred was he and so ferocious in his Epsom mania. Indeed, even without ebullitions of temper and arrogance, men whose pride it is never to have missed annual events or any customary proceeding can be not only pathetic, but extremely boring. Those enthusiasts for discomfort

who break the ice in the Serpentine rather than break their morning-swim routine—I have never met one of them, but I am sure I should find him tiresome.

Among collectors extreme enthusiasts are numerous. The courts not long since were occupied with the case of a gentleman of leisure who had fallen into the moneylenders' hands very heavily through a passion for adding dead butterfly to dead butterfly; while everyone knows the story of one of the Rothchilds fitting out an Arctic expedition in the hope that it would bring back, alive, even a single specimen of a certain boreal flea. All other fleas he possessed, but this was lacking. On making inquiries among friends I find that the classic example of enthusiasm is, however, not a cricketer nor a collector, but the actor who, when cast for Othello, blacked himself all over. Everyone, of course, has heard the story, but its origin may not be generally known, and I am wondering if it occurred anywhere in print before Mr. Crummles confided it to Nicholas Nickleby. Was it a commonplace of the green-room or did Dickens (who was capable of doing so) invent it? Joseph Knight being no more, to lighten the small hours with gossip and erudition, who shall tell?

Meanwhile I am reminded of an incident in modern stage history which supplies a pendant to the great Othello feat. It occurred in the days when the gramophone was in its infancy and the late Herbert Campbell was approaching his end. That massive comedian, who was then engaged in his annual task of personating a dame or a queen, or whatever was monumentally feminine, in the Drury Lane pantomime—as a matter of fact, he was at the moment a dame—had been invited by one of the gramophone companies to visit their office in the City and make a record of one or more of his songs and one or more of his dialogues with the other funny man, whoever that might be. The name escapes me; all that I feel certain of is that it was long after the golden

age when Herbert Campbell served as a foil to the irresponsible vivacity of Dan Leno—who in association with him was like quicksilver running over the surface and about the crevices of a rock—and still longer after those regular Christmas partnerships with Harry Nicholls which were liberal educations in worldly sagacity tempered by nonsense. The name of the other actor is, however, unimportant, for Herbert Campbell is the hero of this tale, and it was for Herbert Campbell's songs and patter that the operator was waiting and the waxen discs had been prepared and the orchestra was in attendance and the manager had taken his cheque book from his desk—for 'money down' is the honourable rule of the gramophone industry. The occasion was furthermore exceptional because it was the first time that this popular performer had been 'recorded'. Hitherto he had refused all Edisonian blandishments, but to-day he was to come into line with the other favourites.

And yet he did not come. Normally a punctual man, he was late. Everything was ready—more than ready—and there was no dame.

Suddenly above the ground swell of the traffic was heard, amid the strenuousness of the City Road, the unaccustomed sound of cheers and laughter. 'Hurray! Hurray!' floated up to the recording-room from the distant street below, and every head was stretched out to see what untoward thing could be happening. 'Hurray! Hurray!' and more laughter. And then was discerned an immense crowd, chiefly errand-boys, surrounding a four-wheeler, from which with the greatest difficulty an old lady of immense proportions, dressed, or rather upholstered, in the gaily coloured clothes of the century before last, was endeavouring to alight, backwards. 'Hurray! Hurray!' cried the boys at every new struggle. At last the emergence was complete, when the old lady, standing upright and shaking down her garments,

revealed herself as no other than Herbert Campbell, the idol of 'The Lane', who in order to speak a few words into the funnel of a phonograph had thought it needful to put on every detail of his costume and to make up that acreage of honest, genial physiognomy.

The Canine Angle

Clicquot Well Won ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

MY hostess and her daughter met me at the station in the little pony-cart and we set off at a gentle trot, conversing as we went. That is to say, they asked questions about London and the great wicked world, and I endeavoured to answer them.

It was high if premature summer; the sky was blue, the hedges and the grass were growing almost audibly, the birds sang, the sun blazed, and, to lighten the burden, I walked up two or three hills without the faintest enthusiasm.

Just after the top of the last hill, when I had again resumed my seat (at the risk once more of lifting the pony into the zenith), the ladies simultaneously uttered a shrill cry of dismay.

‘Look!’ they exclaimed; ‘there’s Bunty!’

I looked, and beheld in the road before us a small West Highland terrier, as white as a recent ratting foray in a wet ditch would allow.

‘Bunty! Bunty! you wicked dog!’ they cried; ‘how dare you go hunting?’

To this question Bunty made no reply, but merely subsided under the hedge, where a little shade was to be had, in an attitude of exhaustion tempered by wariness.

‘How very naughty!’ said my hostess. ‘I left her in the house.’

‘Yes,’ said the daughter, ‘and if she’s going to go off hunting like this what on earth shall we do? There’ll be complaints from everyone. She’s never done it before.’

‘Come, Bunty!’ said my hostess, in the wheedling tones of

dog-owners whose dogs notoriously obey their slightest word. But Bunty sat tight.

'If we drive on perhaps she'll follow,' said the daughter, and we drove on a few yards; but Bunty did not move.

We stopped again, while coaxing noises were made, calculated to soften the hearts of rocks; but Bunty refused to stir.

'She'll come on later,' I suggested.

'Oh, no,' said her elderly mistress, 'we couldn't risk leaving her here, when she's never gone off alone before. Bunty! Bunty! don't be so naughty. Come along, there's a dear little Bunty.'

But Bunty merely glittered at us through her white-hair entanglement and remained perfectly still.

Strange dogs are not much in my line; but since my hostess was no longer very active, and the daughter was driving, and no one else was present, there seemed to be a certain inevitableness about the proposition which I then made that I should get out and bring the miscreant in.

'Oh, would you mind?' my hostess said. 'She won't bite, I promise you. She's a perfect dear.'

Trying hard to forget how painful to legs or hands can be the smart closing of the snappy jaws of dogs that won't bite, I advanced stealthily towards Bunty, murmuring ingratiating words.

When I was quite close she turned over on her back, lifted her paws, and obviously commended her soul to Heaven; and I had therefore no difficulty in lifting her up and carrying her to the trap.

Her mistresses received her with rapture, disguised, but by no means successfully, by reproach and reproof, and we were beginning to drive on again, when an excited voice called upon us to stop, and a strange lady, of the formidable unmarried kind, with a very red face beneath a purple parasol, confronted us.

'What,' she panted, 'is the meaning of this outrage? How dare you steal my dog?'

'Your dog, madam?' I began.

'It's no use denying it,' she burst in, 'I saw you do it. I saw you pick it up and carry it to the trap. It's—it's monstrous. I shall go to the police about it.'

Meanwhile, it cannot be denied, the dog was showing signs of delight and recognition such as had previously been lacking.

'But——' began my hostess, who is anything but quarrelsome.

'We ought to know our own dog when we see it,' said the daughter, who does not disdain a fight.

'Certainly,' said the angry lady, 'if you *have* a dog of your own.'

'Of course we have,' said the daughter; 'we have a West Highland named Bunty.'

'This happens to be my West Highland, named Wendy,' said the lady, 'as you will see if you look on the collar. My name is there too—Miss Morrison, 14 Park Terrace, W. I am staying at Well House Farm.'

And it was so.

It was on the tip of my tongue to point out that collars, being easily exchangeable, are not evidence; but I thought it better that any such suggestion should come from elsewhere.

'It is certainly very curious,' said the daughter, submitting the features of the dog to the minutest scrutiny; 'if it is not Bunty it is her absolute double.'

'It is not Bunty, but Wendy,' said Miss Morrison coldly; 'and I shall be glad if you will give her to me.'

'But——' the daughter began.

'Yes, give the lady the dog,' said the mother.

In the regrettable absence of Solomon, who would, of course, have cut the little devil in two, there was nothing

for it but to surrender; and the couple went off together, the dog exhibiting every sign of pleasure.

Meanwhile the daughter whipped up the pony, and we soon entered the gates.

In the drive, awaiting us, was a West Highland terrier named Bunty.

'There!' cried the ladies, as they scrambled out and flung themselves on her.

'Of course she's not a bit like that Wendy thing really,' said the mother.

'Now that I come to look at her I can see heaps of difference,' said the daughter.

'None the less,' I interjected, 'you turned a very honest man into a thief, and a dog-thief at that; and he insists on reparation.'

'Yes, indeed,' said the mother, 'it is really too bad. What reparation can we make?'

I don't pretend that my feelings are completely soothed, but the Clicquot 1904 which took the place of claret at dinner that evening was certainly very good.

The Returned Letter



IT happened that an illustrious man of affairs—soldier and statesman too—visiting our shores as a helper in the great struggle, by his wise counsels so captured the imagination of his hearers and readers that the greatest of compliments was felt to be his due, and everyone with a black cocker spaniel to name named it after him. He had, as it happens, a name rather peculiarly adapted to that end.

It chanced that among the puppies thus made illustrious was one which a young soldier before leaving for France to win the War gave to his sister, and when writing to him—as,

being a good girl, she regularly and abundantly did—she never omitted to give tidings as to how the little creature was developing; and I need hardly say that in the whole history of dogs, from Tobit's faithful trotting companion onwards, there never was a dog so packed with intelligence and fidelity as this. Most girls' dogs are perfect, but this one was more remarkable still.

Now it happened that the gallant brother, in the course of his duties as a war-winner, was moved from place to place so often that he gradually lost definition, as the photographers say, and the result was that one of her recent letters failed to catch up with him. This was a pity, because it was a better letter than usual. It gave all the news that he would most want to hear. It said what picture her father was working on at the moment, and told, without spoiling them, his last two jokes. It said whom her mother had called on and who had called on her mother, and how something must be done to stop her smoking too many cigarettes. It said that their young brother, having sprained his ankle at hockey, had become a wolf for jig-saw puzzles. It said where the parents had dined recently and where they were going to dine and who was coming next week. It said what she had seen at the theatre last Saturday and what book she was reading. It said which other V.A.D.'s had become engaged. It said what an awful time they had trying to buy some tea, and how scarce butter had become, and what a cold she had caught in the last raid, and how Uncle Jim had influenza and couldn't go on being a special, and how Aunt Sybil had been introduced to one of the Geddeses and talked to him as though it was the other, and how she herself had met Evelyn in the street the other day and Evelyn had asked 'with suspicious interest after you'—and a thousand other things such as a good sister, even though busy at a hospital, finds time to write to a brother over there, all among the mud and the shells, winning the War. And, when writing in this familiar

way, not being in the habit of signing her name, she finished up with a reference to the darlingest of all dogs by sending its love at the very end, so that the last words were: 'Love from——' well, from whatever its name was; but I want to keep it to myself for a minute or so longer.

The letter, as I have said, could not be delivered. The postal people at the Front, and behind the Front, are astonishingly good, but they could not get in touch with the brother this time, and therefore they opened the letter and looked at the foot of it for the name of the writer and found that of the dog, and at the head of it for the street and town where the writer lived, and sent it back as 'insufficiently addressed'.

And that is why in a certain house in London a treasured possession is a returned letter for General Smuts.

The Dogs of the Old Brigade

THE ice needing breaking, for we had never met before and there was no immediate topic, who should come to the rescue but the other 'friend of man' (for whom no mechanical petrol-driven substitute has yet been found), the dog? And not an ordinary dog such as we see everywhere, but a visitor from the past, a revenant; in short, a dachshund. In search of a missing owner it pattered across the floor, long and low and sleek and brown and debonair, just as if there had been no Armageddon, just as if it were still the hero of Oberlander's delicate pencil, week by week in the *Flying Leaves*. 'Unless I am dreaming,' I said, 'there goes a dachshund'; and in a few moments we were all at our ease and trying to remember when we had last seen another member of the vanished race, the Dalmatian (or Plum-pudding dog), such as once ran from side to side between

the wheels of carriages—from side to side to avoid the horses' hoofs; and at last a witness arose who could fix that event in Edinburgh in 1921. Yes, he had seen one in Heriot Row. Or was it——? No, it was Heriot Row. My own last glimpse of those oscillating spots is so remote that I could not place it at all; and yet I can remember when plum-pudding dogs were common objects of the town and countryside, and for a comedian to refer to them as 'damnation terriers' was a sure road to the removal of gravity.

And so from dog to dog we passed, lamenting our losses and wondering why fashions in those animals should change. There was a very real cause—if not a sufficient reason—why the dachshund should have been dethroned; but nothing but caprice can have led to other of the partial eclipses of Sirius. The Bedlington was once a desirable possession; but not often does one see a Bedlington to-day. Is his infrequency the result of a constant desire to fight? Very likely. On the other hand, the King Charles spaniel has also vanished, and no one can charge that gay and affectionate highbrow with belligerence. Constancy and courage he had, but he was not always trailing his coat. Were the martyr monarch interviewed on this subject of dogs (and nothing seems to be easier to Sunday journalists) I hope that one of the questions would bear upon the number of those disembodied little friends of his that now frisk and frolic about his ghostly knees.

Most of us can remember when the more that old ladies saw of men the more they loved pugs; but although there are still old ladies, though very few, and still (I fear) men who can disappoint, the canine solace is a pug no longer. The new comforter is generally either a Pekingese or a Cairn. Now when did the knell of the pug toll forth? When did the Cairn come in? For a true consoler, the Cairn, I should guess, is over-exuberant. His nature is too investigatory; he likes exercise; whereas the pug was quiescent; the pug

knew when he was fortunately placed, and, so long as the lap which it was his destiny to fill was (as it usually was) the lap of luxury, was willing to 'stay put'. Since the wheel is always turning, the pug may come back. Meanwhile, the demand is for others. And the demand is constantly increasing, every day a new notice-board being somewhere set up beside the highway to tell the passer-by that Sealyhams, Cocker spaniels, West Highlands or Cairns are to be bought in the vicinity. Motor-spirit notices are, of course, most numerous, then tea, and then new-laid eggs; but the new kennels are catching up.

I visited two on a recent week-end; a rather curious pried experience, for on the Sunday I was in kennels devoted to little black Cocker spaniels and on the Monday in kennels devoted to the more dazzling Sealyhams. As I approached this 'Maison Blanche', I saw in a neighbouring meadow, through the mist, what might have been a gigantic visitor from another planet moving over the grass on a snow-white cloud. On closer view the vision reduced itself to an ex-officer taking his stud for a walk. They flowed about his considerable feet like a flood. Many a warrior I fancy is now breeding dogs for a livelihood, although not so many, of course, as have exchanged the sword for the chicken-pen. All, however, wear knickerbockers and know the shortest cut to the golf links. Even more numerous are the feminine dog-breeders, in tweed skirts, mostly unmarried. The little Sealyhams, which a very few years ago had never been heard of in London or the South, but are now in hectic demand, barked and yapped me deaf; whereas the little Cockers only cried and whimpered to be loved. Who could withhold love from a Cocker puppy? Not I. Besides, they wouldn't let you. The more they see of men, the more Cockers like them.

But I have said too much about the smaller dogs. Justice now for the great. When will St. Bernards and Newfoundlands, Great Danes and mastiffs return? When George Du

Maurier's hand was busy in *Punch* in adding by sheer force of enchanting example—for the Fair have in certain directions a marvellous tractability—three inches to the height of England's daughters, he often gave his goddesses the companionship of St. Bernards. I see no St. Bernards now. The larger dogs that our present-day reduced, flattened and shingled Amazons lead, or are led by, are Alsatian police-dogs, one of the more humane legacies of the War, or Labradors. But if we had a George Du Maurier to-day, he could, I am sure, with a few strokes, bring the St. Bernard back and set our women's heads again among the stars.

The Little Estranger



I HAD been spending the week-end with the Dunmow-Flitches in their charming converted labourers' cottage in Bucks. I don't mean that the labourers were converted; far from it, judging by the way in which I was told they expressed their opinion of alien gentry snapping up these little dwellings and driving their proper occupants into council houses at three times the rent; I mean the word conversion to apply solely to the structure. Dunmow-Flitch is himself a bit of an architect; his wife knows something of furniture and has a nice sense of colour; and between them and the local builder they made the place as cosy as a transformed London mews.

They had had two cottages thrown together so that there was one long low general living-room, with rugs scattered on rush matting, deep chairs with decorative pillows, woodcuts and etchings on the walls and diamond panes in the windows. The garden had been paved and a sundial in the midst of rosemary bushes informed us that 'Time tarryeth for noe manne'. The long roof was newly thatched, and a

barrel painted white with little holes in it stood on a pole all ready for a new set of fantails, the last and the last before those having mysteriously disappeared. No one knows for certain where, but the boldest unconverted labourer's stew-pot is still under suspicion.

Such was the Dunmow-Flitches' home—'*pied-à-terre*' Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch sometimes called it, with a little apologetic murmur of mirth for having to go to France for an expression exact enough; and there, among the latest periodicals and novels, their friends spent Saturday to Monday all through the less wintry months of the year; and there, ever since they first occupied it, the Dunmow-Flitches were serenely and, so far as I could observe, completely happy.

Until——

But let the story progress at its proper gait.

On the particular week-end to which I refer I had said something to Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch about the curious absence of a dog, and, receiving permission to present her with one, I had visited a kennel to make a choice.

The strict limits of this narrative forbid full description of the kennel which I visited. Let me merely say that it consisted of a series of loose boxes in the middle of a very wet field, and was more discordant than a terminus. The proprietors were two rather formidable middle-aged ladies who knew their own minds and expressed the usual regret at having to part with anything so utterly adorable as Langbourne Susan—that being the name of the puppy which either I ultimately chose or which ultimately chose me. Never had they had a puppy so wholly satisfactory in character and charm. If I or anyone could 'fault' it, they would be more than surprised—electrified if not electrocuted.

A cheque having been written, I came away with Langbourne Susan, around whose neck was a brand-new collar of shining green leather, while in my pocket her proud

pedigree reposed. The next day she was placed in a hamper and put in the care of the guard on the train to the station where Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch in her new Cupid Seven was to meet her.

It was two months before I could get down for another week-end with my friends, and I went with the more willingness because I was curious to see how Langbourne Susan had developed. Ecstatic letters from Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch were my sole evidence as to her well-being.

Almost directly I entered the garden gate I noticed a difference. Dunmow-Flitch, whose voice had never sounded sharp before, was saying, 'Of course he must be punished. Look at the flowers he's ruined.'

'But, sweetheart, how could she know? Think how young she is.'

'Still,' he replied, 'if he's not taught now, how will he ever learn? Dogs are all right in their way and in their place, but it is dreadful to have one's flowers ruined.'

'But you wouldn't have her tied up all day?' Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch replied, a little tartly I thought.

'A very good thing if he were,' he appeared to mutter.

'Oh, Aubrey, how can you say so? And I do wish you wouldn't call Susan "he".'

'I can't be bothered with the sex of dogs,' he replied in a surly growl.

Their bitterness vanished, however, when they saw me, and Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch at once called upon me to admire Susan's cleverness and charm.

She certainly was an attractive little thing. 'Full of nervous fluid,' I remarked; and Dunmow-Flitch gloomily agreed.

'Too much of it,' he said. 'Always digging. Why can't dogs eat their bones and have done with it? He's got a hidden larder under every plant that I most prize.'

'But, dear, it's her nature,' said his wife. 'She's a terrier.'

Terrier means something to do with the earth, doesn't it?' she added, turning to me.

'Oh, I'm quite aware that he's a terrier,' said Dunmow-Flitch, 'but that doesn't help my poor garden.'

'I'm awfully sorry,' I said. 'I could have given you a dog that doesn't dig, if I'd thought of it. Shall I get it changed?'

'Oh, no, please!' Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch protested; and the first lunch-bell rang.

At lunch it was worse. Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch was teaching Susan to beg, and naturally was proud to display her success. But begging has first to be provoked by the sight of a morsel, and then to be rewarded by the gift of that morsel; and Dunmow-Flitch has strong views about feeding dogs at odd times and especially in the dining-room.

'Isn't she marvellous?' Mrs. Dunmow-Flitch cried as Susan achieved a vertical position for the fraction of a second. As a matter of fact it was not an acquired posture of mendicancy at all: the dog, inflamed by greed, had merely attained a moment's perpendicular in, so to speak, its stride.

'I do wish you wouldn't feed him at meals,' said Dunmow-Flitch. 'You'll ruin his character.'

'Only just a tiny piece of bread,' replied his wife.

'You'll ruin him,' said her husband. 'Nothing is so bad for them. Every one tells me so.'

'Aubrey,' said his wife to me, 'does use such disproportionate words. "Ruin" is much too strong. And, after all, Susan is mine, and if I don't mind, why should anyone else?'

'Well, I have to live with him too,' Dunmow-Flitch growled.

'You see how he will always call her "him"? ' his wife continued, still addressing me. 'I can't cure him of it.'

'I think of all dogs as he's', said her husband with final decisiveness, 'and all cats as she's, and I always shall. In heaven's name let's put him out now and finish this meal in

peace. And Susan is a ridiculous name, anyway. I once had an aunt Susan whom I was very fond of. Won't you think of something better?' he added turning to me.

I had a too appropriate name in my mind, but I kept it to myself: 'Rift'.

Literary

Of the Best Stories ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

I WAS reading the other day that that most amusing of clerks in holy orders, who writes Irish farcical stories over the pseudonym 'G. A. Birmingham', but is known to the angels as Canon Hannay, has given it as his opinion that the best funny thing ever said is Charles Lamb's reply to the doctor who recommended him to take a walk on an empty stomach. 'Whose?' inquired Lamb. That certainly is among the best of the comic remarks of the world; but why does Canon Hannay put it down to Lamb? All my life I have been associating it with another humorous clerk in holy orders and also a canon, the Rev. Sydney Smith, and it is to be found in every collection of his good sayings. Canon Hannay, who is normally so eager to give the Church even more than her due—for did he not create out of 'J. J.' the curate a super-magazine-hero, blending Sherlock Holmes, Captain Kettle, and Terence Mulvaney in one?—Canon Hannay, one would think, would have naturally allotted Sydney Smith everything. Moreover, the joke is more in Sydney Smith's way than in Lamb's; not because Lamb was not expert at that peculiar variety of nonsense, but because Lamb had a passion for walking, and rarely, I should say, suffered from any malady needing this particular remedy; whereas the witty canon was a diner-out, addicted to gout and other table afflictions, and a walk on an empty stomach would probably have done him a world of good.

And now I lay aside my pen for a few moments in order to wonder what my own favourite story is, and have the usual difficulty in remembering any stories at all. Searching my memory, I find that Lamb comes up first, which is not

unnatural, for in the stories which most appeal to me there must be irresponsibility rather than malice. Malice is easier, for one thing, and the laughter it causes is of an inferior quality. That touch of gay nonsense which Lamb had, and Sydney Smith had, is worth (to me) all the brilliant bitternesses. This time, too, it is authentic Lamb, and not Brummagem. My momentary choice is Lamb's reply to the reproach of his India House superior, 'You always come late to the office.' 'Yes, but see how early I leave!' That could not easily be beaten.

Lamb, however, did not consider that his best thing. We have it on evidence that he thought his not too kindly remark to his friend Hume on the size of Hume's family his best joke; but I, for one, do not agree with him. Hume, it seems, was the father of a numerous brood, and he happened once to be so ill-advised as to mention his paternal achievement, apparently with pride, in Lamb's presence. 'One fool,' quoted Lamb, 'makes many.' Personally, I don't much esteem this story, not only because it is a score off a simple creature, and a rather too facile one at that, but also because it comes into the category of those sayings which the joker must himself have reported, or which the recipient of the witticism could not well report except resentfully. We can imagine the auditor of the priceless reply, 'But see how early I leave,' after recovering from the stunned condition into which its tremendous irrelevance and foolishness knocked him, hurrying away in perplexity to report it in all its incredibleness to fellow officials: 'What on earth do you think that that mad creature Lamb has just said to me?' and so on. But one does not see Hume hastening round to spread that family joke. Lamb, or another, must himself have done it.

Similarly, when the Austrian journalist Saphir, who said so many witty things, met an enemy in a narrow passage, and on the enemy remarking, 'I'll not make way to let a fool

pass,' pressed himself against the wall, saying, 'But I will,' it must have been Saphir who took the glad tidings round Vienna. A man, said Lamb (and proved it, too), may laugh at his own joke; but I think we always rather prefer that it should first get into currency by the other fellow's agency.

And yet, if that rule were strictly followed we should lose too many good things, for your true humorist scatters his jewels indiscriminately and does not reserve them for the fitting ear.

Sir Walter Raleigh (I mean not the explorer but the longest knight) has pointed out that the reason why we have comparatively so few records of Lamb's jokes is that he made them to simple people, who either did not understand how good they were, or were not in the way of quoting them. As a friend of mine, who does something in a waggish line himself, remarked sadly to me the other day: 'I am always saying the right thing to the wrong people. Someone asked me the other day if I had known William Sharp. "No," I said, "but I once met Wilfrid Blunt," and instead of laughing, my friend began to talk seriously of the *Sonnets of Proteus*. I have no luck.' The fact is that what all wits need is a Boswell. Without a Boswell it is necessary, if they are to be reported, that they must either themselves publish their good things or keep on repeating them until the right listener hears and notes them. Had there been a Boswell for Lamb. . . . But Lamb could not have endured one.

Having reached that point in this discursion, I sallied forth to the haunts of men to collect other opinions as to the best story. One of them at once gave Sidney Smith's reply to the little girl who was stroking the tortoise's shell, 'because the tortoise liked it'. 'As well stroke the dome of St. Paul's,' said Sydney, 'to please the Dean and Chapter.' A second choice shakes me seriously in my own selection, for it ranks high indeed among the great anecdotes, Sam Lewis, the money-lender, was, at Monte Carlo, a regular habitué of the

Casino. One day he bade everyone farewell. 'I shan't see you for a fortnight or so,' he said; 'I'm off to Rome.' 'Rome?' they inquired in astonishment. 'Yes. I'm told it's wonderful.' Two or three nights later he was back in his seat at the gambling table. 'But what about Rome?' his friends asked. 'You can 'ave Rome,' said Sam.

A third offered an historic dialogue from the Lobby. It seemed that an M.P., whom we will call X., somewhat elevated by alcohol, insulted another M.P., whom we will call Y., as he passed through that sacred apartment, by calling him 'a —— fool'. Y., stopping, said severely and pityingly, 'X., you're drunk. I shall take no notice of what you say.' 'I know I'm drunk,' replied X., 'but I shall be all right to-morrow. You're *always* a —— fool.'

Since writing the last paragraph I have asked two more friends for their favourite stories. One of them at once gave me Whistler's comment on reading in the *Reminiscences* of W. P. Frith, R.A., painter of 'The Derby Day', that as a youth it was a toss-up which he became: an auctioneer or an artist. 'He must have tossed up,' said Whistler. The other choice was American and more cynical. A man's wife had died, and on the morning of the funeral the man was found sitting on his doorstep whistling gaily as he whittled a stick. One of the mourners remonstrated. It was most unseemly, he pointed out, that the widower should be thus employed on the day on which they were bearing to her last resting-place the remains of a woman so beautiful in person and in character—a faithful wife, a fond mother, an inspiration and model to the neighbourhood. 'Don't you realize that she was all this?' the scandalized guest inquired. 'Oh yes,' said the husband, 'but—I didn't like her.'

Apropos of Whistler, an artist friend who knew both that delicate Ishmaelite and George Du Maurier, tells me a story of the two which has not, I believe, ever seen print, and is unusual because Whistler is worsted in it. It seems that the

great Impressionist was once developing, to a number of painters, some revolutionary theory or paradox with his customary arrogance and certainty. 'I'm not arguing with you; I'm telling you,' he said, after an interruption. 'Yes,' was Du Maurier's comment, 'but you forget we're not the Horse Marines.'

And now, having set down all these examples, I remember what probably is the best good thing of all. For, as everyone knows, there is some malign fate which has provided that one's memory shall always be a little late when the best stories are being swapped. But better late than never. Dumas père, it may not be generally known, had African blood. He also was the father (like the great Sheridan) of a witty son. Said Dumas fils one day, of his sublime sire: 'My father is so vain and ostentatious that he is capable of riding behind his own carriage to persuade people that he keeps a black servant.' Having recalled that of Dumas fils, here is the best story that I know of Dumas père. Perhaps it is as good a story as has ever been told of any egoist. Coming away from dinner at a house noted for its dullness, he was asked by someone if he had not been dreadfully bored. 'I should have been,' he replied, 'if *I* hadn't been there.'

But of course these are not the best stories. Another day's memory would yield far better ones.

The Two Ladies



AFTER reading aloud some of the sketches by The Two Ladies (as I always think of 'Martin Ross' and Miss E. C. Somerville), and in particular 'The House of Fahy', which I have always held is one of the best short stories ever written, with a last sentence that no one but a professional elocutionist with nerves of steel could possibly compass, it

amused me to imagine a room filled with devotees of the *Experiences of an Irish R.M.*, such as might as easily exist as a Boz Club, capping quotations from that and its companion books and finding pleasure in expressing admiration in the warmest terms and in minute detail; and there are not many pleasures greater than that.

The discussion might, indeed, have begun by the old question, What are the best stories in the world? and my own insistence on the claims of this very 'House of Fahy' to a place high on the list; because, as I should have urged, it relates an episode proper only to the short-story medium; there is no word too many or too few; it has atmosphere and character; it is absorbing; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end—such an end!

'But what about "The Maroan Pony"?' someone might have inquired. 'Isn't that a perfect short story too?'

And I should have replied that it is.

'And "Harrington's"?' someone else might have urged. 'Isn't that perfect? And it has an extra quality, for in addition to all the humour of it, and the wonderful picture of a country auction sale, it has that tragic touch. To my mind it is greater than "The House of Fahy".'

And then I am sure that a most emphatic claim for 'Trinket's Colt' as the best of all would have been formulated; and by this time we should have been right in the thick of it, all eager to speak and be heard.

To me The Two Ladies have long been the only contemporary authors whom it is absolutely necessary to read twice instantly: the first time for the story itself, which is always so intriguing—and the more so as you get more familiar with the ingenuity of their methods—as to exact a high speed; and the second time for the detail, the little touches of observation and experience, and the amazing, and to an envious writer despairful, adequacy of epithet. And having read them twice, I find that whenever I pick them up

again there is something new, something not fully tasted before. Indeed, at any rate in the R.M. series, they are the most trustworthy and re-readable of any writers of our time.

'Talking of observation and experience' (here I resume the report of the imaginary club of devotees), one said, 'they know everything. That they should be wise about hunting and Irish life is natural. Hunting and Irish life are their strong suit. But they know all about the sea too: no one has so etched in the horrors of a ground swell on a hot day. They know all about servants. They know all about dogs—what dogs think and how dogs feel.'

'But most remarkable of all,' said another, 'is their knowledge of man—and married man at that. Who would ever have guessed that Major Sinclair Yeates was the invention of two single women? I cannot find a single slip into sheer femininity in all his narratives.'

The superiority of the R.M. stories over the others would have given us a wide field for debate; and I should certainly have cited their fellow-countryman Goldsmith as an earlier example of the greater ease and power that some authors attain when they assume an imaginary character. For good as their other sketches and novels are, *The Two Ladies* were never so fully armed at every point as when they thought themselves Major Yeates—just as Goldsmith was so much more effective when he was the Vicar of Wakefield or the Citizen of the World.

'It is possible,' I might have said, 'that all collaborators should invent some such personality as the Major, to give them common ground on to which they can simultaneously step.' And the case of Addison and Steele and Sir Roger, although there was there no impersonation, would perhaps have occurred to me.

Thus we might have begun, and so have passed on to the consideration of the work of *The Two Ladies* as a whole,

and have grown happy in the excitement of bestowing praise.

‘They are the only humorists,’ I seem to hear another saying, ‘who never relax. In the R.M. books their whole attitude to life is humorous and so splendid is their sense of duty to their readers, that their almost every sentence is humorous. Do you remember, for example, how when Anthony asks his mother what auctions are, that confirmed bargain-seeker does not merely tell him, as another author might have made her, but “instructs him even as the maternal carnivore instructs her young in the art of slaughter”? And how Flurry’s handwriting was “an unattractive blend of the laundress’s bill and the rambling zigzag of the temperature charts”?’

‘If you are going to begin quoting good phrases,’ I should have said, ‘I can give you plenty. For I have always held that when it comes to sheer writing, good writing, clear writing, vivid writing, vigilant writing, The Two Ladies have no equal and no superior. The art of suggesting one effect by a reference to another was never practised with finer skill than by these authors. Do you remember how when the two terriers followed Flurry’s hunt, their “yelps streamed back from them like the sparks from an engine”? and the uneven Irish road which “accepted pessimistically the facts of Nature”? and the reluctant dog who “resolved himself into jelly and lead”? and how when the R.M. was told by Flurry to watch a certain spot for the fox, the concentration of his eyeglass upon the gap was of “such intensity that had the fox appeared he would have fallen into a hypnotic trance”?’

‘A remarkable thing in their writing,’ another might say, ‘is their double gift of painting with equal power broad landscape and Dutch interiors. Some of their rapid Irish backgrounds are marvels of lucid impressionism, and never a word more of it than the story requires. Their instinct

for saliences in landscape and in all their descriptions is indeed marvellous.'

'And their knowledge of their countrymen!' he might continue. 'Do you remember how they refer to an Irishman as always a critic in the stalls and yet in spirit behind the scenes too? And their Irish idioms! The whisky that was "pliable as milk"!'

'Another remarkable thing about them,' I hope I should have dropped in, 'is what one might call their all-of-a-pieceness. Their first story and their last are equally mellow and mature, although years intervened. They forget nothing. The *R.M.* remains the same.'

'And their modesty! They have added to fiction certain characters that will not die for generations and may even be immortal—in Flurry Knox, in his grandmother, in Slipper, in Maria, in Dr. Jerome Hickey—and there has been no flourish of trumpets, no heralding. These figures have not even had a novel to appear in, but occur casually in that previously most negligible literary form—the humorous sketch of Irish life. The Real Charlotte, that wonderful creation, it is true, has a long novel all to herself; but for one reader fortunate enough to know her, there are fifty who know the others.'

Finally might come this comment: 'They are the last really passionate friends of the noble animal. Not that they don't understand motor-cars; but their attitude to horses is more than understanding: it is intimate, sympathetic, humorous, with a vast tolerance for equine mischief. Do you remember the trainer of Fanny Fitz's "Gamble" in *All on the Irish Shore*—how he met a mare he had once owned, and he did not know her but she knew him? It is one of the prettiest pieces of writing that ever came out of Ireland. It was after the fair at Enniscar, "an' I was talking to a man an' was coming down Dangan Hill, and what was in it but herself [the mare] coming up in a cart! An' I didn't look at her good nor bad,

nor know her, but sorra bit but she knew me talking, an' she turned into me with the cart. 'Ho! ho! ho!' says she, an' she stuck her nose into me like she'd be kissing me. Be dam, but I had to cry. An' the world wouldn't stir her o' that till I'd lead her on meself." And then he utters this immortal sentiment: "As for cow nor dog nor any other thing, there's nothing would rise your heart like a horse."—Isn't that beautiful?"

Thus enthusiastically might we have talked!

And now the bond has snapped, and 'Martin Ross,' who was Miss Violet Martin, is dead. With her death the series stops, for though neither was the dominant spirit, the prosperity of the work demanded both. As to 'The Two Ladies' method of collaboration I know nothing, and should like to know all; which held the pen I have no notion, or if one alone held it. But that it was complete and perfect is proved by this sentence from a private letter from one very near to them, which I may perhaps take the liberty of quoting, since it embodies a remark made by the survivor of the many, many years' partnership. 'There isn't a page, there isn't a paragraph, there isn't a line which either of us could claim as her sole work.' That is collaboration in the highest degree, two minds that not only work as one, but are one.

Poetry made Easy ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪

IN the admirable and stimulating lecture given to the English Association by Professor Spurgeon on 'Poetry in the Light of War', I came again upon that poem of Rupert Brooke's in which he enumerates certain material things that have given him most pleasure in life. 'I have been so great a lover', he writes, and then he makes a list of his loves, thus following, perhaps all unconsciously, Lamb's *John*

Woodvil in that rhymed passage which, under the title 'The Universal Lover', has been detached from the play. But Lamb, pretending to be Elizabethan, dealt with the larger splendours, whereas Rupert Brooke's modernity took count of the smaller. John Woodvil's list of his loves begins with the sunrise and the sunset; Rupert Brooke sets down such mundane and domestic trifles as white plates and cups, the hard crust of bread, and the roughness of blankets.

This, to strangers to the poem, may not sound very poetical, but they must read it before they judge. To me it is at once one of the most satisfying and most beautiful leaves in the Georgian anthology. Here is a passage:

Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing;
Voices in laughter too; and body's pain
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train;
Firm sands; the little dulling edge of foam
That browns and dwindles as the wave goes home;
And washen stones, gay for an hour; the cold
Graveness of iron; moist black earthen mould;
Sleep; and high places; footprints in the dew;
And oaks; and brown horse-chestnuts, glossy-new;
And new-peeled sticks, and shining pools on grass;
—All these have been my loves.

My reason in quoting these fine and tender lines is to point out how simple a thing poetry can be; how easily we, at any rate for a few moments—even the most material, the most world-brutalized of us—can become poets too. For I hold that any man searching his memory for the things that from earliest days have given him most delight, and sincerely recording them, not necessarily with verbal garniture at all, is while he does so a poet. A good deal of Whitman is little else but such catalogues; and Whitman was a great poet. The effort (even without the reward of this not-always-desired label) is worth making, because (and this is where the poetry comes in) it forces one to visit the past and dwell

again in the ways of pleasantness before the world was too much with us and life's hand had begun to press heavily: most of such loves as Rupert Brooke recalls having their roots in our childhood. Hence such poetry as we shall make cannot be wholly reading without tears.

I find that on my list of loves scents would take a very important place—the scent of gorse warmed by the sun coming almost first, gorse blossoms rubbed in the hand and then crushed against the face, geranium leaves, the leaves of the lemon verbenas, the scent of pine trees, the scent of unlit cigars, the scent of cigarette smoke blown my way from a distance, the scent of coffee as it arrives from the grocer's (see what a poet I am!), the scent of the underside of those little cushions of moss which come away so easily in the woods, the scent of lilies of the valley, the scent of oatcake for cattle, the scent of lilac, and, for reasons, above all perhaps the scent of a rubbish fire in the garden.

Rupert Brooke mentions the feel of things. Among the loves of the sense of touch I should include smooth dried beans, purple and spotted, and horse-chestnuts, warm and polished by being kept in the pocket, and ptarmigan's feet, and tortoiseshell spoons for tea-caddies. And among sounds, first and foremost is the sound of a carriage and pair, but very high in position is that rare ecstasy, the distant drum and panpipes of the Punch and Judy. Do they play the panpipes still, I wonder. And how should I behave if I heard them round the corner? Should I run? I hope so. Scent, sound, touch, and sight. Sight? Here the range is too vast, and yet here, perhaps, the act of memory leads to the best poetry of all. For to enumerate one's favourite sights—always, as Rupert Brooke may be said to have done, although not perhaps consciously, in the mood of one who is soon to lose the visible world for ever—is to become, no matter how humble the list, a psalmist.

The mere recollecting and recording even such haphazard

memories of these has had the effect of reconstructing also many too-long-forgotten scenes of pure happiness, and has urged me about this dear England of ours too, for I learned to love gorse on Harpenden Common, and pinewoods at Ampthill, and moss in Kent, and the scent of coffee in the kitchen of a home that can never be rebuilt, and—but poetry can be pain too.

The Test



AFTER dinner we were all sitting in the red-leather library, with marvellous first editions on the shelves and a thousand priceless things in portfolios, and Melsanby (whose only fault is a tendency to write verse and print it himself) gave me one of his very special cigars.

I was experiencing sensations of profound material peace, when my host suddenly became sententious.

‘Only the amateur poet,’ he said, ‘can know to what depths of insincerity human nature can descend.’

There was no bitterness in his tone; merely resignation. But I was vaguely conscious that into my Paradise, my Garden of Cuba, a serpent was crawling. I sank deeper into my luxurious resting place.

‘I shall never stop writing verses,’ he continued. ‘I am too fond of that pastime. But this last venture of mine has decided me never to gather them into a book any more. I’ve learned my lesson.’

The others murmured, ‘No, no.’

I myself said nothing. The dinner had been so good and the cigar was so beneficent that I settled down into real felicity once more and puffed with reinforced complacency.

Melsanby went to a desk and brought back a bundle of papers.

'Look at these letters,' he said. 'All written by friends and acquaintances to whom I sent the last book. Listen to some of them.'

They prepared to listen. I was aware of another shadow of misgiving, but dismissed it.

He picked up the first and read it aloud: "'Dear Mr. Melsanby, I cannot tell you how beautiful your new book is and what a comfort it has been to me'"—and so on. 'That's from a woman. "Dear Mr. Melsanby, it was a kind thought to send me your poems. Nothing gives me so much delight as poetry, and yours is so exquisite." Another woman.'

There was a buzz which meant, 'Ah, yes, a woman, of course.'

'Here's a man,' resumed our host: "'Dear Melsanby, I have read your poems with great interest. I like all, but 'The Purple Emperor' is my chief favourite. Butterflies have always been my hobby." Artful devil, that.'

Another buzz of complete man-to-man understanding. 'Another man' said Melsanby, 'also artful: "Dear Mr. Melsanby, I have enjoyed your new book immensely, but should like to pick a bone with you over the structure of the third sonnet in the opening series. I mean that fine one addressed to Mussolini, with its contrast between the black shirts of Fascismo and the red shirts of Garibaldi. Your rhyming scheme is A.B.B.A.A.C.C.A., whereas I hold that nothing is permissible but A.B.B.A.A.B.B.A. Would not the expenditure of a little more midnight oil have given you the accepted form? Forgive this captiousness. For the rest of the book I have only the most cordial praise.'"

Everybody laughed in the right way, excepting myself. I withdrew farther into the shade.

'Just one more,' said Melsanby. 'Oh, yes, this one. This is a peculiarly hard case because it's from a friend who ought to know better: "Dear old Man, your latest book is also the best. I congratulate you with all my heart.'"

He folded up the papers and returned all but one to the drawer.

'No,' he said, sinking back in his chair again, 'that's my last act of self-indulgence as a versifier. If ever I issue another book it shall be at the publisher's expense, not my own.'

'But why?' someone asked. 'Those seem to be very appreciative letters.'

'Very,' he said. 'But let me tell you something. All those books were uncut. They consisted of two hundred and forty pages. Before I distributed them I made out in a disguised hand a whole cheque-book of cheques for various amounts, large and small, made payable to myself, and these I signed with a sham name. I then inserted one of them in each copy of the book somewhere about page 200. Now, what would be the first action of a reader of the book who came upon one of these cheques? Would it not be to return it to me?'

'Of course,' we replied.

'Then where,' he asked, suddenly turning to me, 'is the one that was in the copy I sent you?'

'Me!' I exclaimed weakly, wondering why on earth I hadn't felt ill a little earlier and gone home.

'Yes,' Melsanby went on remorselessly. 'You say here'—he picked up the remaining letter—'I have read every word.'

The others drew back to wait for my answer. A horrid set of men.

'Ah!' I said, 'mine must have been one of the copies without a cheque in it.'

'On the contrary,' he said, 'yours was the first that we prepared and addressed, Janet and I.' (Janet, the daughter, I was thinking both idolized and idealized me.) 'It was in order to test your boast about being so candid that the whole trick started. But don't be unhappy,' he added; 'you are not alone. Not one single cheque has come back.'

Yorick



LAST autumn I chanced to be on the road from York and Durham charged with the agreeable errand of conveying a large cake to a small boy. The small boy was at school some few miles off the highway between those noble cities, and, although the highway is fairly direct, never have I met with byways that so curved and doubled, rose and fell, as those that we were lost in almost directly the diversion began. But I forgive them, every one, for the reason that in the course of our meanderings we came to a steep village with a church at the top, and on inquiring learnt that its name was Coxwold.

‘Coxwold!’ I exclaimed, seeing in a flash the figures of Corporal Trim, of the Widow Wadman, of Uncle Toby, and even of the Recording Angel, ‘Let me out at once!’ For it was at Coxwold that much of *Tristram Shandy* and all *The Sentimental Journey* were written.

Sterne’s home, ‘Shandy Hall’, as he called it, is above the village, and is not, as one might guess, that ancient and crumbling gabled house opposite the church—a veritable ‘Crazy Castle’—and nothing can be much changed since he held and neglected this living. The church, which is small and not too cheerful, and set in one of the bleakest parts of England, is, so far as I could ascertain, without any visible record of its famous pastor. Nor, should I guess, does his spirit much haunt there. I ascended to his pulpit and imagined what it must have been like for this most whimsical and mundane of clerks in holy orders to see beneath him threescore stolid Yorkshire countenances prepared to receive spiritual comfort. When, meeting the sexton’s wife, I asked if the clergyman there had not once been the Rev. Laurence Sterne, she summoned up such a frown while saying that she had heard so, that I realized that Yorick’s

sprightly absenteeism and amorous levity are probably still remembered against him, although so many years have passed.

This Coxwold experience filled me with the wish to read *The Sentimental Journey* again, and no sooner was I in a bookshop zone than I set about obtaining a copy—for a long while in vain. And then re-reading it I was disappointed, and wondered how it strikes the readers of to-day coming to it for the first time; how a reviewer would now deal with it. Periodically, I suppose, we ought all of us to re-examine the gods of our youth, even if we do not go so far as the unidentified cynic who said that he signalized the publication of a new book by reading an old one. *The Sentimental Journey* is, of course, deliciously written. To Sterne, good, easy, flexible English came as naturally as to Thackeray, but unless you are more interested in the personality of the sentimentalist than I am, you will think a great many of his supple sentences a waste.

'No man,' said Sam Weller, 'never see a dead donkey, 'cept the gen'l'm'n in the black silk smalls as know'd the young 'ooman as kep' a goat; and that was a French donkey, so werry likely he warn't won o' the reg'lar breed.' I wish we had the opinion of this shrewd critic on the whole book, instead of only on a part. That Sam should have found time and inclination to read it at all is one of the mysteries of Literature, but it is a tragedy that his reference to it is confined to two (or possibly three) incidents: to the episode of the dead ass at Nampont, to the meeting with Maria at Moulines, and—I am taking a hint from the reference to the silk smalls—to 'the Case of Delicacy' in the roadside inn near Lyons.

The Sentimental Journey was Sterne's last work. The travels which it describes occupied a few months at the end of 1765, but he had earlier spent much time in France, in 1762-3, and remembered that, too. He was a long while considering the form of the book, which, short as it is, was

not finished till the end of 1767. In January of 1768 he was in London superintending the publication, which occurred on February 27, 1768. The book was received with fervour. Early in March, Sterne, who was then just fifty-five, contracted influenza, and on the 18th he died in his lodgings, in Bond Street, at what is now No. 41, at Mercow's, the furrier's. He was buried in the cemetery of St. George's, in the Bayswater Road, but the body was stolen by resurrection men, sold to a professor of anatomy at Cambridge, and recognized by a stranger in the dissecting room. 'Alas, poor Yorick!' did he say? 'I knew him well.'

Sam Weller read *The Sentimental Journey*, let us say, when he was twenty. I wish, if he lived so long, we could have his verdict after a reperusal in the fifties. He might be as sad about it as I am; for sadness is what we feel when confronted by this change in our old friends. I remember a conversation with that most fastidious critic, Mrs. Meynell, when she was suffering from a revulsion of feeling against *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and she was miserable about it all. She had wanted to go on, all her life, thinking of Goldsmith's idyll as gold and she had found it tinsel. And the other day I found a venerable friend—also a critic of world-wide fame—almost in tears because *Persuasion* was turning out to be less than he used to think it.

I say 'change in our old friends,' but I suppose the truth is that the change is in ourselves and our environment. When I first read *The Sentimental Journey* I was forty years younger; it seemed to me lively, amusing, and audacious. Since then, I have grown older. Even more so, the world has grown older and shifted its points of view. There has been an eye-opening and fibre-coarsening war, which, among other transformations, has converted Sterne's audacity to puerility, and most of his sly self-revelation to unimportant egotism. Not that it was any better then, but his readers didn't know; they were not ready.

Of course *The Sentimental Journey* must not be dismissed by an expression of one reader's personal disappointment. We have to remember not only that it has admirable passages of wit, fugitive beauty, and discernment ('strokes of delicacy', said Horace Walpole, who found *Tristram Shandy* a bore); vignettes of travel that still stand alone; and the whole of the episode of the passport made out to Yorick, the King's jester: but also that it was the first work of its kind; the originators must always be respected. As it happens, no one has done the thing again, although many have tried. How could they, for this is the most personal of books; and they were not Sterne? The least assiduous of apes may imitate a man's approach; but he cannot reproduce the mind.

But what Sterne's derivatives have done for us is to be more interesting. Sterne is a poor story-teller; he twists and turns, and changes his point of vision, which is chiefly concentrated within, and lets too much of the salient drama escape. When he has a real human figure to rejoice in, and room in which to rejoice, as with Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim in *Tristram Shandy*, he need fear no foe. But *The Sentimental Journey* is different. Also in the case of that book Sterne suffers from an even more serious injury than change in ourselves and change in the world; he is suffering from his literary rivals, his own progeny. The taste of our day has not yet abandoned Kinglake in *Eothen*, which surely would not have been cast quite in the way it was but for *The Sentimental Journey*. Yet, compared with R.L.S., the appeal of Kinglake is comparatively non-existent, and Sterne finds it hard to compete with *The Inland Voyage* and the *Travels with a Donkey*. And what about Mr. Belloc's *Path to Rome*?

The Worst Prelude to Adventure



LONDON is never so exciting as on May nights. The other evening I was forced into attending a debate: a thing I had not done for years. Never mind what the subject was, but one speaker after another got up—a few in reply to the last speaker, but most merely to deliver some remarks prepared even earlier (if possible) than the last speaker had prepared his. And so it went on, and then there was a show of hands, something was carried, something was lost; and I found myself under the May stars with the sweetness of the May night all about me.

It was not very late; I was in no hurry to go to bed; and the evening's rhetoric, so futile, when all is said, because only academic and leading no whither, had aroused in me a mood of revolt. To think that we should have been sitting there arguing in a stuffy room, when we might have been high on Hampstead Heath; or in the garden of the Spaniards; or smelling the lilacs of Holland Walk; or, at ease, on the crazy green balcony of the Angel of Rotherhithe, watching the river lights and the stealthy nocturnal shipping. Or we might have been merely in London's streets under the May stars.

It infuriated me. 'I have lost an evening,' I said, 'and a May evening at that; and life is so devilish short.' And so saying I pulled myself together and added, 'But no matter—here you are, with a latchkey and an open mind: have an adventure!'

It was then about a quarter past eleven. At one o'clock I was nearing home, weary and disheartened, asking myself the question, 'Who are the people who have adventures?' and answering it, 'Those who cannot appreciate them.' And then I asked, 'How is it that I, spoiling for an adventure, have had none?' and the answer was, 'For two reasons—one,

your attitude of receptivity: it is the unexpected that happens; and, two, only an ass would ever expect an adventure.' And then I asked, 'This being so, why on earth did I ever prepare the way for an adventure at all? Why didn't I know that they didn't occur?' And the answer was, 'Books.'

The answer was, 'Books.'

It is books that do the mischief. Without books we should know life for the humdrum thing and imposture it is, even in London on a May night. And even as it is, we know it; but books make us forget what we know. Books are in our blood. No one who begins bookishly ever becomes quite free again. There they are, all the time, in the background, dominating conduct and providing standards, ideals, limitations, but above all illusions and disappointments. For the books that one reads in the impressionable years, and therefore absorbs and remembers, are always so much better and more exciting than life.

Ballantyne, for example, who came first—what chances his boys had that were never ours! Coral islands to be cast away upon; fur-trading; gorilla-hunting—you see the mischief of it all! Then Haggard, Stevenson, Defoe, Scott, Dickens. These are the corrupters of youth. One comes away from them for ever expecting something, where one might, without them, have been merely acquiescent and at peace. For they all heighten; they all arrange life their own way and sauce it. Dickens comes nearest to the life that one knows: one continually meets characters with a vague Dickensian flavour; but the breath of genius is not in them. They are the shells only: the great, comic, humane, living, unreal fairyland spirit has not animated them. It never can: it began with Dickens and passed with him. Disappointment again!

But on my way home that night it was Stevenson whom I felt to be the first of the traitors: Stevenson, who brought

Baghdad to London (the low trick!), and, since Baghdad is not really London, spoiled life for thousands of us. How often have I invented New Arabian Nights for myself! I suppose all that ever tasted that seductive poison have done so. The taxi chauffeur who invites one to ride free to the mysterious house. The anonymous, agonized gentleman who stops me in the street imploring me to witness his will or perform some other service, to be followed not long after by the receipt of the lawyer's letter (always a lawyer's letter!) that carries the news of fortune. The note dropped from the barred upper window behind which the beautiful girl is incarcerated. The veiled lady with the bloodhound. . . .

On a May night of stars in London how one can play with, elaborate, and perfect such *motifs*. In the adventure of the agonized gentleman who requires a signature, for example, he stands at the gate in the small hours, counting the infrequent passers-by, his object being to invite the seventh. Perhaps it is not himself for whom he is acting, but for some strange sinister employer, bed-ridden, at death's door, upstairs. An old woman, maybe, masterful, cunning, but helpless, who cannot spare this factotum, but must have a life-and-death message carried at once. It is I who carry it. Perhaps it is written; perhaps it is verbal; curious cryptic words which, when I say them to the person they are intended for, cause him to blanch and quail. Everyone has these dreams of romantic interludes in the drab monotony of city life; but they come to nothing. Adventures, such as they are, fall only to those who have forgotten the story-writers or never knew them.

As to how similar the ideas of exceedingly dissimilar persons can be, even when they are deliberately fantastic, I have an instance only too pat. It has long been a favourite whim of mine that a mirror should be invented capable of retaining every reflection it had ever recorded and giving them back when desired. A little while ago I picked up

Passages from the American Note-Books of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and found the same idea jotted down for use one day in a romance. This book, by the way, is a mine of suggestions for the story-writers, for Hawthorne had more thoughts in a day than he could use in a year; and many of them are here.

And so, turning the key, I bade farewell to the May stars, and did one of the most adventurous things left to us—I went to bed. For no one can lay a hand on our dreams. All the authors of the world cannot spoil those.

The Life Spherical ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

IT was a beautiful September day, and they floated softly over green Surrey.

‘And this is England!’ said the foreigner. ‘I am indeed glad to be here at last, and to come in such a way.’

‘You could not,’ the other replied, ‘have chosen a more novel or entertaining means of seeing the country for the first time.’

They leaned over the edge of the basket and looked down. The earth was spread out like a map: they could see the shape of every meadow, penetrate every chimney.

‘How beautiful,’ said the foreigner. ‘How orderly and precise. No wonder you conquered the world, you English. How unresting it must be! But what,’ he went on, ‘is the employment of those men there, on that great space? Are they practising warfare? See how they walk in couples, followed by small boys bent beneath some burden. One stops. The boy gives him a stick. He seems to be addressing himself to the performance of a delicate rite. See how he waves his hands. He has struck something. See how they all move on together; what purpose in their stride! It is the same all over the place—men in pairs, pursuing or striking, and small bent boys following. Tell me what they are doing. Are they tacticians?’

‘No,’ said the other, ‘they are merely playing golf. That plain is called a golf links. There are thousands like that in England. It is a game, a recreation. These men are resting, recreating. You cannot see it because it is so small, but there is a little white ball which they hit.’

'The pursuit has no other purpose?' asked the foreigner. 'It teaches nothing? It does not lead to military skill?'

'No.'

'But don't the boys play too?'

'Oh, no. They only carry.'

The foreigner was silent for a while and then he pointed again. 'See,' he said, 'that field with the white figures. I have noticed so many. What are they doing? One man runs to a spot and waves his arm; another, some distance away, waves a club at something. Then he runs and another runs. They cross. They cross again. Some of the other figures run too. What does that mean? That surely is practice for warfare?'

'No,' said the other, 'that is cricket. Cricket is also a game. There are tens of thousands of fields like that all over England. They are merely playing for amusement. The man who waved his arm bowled a ball; the man who waved his club hit it. You cannot see the ball, but it is there.'

The stranger was silent again. A little later he drew attention to another field. 'What is that?' he said. 'There are men and girls with clubs all running among each other. Surely that is war. See how they smite. What Amazons! No wonder England leads the way!'

'No,' said the other, 'that is hockey. Another game.'

'And is there a ball there too?' he asked.

'Yes,' was the reply, 'a ball.'

'But see the garden of that house,' he remarked; 'that is not hockey. They are only four, but two are women. They also leap about and run and wave their arms. Is there a ball there?'

'Yes,' was the reply, 'there is a ball there. That is lawn tennis.'

'But the white lines,' he said. 'Is not that, perhaps, outdoor mathematics? That surely may help to serious things?'

'No,' the other replied, 'only another game. There are millions of such gardens in England with similar lines.'

'Yes,' he said, for they were then over Surbiton, 'I see them at this moment by the hundred.'

They passed on to London. It was at that time of September when football and cricket overlap, and there was not only a crowded cricket match at the Oval but an even more crowded football match at Chelsea.

The foreigner caught sight of the Oval first. 'Ah,' he said, 'you deceived me. For here is your cricket again, played amid a vast concourse. How can you call it a game? These crowds would not come to see a game played, but would play one themselves. It must be more than you said; it must be a form of tactics that can help to retain England's supremacy, and these men are here to learn.'

'No,' said the other, 'no. It is just a game. In England we not only like to play games but to see them played.'

It was then that the stranger noticed Blackheath. 'Ah, now I have you!' he cried. 'Here is another field and another crowd; but this is surely a battle. See how they dash at each other. And yes, look, one of them has had his head cut off and the other kicks it. Splendid!'

'No,' said the other, 'that is no head, that is a ball. Just a ball. It is a game, like the others.'

He groaned. 'Then I cannot see,' he said at last, 'how England won her victories and became supreme.'

'Ah,' said the other, 'at the time that England was winning her victories and climbing into supremacy, the ball was not her master.'

How Poetry came to the Course



‘Now, ladies, if you really want something to do,’ said the owner, ‘name my three yearlings for me.’

‘Oh, how delightful!’ they exclaimed in one voice.

‘But remember,’ he continued, ‘that the names should be good ones. The year after next, one of them may run in the Derby, and no horse with a bad name ever won that.’

‘Of course,’ said the first lady. ‘But who would give a beautiful race-horse a common name?’

‘Lots of people,’ said the owner. ‘There’s a horse at this moment called “Done in the Eye”.’

The ladies shuddered.

‘You’ll get nothing like that from me,’ said the second lady, ‘I can promise you. I shall find you a lovely romantic name, all melody and fragrance. What do you say, for example, to—to “Tristram”?’

‘Or “Hyacinthus”?’ said the second lady.

‘Or “Saladin”?’ said the third.

‘Charming, charming!’ replied the owner. ‘There’s only one criticism I should make: all of the horses are fillies.’

‘Women’s names,’ said the first lady, ‘are more beautiful than men’s. I have chosen one for my filly already—“Undine”—the wonderful water-nymph of Fouqué’s story. Could there be a more magical name than “Undine”? It will bring music to the race-card, poetry to the course.’

‘And my choice is “Thalia,” the Muse of idyllic verse,’ said the second lady.

‘And mine,’ said the third, ‘is the most fragile and exquisite of flowers—“Anemone”.’

‘Right-O,’ said the owner, and wrote them down.

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A year later the fillies were running in various races.

“Ere you are, sir,” cried the bookmakers. “Eight to one ‘The liar’! Two hundred to a pony, ‘The liar’!”

“Sixes ‘Any money’!” they cried.

“Now, then,” they cried; ‘here’s your chance. Twelve to one against ‘Undone’! Twelve to one ‘Undone’!”

Mrs. Thornton



IN *The Sportsman's Vocal Cabinet*, edited by Charles Armiger in 1831, is a description of the great race between Mrs. Thornton on Colonel Thornton's Vingarillo and Mr. Flint on Thornville, at York, on August 25th, 1804. The race was four miles, for 500 guineas and 1,000 bye, and 100,000 persons assembled on Knavesmire to witness it, or ten times more than had assembled to see either Eclipse or Bay Malton, those famous fliers. As much as £200,000 depended on the race, and at starting the betting was 5 to 4 and even 6 to 4 on the lady, and at the end of the third mile 7 to 4 and 2 to 1. But Mr. Flint then took the lead and won, Mrs. Thornton drawing up, ‘in a sportsmanlike style’, before the post. Her backers were thus depressed, ‘but the spirit she displayed and the good humour with which she bore her loss were so remarkable’—I quote from the *York Herald*—‘as greatly to diminish the joy of many of the winners’. Isn't that pretty and impossible? The gallant Yorkshiremen!

‘Never, surely,’ writes the reporter—‘never, surely, did a woman ride in better style. It was difficult to say whether her horsemanship, her dress, or her beauty were most admired—the *tout ensemble* was unique. Mrs. Thornton's dress was a leopard-coloured body, with blue sleeves, the rest buff, and blue cap.’

But what of the *Vocal Cabinet*? for this, you say, is all prose. Well, a poet made a song on the race which was put

into the mouth of the victorious Mr. Flint, addressing his competitor. Here are some of his stanzas, in the same key of gallantry as that of the *York Herald's* article and the Knaves-mire gamblers:

I denied you a friend to ride by, I confess,
And for why?—not for sake of the pelf;
But I wished to enjoy, in a case of such bliss,
All that pleasure and honour myself.

Four-fifths of the race, you must candidly own,
You had the 'whip hand,' while behind
I humbly pursued, till your nag 'was broke down'—
Then before you to go, sure, was kind.

But, believe, to the fair I am warmly inclined—
To be always polite I am ready:
Tho' my horse was so rude as to leave you behind,
I will ne'er run away from a lady.

Mrs. Thornton's next race, on which the Colonel, her husband, had a bet of four hogsheads of coti roti and 2,000 guineas, and herself a bet of 600 guineas, fell through; but a little later she was again matched, this time with Frank Buckle. Mrs. Thornton rode Louisa, by Pegasus and Nelly. Buckle rode Allegro, also by Pegasus and Allegranti's dam. Mrs. Thornton carried 9 st. 6 lb., and Buckle 3 st. more. Mrs. Thornton was habited in a purple cap and waistcoat, long nankeen skirts, purple shoes, and embroidered stockings. The race was two miles, and Mrs. Thornton, with the greatest skill and judgment, won it by half a neck. Half a neck in two miles suggests that perhaps Mr. Buckle was a gallant too; but the stewards of the Jockey Club seem to have instituted no inquiries.

Colonel Thornton, I find, was Thomas Thornton, of Thornville Royal, Yorkshire, son of a soldier of the '45 and M.P. for York. He was born in 1757, educated at the Charterhouse and Glasgow University, and on his father's death

he gave up the Army and took to sport, not only hunting and shooting, but writing about them. In 1802 he and his first wife—the lady of the saddle—visited France, and met Napoleon, to whom the Colonel presented a pair of pistols, and in 1806 *A Sporting Tour in France* was published, being the Colonel's letters to the Earl of Darlington, describing his adventures. France attracted him so much that after Waterloo he settled there, and called himself Prince de Chambord and Marquis de Pont. By this time, however, the riding Mrs. Thornton had passed away, and the Colonel had married again. His portrait by Reinagle is in the appropriate ownership of Lord Rosebery, and hangs at The Durdans.

But it is the first Mrs. Thornton who interests me, and I should like to know more of her; but *The Dictionary of National Biography* cannot even record her maiden name. Why do not women ride races to-day one wonders. They do everything else.

The Defeat of Generosity

THIS morning of May, with the Derby only a week or so distant, I received a letter in which occurred the following passage:

What I really write about is not my health, but to say that if you have any opportunity of getting a Calcutta Sweepstake ticket, I'd like one or even two. You see, even in this quiet retreat a flutter attracts.

Now the odd thing is that I have had other letters to the same effect, and several friends—strong men and beautiful women—have recently stopped me in clubs, in private houses, or even in the street, and have asked me to oblige them in a similar way. Why it should be taken for granted that I indulge myself in sweepstake tickets, I cannot explain;

I don't talk about them and I don't look like a gambler or behave like one; but there it is. As a matter of fact I have seven.

Now I want to be perfectly truthful. I am interested in the case principally for the sidelights it throws on my character, but also for its bearing upon the whole question of games of chance, superstition, and avarice. For the possession of these seven tickets is undermining more than one good quality, and I shall have to try very hard to induce myself to endow almshouses or build a church with the proceeds of the first prize if the stain is to be expunged.

Understand that I don't pose as a man of any particular generosity. I can, for instance, refrain from buying matches in the street, or dropping coins in the caps of screevers, and avoid an ex-service collecting-box shaker's eye with as much skill as you can; but as a general rule, when I have seven of anything, I am prepared to part with two or three. My cigar-case would be at your service if we were to meet. I carry cigarettes as much almost for others as myself.

When, however, it comes to Calcutta Sweep tickets I find that the springs of altruism dry up. Generosity disappears. I can think of no living soul to whom I would surrender one of these seven. I should like to; my wish is always to oblige, to say 'Yes' rather than 'No'; I am ashamed of this sordid acquisitiveness and tenacity, but I can't fight it. If you seemed to want it badly enough, you could have my watch. You could have ten times the cost of any of these tickets. But the ticket itself—no. Not one of them. Impossible. Not even if you offered me an absurd sum. The chance that the winner may be among them makes my dissociation from them a possibility not to be contemplated.

If I were to give away or sell any one of those seven tickets I should not sleep a wink until Derby Day. I should be in a fever of fear that its new owner would be the lucky one.

While I am being so frank I may as well grovel a little

more, and confess that I did actually promise one of the seven tickets to a young friend. (A boy, fortunately. It is bad enough to break a promise to a boy, but it would be worse to a girl.) I promised it to him unequivocally, in his mother's hearing. 'Stephen,' I said—and these are my exact words—'I'll get a ticket for you.' And when I said it I was prepared to do so. But when the tickets arrived I found that I couldn't pass one on. It was impossible to carry out the undertaking. What he thinks about me I daren't guess, or what his mother thinks. But there it is; I have failed. I am no longer trustworthy. I know that breaking one's word to a schoolboy is rather a serious matter, but I am doing it. (Perhaps there is something in this anti-gambling movement after all?)

I don't pretend to be continually worried by this decline in liberality, this decay of moral sensitiveness. I can collect peace of mind by assuring myself that if I were to give away a ticket and it won, the embarrassment of the winner would be very painful. Pity for me, who allowed it to leave my hands, would be so powerful an emotion that the recipient of the fortune would have no fun at all. Nothing but remorse. There would be offers to me to go halves; refusals on my part; more offers; more refusals. The whole thing would be intolerable and must be prevented.

Now, although I may be plunging into diversion or calling up reserves of sophistry to avoid reflecting too much upon the ill effects on my character which the possession of these seven tickets is creating, I cannot defer speculation as to what will happen if I win. I know exactly what I shall do. I shall write to Stephen, saying how sorry I am that his ticket (which I was keeping for him in a separate envelope) was not the lucky one, but I am sending him a present as a solatium. My idea of the size of this present is at the moment of writing, considerable. Something really substantial, which, invested will be enough to bring him in a

nice little income for life. That is how I view the matter to-day. But to-day I am poor; to-day, except for this unfortunate affair of the seven sweepstake tickets, I am not too squalidly mean.

But what shall I be like when I have won the prize and shall be worth something between two and three hundred thousand pounds? Persons who own as much as that are, I am told, apt to be minutely scrupulous about the way they spend it. It may be that when the sense of the responsibility of great wealth permeates me, as it will almost immediately do, I may consider that a pound note is all that Stephen is entitled to—if indeed he is entitled to anything.

The Game of the Sparrow



I WAS again reminded of the differences between nations and the rapidity with which the English allow an enthusiasm to burn out, when, the other day, I tried to buy a Mah Jong set, and, after visiting in vain the likeliest places, found in a certain West End shop several derelict boxes, each of which I could have for little more than half the marked price, or, were I a very persistent bargainer, probably for much less. Some were in polished wood, some in crocodile leather, some in morocco, and all were old stock and probably unsaleable—because ‘No one’, said the assistant, ‘wants Mah Jong sets any more. All the people that play it have got their sets, and there are no new players coming along. It is finished. Everyone plays Bridge now.’ He is, I suppose, right; it is those that deal in things who know; the game which has fascinated Chinamen for centuries and had its chance here a few years ago has failed to be more than a passing excitement, and is now no more. The radiant tiles, with their bone or ivory faces and bamboo backs, pricked

out with their cheerful colouring, the exquisite Winds and Dragons inscribed with mystical symbols, now lie in dark, unvisited corners, gathering dust among such low-born companions, also in disgrace, as ping-pong balls and tiddley-wink counters.

But there is a rhythm in life; the wheel can come full circle; and if I am being so apparently out of date as to commend Mah Jong in this leaping year of 1928, it is not because I am reactionary, but because I cannot believe in the extinction of so agreeable and absorbing a pastime. 'Surely', I say to myself, more or less convincingly, 'it is suffering merely from an eclipse, and must regain its effulgence. Surely it will come back.' For it is charming, this game of 'The Sparrow'. I ask those who in the distant days of 1921-2-3 used to play it if they did not in glowing anticipation count the workaday hours until it was time again to sit round the table and build the walls, and join the corners so that no devils got in, and then settle down to the real business of life: which was to gather Pungs and Chows and Kongs. Was it not a delight? I ask you. Do you never, in your secret hearts, as you now see all your best cards rendered innocuous under a 'No-trump' call—do you never recall with regret the happy sight of the row of gay little white façades before you; the leisurely outstretching of the arm to the wall to lift off the next tile, with the accompanying expectancy of drawing something really good; the excited thrill with which you discovered that you had drawn what you needed, and the Oriental mask into which you endeavoured to transform your countenance in order to disguise the triumph from the foe? Perhaps it was a secret Kong of Dragons which you thus amassed—a very momentous coup, for not only does it add 32 to your score, but it gives you a right to double the total, and also it for ever confounds the endeavours of whichever of your rivals may have been out for Unique Wonders.

I am saying nothing in disparagement of Bridge, which I hold to be as good a card game as there is; nor would there be any sense in drawing comparisons where none are possible, for Bridge involves partnership and all its reproaches, whereas in Mah Jong each player is alone, with his hand against the others; I say nothing against Bridge, but is there not something very engaging, far beyond coloured, flimsy pasteboard, in the solidity of these little cubes of ivory and bamboo? I speak as though all Mah Jong sets were made of ivory or, more commonly, bone—the bone, I believe, of some huge Chinese fish—but there are sumptuous sets that cost incredible sums, where the front of the tile is jade and the symbols are inscribed in precious stones. These, however, are for emperors and mandarins.

So much for the material of the game. When we come to its language, how incomparably more alluring can it be! ‘One Heart’, ‘No Bid’, ‘Two Diamonds’, ‘Two Hearts’, ‘Three Diamonds’, ‘Double Three Diamonds’—those are phrases familiar as household words—in fact, they are the household words of the day; but though they can make for the savour of rivalry and the fun of the fray, no one can pretend that these curt challenges bring into a room such wafts of romance as the Four Winds, the Three Dragons, white, red, and green (green for prosperity), the Characters, the Circles, and the Bamboos. I say nothing of the lovely Flowers and Seasons, because it seems to have been agreed not to add them any more to the game; but there they are, smiling, in the box. And then the special phraseology: the terms for the exceptional things that one can do, such as making Mah Jong by drawing a tile from the dead wall, which is called ‘picking the plum blossom’, or making Mah Jong by drawing the last tile from the live wall, which is called ‘catching the moon from the bottom of the sea’. What would one of your red-faced majors in the card-room at the club make of such poetical nonsense as that?

Will it not come back, this pretty beguilement? 'Let us be drunk and for a while forget,' said the poet. Mah Jong can create oblivion too, with less painful after-results. Why did we let it go so soon? Is it that the paraphernalia were too complicated, although little more so than those of chess and backgammon and draughts, and has compensating qualities and cheerfulness and radiance. Is it that so many people could not be bothered to learn? Or is it that its arrival was too sudden, and it was taken up with too much ardour? Falstaff with his sound instinct remarked on the tendency of the English, having hit on a good thing, to run it to death. Perhaps that is what happened with Mah Jong. Not being in its early English days a player, I cannot say; but if you want additional proofs of our intemperance with our new loves you have only to think of that craze which came in just as Mah Jong was being allowed to die—the Cross Word puzzle. The Cross Word fires are still burning, but now only palely; the fierce heat is over; the station bookstalls no longer bend beneath piles of puzzle-books; it is possible to ride in a railway carriage without seeing men with wrinkled foreheads and pencils poised to strike. There is also that other game which I have mentioned—which rhymes with Mah Jong but has its name, not from Celestial imagination, but from onomatopœia—Ping-pong. Not so long ago there were International competitions, and every suburb had its champion, male and female, and its ex-champions; and where is Ping-pong now? And that far more beautiful exercise, Diabolo—where is that?

Bridge, however, will always have the advantage over Mah Jong in its independence of accessories. Mah Jong is useless on a railway journey for want of a table, and even at sea it can be ruled out by the insurgence of the waves. Mah Jong, in short, is ceremonial, and that, perhaps, is among the causes that have brought it into disrepute. Chess may be called ceremonial, too; but chess can be adapted for

the train and the ocean by means of little pegs to fit into little sockets. The two games have not much in common, but they equally give rise to puzzled conjecture as to their origin. It is as difficult to put oneself into the mind of the inventor of the strange personnel of chess and the moves allotted to each man, as of the division of the Four Walls and the Four Winds, the Three Dragons, and all the lesser fry that make up the apparently complex but really simple game of 'The Sparrow'. And why 'The Sparrow'? I have seen it suggested that there is a kinship between the players of the game, each trying to pick up and add a tile to his private store, and the little brown birds found in every city, whose life is spent in seeking for discarded crumbs. Anyway, 'The Sparrow' is the game's name, and unless you have at the end two tiles of the same family to make the Sparrow's Head, you cannot win it. Try.

Sporting Memorials



I WAS hearing the other day about the monument to Joe Graham, for forty years huntsman of the Dumfriesshire hounds, which is to be seen on the top of Carthat Hill above Ecclesfechan; and I am vexed to think that I missed seeing it when passing through Carlyle's village not long ago, my thoughts being set more upon the contemptuous philosopher than upon pursuers of the fox. Monuments on hill-tops are always impressive, and there would seem to be a peculiar fitness in this stone figure winding his horn for evermore. Andrew Lang, himself a Lowlander, once expressed, in his graceful easy way, the wish that in Elysian waters his ghost might eternally catch the ghosts of fish. Similarly, Joe Graham's ghost must be constantly chasing ghostly red rovers, irrespective of close seasons. Next time I am in

that neighbourhood I shall scale Carthage and pay my respects.

Being no centaur I speak without personal knowledge, but I suppose that fox-hunting to-day is essentially unchanged since the fox-hunting of the past, as described in the glowing pages of Charles James Apperley, admirable writer and tireless eulogist of horsemen, hounds, hostesses, and hosts, whose pen-name was 'Nimrod'. Whether there are masters to-day who are the equals of Apperley's gods, who can compare with, say, the great Tom Assheton-Smith and the great Sir Bellingham Graham, not to mention 'The Squire', I have no knowledge; but I hope so. I take it that, although barbed wire is recent and motor-cars are numerous at the modern meets, the art of horsemanship has not changed, the scent of foxes remains the same, and hounds do not run less truly or with less endurance.

Other sports may have altered if they have not deteriorated; cricket, for example, has a new law or two every year, and is gradually coming to divide the country like politics; football has joined hands with commercialism; racing is complicated by Press publicity; lawn tennis (unheard of in 'Nimrod's' time) is being impaired as a pastime, although assisted as a spectacle, by the steady rise in the standard of play. But hunting, being concerned with such an elemental thing as the desire of the hound to destroy a foe, remains the same. Its excitement is the same, its headlong onset, while as for its exultant cries and barbaric yawps, they are from times most primitive; and its official costumes are the same. Hence, Joe Graham in stone, no matter when the statue was erected, is of the present, and will always be of the present; which is more than one can say of 'Nimrod's' contemporary, the Rt. Hon. George Canning, in Parliament Square.

A day or so after my first knowledge of Joe Graham's memorial, chance placed in my hands an odd, ill-disciplined, garrulous but very human book, a *Memoir of the Rev. John*

Russell, written by a friend, and published in 1878, during the lifetime of that famous Devonshire sporting parson, the frontispiece of which depicts another fox-hunting memorial, set up by an admirer of this inveterate Bahram. Joe Graham's memorial is a statue; Jack Russell's a quarry, in which stalls for twenty-two owners of foxhounds were carved, with each its hound and motto, and other emblems of the chase; and the whole was dedicated to St. Hubert, whose name it bears—St. Hubert's Hall—and formally opened in honour of the jovial M.F.H. in holy orders, whose personality dominated all. That was many years ago, half a century perhaps before Russell died in 1883; and having the curiosity to discover if the place is still maintained as a resort for pilgrims and picnic parties, as of old, and Russell's name kept sweet, I have been making inquiries.

At first (to borrow from his own vocabulary) I drew blank; but then I found a Devonshire friend of great pedestrian powers and unlimited complaisance who took the matter in hand, and whose report is before me. 'Five miles out from Launceston towards Okehampton', he writes, 'one comes to the hamlet of Portgate with the Harris Arms at the crossroads. Turn left, and about half a mile down the road is a bridge over the Thrushel, a small stream which flows into the Tamar. Just this side of the bridge, turn in through a garden gate in the grounds of Hayne House on the right, and cross the stream by a footbridge. This brings you on to a track by a wood, and a little way along to the right a winding path with stone banks leads left into the quarry under a stone arch.

'The quarry is circular, cut out of the hillside, about 40 feet across, and the back rises about 20 feet from the floor, which is carpeted with leaves, primroses, and ferns peeping through. The seats—twenty in number—are built of rough grey stone (like the stone walls of Devonshire) half covered with grey-green moss. They are about 4 feet 6 inches to

5 feet across, with stone divisions forming "arms". The one facing the entrance (Russell's?) is about 6 feet wide. All round the ring, and on the slopes of the hills, are beech trees. The whole thing is unspoilt, untouched and—almost—unknown.' Thus my friend reported, adding that it should not take long to restore order and renew the original associations of the place; and I wonder if this may not be possible? There should be as much fox-hunting piety and as much wealth in Devon as in the vicinity of Dumfries.

The Rev. John Russell emerges from his biographies as a direct, honest creature, untroubled by theology, but by no means careless of conduct. If the ancient Persian system of education were right—all, they held, that a boy need know, at any rate as ground work, was to tell the truth, shoot straight, and manage a horse—then Russell was a complete educationalist, too; for those also were his ideals, and he never failed to keep them before him, and, therefore, before others. To these instructions he added one more: 'and don't smoke', for tobacco was as distasteful, and even hateful, to him as to James I and to Algernon Charles Swinburne.

I am not in a position to say anything to the point about hunting parsons. At the first blush they may seem to be a mistake. Yet, why so, so long as they manage their flocks as well as their packs? Whether, on general principles, it is a comforting thing for the bereaved, to see, beneath the cassock of the clergyman who is performing the last rites for their lost ones, the top boots of an eager M.F.H. is an open question. The fact, however, remains that Russell was the darling of the countryside, and of his own parishioners, and when once he was carpeted by his bishop for unclerical addiction to the joys of the chase, one of the witnesses said that it was immaterial to her whether her dead child was buried on Wednesday or Thursday: whichever day best suited the parson, suited her.

We should know more about him if he had a better

biographer; but one quoted remark proves that he had a certain dry humour superior to his ordinary run of genial discourse. He said of Oxford that no wonder it contained so much learning, for every youth going up to it from school carried some with him, and none brought any away.

Masters, New and Old



THE most remarkable thing about championship billiards —after the wizardry of it—is the gulf that divides the handful of best men from the handful of next best men, and the gulf that divides that second handful from everyone else. In all other games you can count the absolutely first-class men by scores. I do not mean that there is not one a shade better than the others, because there is: otherwise there would be no champion; but the throne is surrounded by claimants entitled to stand on the top step of the dais. W. G. Grace, for example, was for a long time beyond all question the best cricketer; but other men occasionally had better seasons, and quite inferior players could bowl him out and defy his bowling. Mr. John Ball junior was the amateur golf champion, yet England and Scotland are sprinkled with men who can give him a stiff game, and he has been beaten, I suppose, on many links.

But in billiards it is a case of the best first and the rest almost nowhere; and at the present moment, among the continually active players, the best are only five in number: Stevenson, Inman, Reece, Diggle, and Aiken. I omit John Roberts, because not only is he old and ill but for years he has stood apart in aristocratic aloofness; I omit Peall and Dawson, because they have retired, and Gray because he is a specialist.

Then comes the first gulf, on the hither (or our) side of

which are Harverson and Smith and Cook and Newman and young Peall, for example.

And then comes the second gulf, and after that we need not trouble very much, for there is no magic left—nothing but merit and accomplishment; and so downwards to our own blundering efforts to get a decent spirit of obedience and good conduct into ivory, or even bonzoline.

It is only those that know something of what ivory can do and should do under coaxing or compulsion who can really appreciate the wizardry of the best players. Because it really is wizardry—nothing else; and not the less so through one's knowledge that it has come from a whole lifetime of practice and thought. For he who would play billiards like one of these must do nothing else. Billiards must be his existence. A good game can be played by men immersed at other times in other pursuits; but wizardry goes only to those who not only start with a natural aptitude, in a billiards environment, but dedicate their bodies and minds to billiards as completely and thoughtfully as a devotee of religion. To know what to do and to do it accurately and beautifully; to know not only what one is doing with this stroke, but precisely what kind of position will be left; to alternate a softness of touch beside which the touch of a butterfly's wing were almost gross with a forcing power that would drive a nail through a plank; to break the balls after a series of nurseries with such precision of effort that they reassemble within an inch after a tour of the table by one of them; and to keep up these changing tactics, without intervals either for consideration or rest, during breaks of two, three, four, five, and six hundred—only by lifelong devotion can these marvels be accomplished.

Meeting Stevenson casually one would never dream that this was a champion of such a delicate and sensitive game. He is a compact, quiet, and joyless, almost saturnine, looking man of a prevalent type. His hair and moustache are of the

ordinary colour; his height is 5 feet 7 inches; he was born in 1874 at Hull. He plays without animation, but swiftly, and now and then with the carelessness of a master—though never with John Roberts's arrogant insouciance—but for the most part he shows a scrupulous thoughtfulness. He is strong in every department; and I would rather see his nursery cannons than Reece's and his losing hazards than Inman's. In extricating himself from what look like impossible situations he can be magnificent, and again he will miss things so simple that one can but gasp. If his tactics were as profound as his technique he would never be hard pressed by any player; but his nature is simple, and he dislikes safety play. Left with an impossibility, he prefers to go for it rather than meet it with retaliatory guile. When waiting for his turn he sits motionless, with his cue vertically between his knees, and rarely watches the game. In fact, he has the impassivity of the professional at its best, but he has not the fire-proof temperament for the game quite as Inman has, or Roberts. He can be both bored and depressed. In watching Stevenson, one does not feel that one is in the presence of absolutely the highest genius, but absolutely the perfect artist.

Edward Diggle is the tallest of the group—six feet, if not more. He comes from Manchester and talks like it: descriptive reporters of his matches call him the Mancunian. He was born in 1873. He has a little dark moustache and a long chin, and looks delicate, with some of the gentle wistfulness of the invalid in his face. Diggle is a classic player: doing the soundest things without haste or floridity. He advances to the table slowly, takes his position slowly, grounds his heavy cue on the cloth for a moment slowly, and then makes the stroke. He breaks all the rules which we are so carefully taught, both as to standing and as to making strokes; but he gets there. His accuracy is a joy, and his own particular top-of-the-table game—a red winner alternating with a

cannon—although in other hands it might be very monotonous, is never, to me, monotonous in his. Why he ever breaks down is a mystery; but I imagine that it is due largely to want of physique. Also Diggle is, I am told, something of a humorist, and humorists are rarely champions of anything; while with him artistry predominates over ambition.

Reece, of Oldham, is as different from Diggle as can be imagined: an all-round athlete, very powerful, clean-shaven, whom one might take to be a successful trainer or stud-groom. He has all the quietude of a rich man's employee, together with the air which comes of receiving the obedience or admiration of inferiors. At his best he plays an exquisite game. His touch can be perfect. But his safety tactics are only second-rate, he is moodier than he ought to be, and a run of bad luck depresses and depreciates him. When playing Inman he is peculiarly liable to low spirits and raspiness; and I don't wonder, for Inman is an antagonist requiring in his opponent an amount of phlegm that all Holland could hardly supply. Reece certainly has it not.

Melbourne Inman is indeed a hard nut to crack. Of all the great billiard players of the day he alone may be said to be out for blood. He is the only real fighter. The others are keen, no doubt, each in his way; but their keenness is tempered by personal idiosyncrasy—Diggle's by a low pulse for example; Stevenson's by a master's disdain; but Inman—Inman is on the make, as we say, all the time. A little, lean, anxious, watchful Hebrew, aged thirty-five, he is worth watching, if only as an object lesson in patience, thoroughness, adroitness, and the art of giving nothing away. He brings the same care to every stroke, easy or difficult, taking no risks. Unlike the other great players of the day, he has no game of his own. Stevenson, for example, and Reece are each always hoping to bring the balls together and nurse them; Diggle manœuvres the white ball to the cushion side of the red on the spot and makes lengthy runs of red winners

and cannons alternately; Gray keeps the red ball somewhere between the middle spot and the D, and builds up his score with losers from it on one side or the other. Inman has no speciality, except a liking to be 'in hand' but employs all these devices as they occur with a power peculiar to himself of leaving something on. The result is that not only is he more consistent in his breaks than his rivals, but he is free from the strain of playing with their anxiety for future combinations. Yet he is artist through and through as well, and it is good to watch the wan ghost of a smile cross his face after a great shot or a great fluke. He is the only one of the Masters whose expression ever relaxes. He is also the wiliest of them. His astuteness is worth many points to him; and that must be a clever man who outwits him in safety play.

Another reason for Inman's consistent success is that there is something antipathetic in his personality which seems to make all his adversaries play a little below themselves. What it is is not quite explicable: perhaps the reaction of just his sheer ambition: the knowledge that this man is out ultimately to defeat all comers and has no other purpose in life. Such a spirit animating one competitor could be seriously disconcerting to the other.

Anyway, there it is, and even Diggle, apathetic though he is, can feel it; while, as I have said, it has again and again reduced Reece to the condition of a jelly-fish. Personally, I have no doubt but that Inman and Mephistopheles are in league; for though I have seen all these players enjoy flukes—*vols*, as the French say so much more vividly—I have never seen any whose flukes have been so outrageous or have come at such opportune moments as Inman's. That he is the luckiest player is beyond question; but I think that, like most lucky men, he deserves his good fortune, for he is a hard worker and he never relaxes, and if all-round-the-table play is needed he will do his best with it. Whatever he does, he will give the spectators an interesting time and his opponent a nervous one.

Fifthly, Aiken, the Scotchman. He is the tortoise among these hares, and one day will win. No glamour whatever, no sparkle; but steady, painstaking excellence. Perhaps none of them would so make an amateur unhappy, for his is more like the sublimation of the ordinary man's play.

And the greatest of them all, what of him? Happily, although he does not play any more, he is still with us, handling very ably a pen instead of a cue. I saw him last, after a long interval, in 1912, and coming away from Thurston's my head was so full of his commanding personality that when I was asked by an artistic friend, meeting me, if I had been to the Old Masters and which did I like best, it was impossible to reply anything but 'Roberts'. The monumental figure with the strong carven face and the white hair and beard was the same Roberts whom I had known slender and black, save for the added dignity of years. A little less brisk: that was all. He still never seemed to look at the balls at all, but merely made them obey him—as though his cue were a wand.

Diverse and wonderful are the gifts of God to man, varied are the manifestations of human genius. This will repeople the world with men and women of his imagination, warm with life, and we call him Shakespeare; this will take brush in hand and evolve from wet paint and lustrous aristocrats, and we call him Velasquez; and this again will stoop over a table of slate covered with green cloth and bend the capricious diabolical spirit of ivory to his will, and we call him Roberts.

On the afternoon that I saw him last, he scored with a rapidity that left one breathless; he made difficulties that he might extricate himself from them; he was full of fight; nothing but his great massive head was old. 'The resource of the man?' sighed my neighbour. The first break that I watched ran to 170 and was cut short by a missed red loser

so simple that anyone could have made it. But that has always been the great man's way: he has always disdained the easiest. His opponent followed, and by methods as painful and deliberate as Roberts's were careless and swift made a number of excellent book cannons. Roberts watched him all the time: none of the ordinary apathy of the waiting professional for him; none of Stevenson's forlorn gaze at his polished boots. The old lion was keen, he wanted the table again.

He soon had it, and was again away at the gallop, and not till the stroke with which the break ended did he make one that was not perfect—the object ball always as much under control as his own. Sad indeed that such mastery should be killed by age. In any rightly constructed world John Roberts and Cinquevalli would equally live for ever. . . .

Watching Stevenson one marvels and marvels—and yet feels that some day, if one really gave one's life to it, one might be able to play billiards. Watching John Roberts one is certain that one never could. That is the difference.

The Visionary Triumph ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

'THIS,' he said (we were discussing our favourite dreams), 'is mine.'

We prepared to listen.

'It is always,' he went on, 'the same—a cricket match: and the older I get and less able to play cricket, the oftener I have it. It is a real match, you must understand—first-class cricket, with thousands of spectators and excitement; and it is played a very long way from my home. That is an important point, as I will explain.

'I am merely one of the spectators. How long I have been watching I cannot say, but the match is nearing the end, and

our side—the side which has my sympathies—is nearly all out, but still needs a few runs to win.

‘What the side is I cannot clearly tell; all I know is that it is my own county, I mean the county from which I come—say Kent—and the match is at Old Trafford or Bramall Lane, against either Lancashire or Yorkshire. But the important thing is that my side is a man short. This man either has been taken ill or has had to go away because of a bereavement. I am not clear as to that, but he is not there, anyway, and unless a substitute can be found Kent will be at a disadvantage and may lose.’

We all got ready to speak.

‘Oh, yes,’ he interpolated hurriedly, ‘I know, of course, that a substitute may not bat for another at the end of a match, but this is a dream, remember. That, perhaps, is what dreams are for—to provide the limited and frustrated life of the daytime with the compensation of limitless adventure and success.’

‘Order!’ we cried.

‘I beg pardon,’ he said, and returned to the vernacular.

‘Very well; that is the situation. Meanwhile the last two batsmen are in—the Kent captain and another: that is to say, the last two, unless another is forthcoming. And still there are six runs needed—five to tie and six to win. The excitement is appalling. Everyone in the vast concourse is tense. It is at this moment that the captain is bowled.’

He stopped to wipe his forehead.

‘What happens then?’ he continued. ‘You would think the match was over. So it would be on any ordinary ground and under ordinary conditions; but this is a dream. What happens therefore is that the Kent captain, instead of returning to the Pavilion, stops and talks to the other captain and then he leaves the pitch and begins to walk towards the ring. When he reaches the ring, some way from me, he begins to ask loudly, “Is there a Kent man here who can play at

all and would help us out?" I can hear him at first only faintly; then, as he gets closer, I can hear more clearly, "Is there a Kent man here who can play at all and would help us out?" My heart beats faster and faster and I am nearly suffocated with suspense as he approaches, because I am a Kent man who can bat a bit, and to play for my county has always been my desire, and I am afraid that someone else will volunteer before the captain reaches me.

'You see now why the match has to be played so far away from home. If it were Kent *v.* Middlesex at Lord's, for example, there would be loads of Kentish men on the ground. But not so many up in the North.

'I always wonder why the captain does not begin in the Pavilion, but he does not. He comes straight to the ring. Every moment he is drawing nearer and no one has offered himself; and then at last he gets to me and I stand up and say that Kent is my county and I can play a bit and would like to help. He hastens to accept my offer, and I take his bat and pads and gloves and go to the pitch, amid the cheers of the crowd.

'At the wicket I am received with hearty greetings by the rival captain (this is a dream remember) and I take middle. Then I look round the field with perfect composure, as I have always seen the best batsmen do, and have always wanted to do myself. I am the coolest thing there.

'The situation is electrical. Six runs are needed and I am the last man. The bowler against me is a demon and I am dead out of practice and by no means fond of being hit on the body. He begins his run towards the wicket, and the ball leaves his terrible long swinging arm and comes towards me like a shell. I raise my bat, get it on the half-volley right in the middle, hit it clean over the Pavilion for six, and the match is won.

'That is my favourite dream.'

'No wonder,' we said.

From the 'Entertainments'

Writer's Profession (*Windfall's Eve*) ♪ ♪ ♪

DOROTHY was worth helping, because she was practical and had shown independence: but what was I to do with her poor sister Amabel, who wanted to 'write so badly'? Nothing is more difficult than to assist those who want to write so badly; because writing must come from within, and there is only one way to improve and that is to keep at it. Writing is fed by writing. The trouble with Amabel was that her impulse came from without. She did not want to write so badly because she had anything that must be said, but because the world was already too full of books. Another trouble was that she had no humility, and in its place a facetiousness that always reminded me of one of the destructive generalizations of my friend Hulse. 'Among the rules of life', he had said, 'one of the first is "Always avoid the company of those who say, "Thank God I have a sense of humour." If a man says it, run; if a woman, leap into the nearest car.'"

When I had last seen Amabel, she was full of pique and ambition because a girl she was at school with, quite an ordinary kind of girl too—in fact she had been something of a laughing-stock—told her, when they had met by chance at a *matinée*, that she was making quite a nice little income by contributing short stories to magazines.

'If *she* can,' said Amabel, who was full of false logic, 'why can't I?'

The only answer was, 'Go ahead, then, and write short stories'; just as when she said that she had met someone who did very well out of cinema plots, the only answer was, 'Go ahead, then, and write cinema plots.'

But those who ask advice about writing never do these things; they ask and ask, and meanwhile the silent workers, who know that the only way to write is to write, are pegging away and eating bread.

Yet it was so firmly fixed in the minds of Amabel and her mother that a period of service at the Museum qualifies one, not only to find editors and publishers, but to influence their minds, that they would not let me be. Amabel was to write badly and I was to help her. 'Everybody', it has been said, 'contains one book,' but I can't see Amabel's unless she were faithfully to record the incentives to write, such as those that I have mentioned, which day after day, for a few moments, possessed her: how each new novel that she read provoked the desire to do something like it, each new play sent her home a dramatist on similar lines, and so forth. Set down with honesty, these derivative impulses of a reaper in other workers' fields would constitute what we call a document; but I doubt if it would be worth while, and surely it would not extend to volume form. Probably what the critic—was it Sainte-Beuve?—meant when he said that everybody contains one book, was that everybody contains one paragraph.

Although I could do nothing for Amabel until she abandoned her intentions of one day taking up her pen, Dorothy was more amenable. She was in a different class, having already tried to help herself; for it is only those who help themselves that gods and suddenly enriched uncles can serve.

By French Rivers (*Genevra's Money*) ∞ ∞ ∞

THE next day I was off early, by car, to Moret; which is a mediæval town within its own gates and possessed of every charm but a good inn: good, that is, in comparison

with Les Charmettes or the princely hotels of Fontainebleau. Having deposited my bag at the Cheval Noir outside the town, I began my search.

You first pass through an imposing portal and then, after threading a quarter of a mile of narrow main street, with a few shops and a café or two, and passing an ancient building where Napoleon slept on his way from Elba to Fontainebleau (as a tablet records), you leave the town again by the second portal and are immediately on the bridge that crosses the Loing, with a wide prospect of water, trees, and hills before you.

The city walls rise sheer from the river on this side, with odd little houses built on them, one of which offers for sale every article that the angler can require, except perhaps patience.

I leaned for a while over the parapet of the bridge—to do which is one of the purest of human pleasures—and looked down the river and up. It was a cloudless day and in the distance the water was silver and blue. Close at hand it was dark and green, and immediately below me was a little company of washer-women on their knees, scrubbing away at their linen and chattering without ceasing, except to laugh. To what extent I was the cause of their laughter I could only guess, but they all had an eye on me.

I moved on across the long bridge, past two enisled water-mills, to the farther bank. There, looking back, you see how nobly the Middle Ages have been respected. All towns built beside a river have a certain romantic quality, but when they are entered by a venerable gate in a wall this quality is enormously heightened.

Moret rises towards the south, and half-way up the hill is the church, with long plain windows letting the light right through, and above it, on the top of the hill, the ancient castle.

Just below the country end of the bridge the road turns

to the left, and here I strayed down an alley to the edge of the Loing to let the scene sink in. The noise of the water through the weir filled the air; now and then a car or wagon rumbled across the bridge; the swallows darted back and forth; and as I stood there, placidly smoking, a man in a blue jacket, with his trousers rolled up over naked legs, came down the alley with a couple of horses, riding one and leading the other, and taking them into the water farther and farther until he was submerged to his knees.

A man in a blue jacket on a white horse up to its middle in a French river is a very attractive sight, and there is something very soothing in the spectacle and in the sound of the splashing as the creatures move. It was all very foreign and delightful.

Then I left the alley, and walking a little way along the road came to a riverside meadow, with seats and trees; and there, a hundred yards away, sketching, were a man and a girl.

Had the man been alone I should have reconnoitred, and if he were young enough for Alistair I should perhaps have addressed him; but I could not encroach on a party of two. The girl wore a light blue overall and her fair hair was bobbed; the man was in tweeds. They were close together and seemed to be painting the same subject: Moret's massed bulk and the Loing catching its reflections.

Having learned that there was a restaurant a little farther along, bearing the odd name of which French picnic caterers are so fond—'Robinson'—I moved away and came soon to a shabby riverside place. At the moment—about half past eleven—I was its sole support, and my hopes of a tolerable meal would have fallen low indeed if I had not in my time been much in France and learned that appearances have no value there. In England a decayed inn means inferior food or no food at all, long waits, slovenliness, squalor. In France

there is no relation whatever between the façade and the kitchen.

If I would take a table under the trees, I was assured by the waiter, who was completing his toilet as he spoke, an excellent déjeuner should be spread before me. He finished buttoning his sorry waistcoat and vanished, and I walked through the garden, which was gravelled and much given up to swings and games, to the edge of the stream, where I found a table all ready laid, with a clean cloth and a clean napkin. Seating myself I lighted another pipe and prepared to be deliciously contented.

I don't want to add another stone to the vast pile of missiles that have been flung at my poor old country; but one of the questions which must be asked on that Day of Days when all information is given, will bear upon England's incapacity to serve food in the open air.

I was musing idly upon this strange difference between two neighbouring nations, when a little dish of fresh radishes arrived, with rolls and butter. The next dish was a *friture* of fish from the Loing, several varieties of which had, largely for my benefit, exchanged the river for the frying-pan. Then a plump cube of rumpsteak with watercress and a little dab of *maître d'hôtel* butter on it, accompanied by a salad. I had been offered white wine or red, but I chose a light beer brewed a few miles away, at Melun. To crown all came some of the best cheese in the world, the cheese of Brie.

It was a perfect meal, eaten under perfect conditions, and I was more than ever grateful to Alistair Muir for quarrelling with his father, taking up painting and concealing himself in the Forest of Fontainebleau.

Meanwhile the Loing was regaling me with its symphony: the quiet lapping of its little waves against the bank, the gentle rustle of leaves, the sounds carried across the surface from a boat-builder's yard, cries of children, notes of birds and the occasional hoot of a steamer from the not very

distant Seine, where the barges congregate. Above all, the hot sun and that murmur in the air which a hot sun engenders.

Now and then other customers arrived—cyclists chiefly, and motorists, and one party in a boat, rowing abominably and dressed as if for comic opera—and the neighbouring tables began to fill up. They were all jolly and in holiday mood, and all either very hungry or very greedy, for I heard them giving terrific orders. My discreet meal would have been nothing but hors-d'œuvre to theirs.

Whenever he could spare a minute I talked with the waiter.

'Do many artists come here?' I asked.

'Numbers,' he said. 'All the time, in the summer.'

'There are some here now?'

'Not staying in the hotel, but we have them to lunch and sometimes dinner.'

'French?'

'Yes, mostly. But English too and American.'

I asked him how he knew the difference between English and Americans.

The Americans talked more, he said. And they were particular in ordering their food and before they ate it. The English were more particular during their food.

I asked which gave the larger tips.

'The Americans used to,' he said, 'but they don't any more.'

Was there a young English artist frequenting the place at the present time? I asked.

Yes. One. With a lady. The table over there was reserved for them every day. They lunched late.

He looked at his watch. If they were coming they were almost due, he said.

'The lady is in blue and has short light hair?' I asked.

'The same. She is very *gentille*.'

Equine-imity (*Genevra's Money*)

I HAVE never been a racing-man; a ticket in the Derby sweep at the club is the extent of my annual ventures in the whirlpool of wagering; but I have always been fond of horses for their own sake, and I looked forward as much to seeing a few of the best at close quarters as to meeting another member of the family. Having taken a room at the Rutland, I walked over to the Musters' place after lunch.

What a curious town it is, this capital of an industry that probably never should have come into existence, and the total elimination of which would certainly be a national blessing! Few English towns are so healthy. The wind from the Heath touches every cheek with bloom. But salubrity is not the only interest of the community; betting is in the air too, and I wondered, as I walked up the clean, broad street, with its shops and cinemas and (I should guess) heavily overworked post-office, how the populace's accounts balance at the end of each season. For where every other inhabitant is a little wizened man in riding-breeches there must be an embarrassment of 'information'.

My acquaintance with trainers began and ended with Tony Musters, so I am unable to say whether he was typical or not; but I guess not. The ordinary trainer's son, I take it, is educated in the stable rather than at Harrow, where this young man had been; and his saddle is, as a rule, more than lexicons. Possibly, had Tony been a midget, he might have been brought up differently; but being a big, heavy fellow, he was obviously not predestined to ride professionally, and therefore his father, who, I understand, was one of the finer, more independent, men in his strange calling, decided to make a gentleman of him instead. He had not anticipated that Tony would in time become a trainer too: it was another

and smaller son to whom he looked to succeed him; but the smaller son had been thrown and fatally injured, and Tony had given up other plans and stepped into the place with determination and was well known as one of the ablest and straightest of the younger school. It is humiliating to have to use the word 'straightest,' for it carries with it an implication; but that is no fault of mine. If I had my way, there should be no race that not did go to the swiftest; no race in which every jockey was not trying his best to win. But it is probably a very fortunate thing for the world that its control does not rest with me.

Of Tony I found myself, as an uncle, feeling rather proud—with a regret that Genevra had never permitted me to meet him before. Perhaps 'never permitted' is a little too strong, but any husband who may chance to read these lines will know what I mean when I amend it to 'had never encouraged a meeting'. Compromise is the breath of married life; and it is almost more important for a man to learn what his wife deprecates than what she applauds. The temperature of the hot water into which he is predestined periodically to plunge, will be lower if he disregards her enthusiasms than if he fails to share her antipathies.

Be that as it may—and I am not thinking any disloyalty to Genevra, whose most illogical whim I wish I still had the opportunity to respect and obey—I had never seen either Winnie or Tony until now; and I liked them both. They began by reproaching me for staying at the Rutland instead of under their roof; and they did it so heartily that I could not be anything but flattered, and flattery is an excellent introduction.

It was a very pleasant house too, with sunny rooms, and spaniels about one's feet. If I have to stumble over any living creature may it always be a spaniel, because spaniels are so divine in their forgiveness. Very few books did I see, but very many pictures—all of horses that had been trained by

one or other Musters and were qualified to sit for their portraits by having done the most gratifying thing that a horse can do—come in first. Beautiful slender creatures with famous names.

‘You’d like to see the stables?’ asked Mrs. Musters.

I said I would. Indeed, I almost added it was what I had come for, but checked myself in time.

‘But he must see our own fillies first,’ said her husband; and he went to the door and emitted a loud hunting cry which was answered shrilly from somewhere above, and then sounded a rush of pattering feet on the stairs and in burst two little girls, both woolly as Eskimos, with a mass of light curls under their caps.

On catching sight of me they turned to stone and their eyes became grave and questioning instead of merry and anticipatory.

‘This is your great-uncle,’ said their mother.

They examined me curiously, their expressions indicating disappointment with so poor a stature: some inches less, all over, than their father’s.

‘Say “How do you do?”’ their mother bade them; and they advanced solemnly and laid a tiny hand in mine and put the time-worn question; and once again I felt shame at the power of a stranger to freeze so much liveliness and fun.

However, we soon got on to friendlier terms, for I had been careful in Newmarket’s broad high street to step into a sweet shop. Phoebe Muir had forewarned me.

They told me that their names were Deb and Dinky, and one was six—Deb—and the other—Dinky—was five.

If they had been boys they would have been jockeys; even as it was, I was told, they intended to spend most of their lives on horseback.

They each had a Shetland pony to show me. Also they

each had a racehorse. I must come and see them at once; and so we all started for the stables, an Eskimo hauling at either of my hands.

The minuteness of the great-uncle was already forgiven.

My nephew had some dozen horses in active preparation and a few yearlings. The horses belonged to various owners; the yearlings were the property of himself, his wife, and his daughters. We passed from box to box in this most admirable establishment and the favourites of fortune were displayed to us. With every horse was a lad—it is a privileged word, for some of them were older than I—brushing, or combing, and all making that soothing, hissing immemorial sound which no clay-souled chauffeur has ever learned. Odd little creatures, these lads, with their bent legs and tight breeches and unmistakable equine-imity. Go where they would for the rest of their lives, dress as they would, not one of them, from the youngest to the oldest, could ever disguise his ancient calling or efface the stable mark. No brand is so indelible.

Tony exhibited the special points of his charges. 'Look at those shoulders!' he said.

'Look at that coat. You could see to shave in it.

'That's a son of Polymelus. He won at Doncaster last year. We're preparing him for the Lincoln.

'That's a filly by Charles O'Malley. She's in the Oaks. She's the prettiest thing ever. Aren't you, my beauty?' and he held her startled quiet head against his cheek.

'Look at those hind legs—There's speed for you! Feel her withers.' And he caressed her again.

'Aren't you sometimes jealous?' I asked Winnie.

'Almost,' she said.

The children knew all the horses' names and the names of the lads too—Jim and Ted and George and Bert. Nothing but my nervous grasp kept them from dashing in among the hoofs.

'This is mine,' said Deb (or was it Dinky?) when we came to the yearlings. 'I named it myself.'

'What is its name?' I asked.

'Velvety,' she said.

'And this is mine,' said Dinky (or was it Deb?). 'Mine is called Peter Rabbit. It's going to win the Derby. Daddy says so.'

I came away from Heath Edge with the conviction that there at any rate Genevra's money was not needed, and that there, at any rate for the time being, were marital affection and trust.

The Reverend Cyril Catt-Wilkins (*Mr. Ingleside*)

THEY were to stay, Leslie said, with some old friends of his at Wilmingham Rectory, a few miles out of Bungay. It was doubly convenient, for the rector's wife was Queen Elizabeth herself.

'Not that she is at all Elizabethan,' said Leslie, 'but we had to give her a good part, as she's rather influential and has guaranteed a large sum. I dare say she'll look all right in a red wig, but we're all sorry for the Earl of Essex. Her husband, the rector, is all for horses and dogs, but he's a trump, and you'll get through the week somehow. It's jolly good of you to go anyway.'

As it happened, the girls got on famously with Mr. Catt-Wilkins, who kept the church (in Sybil's words) 'so exquisitely in the background. How different from father!' she added, 'who loved revivalist services, but always came back so cross after them. He never seemed to care much for his family at any time, but the nearer he had been to heaven the more he disliked us. I suppose it's an awful shock after the excitement of feeling frightfully good and happy to

return to the same old wife and the same old children and the same old cooking.'

The Reverend Cyril Catt-Wilkins was a short and round man, clean-shaven and ruddy, who knew the Christian names of all his parishioners. To accompany him in his dogcart, as the girls did more than once, was to receive a liberal education in rural nomenclature.

'Morning, Tom. How's the mare?'

'Morning, Ben. We're ready for another of your cucumbers!'

'Morning, Sam. Missis better, I hope.'

'Morning, Fred. Sorry to hear your voice has cracked.'

As for his sermons, he had the good fortune to possess several MS. volumes of Sidney Smith's, which he had bought at Sotheby's years before, and these he turned and re-turned as usefully and thriftily as an old woman a good silk. He used to quote with much gusto the northern parson's post-burglary couplet:

They came and prigged my silver, my linen and my store,
But they couldn't prig my sermons: they had all been prigged before.

He hadn't a spiritual thought in his head; but he would sit up all night to assist the lying-in of a spaniel. He practised few virtues of abstention; but his burial services were Shakespearean in their humanity. He was not clever; but he was clever enough to be suspicious of cleverness. He lived out of the world, but watched it and knew how it wagged.

Sybil's frankness gave him immense pleasure, and they had many a bout of discussion. Like so many modern clergymen, he allowed her extraordinary latitude in her references to his calling; but he retained her respect.

'Personally,' he said one evening after she had been praising tolerance, 'I'm getting rather bored with breadth of mind. Breadth of mind nowadays seems to mean nothing

but looking for the humaner virtues among drunkards and atheists and ignoring them among parsons. It is time for someone to point out how much more difficult it is for a parson to be good than, for example, for a pugilist. A parson is always in the limelight: he has to wear a ridiculous collar that buttons at the back, which alone stamps him as pious; his clothes are black and forbiddingly cut—he has to go to Switzerland in August in order to wear anything comfortable; he is thrown continually among old and narrow-minded virgins whom he dare not offend since they possess the money which his church needs, and bit by bit, unless he is very careful or very careless, they sap away what his daily avocations have left of his mind. And so it comes to this, that when a parson is good, it is nothing: that's what he's there for; but when a pugilist is good, you wipe your eyes. "How beautiful! Such a sweet nature!" You ought logically to be just as much interested in a parson who had enough character to be wicked.'

Sibyl and the rector had also some passages over the vote, as indeed was inevitable.

'Well,' he said, on the first evening, 'I suppose all you young ladies are suffragettes.'

'I am,' said Sybil.

The rector laughed. 'And you want to vote, do you?' he pursued, warming to the old fray.

'Of course I do, if anyone does,' said Sybil. 'I don't if no one does. Wouldn't you want a vote if you hadn't got one and all the women had?'

'I suppose I should,' the rector admitted.

'Then why shouldn't we?'

'Well, you see,' said the rector, 'that's different. Legislature and politics and all that are a man's affair. They're natural to him. But it's not a woman's line of country at all.'

'What is a woman's line of country?' Sybil asked.

'What is it?' the rector replied, 'why, minding the house, of course, ordering a good dinner, cooking it, keeping the accounts, looking after the children.'

'Yes,' said Sybil, 'but suppose there aren't any children? Suppose it's a single woman, with no one's home to mind and a living to get just like a man, isn't she to have any say in her country's affairs?'

'Well, perhaps she might,' said the rector; 'but not the others. I'd keep it strictly to those who understood what politics meant. There should be some kind of examination.'

'But does every man that has the vote understand?' Sybil inquired sweetly.

The rector took refuge in facetiousness, the last infirmity of cowardly minds. 'What I always say,' he said, 'is that I will believe in women's suffrage when all women wear the same shaped hat.'

'That's a comic-paper joke,' said Sybil. 'I consider you beaten.'

'And these other ladies,' said the rector, 'I wonder what they think. You, Miss Ingleside?' he inquired, turning to Alison.

'I should like to have a home,' said Alison.

The rector beamed approval.

'Or,' she added, 'to be of some value in other people's homes.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the rector triumphantly.

'But please don't think that makes me any more right than Sybil,' said Alison. 'It's only what my own wish is.'

'It is the normal women,' said the rector, 'who carry on the business of life. The hand that rocks the cradle—ah! And you, Miss Ann?'

'I don't care a bit about politics,' said Ann, 'and I don't particularly about home. I like to be mixed up with the

affairs of life: but not in the least bad-temperedly. I like men, and I like them to do the business part of the country; but I think it's very sporting of Sybil to want to do it too.'

The rector laughed. 'You're too modern for me,' he said. 'Come and see the puppies.'

On Bellona's Hem, 1914

Allies to the End

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(December 1914)

WE were sitting in a little restaurant in the Gay City—which is not a gay city any more, but a city of dejection, a city that knows there is a war going on and not so long since could hear the guns. There are, however, corners where, for the moment, contentment or, at any rate, an interlude of mirth, is possible, and this little restaurant is one of them. Well, we were sitting there waiting for coffee, the room (for it was late) now empty save for the table behind me, where two elderly French bourgeois and a middle-aged woman were seated, when suddenly the occupant of the chair which backed into mine and had been backing into it so often during the evening that I had punctuated my eating with comments on other people's clumsy bulkiness—suddenly, as I say, this occupant, turning completely round, forced his face against mine and, cigarette in hand, asked me for a light. I could see nothing but face—a waste of plump ruddy face set deep between vast shoulders, a face garnished with grey beard and moustache, and sparkling moist eyes behind highly magnifying spectacles. Very few teeth and no hair. But the countenance as a whole radiated benignancy and enthusiasm; and one thing, at any rate, was clear, and that was that none of my resentment as to the restlessness of the chair had been telepathed.

Would I do him the honour of giving him a light? he asked, the face so close to mine that we were practically touching. I reached out for a match. Oh no, he said, not at all; he desired the privilege of taking the light from my cigarette, because I was an Englishman and it was an honour to meet

me, and—and—— ‘Vive l’Angleterre!’ This was all very strange and disturbing to me; but we live in stirring times, and nothing ever will be the same again. So I gave him the light quite calmly, not forgetting to say, ‘Vive la France!’ as I did so; whereupon he grasped my hand and thanked me fervently for the presence of the English army in his country, the credit for which I endeavoured fruitlessly to disclaim, and then all the members of each party stood up, bowed to each other severally and collectively, and resumed our own lives again.

But the incident had been so unexpected that I, at any rate, could not be quite normal just yet, for I could not understand why, out of four of us, all English, and one a member of the other sex so magnetic to Frenchmen, I should have been selected either as the most typical or the most likely to be cordial—I who only a week or so ago was told reflectively by a student of men, gazing steadfastly upon me, that my destiny must be to be more amused by other people than to amuse them. Especially, too, as earlier in the evening there had been two of our soldiers—real men—in khaki in the room. Yet there it was: I, a dreary civilian, had been carefully selected as the truest representative of Angleterre and all its bravery and chivalry, even to the risk of dislocation of the perilously short neck of the speaker.

It was therefore my turn to behave, and I whispered to the waiter to fill three more glasses with his excellent *Fine de la maison* (not the least remarkable in Paris) and place them on the next table, with our compliments. This he did, and the explosion of courtesy and felicitations that followed was terrific. It flung us all to our feet, bowing and smiling. We clinked glasses, each of us clinking six others; we said ‘Viva la France!’ and ‘Viva l’Angleterre.’ We tried to assume expressions consonant with the finest types of our respective nations. I felt everything that was noblest in the British character rushing to my cheeks; everything that was most

gallant and spirited in the French temperament suffused the face of my new friend, until I saw nothing for him but instant apoplexy. Meanwhile he grasped my hand in his, which was very puffy and warm, and again thanked me personally for all that 'ces braves Anglais' had done to save Paris and la belle France.

Down we all sat again, and I whispered to our party that perhaps this was enough and we had better creep away. But there was more in store. Before the bill could be made out—never a very swift matter at this house—I caught sight of a portent and knew the worst. I saw a waiter entering the room with a tray on which was a bottle of champagne and seven glasses. My heart sank, for if there is one thing I cannot do, it is to drink the sweet champagne so dear to the French bourgeois palate. And after the old *fin*, not before it! To the French mind these irregularities are nothing; but to me, to us . . .

There, however, it was, and, in a moment, the genial enthusiast was again on his feet. Would we not join them, he asked, in drinking a glass of champagne to the good health and success of the Allies? Of course we would. Instantly we were all standing again, all clinking glasses again, all again crying 'Vive la France!' 'Vive l'Angleterre!' to which we added, 'A bas les Boches!' all shaking hands and looking our best, exactly as before. But this time there was no following national segregation, but we sat down in three animated groups and talked as though a ban against social intercourse in operation for years had suddenly been lifted. The room buzzed. We were introduced one by one to Madame, who not only was my friend's wife, but, he told us proudly, helped in his business, whatever that might be; and Madame, on closer inspection, turned out to be one of the capable but somewhat hard French women of her class, with a suggestion somewhere about the mouth that she had doubts as to whether the champagne had been quite a

necessary expense—whether things had not gone well enough without it, and my contribution of fine were the fitting conclusion. Still, she made a brave show at cordiality. Then we were introduced to the other gentleman, Madame's cousin, who, we were told with pride, had a son at the Front; on hearing which, we shook hands with him again, and then gradually set about the task of disentanglement, and at last got into our coats and made our adieux.

When I had shaken his feather-bed hand for the last time my new friend gave me his card. It lies before me as I write, and I do not mean to part with it:

BAPTISTE GRIMAUD

DÉLÉGUÉ CANTONAL

9A PLACE GAMBETTA

Pompes Funèbres

Well, if ever I come to die in Paris I know who shall bury me. I would not let anyone else do it for the world. Warm hearts are not as common as all that!

The Marne after the Battle



IN the destruction of the Marne villages there was much caprice. This one is destroyed: that unharmed. This one, such as Revigny, which is, however, bigger than a village, is carefully divided into two halves, one left as it was and one ruined. Vitry-le-François, a large market town on the great canal that eventually joins the Rhine, was only looted; Sermaize-les-Bains, an inland watering-place, was almost totally destroyed. At Heiltz-le-Maurupt, partly no doubt to

show with what skill they could control their incendiarism, the Germans carefully isolated a Protestant chapel.

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Only one house, and that a large farm useful to the enemy, on the outskirts, remains at Vassincourt, a high-standing village where hard fighting occurred. Many were the killed, and the graves are so shallow that it is now far from sanitary. At the Café des Ruines, a mere shed which has sprung up, is pinned to the wall a piece of canvas: a relic of poor Pegoud's aeroplane sent to the proprietor by his soldier son. Another village almost wholly destroyed is Maurupt. And then, close by these, you find quiet villages that are as they were, except for a brooding anxiety. Here the Germans destroyed nothing, but merely took horses and food. In some cases, of course, the burning may have been disciplinary; in some cases the shelling was part of a genuine battle; but often enough the escape of one place and the destruction of another was due to mere differences of character in the enemy's commanding officers—this one being humane and that brutal, just as men may be in ordinary daily life.

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The churches have suffered very seriously, not without reason. Sometimes guns were mounted on them; often they were the scenes of bloody hand-to-hand conflict; while as coigns of observation their towers were naturally undesired by the invaders. There was therefore ground for their destruction. In many cases also they were as much hit by French as German shells, notably at Huiron, near Vitry-le-François, which stands, like so many Marne villages, on a high watershed. Huiron church is now just a husk. Over the door is a pretty sculptured saint, unharmed, as is so often the case in these church ruins. At Revigny the tower is

smashed and the bell lies in fragments on the floor, but enough of the edifice remains for worship.

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Here and there one picks up stories of privation and fortitude, true enough but almost past belief. In one high-standing village, now ruined, for instance, was a man who, at the approach of the Germans, hurried to the forest of the Argonne with his dog. There he hid for three days with nothing to eat, watching the sky glow red with the flames of his own and other villages, and hearing the incessant guns. Then he ate his dog. Three days later he returned. He looks just like other men.

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At Maurupt is a small boy who, wandering in a wood just after the battle of the Marne, came upon a wounded German. What did he do? What should he have done? What would you or I have done? I cannot say. But the small boy returned swiftly to his home, obtained a chopper, and, saying not a word to anyone, again sought the wood. . . . He is now a hero. If you go to Maurupt he will be pointed out to you.

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There are no young men in the villages; no men of middling age; only old men, women, girls, and children. The women do the work—drive the carts, control the harvesters, the mechanical reapers and binders (and the name of Pilter is probably better known than that of Poincaré in this district), milk, plough, sow. Were it not for the children, there would be no relief to the prevalent adult expression, which is sombre or resigned; and, indeed, acceptance of disaster may be said to be the new rural spirit, if the word spirit can be applied to such a negative state. September 6–12, 1914, left an ineradicable melancholy, so

swift was the onrush, so terrible the rage, so irreparable and gratuitous the injury.

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Is it to be wondered at that many of the old women confess to an upheaval of their faith? Why, they ask, should such calamity have come upon them? What had they done to deserve it? One old lady gives it out that she will trouble Joan of Arc, whose statue is in her village church, with prayers no more. 'She has abandoned us,' is her complaint.

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During the harvesting season regiments were sometimes billeted on villages for a month at a time, so that the soldiers might help in getting in the crops. For crops are needed not much less than the death of Germans. One of these soldiers was himself a farmer in the Midi. On his own distant farm were just two women, one very old, and his fields were lying idle with none to reap or carry. Meanwhile from dawn to dusk he harvested for a stranger.

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The ruins have a strangely foreign, un-French, appearance—due very largely to the chimney stacks which resisted the fire and for the most part still stand. They make the total effect one of a dead city of monoliths. Often no attempt has been made to remove any of the débris. Bedsteads twisted into odd shapes by the heat are very common objects. Bicycles similarly deformed are rarer, but one sees them, and almost always the isolated kitchen range, rusted and gaping but holding its own with a fine independence and determination is visible. It seems to say that whatever else the Germans may have done they could not break the indomitable spirit of the French cuisinier!

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Vitry-le-François, named after François I, must be one of the neatest provincial towns in the world. Built by a monarch of orderly mind though somewhat irregular habits (as one Diane de Poitiers could relate), it fulfils a rectangular plan. In the middle of it is a square; within that is a smaller square of lime trees whose branches have been severely cut into cubes; and in the middle of that is a fountain. From this fountain radiate the four principal streets.

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The fountain itself, rather daringly in such close proximity to the real article, represents the Marne, that great and beautiful and very green and now poignantly historic river on which Vitry is situated. And the symbol of the Marne is, naturally enough in France, a bronze lady: a feat of imagery which, since the stream can be seen only a few yards away, should have the effect of turning the youth of the town either into poets or, by way of protest, realists. It suggests also that some limit of distance from the fact should be set upon symbolic sculpture. There, however, she stands, this bronze lady, not much more motionless than—especially on Sundays and in the evening—stand the multitude of anglers on her river's actual banks. For Vitry-le-François fishes with a unanimity and application such as I never saw before. Everyone fishes: old women fish; young women; mothers with their children; girls; boys; elderly men; the barber with the strabismus who is so anxious to learn English; the tall man with one leg who manages his bicycle so cleverly: all fish. After five o'clock they are as sure to be by the river as the bronze lady is sure to be in the centre of the square. But, most of all, the soldiers fish. Vitry is packed with soldiers, and every one has a rod. When work is done they hold their rods over the river with a pacific content that for the moment reduces Guillaumism to a dream, a myth. But for that dread menace they would not be there in such numbers,

it is true, yet how can one fear the worst so long as they angle, these warriors, with such calm and intensity?

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No one, so far as I know, ever catches anything; but what of that? It is notorious that fishing and catching fish can be totally opposed pursuits. Nothing ever discourages or depresses the Vitry enthusiasts. They fish on; they smoke on; they exchange jests and hopes. The barber, with his white jacket and his ragged beard, who for the most part has one eye on his float and the other on the street whence would come running the boy who lathers the customers, may now and then examine his hook with a gesture of surprise, but he is not really concerned to find no fish squirming there. Similarly, at intervals, every soldier withdraws his line to replenish his bait or move his float; but they too are not down-hearted. I say float, for it is wholly that kind of fishing. No flies, no reels even; nothing but a rod, a piece of string, a float, two split shots, a hook, and some quite superfluous lure. A few more imaginative minds add a landing-net. I have sometimes wondered what would happen if a fish with a sense of fun did once permit itself to be drawn from the river. Would they run as from a sea-serpent? I imagine them, en masse, soldiers and civilians, old and young, stampeding from the banks. 'A fish! A fish!'

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Vitry has several inns, but only two that count, and one of these, the older and more stately looking, does not deserve to. It is ancient and mouldering, and nobody cares. You ring the bell, to no purpose. You ring again and again, and then discover that it is broken, has been broken for years. 'La sonnette est cassée,' you remark severely. 'Oui,' the patronne acquiesces, 'elle ne marche pas.' At this hotel

nothing marches. In the stables are no horses; in the coach-house is one omnibus with three wheels and one with two. Progress not only has passed it by but has not even glanced at it.

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Vitry has also several cafés, one of which, by the canal towpath, where the weary horses plod, bravely calls itself the 'Café de Navigation'. As for the others, they are of the regular pattern—'de Commerce', 'de Paris', and so forth. It also has many shops, for it is a centre of an agricultural district, and farmers and farmers' wives—chiefly farmers' wives nowadays—rely upon it for the necessities of life. And mention of the shops reminds me of an experience in Vitry which I shall ever cherish, for I too, finding myself one day in want of a necessity of life, entered the chief ironmonger's and laid my need before the assistant. A corkscrew? Assuredly. He had all kinds. He displayed first one and then another, remarking that the second was 'plus sérieux'. It was, of course, the more serious corkscrew that I bought. 'Great sensible land of France,' I said to myself, as I bore away this precious purchase, 'where the words "serious" and "corkscrew" can be so naturally allied!' For the rest of my life corkscrews will fall into the two divisions—serious and the reverse.

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Like all provincial towns, Vitry has its share of clubs. I made a list of them for sheer pleasure in reading their friendly names. Here are some: Les Disciples de Progrès; Véloce Club Vitryat; Société des Combattants de 1870-1; Société des Sciences et des Arts; Les Fraternelles anciens Sous-officiers; Jeunesse Républicaine Vitryate; and Société des Vétérans de Terre et de Mer. Can you not see them on Club nights? The animation of it all: the jokes, the laughter. I should like to peep in at the Combattants of 1870-1: white-moustached old fellows, some with only one arm or leg.

And the veterans of the earth and the sea should be worth a visit.

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The Germans overflowed Vitry early in the war. The Mayor and Corporation fled, but the curé, a venerable and imposing white-haired figure, remained. I heard him tell the story in a sermon to the militaires, and it lost nothing in his rhetoric. The town would have been burnt but for the vast numbers of German wounded in it. A certain amount of looting was done, but not much. The Vitry people on the whole do not give the Huns such a bad character.

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It was at this special service in Vitry's great church that I felt the power of music as never before. Suddenly the first notes of a solo were heard in a tender, vibrant tenor. They broke on the ear without warning and came from I knew not where, but by moving my place—I was leaning against a pillar—I saw, high up, in the organ loft, the singer, a French soldier in khaki. He sang not only exquisitely but so movingly that it was almost pain, and yet such pain as one would not forgo. Hoping it might go on for ever one trembled lest each note was the last. It was so beautiful that one feared to meet any other eye. . . . A little later he sang again. The first solo was a psalm, set to some wistful cadences; the second was a hymn, a long hymn enumerating the mercies of the Lord. Each verse began with the words 'Souvenez-vous?' Did we remember? the singer asked us, in tones so gentle, so beseeching, and yet so rich that they touched chords that I did not know were hidden in me; and again the beauty of it was almost too much to bear. For the first time I realized that the voice is also an instrument. . . . Half the church was in tears. We heard later that the singer was a famous operatic star mobilisé.

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All relics of the fighting have to be taken to the nearest mairies by order of the Prefect of the Marne; but it is a rule that is not too slavishly obeyed. The Mayor of Étrepy showed me many curiosities, including a vessel used by the Germans in gassing. After the enemy had passed and done their worst, great quantities of their inflammable gelatine disks were found here and flung into the neighbouring river Sault. They are square, the size of a quarter postage stamp, and as thick as sixpence. First, soldiers would pass down the streets flinging bombs through the windows, and then others would follow to throw in handfuls of these little fiendish squares to complete the conflagration. The Mayor led me to a field behind his new home and showed me the gun positions, and also a great black circle in the grass, covered with cinders. These, he said, were the remains of a funeral pyre of German bodies over which pitch was poured, there being no time to bury them. It is strange to hold in one's hand a piece of this slag—concentrated residuum of I know not how many of the foe.

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In a wooden hut erected by the Friends lives an old woman to whose house came three huge and terrible Germans demanding food. They took all she had, chiefly potatoes; but even as they did so all three were killed. She now sits hour after hour at her door and sews; while under the potato patch in her little garden those three Germans lie.

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During the summer of 1915 great supplies of crosses were prepared for the graves of the fallen, both French and German, in the department of the Marne. The German graves are marked by a railing and cross of silver birch, with the dead man's number affixed. The French graves have a more enduring painted wooden railing, a cross, and the

tricolor. Often the poor fellow's képi is there too, and sometimes his coat and boots. When the grave is near habitations—and that means near a village, for there are no isolated houses—it often has flowers placed on it. The graves occur in the oddest places: in the midst of fields—more than once I saw the tricolor just visible among the ripening corn—beside the road, in front gardens and back. At Pargny, for example, there are several graves in a garden close to the railway, and just behind a neighbouring château three Germans lie, two named and one unidentified, but all commended to God's mercy. The château was closed, and one wonders if on the owner's return these graves will be removed.

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In a mass of outbuildings which I visit—stables and lofts, dairy, wash-house and coach-house, now empty, but occupied by the Germans during the battle of the Marne for a night or so, and by many French regiments on their way to the Front since then—are a series of five little rooms, probably originally meant for grooms. Here at one time, for a rather longer period than usual, a group of French officers lived. Their names are on the walls, together with some of their portraits in silhouette (made by throwing the shadow of the profile with a candle, pencilling round the edges, and then blacking it all in), verses, mottoes, sentiments, such as 'Vivent les femmes, le vin, et le tabac!' and a number of high-spirited drawings which, in the words of a curé who was with me, are distinctly 'pas propres' and ought never to have met his virginal eyes. One of the poems enumerates the many gifts of a young officer of Zouaves, a very Admirable Crichton. His name is given. And when one reaches the end where the poet's signature is, behold the hero and his eulogist are one! Another is a savage attack by an assassin, in the manner of Aristide Bruant, on the judges of France. It would be interesting to know if the confessions in this

strange doggerel were really autobiographical. There are enough to guillotine him.

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I was present in one village on the night that marching orders had come to the regiment which had been billeted there for some weeks. They were from the Midi, and spoke mostly the guttural French that one hears in Toulouse and Marseilles. The village street, the usual alternation of white cottages and farm-houses, was pitch dark save for the glimmering of light from a window here and there; and as it was full of wagons all ready for departure at daybreak, walking there was dangerous. Songs came from this room and that: ditties familiar to all, for all were sung in rich unison. Whenever a lull came one heard the low whispered tones of farewells in the darker corners. How many broken hearts these careless, homeless fighting-men leave behind them, who shall say? For they carry their facile affections from village to village as they steadily draw nearer and nearer to the Real Thing.

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In the hotel at Vitry was a French officer's fiancée, blonde and triste. He joined her at the table d'hôte, where they used to make plans, not with too much confidence: a little wistfully, and as though the gods might overhear. 'Après la guerre,' she would say, time and again, and he echoed it: 'Après la guerre!' This phrase is the burden of conversation all over the country, from Calais to the Pyrenees, from Ushant to Marseilles—'Après la guerre!' Then what things will be done! For those who do not look too deeply or take long views, all that is joyful and perfect is summed up in these words, 'Après la guerre!'

Laughter in the Trenches



THE careless facetiousness of the British soldier in the fighting line of the present war is the wonder of the world. Where does he get this spirit? we ask. How comes it that, even there, jokes are so ready to his tongue? How can so much of this terrible business lend itself to jest? The complete answer would require a psychological memoir of great length, and no doubt we should in the course of it alight upon the fact that irony is allied to courage, or, at any rate, is one of the best protections against a too vivid perception of fact, and, collectively, an admirable means of concealing deeper feelings. But it is not the British soldier's use of humour as a sustaining influence in which I am at the moment interested, but his general day and night delight in it. This not only is new, but very curious.

For the best rapid idea of the persistent levity that I mean, one must go perhaps to the drawings of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, collected in a book entitled *Fragments from France*. Here may be seen two score and more diverting pictures of Mr. Atkins at the Front informed by a sardonic laughing philosophy. The horrors of war are by no means lacking. Indeed, but for those horrors we should not have these jokes: the relation is intimate. No historian of the war who takes any account of the psychology of the New Army can afford to neglect Captain Bairnsfather's work. And it certainly reveals the value of irony as a prop in hard times. Without that buckler no trench fighter is fully armed.

What is the cause of this levity in this most cruel and terrible of campaigns? To a large extent fashion. Human nature, it is true, does not change, but human veneers change very often; and no doubt there is a fashion for facetiousness to-day that did not exist a few years ago. They had their

jesters then, of course, but the joke was not essential; it was not yet crowned. To-day everyone is funny, or would like to be funny. It is a kind of national duty. To-day the German trenches are given comic names, and bayonet charges towards them, which are to end in the bloodiest and most dreaded kind of warfare, are dashed into to such battle-cries as 'Early doors, sixpence!'—a significant enough form of words, for it is largely through the music-hall and theatre that this prevailing and far from undesirable tendency to jest has grown and spread. Were I lecturing upon the two Georges—Mr. George Graves, with his grotesque epithet or simile for every incident of life; and Mr. George Robey, with his discoveries of the humour that lurks in seaminess—I should say that they are prime movers in this mode. Without them and what they stand for there would not exist half the raillery that now enlivens and heartens the army.

But there is still another reason for the levity of our men in this war; and that is the foe himself. Implacable and unscrupulous as the enemy has been, the German quâ German yet remains a comic figure to the mind of the English rank and file soldier, who is, one has to remember, very largely either the man in the street or the man in the village. To him the broad idea of the German, familiar, though not much considered, for years, is a quaint foreigner, often in too sharp competition with Englishmen, who shaves his head, usually wears spectacles, has an outlandish speech, is often too fat and always too alien; while it is notorious that he lives on sausages and that they are made of dachshunds. Probably the inseparable association of the sausage with Germany would alone have served to render the German a figure pour rire in the eyes of the unexamining, for, as has been often enough pointed out, it is sufficient to mention this article of diet to any English music-hall audience to have them in fits of laughter. Why, no one has ever wholly understood. For the comedian to say 'kipper' is to partake

of much of the same triumph, but not all. The sausage comes first, and the German, no matter what the rest of his activities may be, or how dreadful, is a sausage-eater or even sausage-worshipper.

Such, then, is the preconception, however erroneous, and it is so firmly fixed that not even the horrors of war can wholly exclude a certain amusement at the notion of this figure, indefinitely multiplied and clad in uniform, constituting the other side.

So much for those of our soldiers who had never met a German. There remain those that had, and here again was nothing to provoke anticipatory gloom, for the Germans visible and tangible to the man in the street and the man in the village are Germans who have shaved them, or fed them, or done them out of jobs; and none of them, despite their efficiency, were ridicule proof. There was something comic in the idea of an enemy consisting of this expatriated parasitical type of warrior. It made the campaign wear a farcical look. I do not suggest that there have not been very serious awakenings and realizations to the contrary, but the preconception gave the note and it has persisted. Moreover, when it is remembered that the British soldier is more ready to be amused than to be frightened, it will be seen that even the Germans themselves have contributed not a little to this risibility since the war began. That they devastated Belgium is true, but the deed carried its penalty with it in the name Hun, and to Mr. Atkins' whimsical mind such a word as that, and especially without the aspirate, is meat and drink. An enemy who, whatever his deadly purposefulness, can be characterized as 'uns is bound to attract banter. Then, again, there was the French soldier's word for him, also very sympathetic to the British sense of fun—Boche. The finer types of foe could never be called either 'un or Bosh; and when an 'ymn of 'ate is added there is no more to be said. In short, whatever the Germans have done, they have left

a loophole, a joint in the armour, for the satirist to penetrate, and satire was never more general in England than now.

If one doubts that the alleged character and physical conformation of the enemy is in any way responsible for so much jestingness in our men, one has but to conjecture what would be the case were we fighting someone else. Did our men, for example, exhibit during the Crimean War anything approaching the sardonic mirthfulness of their present attitude? I can find no evidence that they did. And is it likely, were the Russians of to-day our foes instead of our friends, that our men would fight them laughing as they are so ready to laugh now? I think not, for the Russian is certainly not a figure of fun to the English mind. The mass of us know almost nothing about him, but what we do know, or think we know, is very serious.

Or against the French, should we be so light-hearted, so ready with hilarity? I think not. The Frenchman, once a target for English ridicule, has long ceased to be so. To this generation the term 'Froggy' is hardly known. Moreover, the French, when it comes to warfare, have a tradition that carries a very impressive weight. They may have been beaten by the Germans in 1870, but Napoleon is still a gigantic idea, and atavistically we may yet be conscious of the Boney scares. Anyway, I hold that whatever preconception the man in the street and the man in the village may have fostered with regard to the French, there was no element of contempt in it. One reason for this I have given, and the other is that Frenchmen are rare in England, and when they are met they are not antipathetic enough for any very distinct preconception to have been formed, and certainly not one of disdain. It is the admirable nature of the French to wish to leave France as little as they can, and, once away, to wish quickly to be back again, and with such a nostalgia always present, they are concerned to take away no Englishman's livelihood. To the Frenchman there is no home but the country which

it is foolishly customary to accuse of lacking a word for that sacred haven; whereas many Germans who bleat tearfully of their Fatherland are never happy until they substitute foreign soil for it.

A First Communion in the War Zone



EVERYONE who has made a stay in Paris or in any French town, and has been at all observant, must have noticed, either singly or in little groups, that prettiest of the flora and fauna of Roman Catholic countries, a 'first communicant' in her radiant and spotless attire—from white shoes to white veil, and crown of innocence over all. One sees them usually after the ceremony, soberly marching through the streets, or flitting from this friend to that like runaway lilies. Prinking and preening a little in the shop windows, too; and no wonder, for it is something to be thus clad and thus important; and never will such clothes be worn by these wearers again. Meanwhile the younger children envy, and little attendant bodies of proud relations somewhere in the vicinity admire and exult.

If I write as if all 'first communicants' are little girls, it is because it is the little girls who are the most noticeable. And who cares about little boys anyway? Yet boys communicate too, and in their broad white collars and with their knots of white ribbon they may also be seen, although less frankly delighted; indeed, often a little self-conscious and ashamed. But the little girls, who know instinctively that women are the backbone of the Roman Catholic Church, they are natural and full of happy pride; they carry it off with style.

In the spring of 1915 it was my fortune not only to know personally a bouquet of these eager little French pietists, but

to be present as one of the congregation at the great event—their *première communion*. It was not in Paris, nor in a town at all, but far away in the country, in a village where the guns of Verdun could be heard in the lulls of the service. There were six little girls in all, and I saw them pass into the safe keeping of their new mother, the Church of Rome, and in visible token receive from the officiating hands a pictorial certificate so chromatically violent that it could not but satisfy any childish eyes and, under such conditions of emotional excitement, must ever remain as a symbol of their consecration. I heard, too, the curé's address to these lambs, in which he briefly outlined the life and character of Christ and of certain of the disciples, coming to each with much the same tender precision and ecstasy as a fastidious and enthusiastic collector to the choicest porcelain.

But what chiefly interested me was the form of the vow which the good curé—one of the best of men, who, in September 1914, saw his church reduced to ruins and most of his parish destroyed by fire by the invading Huns, and never budged from his post—had himself recently drawn up for such occasions. What the usual form of such documents is I cannot say, but in view of the serious plight of France and the renaissance of patriotic fervour in the brave and unconquerable French nation, the curé had infused into this one an element of public duty hitherto omitted.

At the end of the 'jolie cérémonie', as in conversation he called it, and as it truly was, I asked him for a copy of this admirable catechism, and here are a few of its questions and answers. The title is 'A Promise to be a good Christian and a good Citizen of France':

Q. What is the road to Heaven?

A. That which my mother, the Holy Roman Church, shows me. If I follow it, I am convinced that, while gaining happiness for myself, I shall increase the glory of my family and the honour of my country.

Q. Does the Church command you to obey the legitimate laws of your country?

A. Yes; and I must be ready, if needful, to give my blood for her. (Poor little white peacocks!)

Q. On whom do you count to assist you?

A. Here, on earth, on my parents and on my instructors. Above, on God, on the angels and the saints, and principally on my guardian angel, on the holy Saint Peter, and on the blessed Joan of Arc.

Q. Who are your enemies?

A. The enemies of France, and those who, all unenlightened, attack the Church.

Q. What is your ambition?

A. To see France victorious and united in a bond of love with the Church, to see her add to her tricolour the Image of the Sacred Heart, and to see her take soon her place at the head of the nations.

Is not that rather fine? It must be to the good thus to blend religion and patriotism. I know that, especially on that soil over which the Germans had spread so devastatingly, one could not listen to these fresh young voices raised together in such idealism without a quickened heart.

A Revel in Gambogia



THERE are certain ebullitions of frivolity about which, during the war, one has felt far from comfortable. To read reports of them, side by side with the various 'grave warnings' which everyone has been uttering, is to be almost too vividly reminded of England's capacity for divided action. But there are also others; and chief among these I should set the fancy-dress carnival of munition-workers at which I was privileged to be present one Saturday night. Here was necessary frivolity, if you like, for these myriad girls worked

like slaves all the week, day and night, and many of them on Sunday too—and ‘National filling’, as their particular task is called, is no joke either—and it was splendid to see them flinging themselves into the fun of this rare careless evening.

Fancy dress being the rule, it was only right and proper that there should be prizes for the best costumes; and since the lady who shed her beneficence over this prismatic throng does nothing by halves, she had called in the assistance of two artists to adjudicate. I will not make public their names; that would be to overstep the boundaries of decorum and turn this book into sheer journalism. But I will say that one of them is equally renowned to Chelsea for his distinguished brushwork and his wit; and that the other’s extravaganzas cheer a million breakfast-tables daily. How I, who am not an artist, and so little of a costumier that I did not even wear evening dress, got into this *galère* is the mystery. I can explain it only by a habit of good fortune, for I chanced to be in the studio of the Chelsea artist at the moment when the beneficent lady arrived to put her request to him, and, noticing my pathetic look, she in her great kindness included me in the invitation.

Deciding on the best costume when there are many hundreds of them, and they pass before the dazzled eye in a swift procession of couples, is not easy; and only very remarkable men could perform the task. Women might find it easier, because they would not be influenced, as one of our judges obviously was, by the external claims of personal beauty. A woman would look at the costume and nothing else, make her notes with scientific precision, and prepare for the next. But when the competitors are all—or almost all—girls, and most of them pretty and all jolly, why, how can you expect impartiality, especially in artists, and at any rate without a struggle? But in spite of the difficulties set up by the impact of so much charm upon the emotional

susceptibilities of at any rate one judge, the process of selecting a first, second, and third was accomplished with, I should say—speaking as a calm, detached spectator, with all my feelings well under control—absolute equity.

The first prize went to a slender lady of whose features I can say nothing because I never saw them, her Eastern costume including a veil that covered her face. But it seemed to these not too discerning eyes that she was otherwise of an attractive shapeliness. As to her, the judges were unanimous; but when it came to the second they were divided. The Chelsea judge, again swayed by passion, and possibly recalling old triumphs in his Latin Quarter days, preferred a French costume; the other was firm for an Indian. What would have happened I dare not think, for each was a powerful and determined man, ready to stick at nothing, had I not, in my cool-headedness, been inspired to suggest tossing up for it, and the result was that, the coin showing heads, the Indian won, and the French costume naturally took the third prize. There were then two prizes to be awarded for the most original costumes, the previous ones having been for the prettiest costumes, and here the winner was a jovial lady who with her own hands had transformed herself into an advertisement for a certain soup powder.

The iron laws of etiquette (or is it finance?) which so cramp the style of any writer who refers to advertisements forbid me to state what particular soup powder this was; but according to the hoardings, the way in which a pennyworth will nourish and rejoice the human frame is, as the Americans say, something fierce. If the applause of the company was a guide, this prizewinner is a very popular figure among our 'National fillers'. The second prize went to a very ingenious costume called 'Tommy's Parcel', consisting of most things that a soldier likes to receive, and so thorough in design as to comprise, tied to the lady's shoes, two packets of a harmful necessary powder without a copious sprinkling

of which no trench is really like home. If the approving glances at 'Tommy's Parcel' from a young officer who was at my side are any indication, there are few of our warriors who would not welcome it with open arms.

And then—the prizes all awarded—all these nice girls, on whose activities England has been so largely depending for safety, set again to partners.

But why, you ask, Gambogia? I thought you would want to know that. It is because in the making of munitions at the factory from which these girls all come there are certain chemicals which have the effect of turning the skin yellow. And among these merry revellers were some thus—but, I hope and believe, only temporarily—disfigured. The cheerfulness with which they are prepared to run these risks, not to mention others more perilous but less menacing to personal vanity, is not the least of the finenesses of character which the war has brought out; and the thought of that and of their hard work and their gay courage made the spectacle of the happy high spirits of this evening of playtime even more a satisfaction.

The Triumphant Progress



THERE are few phases of the War—subsidiary phases, side-issues, marginalia—more interesting, I think, than the return of the natives: the triumphant progress, through their old haunts and among their old friends, of the youths, recently civilians, but now tried and tested warriors: lately so suburban and hesitating and immature, but now so seasoned and confident and of the world. And particularly I have in mind the return of the soldier to his house of business, and his triumphant progress through the various departments, gathering admiration and homage and even

wonder. I am not sure that wonder does not come first, so striking can the metamorphosis be.

When he left he was often only a boy. Very likely rather a young terror in his way: shy before elders, but a desperate wag with his contemporaries. He had a habit of whistling during office hours; he took too long for dinner, and was much given to descending the stairs four at a time and shaking the premises, blurring the copying-book and under-stamping the letters. When sent to the bank, a few yards distant, he was absent for an hour. Cigarettes and late hours may have given him a touch of pastiness.

To-day, what a change! Tall, well-set-up, and bronzed, he is a model of health and strength. His eyes meet all our eyes frankly; he had done nothing to be ashamed of: there is no unposted letter in his pocket, in his head no consciousness of a muddled telephone message. To be on the dreaded carpet of the manager's room was once an ordeal; to-day he can drop tobacco-ash on it and turn never a hair.

Oh yes, he says, he has been under fire. Knows it backwards. Knows the difference in sound between all the shells. So far he's been very lucky, but, heavens, the pals he's lost! Terrible things happen, but one gets numbed—apathetic, you know.

What does it feel like to go over the top? The first time it's a rotten feeling, but you get used to that too. War teaches you what you can get used to, by George it does! He wouldn't have believed it, but there——

And so on. All coming quite naturally and simply; no boasting, and no false modesty.

This is his first leave since he went to France, and he thought he must come to see the firm first of all. Sad about poor old Parkins, wasn't it? Killed directly. And Smithers's leg—that was bad too. Rum to see such a lot of girls all over the place, doing the boys' jobs. Well, well, it's a strange

world, and who would have thought all this was going to happen? . . .

Such is his conversation on the carpet. In the great clerks' room, where there are now so many girls, he is a shade more of a dog. The brave, you know, can't be wholly unconscious of the fair, and as one passes through one catches the same words, but spoken with a slightly more heroic ring.

'Lord, yes, you get used even to going over the top. A rotten feeling the first time, but you get used to it. That's one of the rum things about war, it teaches you what you can get used to. You get apathetic, you know. That's the word—apathetic: used to anything. Standing for hours in water up to your knees. Sleeping among rats.' (Here some pretty feminine squeals.) 'It is a fact,' he swears to them. 'Rats running over you half the night, and now and then a shell bursting close by.'

Standing at his own old desk as he talks, he looks even taller and stronger than before—by way of contrast, I suppose, and many of his listeners are wondering if he will ever be able to bring himself to resume it.

Having occasion, a little while later, to go downstairs among the warehousemen, where female labour has not yet penetrated, one hears him again, and notices that his language has become more free. Safely underground he extends himself a little.

'Over the top?' he is saying. 'Yes, three blinking times. What does it feel like the first time? Well——' and he tells them how it feels, in a way that must not be reproduced here, but vivid as lightning compared with his upstairs manner. And still he remains the clean forthright youth who sees his duty a dead sure thing, and does it, even though he may be perplexed now and then.

'So long!' they say, old men-friends and new girl-acquaintances crowding round him as at last he tears himself away. 'So long!' they say. 'Take care of yourself.'

'You bet!' he replies. 'But the question is, Shall I be allowed to? What price the Hun?' And with a 'So long, all!' he is gone.

All over London, in the big towns all over Great Britain, are these triumphant progresses going on.

Rivalry



WHEN I sat down on the seat facing the Row there was already on it a soldier in the familiar blue clothes. He had the red moustache which inevitably leads to the nickname of 'Ginger,' or possibly 'Carrots', and he was smoking a cigarette. By his side were his crutches. After a minute or so a very tall figure, also in blue, hobbled towards us and took the space between Ginger and myself.

The freemasonry of arms has, I suppose, always, among rankers, made any introduction needless; but there has unhappily come in a new and a super freemasonry which goes beyond anything that uniform can do. I mean the freemasonry of mutilation. By reason of their wounds these strangers were as brothers.

At first they talked hospitals. Then regiments. Then Haig, of whom it has so finely and finally been said, by another British hero: "Aig 'e don't say much; 'e don't, so to say, say nothin'; but what 'e don't say don't mean nothin', not 'arf. But when 'e do say something—my Gawd!" Then they came to grips and mentioned the cause of their injuries—bullet or shrapnel. Then the time and the place. Both had been hit in the knee, and this coincidence, operating like all coincidences, added to their friendliness. Their cigarettes finishing simultaneously, Ginger gave Six-foot-two one of his, and Six-foot-two offered his little packet to Ginger in exchange.

'Do you often come here?' Ginger asked.

'Every fine day,' said Six-foot-two, 'unless there's a ride in a brake or a free matinee on the tappy.'

'I must look you up again,' said Ginger.

'Do,' said Six-foot-two. 'When do you expect to leave?'

'I can't say,' replied Ginger. 'There's no knowing. You see mine's a very extraordinary case.' He smiled complacently.

'That's funny. So's mine,' said Six-foot-two.

'How do you mean—extraordinary?' the other asked a little sharply.

'Why, the doctors have had so much difficulty with it. It's a unique, they say. How many operations did you have?'

'How many did you have?' Ginger replied, with the caution of the challenged.

'Go on—I asked you first,' said Six-foot-two. 'Was it more than eight, anyway?'

'It was ten,' said Ginger.

'Well, I had eleven,' said Six-foot-two proudly. 'They went after those bullets eleven times. But they're all out now. I had every doctor in the place round me.'

'So did I,' said Ginger, 'and one of my bullets isn't out yet. It's right in the bone. They're going to try again soon.' He had quite recovered his good-humour.

'What about your patella?' Six-foot-two inquired after a pause.

'My what?'

'Your patella. Do you mean to say the doctors didn't talk about that?'

'I dare say they may have done, but I don't remember. Still, *our* doctors don't talk much—they act.'

'Well, so do ours. There aren't better doctors in the world than at our place, I can tell you. It's common knowledge. Why, Sir Rashleigh Hewitt is there every day—the great Sir Rashleigh Hewitt, the King's doctor.'

'Well, the King has more than one. Sir Frank Carver is another, and he's at our place day and night. He's a masterpiece.'

'I've always understood,' said Six-foot-two, 'that Sir Rashleigh is at the very head of his profession. The nurses say so.'

'He may be for some things,' Ginger conceded. 'But not the knee. Sir Frank Carver is the crack knee man. Now if you'd been at our place I dare say that one operation would have been enough for you.'

'Enough? What rot! How could it be enough, with all the complications? I tell you it's a unique, my case.'

'Yes, it may be. But what I'm getting at is that it might not be if you'd had Sir Frank Carver, the great knee specialist, at it at once.'

'Oh, give Sir Frank Carver a rest. Sir Rashleigh Hewitt's good enough for me and for anyone else who knows.'

'All right,' said Ginger. 'Keep your hair on!'

'My hair's on right enough,' said Six-foot-two. 'It's you who are getting ratty.'

There was a pause, and both lighted new cigarettes, each taking one of his own.

'What puzzles me,' Six-foot-two began slowly, 'is no one saying anything about your patella. That's the great marvel of my case—my patella. It's full of holes, like a sieve. There's never been one like it before. The profession's wild about it. That's what makes me so interesting to them.'

'Where is it, anyway?' Ginger snapped out.

'In the knee, of course.'

'In the knee! Well, if it's in the knee mine must be full of holes too. I've got everything you can have in the knee, I tell you. Everything.'

'Have they written anything about you in the papers?' Six-foot-two asked. 'No. Ah,' he went on triumphantly, 'they have about me. There's a medical paper with a piece

in it all about my patella. I sent it home and they've framed it. It's the most astonishing thing in surgery that I should be able to be walking about at all.'

'That's what they tell *me*,' Ginger replied. 'But, anyhow, your bullets are all out. I've got another one yet, and by the time that's out I dare say I shall have had twenty operations and a whole column in the papers. But as for articles in papers, they're nothing. Have you got your X-ray photograph?'

'No,' Six-foot-two admitted.

'They gave me mine,' said Ginger. 'I sent it home. It's over the mantelpiece, my mother says. People come from miles to look at it. It's a pity you didn't get yours. That was foolish of you, if I may say so. Well, so long. I'm having tea to-day with one of our grand lady visitors in Rutland Gate. If you don't see me here when you come again, the chances are I shall be having my next operation. So long!'

'So long!' said Six-foot-two.

Ginger on his crutches moved away.

'Extraordinary,' Six-foot-two murmured, either to me or to himself or to the Park at large, 'how some blokes always want to be the most important things in the world.'

Repentance



AT the unusual sound of cheering in a London street—at so undemonstrative an hour as 9.15 a.m.—I turned and stopped. Down Charing Cross Road came three taxis, each containing many bags and many young men—certainly seven young men in each, packed high and low—and each containing two or more of that beautiful red, white, and green flag which flutters so gaily and bravely over public buildings in Rome and Florence and Turin, in Venice,

Verona, and Milan, and on festa days (which seem to come seven times a week) in all the villages of the loveliest land on earth.

The young men waved and shouted, and shamefaced London which has never yet cheered its own soldiers through the street, shouted back. For these were young Italians on their way to Italy, and there is something about a foreigner hastening home to fight for his country that would seem to be vastly more splendid than the sight of our own compatriots leaving home for the same purpose. So oddly are we English made.

Still, these young fellows were so jolly and eager, and, even in the moment of time permitted by their sudden apparition, it was so possible to envisage war's horrors in front of them, that no wonder there was this unwonted enthusiasm in the Charing Cross Road at 9.15 a.m. Besides Italy had been a long time coming in . . .

A block brought the taxis to a standstill just by me, and I was conscious of something familiar about the youth in grey on the very summit of the first. He had perched himself on the fixed fore-part of the cab, and knelt there waving a straw hat in one hand and his country's flag in the other. And suddenly, although his face was all aglow and his mouth twisted by his clamour, I recognized him as a waiter at the—well, at a well-known restaurant, whose stupidity had given me from day to day much cause for irritation and to whom I had again and again been, I fear, exceedingly unpleasant. Less than a week before I had been more than usually sharp. And now I found myself trying to catch his eye and throw into my recognition of him not only admiration but even affection—a look that would convince him instantly that I wished every impatient word unsaid. But he was too excited to see anything in particular. His gaze was for the London that he had lived in and was now leaving, and for that London as a whole; and his thoughts were on his native land and the

larger life before him. He had, very rightly, at the moment no eyes for one of those impatient, unreasonable, and bad-tempered Englishmen known as customers.

In a few moments off they all went again, and with them went my thoughts—to their beautiful land of sunshine and lizards, of blue skies and lovely decay and absurd gesticulating men with hearts of gold. With them went my envy too, for it must be wonderful to be young and able to give up carrying plates and strike a blow for one's country.

Since then I have found myself saying to myself, I don't know how many times, 'I wish he had seen me.'

Personal Sketches

A Morning Call



THE card of invitation—for which I have to confess that, like a true social climber, I had to some extent angled—came at last, stating that my visit would be expected on the following day at noon precisely, and that evening dress was to be worn. As I did not receive it until late at night, and as some medals had to be bought and a carriage and pair hired, I was busy enough after breakfast. The medals were for distribution afterwards among certain intimates, and the carriage and pair was to convey my friend and me to the reception, because we wished to enter at the gate of honour, and if you would do this you must have two horses. A single horse, and you are deposited at an inferior door and have a long walk.

It was to one of the most famous buildings in the world that we were going—possibly the most famous—and the horses' hoofs had a brave resonance (not wholly to be dissociated from thoughts of Dumas) as they clattered swiftly over the stones, beneath archways, past sentries, and through spacious and venerable courtyards, to the foot of the famous stairway. After ascending to an ante-room, where colossal guards scrutinized us and splendid lackeys took our hats, we were shown into the reception-room, in the doorway of which an elderly gentleman in black with a black bag was talking with such animation to a major-domo that we had to interrupt them in order to pass.

In this reception-room, an apartment of some splendour, in which we were to meet our host, sufficient guests had already assembled to occupy most of the wall space—for that is how we were placed, in four lines with our backs to the

walls. There were about ninety in all, I calculated, of which many were priests and nuns and many were women, a few youths, a few girls, and a very few civilian men. It needed only the swiftest glance to discern that my friend and I were the only ones who had complied with the regulation about evening dress. This, naturally, greatly increased our comfort, since we became at once the cynosure (as the learned would say) of every eye. In the centre of the room was a little knot of officials, including four or five soldiers, all chatting in low tones and occasionally glancing through the door opposite that by which we had entered, which gave upon a long corridor. So for some twenty minutes we waited, nervous and whispering, when suddenly the officials stiffened, the soldiers hurriedly fetched their rifles from the far corner (a proceeding not without humour when one considers all things), and the whole ninety of us sank on our knees as a little quick, dark man, dressed in white, entered the room.

To be on one's knees, in evening dress, at twenty past twelve in the day, facing a row of people, across a vast expanse of carpet, similarly kneeling, and being also a little self-conscious and hungry, is not conducive to minute observation; but I was able to notice that our host was alert and bird-like in his movements and had a searching, shrewd, and very rapid and embrasive glance. Beneath his cassock one caught sight of elaborate slippers, and he wore a large and magnificent emerald ring.

As he was late he got briskly to work. Each person had individually to be noticed, but some had brought a little problem on which advice was needed; others required solace for the absent and afflicted; most, like myself, had medals of the saints which were to be made more efficacious; and three or four of the priests were accompanied by far from negligible or indigent old lady parishioners, to whom such an event as this would be the more memorable and valuable if a little

conversation could be added. Hence, there was work before our host; but he performed his task with noticeable discretion. To me, whom at last he reached, he said nothing; but my friend, who is of the old persuasion, put to him the case of a dying youth and obtained sufficient assurance to be comforted. And all the while I could see the elderly gentleman in black with the black bag glancing round the walls from the doorway—his function, as I afterwards learned, being that of a doctor intent upon restoring to consciousness those (and they are numerous) who swoon under the immensity of this ceremony.

Having come to the last of his visitors, our host retired to the middle of the room and delivered a short address on the meaning of his blessing and the importance of rectitude. He then blessed us once again, collectively, and was gone, and we struggled to a vertical position, the elderly ladies finding the assistance of their attendant priests more than useful in this process.

My knees, too, were very sore; but what did I care? I had seen Pope Benedict XV.

Freaks of Memory

IT was my fortune not long since to meet again, in the flesh, the most famous of our prophets. I need not mention his name; enough to say that his cautious vaticination is on sale everywhere, even in the streets. To my dismay he did not recognize me. Not that want of recognition is so rare—very far from it—but the surprise is that a being gifted with such preternatural vision should thus fail, when I, who am only an ordinary person, knew him again instantly. Long habits of fixing his penetrating gaze on the murky future have no doubt rendered the backward look less

simple to him. Anyway, there we stood, I challenging him to remember me and he failing to do so. This momentary superiority of my own poor wits over those of a man who (all undismayed by the refusal of events always to fall into line) foretells so much, uplifted me; but the untrustworthiness of memory is so constant and lands one in such embarrassments that it is foolish for anyone to boast.

Among the marvels of the human machine, memory is, indeed, strangest. The great bewildering fact of memory at all—of the miracle of the brain—is, of course, as far beyond our infinite apprehension as the starry heavens. Of that I never dare to think. But the minor caprices of memory may, fittingly enough, engage our wonder. The lawlessness of our prehensile apparatus, for example—the absurdly unreasoning system of selection of such things as are to be permanent—how explain these? And why should memory be subject also to that downward tendency in life which forces us always to fight if we would save the best? It would have been just as easy, at the start, when the whole affair was in the making, to have given an upward impulse. That was not done, but the memory, at any rate, being all spirit, might have been exempted from the general law. But no; as we grow older, not only do we remember with less and less accuracy, but of what we retain much is inferior to that which once we had but now have lost.

I, for example, who once had long passages not only from the great poets, but also from the less great but often more intimate poets—such as Matthew Arnold and William Cory, to mention two favourites—at the tip of the tongue, now have to recite myself to sleep with a Bab Ballad. That nonsense never fails me, but I cannot at this moment give the right sequence of any two of the quatrains of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám, although once, and for years, I had the whole poem complete too. I would rather have been

left the wistful Persian than Gilbert's *Etiquette*, but the jade Memory had other views.

Any prose that I might once have learned naturally faded first, because there was no rhyme or metre to assist retention; but why is it that there is one sentence which, never wholly mine, flits so often before the inward eye? It is in that story of Mr. Kipling's of the mutinous elephant who refused to work because his master was too long absent. This master, one Dheesa (you will remember), having obtained leave for a jaunt, exceeded his term: and the sentence which recurs to me, hazily and hauntingly, often twice a day and usually once, with no apparent reason or provocation, is this: 'Dheesa had vagabonded along the roads till he met a marriage procession of his own caste, and drinking, dancing, and tippling, had drifted past all knowledge of the lapse of time.' Now, surely, out of all the thousands of books which I have read and more or less dimly remembered, it is very strange that this should be almost the only sentence that is photographed on the mind.

Once I knew many psalms: I know them no longer, but I have never forgotten a ridiculous piece of dialogue in a book called *The World of Wit and Humour* which I was studying, on weekdays, at the same time, how many years ago:

'Father, I have spilt the butter. What shall I do?'

'Rub it briskly with a woollen fabric.'

'Why?'

'Because friction generates caloric, which volatises the oleaginous particles of the stearine matter.'

—And once I knew many psalms.

One of the odd things about what we call loss of memory is that it is catching. How often when one person forgets a name well known to him does his companion, to whom it is equally well known, forget it too. Why is that? The other day I had an excellent example of this curious epidemic.

It was necessary for the name of a certain actor—not a star, but a versatile repertory actor of distinction—to be recalled in order that a letter to him might quickly be dispatched. I had forgotten his name, but I described him and his methods with sufficient accuracy for every one (there were about six of us) to recognize him. Some of us could even say in what parts we had seen him and compare notes as to his excellence, and yet his name absolutely eluded one and all. Why? We all knew it; why did we unanimously fail to know it then?

We parted intent upon obtaining this necessary information, my last sapient words being that to the best of my belief his first name was Joseph and his second began with P. On meeting again the next day, each of us had it pat enough, and it had broken upon each, more or less suddenly, during the night. Since the name was Michael Sherbrooke, you will understand why, in my case, its arrival was peculiarly gratifying. If I am not now known to those others as Mrs. Nickleby, it is only because they are so kind-hearted.

The great mystery is, Where, while one is forgetting them, are the things one forgets, but suddenly will remember again? Where are they lurking? This problem of their whereabouts, their capacity to hide and elude, distresses me far more than one's inability to call them from the vasty deep of the brain. Or are they, perhaps, not there at all? Do they not, perhaps, have evenings out, times off for lunch and so forth, and thus we sometimes miss them? Or can there perhaps be some vast extra-mural territory of the brain from which facts have to be fetched—as, if one would consult old newspapers at the British Museum, one must wait until the volumes can be brought from Hendon? The fact that they always, or nearly always, return, sooner or later, rather supports these theories.

Of Plans for one more Spring ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

IT is much on my mind just now that I must not waste a minute of the spring that is coming. We have waited for it longer than for any before, and the world has grown so strange and unlovely since spring was here last. Life has become so cheap, human nature has become so cruel and wanton, that all sense of security has gone. Hence this spring must be lived, every moment of it.

I know it is coming, for I had a sudden foretaste this morning. I was conscious of its stirring beneath the mould; I could hear it and feel it. Moreover, the birds have begun to make sleep difficult after six, bless their throats! The thrushes (the darlings!) have begun to perch on the topmost spray of the yew tree to try their voices. Soon the starling will be scrabbling at the eaves as early as five, confound them!

Every year I determine to do certain things in the spring. This year I must surely do them. There is a hedge I know, in a meadow, under which one finds white violets. I must go there. Daffodils, too. I know of four certain spots for daffodils; not the splendid yellow lilies (as they can grow to be) of the London shops—the stately and distinguished ‘Sir Watkin Wynn’ and so forth—but the daffodils of the meadows, short and sturdy, fluttering in the winds of March, all bending their lovely heads together. One at least—and I hope two—of those spots I shall visit.

I shall find my first primroses on the banks of a stream about two miles away. And one day I must do a little gardening—not because I like digging, for I detest it more almost than any form of exercise, except rowing—but in order (*a*) to get the smell of the earth, and (*b*) to be in the company of a robin once more. No other toil, I have observed, so bridges the gulf fixed by the All-Wise between man and robins as

digging—turning over the soil. Chopping wood is not bad; but digging is best. I know that after two minutes of spade-work a robin will arrive on the scene and establish himself in the stalls, so to speak. Where he comes from will be one mystery, and how he learnt that I am there will be another. But he will arrive; the marconigraph of the birds will be in action; their spy system will again do its work.

There is a copse which the woodmen have been clearing this winter. You know, of course, what this means. It means that in May the bluebells will flood it like an azure sea. Not that I shall wait until May to go there, for the anemones come first, and the primroses, and now and then an early thrush flies scolding from her nest among the faggots; but it is going to be the best bluebell site about here.

I know a cowslip field too. There is no need to pick any of the other flowers except the violets; all the others are more satisfying as they grow. But cowslips must be picked. You pick them until you have a big enough bunch to bury your face in. Then you bury your face in it. That is one of the rules of spring, and if ever it was broken, it shall not be this year.

And I must see about erecting the owl box at once, because I can think of nothing more fascinating than to have a family of owls growing up close to the house, and to watch their ghostly parents conveying food to them. I do not say, of course, that a pair of owls will come merely because a home is provided; but they may. Anyway, it must not be my fault that they do not.

And the walks I shall take! That one up the bostel at the side of Fronbury, and then along the turf among the larks for three miles, and then winding down through the beech woods (with the tenderest green on them you ever saw) to the village of East Tritley. (These are not the real names. It is hardly likely that I should give the real names: I don't want half London down here!) At East Tritley right under

the down lives a friend in a Tudor manor-house, with a formal garden and wainscoting, a picture by Matthew Maris, and other delectabilities, and with him I shall have tea, and saunter slowly back just as the day is turning to evening and the thrushes and blackbirds are at their best. And as I draw near home I shall walk into the evening turmoil of the rookery close by. This racket, as a matter of fact, has already begun, but at present it is the usual row between builders and architects over the specifications. Later there will be the jangle of the family too.

The great charm of this walk is the wide prospect from the top of the downs—some nine hundred feet up—and then the search, as one descends to the plain at the foot, for the boldest primrose: that is to say, for the primrose which has succeeded in climbing highest up the slopes. Incidentally, there will be hawks to watch. Now and then I shall almost step on a hare in her form. Also, there is a bank on the north side of Fronbury, where, if the sun is hot, one is almost sure to see an adder or two, and perhaps a grass snake, thawing the winter from their bones.

Another walk will be through Tritley Park, among the venerable Spanish chestnuts and the deer, to Vests Common, where another friend has what the cultured call a *pied-à-terre* and the simple a cottage. The special charm of Vests is that it is an oasis of red sand in a district mainly composed of clay or chalk. Scotch firs and other firs are the only trees, save for delicate silver birches which in the spring are like green flames; and in May the brake ferns begin to force their arched necks through the peat like submerged swans. Well, Vests Common will be a very constant joy to me this spring. I shall roam there continually, and, very likely, induce my friend to let me have his cottage for a few days directly the nightingales are in force.

What a programme!

The Other Two



IT is my good or ill fortune to have taken a furnished flat at a dizzy altitude in the neighbourhood of a terminus which is at once nearest the sea and the Promised Land. Immediately above the flat is a spacious roof, which affords a pleasant retreat in the cool of the evening and commands what the agents call an extensive prospect, and where, at most hours, toy dogs may be met. The flat itself consists of a number of rooms the walls of which are covered with photographs of men, women, and children, almost as thickly as the pages of a schoolboy's album are covered with stamps. There are more men than women, and more women than children. The men have obsolete beards; several of the women seem to be sisters, and have been taken together with their heads inclining towards each other at an affectionate angle, which, although affectionate, does not render the thought impossible that each sister secretly is convinced that she is the handsomer. There are also sets of children graduated like organ pipes. These photographs not only hang on the walls but they swarm in frames about the mantelpieces and the occasional tables. The occasional tables are so numerous and varied in size that one might imagine this their stud farm.

The beginning of my tenancy was marked by a tragedy. The larder window having been left open by the previous occupants, a large slate-coloured pigeon, having plans for a family, had made a nest and laid an egg in it, and, at the very moment when I suddenly opened the door, was preparing to lay another. To this achievement I personally should have had no objection; but the porter, who was showing me round, and who has a sense of decorum more proper to such apartments, had other views, and before I could interfere he had removed the egg, brushed away the nest, and

closed the window. That ended his share of the drama; but mine was to begin, for ever since that day the pigeon, with a depth of reproachfulness in its eyes that is extremely distressing, has sat on the kitchen window-sill making desperate efforts to get in, so that I creep about feeling like Herod. During Baby Week it was almost unbearable. Even when I am far from the kitchen I can hear its plaintive injured cooing.

The flat is conspicuous in possessing, in addition to numerous other advantages, such as a night porter to work the lift, who is never visible, and a day porter who, having been forbidden by the powers that be to use the lift before two o'clock in the afternoon, scrupulously obeys the new regulation, except when he has to ascend to an upper floor himself: the flat has, in addition to these advantages, windows that refuse to be lifted by any but a Hercules, and doors (ten in all) not one of which will remain open except by artificial means. Whether or not this is a peculiarity of Westminster architecture I cannot say, but all the doors are alike. They each quickly but remorselessly close, yet so gently that the latch does not catch, and every breath of draught (and we by no means stop at breaths) sways them noisily to and fro with a sound that is excessively irritating to the nerves. I have therefore either to go to the door and fasten it or find something with which to fix it open. Normally, I use a chair or a weight from the kitchen scales; but two of the rooms—the drawing-room, where the occasional tables are most fecund, and the dining-room, where I do everything but dine—are supplied with door-stops of their own, consisting each of an elephant's foot mounted with brass. Picture me then, the most Occidental of men and so long a devotee of the study and the shelf as to be less of a big game hunter than anyone you could imagine, moving about this intensely sophisticated flat carrying from room to room the foot of a mammoth of the Indian jungle or the

African forest (I don't know which) in order to prevent a London door from banging. Imperial Cæsar's destiny was not less exalted or more incongruous.

If there were four of these feet I should be more at ease. But there are only two of them, and elephants are quadrupeds. Where then are the other two? That is the question which is wearing me out. I lie awake at night, wondering, and then falling into an uneasy sleep hear a heavy stumbling tread on the stairs and wake in terror expecting the door to burst open and the other half of the elephant to advance upon me demanding its lost feet. It is always a dreadful nightmare, but never more so than when the mammoth not only towers up grey and threatening, but coos like an exiled pigeon.

The Marble Arch and Peter Magnus ∞ ∞ ∞

FINDING myself (not often in London on the day that comes so mercifully between the Saturday and Monday) beside the enisled Marble Arch, I spent half an hour in listening to the astonishing oratory that was going on there. Although I had not done this for many, many years, there was so little change in the proceedings that I gained a new impression of perpetual motion. The same—or to all intents and purposes the same—leather lungs were still at it, either arraigning the Deity or commending His blessed benefactions. As invariably of old, a Hindu was present; but whether he was the Hindu of the Middle Ages or a new Hindu, I cannot say. One proselytizing Hindu is strangely like another. His matter was familiar also. The only novelty that I noticed was a little band of American evangelists (America being so little in need of spiritual assistance that these have settled in London) in the attire more or less of the constabulary of New York, the spokesman among whom,

at the moment I joined his audience, was getting into rather deep water in an effort to fit the kind of halo acceptable to modern evangelicals on the head of Martin Luther.

As I passed from group to group, with each step a certain inevitable question grew more insistent upon a reply; and so, coming to one of London's founts of wisdom and knowledge, I put it to him. 'I suppose,' I said, indicating the various speakers with a semicircular gesture, 'they don't do all this for nothing?' The policeman closed one eye. 'Not they,' he answered; 'they've all got sympathizers somewhere.'

Well, live and let live is a good maxim, thought I, and there surely never was such a wonderful world as this, and so I came away; and it was then that something occurred which (for everything so far has been sheer prologue) led to these remarks. I was passing the crowd about one of the gentlemen—the more brazenly confident one—who deny the existence of a beneficent Creator, when the words, 'Looking like a dying duck in a thunderstorm,' clanged out, followed by a roar of delighted laughter; and in a flash I remembered precisely where I was when, forty and more years ago, I first heard from a nursemaid that ancient simile and was so struck by its humour that I added it to my childish repertory. And from this recollection I passed on to ponder upon the melancholy truth that originality will ever be an unpopular quality. For here were two or three hundred people absolutely and hilariously satisfied with such a battered and moth-eaten phrase, even to-day, and perfectly content that the orator should have so little respect either for himself or for them that he saw no disgrace in thus evading his duty and inventing something new.

But was that his duty? That was my next thought; and a speech by that eternally veracious type whom Mr. Pickwick met at Ipswich, and who, for all his brief passage across the stage of literature, is more real than many a prominent hero

of many chapters, came to mind to answer it. I refer to Mr. Peter Magnus, who, when Mr. Pickwick described Sam Weller as not only his servant and almost friend, but an 'original', replied in these deathless words: 'I am not fond of anything original; I don't like it; don't see any necessity for it.' And that's just it. The tribe of Magnus is very large; it doesn't like originality, and doesn't see any necessity for it—which, translated into the modern idiom, would run 'has no use for it'. Hence the freethinker was right, and the longer he continues to repose his faith in ancient comic clichés the greater will be his success.

And then I thought for the millionth time what an awful mistake it is to be fastidious. Truly wise people—and by wisdom I mean an aggregation of those qualities and acceptances and compromises that make for a fairly unruffled progress through this difficult life—truly wise people are not fastidious. They are easily pleased, they are not critical, and—and this is very important—they allow of no exceptions among human beings. Originals bore them as much as they did Mr. Magnus. One of the astutest men that I know has achieved a large measure of his prosperity and general contentment by behaving always as though all men were alike. Because, although of course they are not alike, the differences are too trifling to matter. He flatters each with the same assiduity and grossness, with the result that they all become his useful allies. Those that do not swallow the mixture, and resent it, he merely accuses of insincerity or false modesty; yet they are his allies too, because, although they cannot accept his methods, being a little uncertain as to whether his intentions may not have been genuinely kind, or his judgment honestly at fault, they give him the benefit of the doubt.

Thoughts on Sleep

MANY years ago I committed to memory a short poem which I found in the *Sydney Bulletin*. It ran thus:

I have lived and I have loved;
I have waked and I have slept;
I have sung and I have danced;
I have smiled and I have wept;
I have won and wasted treasure;
I have had my fill of pleasure;
And all these things were weariness,
And some of them were dreariness.
And all these things, but two things,
Were emptiness and pain:
And Love—it was the best of them;
And Sleep—worth all the rest of them.

It was not till the other day, I might remark, that I found that the author was Charles Mackay, and that the poem continued thus mournfully:

Worth everything but Love unto my spirit and my brain.
Be still my friend, O Slumber,
Till my days complete their number,
For Love shall never, never, return to me again.

I still believe the poet's words to be true: sleep is the second best thing, and how differently we view it, at different stages of life! I was in a house the other day where a small boy was kicking and screaming because his nurse had come to get him ready for the night, and an old man was querulously inquiring every few minutes if it was not yet bedtime; for to youth sleep is an interrupter of fun and excitement; to age it is an escape from life. Terrible, I thought, to live so long that escape is desirable. That sleep should be desirable,

yes; but not escape. Not yet; and those tragic lines of another Scotch and also little-known poet came back to me:

Life, thou wast once so sweet and bright
I grudged each hour that slumber stole
From happy day, though happy night
Brought ever dreams of new delight
To haunt the slumbers of the soul.

Now thou art all so dark, so drear,
I pray for sleep to drown the pain,
Though in his grisly train appear
A thousand phantom shapes of fear
To wring the heart and sear the brain.

Having recently returned from the longest voyage I ever took I can attest that that line in the old song about being rocked in the cradle of the deep is not a mere poetical trope. The cradle of the deep actually does rock to slumber. Never have I slept so long, so soundly, and so often; and such noises and annoyances as are apparently inseparable from a ship—the creakings and strainings, sailors' footfalls on the deck above, the splash of the hose or rasp of the holy-stone—do not really disturb, are not really anything more than emphasizers of one's bliss: coming in time to be a part of one's repose, awaking once just enough to remind one how blessed and beneficial this vast cradle is. The sea, one might remark, paraphrasing an old saying—the sea that rocks the cradle soothes the world.

Sleep at sea is peaceful and placid, not dreamless, but accompanied by such dreams as please and quickly fade. Indeed, the dreams dreamed in the cradle of the deep are more like the dreams of the day: light and fanciful and seldom unhappy or frightening, whereas sleep on those other moving beds, the berths of the wagon-lit, is, in my case, accompanied by the choicest nightmares. So crowded are they with incident and grotesquerie that I look forward to

every night-railway journey with excitement. And the waking is exciting, too, for I wake only when the train stops, with that long-drawn sigh from the brakes and strange foreign voices coming out of the hush. Then the guard's trumpet sounds and I am instantly asleep once more and again among my chimeras and weird absurdities.

Doctors say that dreamless sleep is best, and then go on to complicate this remark by the statement that all our dreaming is packed into the minutes immediately preceding awakening. If my own impressions are true, I dream all night long and never sleep without dreaming. But almost never are my dreams worth remembering and very seldom do I remember them. Never do I have such dreams as one told me recently by a friend, who, in her sleep, found herself, after an operation, on a yacht, on which, to her surprise, was an old acquaintance. To her surprise, because she knew him to be dead.

On being taxed with the inconsistency, he replied: 'Yes, I'm dead all right; but that's no reason why I shouldn't be on a yacht with you.'

Having assimilated this startling assertion, 'Tell me', she said, 'what it's like to be dead.'

'It's just the same as being alive,' he replied, 'only you don't have any fun.'

'Fun?'

'Well, adventure. You don't have any adventure, because, you see, there's no danger. Being dead, you can't die; and half the fun of life is in wondering when you're going to die and in running risks. For instance, if I were to fall over that handrail into the sea it wouldn't be any fun, because I'm drowned already, so to speak. The question of rescue or failure to rescue has ceased to matter.'

The art of snatching forty winks whenever one will is difficult to acquire, but far better worth struggling for than sagacity at bridge or efficiency at golf, which seem to be the

two commonest goals now set before ambition's gaze. At least that is my belief to-day. And once I had as low an opinion of sleep as any proprietor of a night club. I now know that there is more refreshment and stimulation in a nap, even of the briefest, than in all the alcohol ever distilled. If he who sleeps, dines, he who naps, nips; but he nips the true Hippocras, the real elixir. In this matter of stealing forty, or even thirty-nine winks, dogs and cats should be our models. No, not cats—for they may be deceiving us all the time—but dogs; for dogs can fall asleep instantly, anywhere, and be awake instantly, anywhere.

The friend of humanity who should confer sleep upon the sleepless would be perhaps the truest friend of all. I don't remember if the late M. Coué (who has been so tactless as to die) claimed that his mental soothing syrup was sovran against insomnia; but if it was, he was a benefactor indeed. Undoubtedly, the constant repetition of any form of words is sedative; but not unless the mind behind the words is a blank. That is the difficulty: to make one's mind a blank. And especially must one strive to eliminate the future. Far-off things, even unhappy, can be thought about with safety; but nothing that has not happened yet, but may happen, no matter whether grave or gay, must be considered.

We talk generalizingly of sleep, but really it has many different varieties. On some nights one sleeps harder than on others; just as on some days one works harder, or plays harder. There are occasions when five hours' sleep can be more refreshing and restorative than ten. I found this truth first expressed, if I remember rightly, by a character in one of Marryat's novels. The mere existence of night clubs helps to prove how different are the sleeping needs of different people. Should I be tempted to sup at one of these places I am the worse for it the next day; I rise with difficulty, longing to be allowed to slumber again, and when the afternoon comes I am but one remove from a somnambulist.

Yet I had seen all around me regular attenders, not all young, many of whom I know have to be at work early the next morning and who were showing no sign of wear and tear. Why should they be so privileged and I not? It would not surprise me if I never went to a night club again, not from fear of the police, but simply because sleep becomes steadily more and more necessary and more and more pleasant. One has to make a choice, and I prefer sleep to saxophones; also I now sleep as a rule very well and, oddly enough, am rather proud of it.

I say oddly because most people of my age, I observe, are ashamed of sleeping. If you ask a man how he slept last night, the chances are that he will say he hardly closed his eyes. Indeed, there will probably be no need to ask him: he will volunteer the information. If a census could be taken it would be found that, according to their own testimony, there was practically no sleep by adults in England at all last night. Everyone was hours getting to sleep and then woke up again at once. The facts were, of course, otherwise; but it seems to be agreed that not to have been able to sleep is the right pose. All these people probably slept soundly, waking at most for a few minutes, and then peacefully dropping off again; but so fond of this despised slumber are they that a minute of it lost at four a.m. seems to them like an hour; hence their peevish exaggeration. None the less the man who complains of his broken night has, I think, a slight advantage over the man who slept like a top, like a log, or like the dead.

Like the dead. This reminds me that the French say that every nap is a 'little death'. Has it not perhaps been mercifully ordained that the more we grow to like sleep the less we come to fear the tomb?

A Lesson



GOD—it is notorious—works in a mysterious way to get morality and decency into us; which is another way of saying that not all light is communicated by the Episcopal bench, by clerks in holy orders, by divines who do not conform, or by editors at Whitefield's Tabernacle.

The other day, for example, I had lunch with a very charming actress in a pleasant restaurant.

'Rather a funny thing happened the last time I was here,' she remarked.

'Yes?' I replied languidly.

'About you.'

'Oh!' I said with animation. 'Do tell me.'

'It was also at lunch,' she explained. 'The people at the next table were talking about you. I couldn't help hearing a little. A man there said he had met you in Shanghai.'

'Not really!' I exclaimed.

'Yes. He met you in Shanghai.'

'That's frightfully interesting,' I said. 'What did he say about me?'

'That's what I couldn't hear,' she replied. 'You see, I had to pay some attention to my own crowd. I only caught the word "delightful".'

Ever since she told me this I have been turning it over in my mind; and it is particularly vexing not to know more. 'Delightful' can be such jargon and mean nothing—or, at any rate, nothing more than amiability. Still, that is something, for one is not always amiable, even when meeting strangers. On the other hand, it might be, from this man, the highest praise.

The whole thing naturally leads to thought, because I have never been farther east than Athens in my life.

What did the man mean? Can we possibly visit other

cities in our sleep? Has each of us an *alter ego*, who can really behave, elsewhere?

Whether we have or not, I know that this information about my Shanghai double is going to be a great nuisance to me. It is going to change my character. In fact, it has already begun to change it. Let me give you an example.

Only yesterday I was about to be very angry with a telegraph boy who brought back a telegram I had dispatched about two hours earlier, saying that it could not be delivered because it was insufficiently addressed. Obviously it was not the boy's fault, for he belonged to our country post office, and the telegram had been sent to London and was returned from there; and yet I started to abuse that boy as though he were not only the Postmaster-General himself but the inventor of red-tape into the bargain. And all for a piece of carelessness of my own.

And then suddenly I remembered Shanghai and how delightful I was there. And I shut up instantly, and apologized, and rewrote the message, and gave the boy a shilling for himself. If one could be delightful in Shanghai one must be delightful at home too.

And so it is going to be. There is very little fun for me in the future, and all because of that nice-mannered double in Shanghai whom I must not disgrace. For it would be horrible if one day a lady told him that she had overheard someone who had met him in London and found him to be a bear.

Green Sounds in a Green Shade ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

RETURNING from Wembley down the Harrow Road I noticed a man mowing a grassy bank with a scythe. Always a rare spectacle now, and particularly so in London, it seemed the more anachronistic after the orgy of modernity

which I had just left and which was still making my head dizzy—the Palace of Engineering, with its whirling fly-wheels and mechanical devices for doing everything without hands; the Palace of Industry, where bread was baked and wrapped up by inhuman machines under your eyes; the aeroplanes buzzing above: the general impression of civilization at the highest and noisiest pressure.

Watching the mower at his task, with his back swaying like music and his bare brown arms rhythmically controlling the swaths, I thought again of what we lost when the scythe went out and the fussy little lawn-mower came in: lost in sight and lost in sound, even though we gained in every other way. 'But the scythes had to go,' the strident voice of utilitarianism reminds me. 'The scythe is too slow. And also, it doesn't cut close enough. What kind of a mess would it make of the centre court of Wimbledon?' True. I do not see the scythe dealing faithfully with the tender shoots from the shores of Solway Firth on which the Lenglen leaps to conquer; and yet, even if there was not great lawn-tennis before there were mechanical lawn-mowers, there was great cricket; greater cricket possibly even than to-day; and it was played on pitches that man had to prepare without any assistance from engineers.

I am merely recording; not framing any censorious indictment. The loss of the steady swish of the scythe, broken now and again while the hone is in use, and then resumed with a new series of long soothing strokes (Andrew Lang wrote a charming poem about this soft melody)—that loss is a serious one, and the countryside is the poorer for it; but I maintain that the whirr of the lawn-mower, although never competing in beauty, has an agreeable quality of its own. It is, for all its metallic chatter, a delicious noise to wake to. It tells that the morning is fine, for lawns are rarely mown in actual rain; it tells that someone less fortunate than oneself is up and about and busy, a thought that

lays emphasis on one's own superior luck; it suggests the pleasure of the games that are to come later, whether lawn-tennis or croquet, golf-croquet, or bowls; it gently amuses the mind with speculations as to where the machine now is as the sound diminishes or grows; at what point it will stop for the grass to be emptied from the receptacle; how good that grass must smell! And so one lies on in a bliss that is partly stupor, lulled and serene, waiting for the knock that heralds tea.

No one emerging gradually from sleep, with sense after sense, one by one, returning from their nightly journey to oblivion and assembling for action, can fail soon to be conscious of the omnipresent rattle of the mowing machine, which has an odd vibrant air-filling penetration; but the ear will be longer in detecting that comforting rumble, with now and then a squeak in it, which tells that roller is at work.

I suppose that no one will believe me when I say that I like rolling a lawn; but the statement could not be more veracious were it uttered on the rack. I like rolling a lawn. I like the actual conflict with the roller, which is just heavy enough to bring out a certain combativeness; I like to feel the worm castings go down under it with a faintly perceptible crunch; I like the easy progress, steady, irresistible (thanks to my strength of body and mind), purposeful, beneficial. It is a task that exercises without fatigue and cheers its performer with the knowledge that he is doing something of value. He who rolls is earning whatever meal comes next. He who rolls can also be escaping from the others. 'Look at that nice kind Mr. Lucas, rolling,' says the hostess; 'isn't it angelic of him?' and although I am really pleasing myself first and foremost, it is possible to flush with self-esteem too.

For, I repeat, I like rolling. I like the opportunity it gives both for observation and for contemplation. Spaniels defy you and refuse to move until they are almost under the weight. Birds have almost no fear of the roller, where a

lawn-mower would have them in a ferment. They let you get quite close; robins almost sit on the handle. The flowers emit their most delicate fragrance for him who quietly rolls; wafts of sweetbrier come his way.

But if there were absolute silence, I don't think I should like rolling so much, or collect so many thoughts during the operation. I like its sounds: the muttered disagreement that always goes on between the two cylinders and is accentuated by any lump; the occasional squeal.

When I go to Lord's and see a man perched up on a motor-roller I am sorry for him. That is not rolling: that is mere conducting. (I borrow the word from a French innkeeper who once drove me in his car from Caudebec to Dieppe. '*J'aime beaucoup conduire*,' he said.) None of the pleasures that I know can be his. But when I go to Lord's and see a man perched up on a motor lawn-mower, I think him fortunate, for I dislike the bustle and scurry and bent attitude involved in pushing a lawn-mower as much as I like the leisureliness and comparative muteness of rolling. I am never angelic enough to mow the lawn, however nice and kind it may be! But to roll it, yes; I would roll it all the way to Rio.

For the rest, the sounds of the garden are chiefly the notes of birds, and it is one of the tragedies of life that so few people can identify them or agree in their identification. What is the bird that, at this very moment as well as at most other moments between dawn and eve, is saying, 'Stick to it'? There is much talk of the recent broadcast of the nightingale; but the nightingale is easy. By singing at night he turns the problems of ornithology into child's-play. What I want is a gramophone record of all the garden birds, with names, so that I can place them at once. But more than anything do I want to know the name of the bird who insults me by saying, 'Stick to it!' Morning, noon, and afternoon he thus adjures me—me, who like rolling!

And I have said nothing about the most exciting garden noise at all. I have been tiresome about scythes, tedious about lawn-mowers, and conceited about rolling; and all the while there are such sounds going on under the turf as no one would believe—because no one could hear. But look at that thrush over there on the grass with his head on one side. Do you know what he is doing? He is listening in! To what? He is listening for a worm. But—cruel Nature again!—the bitter joke to the worms is that apparently worms can't hear the thrush.

A Coward's Courage



THE War brought bad days to all head waiters, but not least to those in English provincial hotels, native born and not too efficient. It depleted or wholly removed their staffs; but the head waiter had to remain—to struggle with inexperienced hands, to see the fair fame of the establishment disappearing, to receive and, if possible, parry the complaints of the customers.

Under these afflictions some suggested absolute hopelessness; some showed signs of wear and tear; some cultivated that apathy under misfortune, that dulled acceptance of bad luck, which is part of the Briton's heritage from his climate, others deprecated the situation but smiled, and in smiling disarmed criticism.

I am thinking in particular of one who more than smiled and disarmed criticism—who laughed and conquered.

I found him in the coffee-room of an ancient and honourable West Country hotel. Little tables and big were all about him, with pink and green wine-glasses on them and napkins bursting from tumblers into symmetrical schemes of foliage. It was just before lunch and he was adding finishing touches

of polish to knives and forks, with an apron protecting his very spick dress-suit: dinner jacket with satin roll collar and neat black tie; such clothes as, but for the time of day, would proclaim him fellow-guest rather than servitor. A big man, with a large white and superficially very amiable face. But his most notable feature was his eye. It was the eye of a child—a rather spoilt child, accustomed to get its own way and to be considered preferentially; but it was confident and dominating too. It called, in association with the vast benignant countenance, for a similar mood in its *vis-à-vis*—insisted on it, had the right to it; so that one would endure much rather than be the cause of disappointment.

I was in the coffee-room merely to arrange about lunch, but the head waiter's communicativeness was such that while doing so I learned many things. I learned that he was practically single-handed; that he had been there for twenty and more years—twenty-three come December; that the War was hitting the place very hard; that it was one's duty not to grumble; that all his best boys had been called up; that three of them had been wounded and one killed; that waitresses do their best but are not so good as waiters, at any rate not from his point of view; that the high wages at the local munition works made it difficult to retain waitresses anyway; and that spirits really were now hardly worth drinking.

At lunch there were many people, but, with very little help, the head waiter, now divested of his apron, kept them fairly contented, even finding time to talk a little at most of the tables. From certain broken sentences that reached my ears I gathered that he was practically single-handed; that something was hitting the place very hard; that someone had been somewhere for more than twenty years; that grumbling was a mistake; and that spirits nowadays were hardly worth drinking. Probably, had not a guide-book claimed my attention, I should have heard and learned more.

As the room began to empty and the strain of attendance was relaxed, he advanced smilingly upon my table, with an expression of supreme satisfaction, bearing before him, in both hands, a brass-bound box or casket.

'You might like to see,' he said, 'a little souvenir which one of my staff, back on leave from the Front, brought me;' and with enormous pride and a gratification almost paternal—or more than paternal, Creatorial—he opened the lid and revealed a model aeroplane constructed of metal from shell-cases and other accessories of warfare.

'I've always,' he said, 'had good boys and treated them well, and first thing this lad did was to come and bring this souvenir he's been making for me. He's back in France now.'

I was properly appreciative, both of the workmanship of the model and of the kindly relations subsisting between superior and inferior, and he bore the relic away with complacency radiating from his capacious person, and I saw him, not without surprise and a slight twinge of regret, displaying it at another table. Why, I cannot exactly explain, but it seemed to me wanting in finer feeling, in the subtlest delicacy, to show to everyone at the same time this proof of devotion to himself. There should be intervals. It wasn't that I was mortified not to be unique; but to make a triumphal progress with the thing seemed a little blatant.

You may until now have been looking upon this document as just a character sketch of a certain head waiter. But really it is something else; it is the story of my own courage. For it was my destiny that day to have to act with a distasteful bravery. At dinner that evening, when the strain of attendance had begun to relax and several of the guests had departed, I was conscious of the head waiter's eye turned towards me with a gleam of assurance and his features melting comfortably into the smile of self-approval. But a moment later my blood was frozen and an icy perspiration

broke out over me as I saw him, all confidence and complacency, bearing in my direction the box containing the aeroplane. For quicker than lightning the dreadful thought had flashed through my brain: 'He has forgotten that he showed it me at lunch,' followed by the agonized question: 'What shall I do? Am I strong enough to tell him so? Can I bring myself to do something which must abash him?'

By this time he was on me, wreathed in happiness and expectancy. 'You might like to see,' he began, 'a little souvenir which one of my staff——'

With a desperate effort I pulled myself together. 'Oh, that little model,' I said. 'You showed me that at lunch,' and I lowered my eyes in the hope that it might make his discomfort easier.

He laughed. 'So I did,' he said, and carried it to the next table. The next: not even the next but one! 'You might——' I heard him begin.

When shall we learn, some of us who have so much sensitiveness for the insensitive, that there is nothing they need less?

My Friend Flora



'How much is this bunch?' I asked the flower-woman at the corner.

'A shilling,' she replied, 'but you can have it for sixpence. I hate the sight of it.'

Now here was an oddity in a world of self-centred, acquisitive tradespeople: a dealer who decried her own wares. Obviously flower-women can have temperaments.

I asked her what there was about palm, as we call those branches of willow with the fluffy, downy buds on them, that so annoyed her.

'It's such stupid stuff,' she explained. 'I can understand people buying daffodils or tulips or violets, because they're pretty or sweet, but not this dried-up stuff with the little kittens.'

The remark set me wondering to what extent dealers in other articles are perplexed by their customers' preferences. (Some milliners, I hope.) For the most part we are encouraged by the shopkeeper to follow our own inclinations. His taste may be utterly different, but he doesn't impose it on us; he ventures to suggest only when there are varying prices and we seem unduly disposed to the lowest. But this old lady was prepared, long before the bargaining stage had set in, to knock off fifty per cent. and traduce the goods as well. Surely a character.

'And that's not all,' she added. 'What do you think a lady—calls herself a lady—said to me just now when she bought threepennyworth? She said it lasted a year. Fancy telling a poor flower-woman that!'

We went on to talk of her calling. I found her an 'agreeable blend' (as the tobacconists say) of humour and resignation; and very practical.

'Why are your flowers,' I asked her, 'so much better than the flowers of the man the other side of the road?'

'Because he takes his home at night,' she said. 'You should never do that. If I've got any unsold, I leave them at the fire-station and then they're fresh in the morning. But I don't often have any left over.'

This was, I should say, a day of acute discomfort: it had been bitterly raining since early morning, and yet there was no bitterness in her. She was merely resigned. Very wet, but cheerfully apathetic. 'When it's cold and wet like this,' I asked, 'is life worth living?'

'Of course,' was her splendid answer; 'aren't there the nights?'

Rather fine that—even if as a commentary on the wakeful

hours a little acid. And for those who can sleep, how true! 'Aren't there the nights?' I must remember the solace when next the cynic or the misanthrope girds at sunless noons.

Of her philosophy she then gave me another taste, for observing a great mass of loose coins, many of them silver, lying in the basket, I asked if she were not afraid of a thief snatching at it. 'Oh, no,' she said. 'But I don't always have it there. It's because it's so wet to-day. Counting helps.'

My guess would have been that although the life of flower-women calls for philosophy, for philosophy to respond is by no means the rule; and her consolation and cheerfulness made me very happy. Yet what a penance much of their lives must be! First of all, there is the weather. Wet or fine, hot or cold, they must be out in it, and stationary at that. What to place second and third I do not know, but there is the perishable character of the stock-in-trade to be considered, and, when fogs and frosts interfere, the chance of being unable to collect any stock-in-trade at all. But exposure must be the crucial strain.

The whole question of the motionless, receptive attitude to the elements is interesting to me, who catch cold several times a day. How these people can stand it is a constant mystery. That blind man, for instance, at the little door of the Temple just below the Essex Street archway—ever since I can remember London he had been there, with his matches, always serene, no matter what new buffetings Heaven has for him.

The blind in particular seem to become indifferent to climatic extremes; and there must be in everyone's cognizance two or three immovable sightless mendicants defying rain and chill. Every town in the country has such landmarks, and all seem to retain their health. But I recollect that the blind man who used to sit in front of the Grand Hotel at Brighton forty years ago spelling out Holy Writ, while the dog at his feet collected coppers in a little box,

always in winter wore mittens and a cap with ear-flaps, and had fingers red and swollen. Still, he endured. Whether with those red and swollen fingers he really deciphered the Evangel or merely repeated from memory, we never knew, but I can still hear the droning voice, 'And Jesus said——'

This insensitiveness to January blasts and February drenchings may be one of the compensations that the blind enjoy. Whatever else happens to them they never, perhaps, catch cold. And that is more than something.

But how odd that these stolid, shabby, and often rather battered old florists should be the middle-men and middle-women between the country and the city, but for whose indifference to pitiless skies so many town-dwellers would never see a blossom at all! There is nothing of the country about them, nothing of the garden—almost no Londoner less suggests the riot of a herbaceous border—and yet it is they who form the link between flower-bed and street.

'Well,' I said, grasping the bunch of palm that the old flower-woman had sold me at such a sacrifice, 'good-bye; I hope you'll empty your basket.'

'And I hope you'll empty yours,' she replied.

'Mine?' I said, 'I haven't got one.'

'Oh, yes, you have,' said Flora: 'everyone's got a basket, only they don't always know where to take it.'

A South Sea Bubble



'I WANT you,' said my hostess, 'to take in Mrs. Blank. She is charming. All through the War she has been with her husband in the South Seas. London is a new place to her.'

Mrs. Blank did not look too promising. She was pretty

in her way—‘elegant’ an American would have called her—but she lacked animation. However, the South Seas . . . ! Anyone fresh from the Pacific must have enough to tell to see soup, fish, and entrée safely through.

I began by remarking that she must find London a very complete change after the sun and placidity that she had come from.

‘It’s certainly noisier,’ she said; ‘but we had our share of rain.’

‘I thought it was always fine there,’ I remarked; but she laughed a denial and relapsed into silence.

She was one of those women who don’t take soup, and this made the economy of her utterances the more unfair.

Racking my brain for a new start I fell back on those useful fellows, the authors. Presuming that anyone who had lived in that fascinating region—the promised land of so many of us who are weary of English climatic treacheries—would be familiar with the literature of it, I went boldly to work.

‘The first book about the South Seas that I ever read,’ I said, ‘was Ballantyne’s *Coral Island*.’

‘Indeed!’ she replied.

I asked her if she too had not been brought up on Ballantyne, and she said no. She did not even know his name.

‘He wrote for boys,’ I explained, rather lamely.

‘I read poetry chiefly as a girl,’ she said.

‘But surely you know Stevenson’s *Island Nights’ Entertainments*?’ I said.

No, she did not. Was it nice?

‘It’s extraordinary,’ I said. ‘It gives you more of the atmosphere of the South Seas than any other work. And Louis Becke—you must have read him?’ I continued.

No, she had not. She read very little. The last book she had read was on spiritualism.

'Not even Conrad?' I pursued. 'No one has so described the calms and storms of the Pacific.'

No, she remembered no story called Conrad.

I was about to explain that Conrad was the writer, not the written; but it seemed a waste of words, and we fell into a stillness broken only by the sound of knife and fork.

'Hang it! you shall talk,' I said to myself; and then aloud, 'Tell me all about copra. I have longed to know what copra is; how it grows, what it looks like, what it is for.'

'You have come to the wrong person,' she replied, with wide eyes. 'I never heard of it. Or did you say "cobra"? Of course I know what a cobra is—it's a snake. I've seen them at the Zoo.'

I put her right. 'Copra, the stuff that the traders in the South Seas deal in.'

'I never heard of it,' she said. 'But then why should I? I know nothing about the South Seas.'

My stock fell thirty points and I crumbled bread nervously, hoping for something sensible to say; but at this moment 'half-time' mercifully set in. My partner on the other side turned to me suavely and asked if I thought the verses in *Abraham Lincoln* were a beauty or a blemish; and with the assistance of the London stage, some new novels, and the universal unrest I sailed serenely into port. She was as easy and agreeable a woman as that other was difficult, and before she left for the drawing-room she had invited me to lunch and I had accepted.

As I said good night to my hostess I asked why she had told me that my first partner had been in the South Seas. She said that she had said nothing of the sort; what she had said was that during the War she had been stationed with her husband, Colonel Blank, at Southsea.

In all Sobriety



WE were mentioning—within reason—the occasion in our lives when we had been made to look most foolish. It is a good subject for conversation, so long as people are truthful.

Various contretemps had been related, and then came the turn of the Doctor.

‘Even you,’ I said, ‘for all your owlish wisdom and self-protectiveness, have been caught out once, I’m sure.’

‘Of course,’ he replied. ‘Even I. In fact, I haven’t lived it down yet, although thirty years have passed. I have a brother who still has to hold on to something to keep him steady whenever he refers to it.

‘It was soon after I had gone into practice. One day, by mistake on the part of the maid, a man was shown into my consulting-room, who, instead of being, as I expected, a patient—and patients weren’t so common then—was a drummer, and his special line was glass. Before I could put up any effective attack he had whipped out of his bag a carafe and a tumbler.

“‘These,” he said, “are the perfect things for a doctor’s waiting- or consulting-room. Elegant in shape and—what is much more to the point—unbreakable. All medical men suffer from breakages; but with these you need never fear such expense again. They are made of a new patent toughened glass, so that—well, look!”

‘To prove his words he tossed the carafe on to the floor, and it bounded lightly along it, intact. He retrieved it and threw it up to the ceiling, and down it came and again bounced along, intact. Then he pitched the tumbler on the floor, and it survived the shock. Then he offered them to me, and I threw them about.

‘The upshot of it was that I bought them chiefly for fun, and he went away happy.

‘That was in the morning. On the evening of the same day I was dining with some friends and going to a ball, and also on that evening I was expecting my eldest brother on a visit.

‘He was a don at Cambridge, and was coming from there—a long journey—and as he had not arrived by the time I had to go, I left him a note of apology explaining the situation and putting the house and the cellar at his disposal and went off to my revels.’

He stopped and began to laugh softly. Personally I am all in favour of men enjoying their own jokes, and it was a delight to see his eyes moisten and disappear amid the wrinkles.

‘It was a very jolly dance,’ he resumed, ‘and I was there till the end, reaching home somewhere about half past two. On the hall-table I found a note from my brother, adjuring me, however late I was, to give him a call and say how do; and I prepared to do so, but first I looked into the consulting-room to see if there were any messages. The first thing I saw was the carafe and tumbler, and as my brother had always had the same interest in the marvellous and unexpected as I—we had been great experimentalists as boys—I took the tumbler with me.

‘Quietly opening his door I struck a match and lit the gas.

‘He at once woke.

“‘Hullo, old man!’ he said, blinking and sitting up; ‘I hope you’ve had a good time.’”

“‘Splendid,’ I said. ‘But, I say, I want you to see this. One of the most extraordinary things in the world.’”

‘I showed him the tumbler and lifted it above my head.

“‘Now watch,’ I said, and flung it to the floor, where it broke into about ten million pieces. . . .

‘To this hour, no matter what I do or say, it is my brother’s firm conviction that I was drunk.’

The Heel of Achilles



IT was not until after many refusals that I consented at last to be a personal conductor of a party of Australian friends to Avebury and neighbourhood.

They had used every incitement to induce me to forget my London duties and play truant for the day. They had said the nicest things:

‘No one could explain everything so interestingly.’

‘You know so much.’

‘Yes, and you say it so well.’

‘You look as if a day off would do you good.’

‘You know England backwards.’

‘We should have such confidence in your information.’

All this was very flattering, but my defence did not give way until one of the company—the youngest and prettiest—said, ‘Maybe you’ll get an article out of our silly remarks. We are sure to say or do something awfully stupid.’

That was an idea, certainly. Articles are not so easily come by that one can afford to throw away opportunities; and our cousins from the Dominions are, of course, when the hand that deals with them is gentle, fair game. And this one was very fair game.

‘You won’t be offended if I score off you?’ I asked her.

She said she would adore it.

And so everything was settled and we started.

It was delightfully fine and they had provided a car which took us very comfortably.

I showed them all the sights: the new Great West Road, which opens so blandly at Chiswick; the old coaching inns where horses were changed; the miles of cabbage-fields where once highwaymen roved; Colnbrook with the bridge where you pass in an instant from Middlesex into Bucks; the ancient Ostrich inn; and then I prepared them for the first

and sudden view of Windsor Castle rising in the distance in all its romantic authentic mediæval bulk.

At Slough I had the luck to remember an odd historical incident which has stuck in the memory to the exclusion of much that is more valuable—to wit, that the first occasion on which the electric telegraph was of assistance to the police in detecting a criminal was in connection with a Quaker named Tawell, who, having committed a murder at Slough, was, through the medium of the new invention, arrested at Paddington at the moment when, feeling safe and sound and beyond anxiety, he alighted from the train.

This story took us to Maidenhead, where I pointed out Skindle's, and we stopped on the bridge to see the river each way; and then in Maidenhead Thicket came more highwayman lore; and so on to Twyford and the river Loddon and Reading (where Quakers of a variety totally antagonistic to Mr. Tawell of Slough make biscuits; a statue of one of them, with his umbrella, is in the centre of the town), and so on to Newbury, with anecdotes of Jack of Newbury and light but authoritative references to the two battles fought there—the first (as you, of course, recollect) on September 20, 1643, and the second on October 27 a year later. Then to Hungerford and so through Savernake Forest (literary references to Richard Jefferies and his *Round About a Great Estate*, and anecdotes of the famous Marquis of Ailesbury) to Marlborough (names of famous scholars), and so to our destination, Avebury, that minor Stonehenge, where lunch was awaiting us at the hospitable 'Red Lion'.

I will not trouble you with my learned dissertation on the famous stones, the temple, the great circle and the lesser circle, the avenue, and all the various conjectures of antiquaries as to their meaning. Suffice it to say that my reputation as one who knows and can explain, pleasingly and without pedantry, was not only upheld but increased.

We returned by way of Devizes (recollections of Sir

Thomas Lawrence and his childhood at 'The Bear'; references to illustrious visitors to Bath who used to stop here for the night—Quin, Foote), and so back to town, I still now and then shedding facts, and none of the party saying anything gauche at all, anything of the slightest use to my bright satirical pen.

Gradually we sank into silence, and one or two of us may even have napped: with perfect propriety, for the same road was being traversed; but between Slough and Colnbrook my fairest companion's eyes caught sight of a motor-cycle ahead of us carrying two riders so unsuitably dressed that she drew our attention to them at once.

'Oh, do look at that!' she exclaimed. 'Just think of going out on a mo-bike in top-hats and tail-coats! Doesn't that beat everything?'

'It's not so odd as you think,' I replied; 'just about here, that is. In most parts of England it might be peculiar, but not just about here. I'll explain.'

They prepared to listen.

'Isn't it luck,' said the prettiest girl, 'having *him* with us—the one man who really knows?'

Having finished blushing, I resumed. 'We are close to Eton,' I said. 'It is over there, just this side of Windsor Castle. The river Thames is between them. And that motor-bicycle belongs to two Etonians out on a joy-ride. When you go to Eton you will notice that the older boys wear top-hats and tail-coats; the famous Eton jacket belongs to the younger boys only. Now these two ahead of us are no doubt members of "Pop", the swagger club of the school, and have special rights in consequence. Look at them well when we overtake them: you'll very likely see a future Prime Minister or Viceroy, a future Duke or owner of a Derby winner.'

All excitement for such fateful or aristocratic lineaments, we prepared for the spectacle. But as the moment of passing arrived the prettiest girl gave me a swift and horrified glance

which, although there was sympathy in it too, I would pay a hundred pounds not to have deserved.

For my Etonians turned out to be two middle-aged men with moustaches, in rusty black, very obviously connected with a firm of local undertakers.

Alas! for the pride of 'Pop'.

Alas! for the pride of the cicerone.

The American Mother



IT was at a village near Totnes that I ate an American Mother.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I don't mean a matron from God's own country; I mean an apple. Having eaten one, I ate a second. In fact, finding myself for the first time for years—or 'in years', as a real American mother would say—in a well-stocked orchard in October, I ate apples continuously, of many varieties, and am now regretting the lost opportunities of my life and the millions of apples that I might have enjoyed, but missed. I ate American Mothers, Keswick Codlins, Cox's Orange Pippins, and others whose names I forget or did not know, and I have now decided that the old defensive method against the Harley Street invasion shall be adopted. What number of apples a day would make the doctor's visit unavoidable I have never heard; but the one that keeps him at bay shall never again be neglected.

How hard, by the way, does the first-apple joke diel! At Plymouth I sat out, for my sins (which are many and by no means at an end), a large portion of a variety performance which contained no fewer than two facetious references to Eve and the serpent. Both were well received, particularly by the ladies, who are usually the more lenient part of an audience, and always so when there is a reference to Adam's

consort. The Garden of Eden jest, however, cannot fail among men too. Comic in itself, it also flatters the listener's erudition. Had Eve never partaken of fruit, had Noah not sailed in the Ark and the whale refused to swallow Jonah, many of us would, of course, have no Biblical profundity whatever.

After so many years and so much facetiousness one would expect no novelty in the great shaddock incident (as Meredith would have called it), yet quite recently I found a new treatment of it, in the *New York Life*, which surveys the world from so many odd angles all its own. In one of its smaller pictures an artist depicted our first parents busily devouring the apple: Adam, however, not quite so happily as Eve, because, floating mistily before his eyes, are the shadowy forms of a rake, a spade, and a hoe. 'I like these apples,' he says, 'but I believe they affect my nerves.'

If only for the sight of its orchards my wanderings in Devonshire were justified: so beautiful were they. The English landscape rarely burst into flame, but it was doing so now, and its orchards were half of a burning red and half a burning yellow, and all glorious when the westering sun struck them. Cider-brewing indeed had already begun, and finding the doors of a press open I ventured in and watched the juice dripping under the heavy weights, and smelt the pungent sweetness of it, and heard fresh apples tumbling down the hopper to their happy destiny of raising Devonian spirits and loosing, not only in the bar parlour of the King's Arms, Devonian tongues.

Various Creatures

A Tiger ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪

TO have the opportunity of hunting a tiger—on an elephant too—which by a stroke of luck fell to me, is to experience the un-English character of India at its fullest. Almost everything else could be reproduced elsewhere—the palaces, the bazaars, the caravans, the mosques and temples with their worshippers—but not the jungle, the Himalayas, the vast swamps through which our elephants waded up to the Plimsoll, the almost too painful ecstasies of the pursuit of an eater of man.

The master of the chase, who has many tigers to his name, was Sir Harcourt Butler, whose hospitality is famous, so large and warm is it, and so minute, and it was because he was not satisfied that the ordinary diversions of the 'Lucknow Week' were sufficient for his guests, that he impulsively arranged a day's swamp-deer shooting on the borders of Nepaul. The time was short, or of elephants there would have been seventy or more; as it was, we were apologized to (there were only about six of us) for the poverty of the supply, a mere five and twenty being obtainable. But to these eyes, which had never seen more than six elephants at once, and those in the captivity either of a zoo or a circus, a row of five and twenty was astounding. They were waiting for us on the plain, at a spot distant some score of miles by car, through improvised roads, from the station, whither an all-night railway journey had borne us. The name of the station, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten: there was no room in my heated brain for such trifles; but I have forgotten nothing else.

It was after an hour and a half's drive in the cool and spicy

early morning air—between the fluttering rags on canes which told the driver how to steer—that we came suddenly in sight of some distant tents and beside them an immense long dark inexplicable mass which through the haze seemed now and then to move. As we drew nearer, this mass was discerned to be a row of elephants assembled in line ready to salute the Governor. The effect was more impressive and more Eastern than anything I had seen. Grotesque too—for some had painted faces and gilded toes, and not a few surveyed me with an expression in which the comic spirit was too noticeable. Six or seven had howdahs, the rest blankets: those with howdahs being for the party and its leader, Bam Bahadur, a noted shikaree; and the others to carry provisions and bring back the spoil. On the neck of each sat an impressive mahout.

To one to whom the pen is mightier than the gun and whose half a century's bag contains only a few rabbits, a hedgehog and a moorhen, it is no inconsiderable ordeal to be handed a repeating rifle and some dozens of cartridges and be told that that is your elephant—the big one there, with the red ochre on its forehead. To be on an elephant in the jungle without the responsibilities of a lethal weapon would be sufficient thrill for one day; but to be expected also to deal out death, was too much. In the company of others, however, one can do anything; and I gradually ascended to the top, not, as the accomplished hunters did, by placing a foot on the trunk and being swung heavenwards, but painfully, on a ladder; by my side being a very keen Indian youth, the son of a minor chieftain, who spoke English perfectly and was to instruct me in Nimrod's lore.

And so the procession started, and for a while discomfort set acutely in, for the movement of a howdah is short and jerky, and it takes some time both to adjust oneself to it and to lose the feeling that the elephant sooner or later—and probably sooner—must trip and fall. But the glory of the

morning, the urgency of our progress, the novelty and sublimity of the means of transport, the strangeness of the scene, and my companion's speculations on the day's promise, overcame any personal want of ease and I forgot myself in the universal. Our destination was a series of marshes some six miles away, where the gonds—or swamp-deer—were usually found, and we were divided up, some elephants, of which mine was one, taking the left wing, with instructions on reaching a certain spot to wait there for the deer who would move off in that direction; others taking the right wing; and others beating up the middle.

We began with a trial of nervous stamina—for a river far down in its bed below us almost immediately occurred, and this had to be crossed. I abandoned all hope as the elephant descended the bank almost, as it seemed, perpendicularly, and plunged into the water with an enormous splash. But after he had squeezed through, extricating himself with a gigantic wrench, the ground was level for a long while, and there was time to look around and recollect one's fatalism. Far ahead in a blue mist were the Himalayas. All about were unending fields, with here and there white cattle grazing. Cranes stretched their necks above the grass; now and then a herd of blackbuck (which were below our hunting ambitions) scampered away; the sky was full of wild-duck and other water-fowl.

Of the hunting of the gond I should have something to say had not a diversion occurred which relegated that lively and elusive creature to an obscure place in the background. We had finished the beat, and most of us had emerged from the swamp to higher ground where an open space, or maidan, corresponding to a drive in an English preserve, but on the grand scale, divided it from the jungle—all our thoughts being set upon lunch—when suddenly across this open space passed a blur of yellow and black only a few yards from the nearest elephant. It was so unexpected and so quick that

even the trained eyes of my companion were uncertain. 'Did you see?' he asked me in a voice of hushed and wondering awe; 'could that have been a tiger?' I could not say, but I understood his excitement. For the tiger is the king of Indian carnivora, the most desired of all game. Hunters date their lives by them: such and such a thing happened not on the anniversary of their wedding day; not when their boy went to Balliol; not when they received the K.C.I.E.; but in the year that they shot this or that man-eater.

That a tiger had really chanced upon us we soon ascertained. Also that it had been hit by the rifle on the first elephant and had disappeared into the jungle, which consisted hereabouts of a grass some twenty feet high, bleached by the sun.

A Council of War followed, and we were led by Bam Bahadur on a rounding-up manœuvre. According to his judgment the tiger would remain just inside the cover, and our duty was therefore to make a wide detour and then advance in as solid a semicircle as possible upon him and force him again into the open, where the hunter who had inflicted the first wound was to remain stationed. Accordingly all the rest of us entered the jungle in single file, our elephants treading down the grass with their great irresistible feet or wrenching it away with their invincible trunks. It was now that the shikaree was feeling the elephant shortage. Had there been seventy-five instead of only twenty-five, he said, all would be well: he could then form a cordon such as no tiger might break through. For lack of these others, when the time came to turn and advance upon our prey he caused fires to be lighted here and there where the gaps were widest, so that we forged onwards not only to the accompaniment of the shrill cries of the mahouts and the noise of plunging and overwhelming elephants, but to the fierce roar and crackle of burning stalks.

And thus, after an hour in this bewildering tangle, with the universe filled with sound and strangeness, and the scent

of wood smoke mingling with the heat of the air, and the lust of the chase in our veins, we drew to the spot where the animal was guessed to be hiding, and knew that the guess was true by the demeanour of the elephants. Real danger had suddenly entered into the adventure; and they showed it. A wounded tiger at bay can do desperate things, and some of the elephants now refused to budge forward any more, or complied only with terrified screams. Some of the unarmed mahouts were also reluctant, and shouted their fears. But the shikaree was inexorable. There the tiger was, and we must drive it out.

Closer and closer we drew, until every elephant's flank was pressing against its neighbour, the outside ones being each at the edge of the open space; in the middle of which was the twenty-fifth with its vigilant rider standing tense with his rifle to his shoulder. The noise was now deafening. Everyone was uttering something, either to scare the tiger or to encourage the elephants or his neighbour or possibly himself; while now and then from the depths of the grass ahead of us came an outraged growl, with more than a suggestion of contempt in it for such unsportsmanship as could array twenty-five elephants, half a hundred men and a dozen rifles against one inoffensive wild beast.

And then suddenly the grass waved, there was a rustle and rush and a snarl of furious rage, and once again a blur of yellow and black crossed the open space. Six or more reports rang out, and to my dying day I shall remember, with mixed feelings, that one of these reports was the result of pressure on a trigger applied by a finger belonging to me. That the tiger was hit again—by other bullets than mine—was certain, but instead of falling it disappeared into the jungle on the other side of the maidan, and again we were destined to employ enclosing tactics. It was now intensely hot, but nobody minded; and we were an hour and a half late for lunch, but nobody minded: the chase was all! The

phrase 'out for blood' had taken on its literal primitive meaning.

The second rounding-up was less simple than the first, because the tiger had more choice of hiding-places; but again our shikaree displayed his wonderful intuition, and in about an hour we had ringed the creature in. That this was to be the end was evident from the electrical purposefulness which animated the old hands. The experienced shots were carefully disposed, and my own peace of mind was not increased by the warning 'If the tiger leaps on your elephant, don't shoot'—the point being that novices can be very wild with their rifles under such conditions. As the question 'What shall I do instead?' was lost in the tumult, the latter stages of this momentous drama were seen by these eyes less steadily and less whole than I could have wished. But I saw the tiger spring, growling, at an elephant removed some four yards from mine, and I saw it driven back by a shot from one of the native hunters. And then when, after another period of anxious expectancy, it emerged again from the undergrowth, and sprang towards our host, I saw him put two bullets into it almost instantaneously; and the beautiful obstinate creature fell, never to rise again.

Vesta Vulgaris



THE power of infinitesimal creatures and the far-reaching effects of their activities were rarely better illustrated than the other day in Berkshire when the honest folk of Farrington, who were expecting to hear the orotund pronouncements of an illustrious and venerable peer on the tenets of Liberalism, had instead to depend for intellectual nourishment upon the comparatively immature eloquence of his youngest son. And why this substitution? Because the

Earl had been stung by a wasp. And it is not so long since one of our county captains was kept out of the cricket-field by another (or possibly the same) insect.

As sluggards gravitate—or should do—to the ant for reformation, so did this incident send me to the authorities on wasps to discover what I could about those terrifying marauders, those miniature tigers of the air. I found much; but the principal fact of all, and one which gives me immense satisfaction, is that the males do not sting. Once again—but I am not going to elaborate this point. This discovery is not only a matter of congratulation among the sterner and less treacherous sex, but it leads me to wonder how many times you and I have quavered under the noisy and venomous menace of a wasp without any reason whatever. Because if it were a male we were safe. Not knowing, we passed again through the degrading gamut of avoidance, dismay, and cowardice, proper (as it turns out) only on receiving a visit from a female of the species. Surely, if Nature could withhold stings from the males, she might go a step further and provide them with visible credentials, give them some distinctive colouring, say red stripes instead of yellow, to denote their sex and honourable intentions. ‘Don’t worry; it’s not a female!’ we ought to be able to remark, casually and at quite long range. But no. Instead. . . . But you have witnessed the humiliating spectacle too often. And it is possible that Nature enjoys watching it too.

Most stings that are implanted in us when, as the child said, the wasps ‘sit down’, are those of the ‘workers’, who are exclusively female. There are also females who do not work, but can, if put to it, sting; but they are not frequent. The ones that sting us are, so to speak, the ‘chars’ of the hive.

For, like their cousins the bees, wasps are divided into workers and drones. The workers, who are exclusively female, are the unfertile ones. As, however, maternity does not impair

their malignant power towards us, it is good news to hear that they all die at the end of each summer. The males die, too, yet since they cannot sting, their demise would not so much concern us but for the circumstance that before they die they take the steps which, among wasps, lead to parentage. Their wives then settle down to hibernate, in crevices of walls and trees, or in the grass or moss, preparing for the spring, when a new colony or community will come into being. Each mother's first duty, as soon as the winter is over, is to make a nest fit for her myriad children to live in.

The nests used to be made of dried wood fibre before paper was invented, but now that paper is so common it is often the chosen building material, and not seldom the cases of old cartridges are employed. Note again Nature's frugality and ingenuity. The cylinder that dealt death to the rabbit in the winter can become in the spring the home, sweet home, of the wasp.

These nests, howsoever constructed, have to be ready in the spring, because it is then that the females must lay their eggs, and it is therefore important that at the time we should be vigilant with our sulphur and gunpowder and prussic acid, because if a nest can be located and destroyed early enough, there will be fewer wasps—and, therefore, fewer stings—in the neighbourhood. But one must not destroy too lightly, for there are always two sides to a question. True, the wasp is a nuisance; but it is true also that he has his uses. So far as the ordinary non-scientific eye can discern, the principal functions of a wasp are to impel market gardeners towards the bankruptcy court, to disarrange Berkshire flower shows, to get involved in the marmalade, and to destroy picnics. But they do more than that. They are the deadly foes of blow-flies, on which they feed their multitudinous young and they themselves eat caterpillars, which otherwise would eat things that, but for them, we, the lords of creation, would ourselves like to consume.

To return to the nest, which we will suppose undestroyed, Nature's diabolical cunning further arranges that the first babes to be born are workers, so that the mother at once has assistance in enlarging the nest, which, like roadmending in London, is a continuous process, and in feeding the larvæ. In the course of one summer one nest may produce as many as thirty thousand wasps: a solemn thought. The workers having all been born and set to their various tasks, one of which is to sting retired statesmen and cricket captains, the drones begin to stroll in, the fully developed females and the males. These have larger apartments than the others, and require, I imagine, a great deal of attention (which it would go ill with the workers if they did not supply), their sole occupation being to prepare for next year's families. And so it goes on, and always will, for neither man nor the other forces ranged against the wasps can prevail. His chief enemies, by the way, next to ourselves, who put up, however, only a spasmodic fight, are the *Rhipiphorus paradoxus* and the *Libea linearis*. These imposing-sounding creatures are, as a matter of fact, beetles who batten and flourish on the wasp's larvæ. What animal eats the two beetles I have not learned; but that symmetrical old lady, Dame Nature, would see to it that they did not escape.

The Squirrel ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪

SEPTEMBER being the squirrel's month, I was not so surprised as I might have been, when, the other morning, intent upon resting by a certain gate where a woodland prospect opens, I found it already occupied by a little gentleman in a russet fur coat and white waistcoat engaged in cracking a nut exactly as in the picture by Landseer engraved by Samuel Cousins. For awhile he disregarded my approach;

he then by some magical means proper to squirrels gained the safety of an oak tree, and half-way up the trunk turned to stone, another of the squirrel's marvellous accomplishments.

But what a little duffer, I thought, not to stay and make friends! because what grown-up person would ever want to do anything but ingratiate himself with so fascinating a creature? A pity that squirrels are so slow to learn this. So far as I know, the only living human being whom they have permitted themselves to trust is Lord Grey of Fallodon (not a bad choice), although not long ago there was an American art critic settled in our midst, named W. J. Stillman, whose relations with two of them called Billy and Hans were of the most cordial; and in old books one often finds references to the possibility, although with great difficulty attended, of the taming of such shrews.

Thus, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (why is there no *Gentleman's Magazine* to-day?) as long ago as 1788 a correspondent remarks in a letter, 'a squirrel sits by me while I write this, who was born in the spring of 1781, and has been mine nearly seven years. He is frequently suffered to expatiate in my garden; he has never of late been tempted to wander beyond it; he always climbs up a very high ash tree, and soon after returns to his cage or into the parlour.' I am not sure about Lord Grey's experience, but the consensus of opinion among those persons who have domesticated squirrels is that you can never be sure. At any moment they may bite the hand that feeds them.

From his own observation Sylvanus Urban's correspondent relates that squirrels have exact musical ears; while another correspondent adds that squirrels have been seen to cross rivers on little rafts of bark, using their tails as sails; but this is the kind of thing that I personally, taking my walks abroad, always miss. It is true that, standing one hot Sunday afternoon beside a mountain lake in West Chester

County, in New York State, wondering whether or not I would bathe, I observed a snake swimming across it, with his head out of the water and a forked tongue darting from left to right—one of the most terrifying spectacles of my life—and decided that bathing might be unwise. But that was exceptional. My usual luck is to arrive just when the phenomenal occurrence is over, and probably no one has had his attention drawn to so many shooting stars as I have—after they have finished shooting.

Most squirrels are aloof and suspicious. Even the grey squirrels of Regent's Park and the Zoo, for all their urban habits and familiarity with civilization, are stand-offish; they will accept food, but only in a snatching, timorous way; and there is not, so far as I have observed, a charmer of them, as there are charmers of sparrows and pigeons. If there is, I should like to see him at his pretty task.

By the way, I wonder what the authorities are now saying about the depredations of the squirrel in London. I remember that Sir Fredrick Treves used to write periodically to *The Times* about the 'Grey Peril', but the matter seems to have lost gravity, or something more important has crowded it into the background. Meanwhile, grey squirrels continue to sit on the railings and delight young and old. 'Look at the darlings' we say, although I have a suspicion that in private life the squirrel has a personality little short of venomous.

America, if it has the problem, treats it lightly, for not only in Central Park in New York, but in the beautiful green suburbs of Philadelphia, you see scores of grey squirrels, still and nibbling or scampering about the gardens and fleeing from approaching cars. You also notice rabbits posed quietly and securely on the lawns, apparently in no danger of molestation from man, and free, owing to the absence of walls, fences, or even hedges, to roam wherever they will from one gay white abode to another. For these are two of

the principal differences between England and America: that whereas an Englishman's house is his castle and must be stormed, an American invites you to enter his grounds and inspect, or rather lays them so open to you that you need not trouble to enter: and whereas an Englishman's rabbit is his dinner, to an American, or, at any rate, to a suburban dweller near the City of Brotherly Love, a rabbit is as sacred as to an Egyptian his ibis, to a Hindu his cow, or to a Jain his flea.

Yet American humanity can break down. I find in the *Boston Cook Book* the following sinister entry, under the title 'A Missouri Dainty':—'Cut a carefully dressed young squirrel into pieces for frying; rub each piece with salt, pepper, and dust with a trifle of mace; dredge well with flour and fry to a rich brown in half butter and half lard. Remove——' No, I can't go on; the subject is too painful.

Now in England the squirrel could approach Mrs. Beeton without a tremor, for, so far as I can discover, he has no enemies more deadly than boys, whose aim happily is often infirm, and dogs, whom at one bound he leaves pathetically below. He therefore should, and perhaps does, live for ever. The only dead squirrels that I ever found were babies in a nest that had been blown down in a storm. But although so immune, he is himself only half a vegetarian, for in addition to his nut diet, he kills and eats his fellow-creatures with great cheerfulness, mice and small birds being his favourite morsels. And he looks upon eggs as a special delicacy. Fortunately for the squirrel's general reputation, Landseer didn't paint him in a carnivorous mood.

The Sparrow's Friend



IF you entered the Tuileries any fine morning (and surely the sun always shines in Paris, does it not?) by the gate opposite Frémiet's golden arrogant Joan of Arc, and turned into the gardens opposite the white Gambetta memorial, you were certain to see a little knot of people gathered around an old gentleman in a black slouch hat, with a deeply furrowed melancholy face, a heavy moustache, and the big comfortable slippers of one who (like so many a wise Frenchman) prefers comfort to convention or the outraged opinion of others. All about him, pecking among the grass of the little enclosed lawns, or in the gravel path at his feet, or fluttering up to his hands and down again, were sparrows—*les moineaux*—for this was M. Pol, the famous '*Charmeur d'oiseaux*'.

There is a certain attraction about Nôtre Dame, its gloom and its glass and its history; Sainte Chapelle is not without a polished beauty; the Louvre contains a picture or two and a statue or two that demand to be seen and seen again; but this old retired civil servant with the magic power over the *gamins* of the Parisian roadways and chimney-stacks was far more magnetic to many a tourist. Those other of Baedeker's lions were permanent and would endure, but a frowzy unhappy old man in scandalous footwear who not only charmed the sparrows but quite clearly had confidential understandings with each was a marvel indeed and not to be missed. Nôtre Dame's twin towers on each side of that miracle of a rose window would be there next time; but would M. Pol? That is how we reasoned.

We did well to see him as often as we could, for he is now no more; he died in 1918.

For some time the old man had been missing from his accustomed haunts, through blindness, and Death found

him at his home at Chandon-Lagache, in the midst of the composition of rhymes about his little friends, which had long been his hobby, and took him quite peacefully.

I have stood by M. Pol for hours, hoping to acquire something of his mystery; but these things come from within. He knew many of the birds by name, and used to level terrible charges against them, as facetious uncles do with little nephews and nieces; but more French in character, that is all. One very innocent mite—or as innocent as a Paris sparrow can be—was branded as L'Alcoolique. Never was a bird less of an inebriate, but no crumb or grain could it get except upon the invitation, '*Viens, prendre ton Pernod!*' Another was Marguerite, saucy baggage; another, La Comtesse; another, L'Anglais, who was addressed in an approximation to our own tongue. Now and then among the pigmies a giant pigeon would greedily stalk: welcome too. But it was with his sparrows that M. Pol was at his best—remonstrative, minatory, caustic; but always humorous, always tender beneath.

Latterly he sold a postcard now and then, with himself photographed on it amid verses and birds; but that was a mere side issue. Often strangers would engage him in conversation, and he would reply with the ready irony of France; but he displayed little interest. His heart was with those others. One felt that the more he saw of men the more he liked sparrows.

The French have a genius for gay commemorative sculpture. If a statue of M. Pol were set up on the scene of his triumphs (and many things are less likely), with little bronze *moineaux* all about him, I for one should often make it an object of pilgrimage.

A Self-made Statue

NOT the least of the Zoological Gardens' many attractions is their inexhaustibility. There is always something new, and—what is not less satisfactory—there is always something old that you had previously missed. How is that? How is it that one may go to the Zoo a thousand times and consistently overlook one of the most ingratiating denizens, and then on the thousand-and-first visit come upon this creature as though he was the latest arrival?

There the quaint little absurdity was, all that long while, as ready to be seen as to-day, but you never saw him, or, at any rate, you never noticed him. The time was not yet.

Yesterday, for me, the hour of the Prairie Marmot struck.

I had been watching a group of wounded soldiers drifting round the Zoo. It was very hot, and they were bored. They stopped at each cage, it is true, but with only a perfunctory interest in most; but when suddenly one of the little free squirrels made his appearance in the middle of a path, a galvanic current ran through them, and their visit to the Zoo became an event. Every member of the Blue Brigade made an individual effort to coax and conciliate the little scamp; but in vain. The squirrel had the time of its life. It went through its whole repertory of rapidities and evasions. It approached, and then, with lightning swiftness, retreated. It sat up and it crouched; it waved its tail and was waved by it. It looked a thousand ways at once. It was shy and it was bold, but it was never bold enough; no soldier, with whatever outstretched bribe, could ever quite get it. There is, however, caprice in these matters, for when a lieutenant who had been looking on stooped down and held out a nut, the squirrel instantly took it and sat perfectly still beside him while eating it.

No doubt the squirrel takes a pleasure in its capricious

flirtations with danger, but certain it is that it would lose very little fun and no food at all if it were always friendly; while the joy and excitement—I am sure excitement is the word—of the lords of creation and their families who visit the Zoo would be enormously greater.

Moving on, I was conscious, for the first time, of the Prairie Marmot.

Countless are the times that I have passed the enclosure which, though the Prairie Marmot shares it with the grey squirrel, its North American compatriot, really belongs to neither of them, but to pigeons and sparrows. No doubt you know this enclosure; it has on one side of it the aquarium where the diving-birds pursue their live prey with such merciless zest and punctuality every day at 12 and 5, and on the other is De Mattos' sculptured group of the giant negro in conflict with the angry mother of cubs.

Coming unconsciously upon this enclosure, I was suddenly aware of the oddest statuette. Pigeons, squirrels, and sparrows were moving restlessly about in the eternal quest for food, and in their midst, obviously made of stone, although coloured to resemble fur, was the rigid effigy, some ten inches high, of as comic a creature as a human artist ever designed. There this figure stood, without a flicker. And then, a small girl with a bag approaching the railings, he came to life in a flash, the perpendicular suddenly gave way to the horizontal, and he trotted down to meet her much as any other rodent would do.

The Prairie Marmot is a rat-like creature, but blunter, stockier, twice as big, and light brown in colour. The learned, of course, after their wont, know him by a lengthier and more imposing name. Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, for example, who controls the Zoo so ably and with such imagination, would never say Prairie Marmot on those occasions when he has questions to ask as to its well-being in captivity. Nothing so commonplace. 'And, by the way,'

he would add, having been satisfied as to the good health of the elephants and the water-beetles, the avadavats and the hartebeests—‘and, by the way, how is the *Cynomys Ludovicianus*? Does he seem to thrive? Does he prosper and multiply, or is the competition of the *Columba Londiniensis*’ (meaning the Metropolitan pigeon) ‘too much for him?’ But whatever you call him, the Prairie Marmot remains a most ingratiating creature, and when you see him with his two tiny hands holding a monkey-nut and consuming it with eager bites you feel that it must have been of him that the well-worn phrase, ‘to sit up and take nourishment’, was first used.

In the unimportant intervals between these two actions—this vertical eating and the sudden transformation of himself into stone, which is his greatest gift and which he does so often that he has worn his poor tail into a threadbare stump—the Prairie Marmot is of no particular interest. He just creeps about or disappears into his crater in the bank. But as his own statue—so perfect as not only to be the despair but the bankruptcy of sculptors—he is terrific. And the change is so swift. One moment he is on all fours, and the next he is a rock, as though a magician had waved his wand.

Henceforth no visit to the Zoo will be, to me, complete without few minutes’ contemplation of the *Cynomys Ludovicianus* in his quick-change turn.

The Fearless Pet



AFTER having spent many years in considering the problem, I have come to the conclusion that the happiest life is that which is spent in a well-appointed home by a fearless pet.

I was helped to this belated decision by the contemplation of a tame jackdaw.

I had long known the wild jackdaw in his two commonest spheres of interest: both as a vigilant observer and probably severe critic of deans and chapters from a point of vantage on cathedral spires; and also as a black ghost flitting on silent wings from hollow trees, a marauder with no language but a cry, yet plenty of that. But not till a week or so ago did I find myself in a country house in which, although the master pays the rates and taxes and arranges for repairs, and the mistress orders the meals, and other persons have their duties, the sole authority is a jackdaw with one clipped wing. This kind of masterful fowl was new to me, and I confess that for a while I shrank from him and covered my ears when he issued his discordant orders. (If the ornithological books are to be believed, the jackdaw's voice, in captivity, approximates to those of the family that he dominates. I hope there are exceptions to this rule.)

To the timid, among whom I count myself almost chief, there is something terrifying in this great bird's beak, so long and sharp; in the red cavern that he exposes when he says—what says he?—caw; in the calculating coldness of his searching blue eye. The eyes of all birds are disconcerting, for you know not where they look, and, even more, where they do not look (the pelicans in St. James's Park are excellent examples); but the jackdaw is so much more aggressive and purposeful, and takes rebuffs so much less seriously, that this blue eye of his is peculiarly frightening. 'What is he plotting now?' you ask yourself. 'What is the next uncanny project?' And you carefully remove your signet ring, if you wear one, and secrete it in a pocket, lest it and your fingers are snapped up simultaneously.

At first, as I say, he had me trembling; nor did the fact that he closely resembled two friends of mine, an historian and a yachtsman, seem to help. But when, suddenly, as I

was reading a book in the garden, he alighted on my knee, I fell beneath his sway. After that I also was his slave, and most of my lunch found its way into that scarlet tunnel, for he sat then on the back of the chair; and now all meals seem insipid for want of such a familiar. I have known many varieties of pet, and not a few of them fearless, but it would seem, if this bird is typical, that the jackdaw exceeds all in assurance and instant expression of his demands.

A happy life! What his doubts and fears may be, I know not; he gives no sign of any of the fever and the fret that line our brows; all that you are aware of is an intense craving for adventure, which is usually gratified, a constant hunger punctually assuaged, and a desire for the society of men and women—his true peers, that is to say—which in his particular case is fulfilled. There comes, it is true, a time when the wicker gate of his cage is opened, and he is ordered to enter it, but even that restriction has its compensating fun, for he leads the whole place a dance for some twenty minutes every evening, before consenting to enter, and rejoices in every dodge and double. It is only during these twenty minutes that he refuses to come when he is called; it is only then that pieces of buttered toast have no allure.

Fearful of him as I was, the first time that this uncanny fowl sat on my knee I experienced a thrill of satisfaction, as well as being conscious of the birth of thralldom. That a bird should do this bold thing, uninvited, full of trustfulness, was so wonderful. That is the way to flatter us, to get us, if they only knew! And especially attractive is it when the overture is made by one of those ethereal, mysterious beings that fly. If I were walking in a deer-park and a fawn trotted out and nuzzled against my hand, I admit that I should be conscious of an enormous personal triumph; I should look on myself as a creature apart. But, in the main, such an attention from a quadruped is merely gratifying, not exciting: a fact due, I suppose, to our companionship with horses,

cows, dogs, and cats; or, at any rate, to our being accustomed to them. But to be treated spontaneously as the friend of a bird of the air—one of the miracles of creation—that is an honour indeed, and one of the highest. I suppose that to be intimately the friend of a fish or intimately to have a fish for a friend would be the ultimate ecstasy. But birds can be so aloof that you may judge of my renewed pride and delight when, in the same garden, a white fantail pigeon fluttered out of the blue sky and settled gently on my arm. Normally I consider myself as anything but a 'charmeur d'oiseaux': I am too busy, too restless: the rôle needs indolence and infinite time and patience; and so my surprise and pleasure were the greater. Nor, although I had no grain at hand to appease it, did it at once fly away, but remained long enough for me to see how pink were its feet, how pink was its beak, and how crimson its eye-rims.

And this reminds me that if a certain London bank manager is wondering why one of his messengers was so late in returning to the office the other day, I can tell him. I don't know the bank, but the messenger is tall and thin and dignified; he has the usual quiet tail-coat uniform, a tall hat, and satchel. But he carries something else besides cheques and bills and investments: he carries bird-seed; and whenever his way lies anywhere near Trafalgar Square he stops to feed the pigeons. I have seen pigeons fed by many persons in many lands, but never have I seen a man so beset by pigeons, so covered with pigeons, as this bank messenger. They were on his topper, his shoulders, his arms, his hands, two or three were eating at his lips, and the air was full of the beating wings of others waiting to alight, like cherubim in an old Nativity picture.

To return to my own pigeon, its life and that of its spouse, an inflated fellow with a ridiculous strut, could not well be happier. They have everything they want, and in addition every kind of extra titbit and attention from the household.

For my point is that if the ordinary routine of a domestic pet is happy, how much happier must it be when intimate association with mankind is superimposed! Most of us would like to be friends with some dumb animal, and how seldom can it be contrived! When it is, how we value it; and, similarly, how they must value it too! The pity is that so very few of them are sufficiently fearless to be able to bridge the gulf.

Animals in Communication



A PARAGRAPH, first in a morning paper and then in an evening, tells the world that Mr. Hutson, a postman, crossing a pasture near Grimsby, was approached by a cow lowing piteously and occasionally running to a corner of the field. Following, he found a calf at the bottom of a dry well. The calf was rescued, whereupon the cow showed her delight by unmistakable signs. This incident proves, if proof of anything so obvious were needed, that animals have it in their power to communicate with us.

But what I want to know is: How do they communicate with each other?

It is certainly not by actual speech. Those movements of the lips and tongue and teeth which we bring into play in order to tell each other that it is another wet day, are not, so far as my observation goes, in use among horses, cattle, dogs, or cats. A cat, it is true, purrs, and there may be gradations and subtleties in purring that correspond to speech; but, on the other hand, one does not hear two cats purring at one another. When cats address each other—at any rate, at night—they emit sounds which can so easily be construed into conversation that they had better pass quickly from this inquiry.

But horses and cattle? Beyond the neigh of one horse to another across the hedge, or a bereaved mother's desolate keening for her calf, they are mute; and one rarely sees them even in the attitude of exchanging confidences. For the most part, when two horses or two bullocks are together, it is to join forces in repelling the attacks of flies. They had, however, to let each other know that such combined strategy would be valued. How did they do it? How do they communicate? Is it telepathy?

When we say the dumb animals, always with pity, or, at any rate, conscious of the superiority of our own articulate voices (although how seldom one hears anything good, or says a good thing to the right listener!), we mean quadrupeds. That those other bipeds, birds, talk together, everyone is agreed. They are talking all the while, and it is doubtful, however monotonous their song may sound, if they say the same thing oftener than we do. You have only to set up in your garden a table with crumbs punctually scattered on it to realize that there is a very complete system of broadcasting among sparrows and chaffinches, robins and tits. More accurately, I should say, a very complete system of broadcasting between sparrows and sparrows, chaffinches and chaffinches, and tits and tits. For I have observed that each of these species hates the other, and as for the dear little robin, emblem of Peace and Goodwill on our Christmas cards, he is the greediest, most selfish, and least tolerant of them all. But that most birds talk together, whether their words are abusive or not, is clear. As for rooks, when we are near their assembly we can, of course, actually hear what the discussion is about, for rooks in trees use words far more distinctly than many of those that are intended to reach the Press Gallery in the derivative imitation rookery at Westminster.

I have been referring to the human faculties for articulation and exchange of ideas as though they were perfect; but

even with the apparatus of lips, tongue, and teeth that we, the lords of creation, can flaunt so triumphantly at four-footed creatures—our poor dumb friends—we sometimes fail to communicate to others our own meaning. I was never so astonished in my life as one day in Birmingham during the cricket season of 1924 (peace to its splashes!), when the taxi that was taking me, as I hoped and believed, to the county ground to see the opening of the first Test match, drew up at a forbidding-looking building in one of Birmingham's most ill-favoured streets (and she has a plethora of them), and, as I did not get out but sat solidly on, the driver descended and opened the door with 'Here you are.'

Anything less like a cricket ground the puny and finite mind of man could hardly conceive. 'What do you mean?' I said—I hope like a perfect gentleman, but fear the worst.

'The Synagogue,' he replied; 'you told me to drive to the Synagogue.'

To return to this question of the communication of quadrupeds—the commonest case that comes under our eyes is that of dogs. When do dogs talk? We know from their escapades that dogs can incite each other to mischief; but is that the result of speech, or is it done by example? How does a naughty adventurous terrier persuade a mild home-keeping spaniel to go hunting? Is it by the visible lure of escape, by the actual sight of himself gaily scampering across the field in the direction of the burrows, or has he used words? Has he said, 'You're an awful mutt to stay here in the garden, with a very good chance of being chained up, when there are tons of rabbits over there simply waiting to be chased'? If so, when did he say it, and how?—for who has ever seen a dog's lips move in articulation?

Dogs have sight—wonderful sight, considering how near the ground they are; they have a highly specialized sense of sound; they have the most sensitive noses; they have good

memories and a perfect system of associating ideas; they can utter sounds of welcome, of exasperation and of warning. But can they talk? Although I have kept dogs for many years, I can remember no occasion on which I have seen one go up to another and obviously tell him news.

And the fact remains that there are certain things that dogs don't tell each other: such obviously necessary things that one is almost entitled to deduce inability to do so. Take the case of a spaniel with puppies—but first we must assume one or two things; we must assume that a spaniel has a mother's affection, and also that she does not want her offspring unduly to suffer. That is reasonable, isn't it? But who that has kept dogs has ever found a puppy with its mother still on the premises any easier to train than a puppy ravished from the maternal embrace and brought from a distance? Certainly the yelps of pain or protest, the cries of fear, ring out under both conditions, and a word of counsel from the mother, were she there, would save them all. But it does not. The misdemeanours go on, and the whackings go on. It looks almost as if the mother really were dumb, after all.

The Italian Question



THERE are, no doubt, matters of importance which must always agitate the minds of Italian senators and the souls of Italian reformers; the country of Dante, Garibaldi, and D'Annunzio cannot for long be without deep and vital problems, political and social: but for me, in that otherwise delectable land, the dominant question is, What becomes of the mosquito while you are hunting for him? (I say 'him', although, of course, there are supporters of the theory that mosquitoes are feminine. But I know he is a he, and I know his name, too: it is, for obvious reasons, Macbeth.)

This is my procedure. I undress, then I put on a dressing-gown and slippers, and, lifting the mosquito curtains, I place the candle inside them on the bed. Then, with the closest scrutiny, I satisfy myself that there is no mosquito inside, as indeed Eleanora, the handmaid, had done some hours earlier, when she made the bed. '*Niente, niente,*' she had assured me, as she always does. None the less, again I go carefully round it, examining the net for any faulty hanging which might let in an insect ascending with malice from the floor.

This being done, I creep through, blow out the candle, and go to sleep.

I have slept perhaps an hour when a shrill bugle-call, which I conceive in my dreams to be the Last Trump, awakens me, and as I awake I realize once again the melancholy fact that it is no Last Trump at all, but that there is, as there always is, a mosquito inside the curtains.

Already he has probably bitten me in several places; at any cost he must be prevented from biting me again. I sit up and feel my face all over to discover if my beauty has been assailed; for that is the thing I most dread. (Without beauty what are we?) I lie quite still while I do this, straining to catch his horrid song again; and suddenly there it is, so near that I duck my head swiftly, nearly ricking my neck in doing so.

This confirming my worst fears, there is nothing for it now but to lift the curtains, slip out on to the cold stone floor, light the candle, and once again go through the futile but necessary movement of locating and expelling a mosquito.

That there will be none to expel, I know.

None the less I crawl about and peer into every corner. I shake the clothes, I do everything that can be done short of stripping the curtains, which I am too sleepy to do. And

then I blow out the candle for the second time and endeavour to fall asleep again.

But this time it is more difficult: Macbeth has performed his pet trick too thoroughly. At last, however, I drowse away, again to be galvanized suddenly into intense and dreadful vigilance by the bugle shrilling an inch from my ear.

And so once again I get up and once again the pest vanishes into nothing. . . .

The next time I don't care a soldo if he is there or not, I am so tired; and the rest of the night is passed in a half-sleep, in which real mosquitoes and imaginary mosquitoes equally do their worst, and I turn no hair. And then, some years later, the blessed dawn breaks and spreads and another Italian night of misery passes into glorious day; and, gradually recognizing this bliss, I sit up in bed and begin to tear away at the fresh poison in my poor hands and wrists, which were like enough to a map of a volcanic island in the Pacific yesterday, but now are poignantly more so.

And suddenly, as I thus scratch, I am conscious of a motionless black speck on the curtain above me. . . .

It is—yes—no—yes—it is Macbeth.

I agitate the gauze, but he takes no notice; I approach my hand, a movement which in his saner moments he would fly from with the agility of electricity; he remains still. He is either dead or dazed.

I examine him minutely and observe him to be alive, and the repugnant truth is forced upon me that he is not merely drunk, but drunk with my blood. That purple tide must be intoxicating; and his intemperance has been his ruin.

There is only one thing to be done. I have no paltry feelings of revenge; but his death is indicated. The future must be considered. And so I kill him. It is done with the greatest ease. He makes no resistance at all: merely, dying,

saluting me with my own blood. It is odd to have it thus returned.

A good colour, I think, and get up, conscious of no triumph.

Then, going to the glass, I discern a red lump on my best feature. . . .

Places and People

Swinburne and 'The Pines'



PERHAPS the most interesting experience was the evening I spent at 'The Pines', to see Swinburne's copy of the works of George Wither, with Lamb's marginalia, and to hear his eulogies of Elia. Having written for permission to call, the reply came from Watts-Dunton, in the form of an invitation to dinner, and naturally I was only too happy to accept, the one bitter drop in the cup proceeding from the circumstance that I had never read *Aylwin*. Fortifying myself, however, with the forlorn hope that possibly no reference to that work would crop up, I ascended the steps of 'The Pines', a gloomy genteel residence which, on the face of it, looked less likely than any suburban semi-detached villa to harbour genius.

I was shown into the room where dinner was immediately to be served, and had but time to note that it was hung with Rossettis when Watts-Dunton came in and greeted me. 'The Bard', as he called Swinburne, would be down directly, he said; and after a minute or so dishes were placed on the table, which was laid for three, and the poet made his entrance.

This, my first sight of Swinburne, I am not likely to forget, since various other preconceptions instantly crumbled away. For one thing, though he was as short as I had supposed, his body was by no means the inconsiderable affair that, from many testimonies, one had thought it. On the contrary, it was marked by solidity, and below the waistline was not less ethereal than that of many a trencherman who had never written at all or anything but prose. His face, too, which was highly coloured, bore further signs that

materialistic interests were not outside his scheme of life. The eyes were fixed and mirthless. Above the eyes, however, all was different and magnificent—a dome, lofty and aloof as one could ask, curiously like Shakespeare's. His hair, a ruddy grey, was thin; his beard, the same colour, was fuller than I had expected. But his whole person was informed by prandial intentness. It had neither vivacity nor spiritual suggestion.

When I say that the poet made his entrance, I use the words carefully, for there was ceremonial about the action. He can be said to have moved both impressively and absurdly, in a posture so erect that it passed beyond the perpendicular and inclined a little backwards. What added the ultimate touch of unexpectedness was the fact that in his hand was a bottle of either beer or stout—I forget which. Grasping this firmly in front of him, the author of *Atalanta in Calydon* advanced to his chair, on the right of the head of the table, and sat down. Of me he took no notice whatever. Either he was wholly occupied in his own meditation, which his friend was not so maladroit as to interrupt in order to introduce me, or being so used to the apparition of unattractive strangers at the evening meal, and conscious of his own deafness and consequent difficulty as a conversationalist, he had arranged to be relieved from intercourse with them. I cannot say which. I only know that such detachment did not add to my comfort. And thus the meal began.

I do not pretend to have enjoyed it. Swinburne for a long time said nothing but applied himself stolidly to his food. From the careful way in which he poured the fluid from his cherished bottle, I gathered that that was his allowance and must be husbanded. Watts-Dunton spoke solely to me, chiefly of Borrow and himself, and the situation was not relieved by his question whether I recollected a certain passage in *Aylwin* which touched upon the very theory he happened to be then developing. To my dying day I shall

count it for virtue, against how many deflections from the right path, that I had the courage to reply that I was still a stranger to that classic. The entrance of the sweets at this moment made a diversion so gracious that if I could meet that parlourmaid to-day I would go on my knees to her.

It was then that my host addressed his first remark to the poet, asking him whether he would have the pudding, whatever it was, or a jam tart?

The poet replied that he would have a jam tart.

'Ah! Swinburne,' said the critic, roguishly, in a deep theatrical voice, raised to penetrate the poet's deafness, 'I knew you would choose a jam tart.'

Another visitor to this convivial home assures me that Watts-Dunton always called the Bard 'Algernon'; but I feel certain of the collocation of 'Swinburne' with jam tart: my ears still retain the music.

The ice thus broken, Swinburne was informed in equally profound tones of my identity and mission, and reminded of my letter, and, the name of Lamb obviously touching one of his softest spots, for the first time looking in my direction he gave me a glance of welcome, thus kindling in me the only suggestion of warmth or of anything but constraint that I had yet felt.

It was then that, possibly feeling that my reception had not been of the most cordial and wishing to make me thoroughly at home at 'The Pines', Watts-Dunton proceeded to greater efforts.

'You remember, Swinburne,' he began, and here I may say that the conversation of these two intimates, who had lived together for so long and, one supposes, with so much understanding of each other, was oddly artificial to the stranger's ear. They spoke to each other not only like a book, and a very stilted one, but as if they had but just met. When absolutely alone they may have relaxed, but of that I know

nothing. 'You remember, Swinburne,' Watts-Dunton resonated, 'that Canon Ainger once paid us a visit for a similar purpose.'

The poet remembered.

'And you remember, Swinburne,' his friend continued, 'that we thought him a very poor creature.'

'Yes,' the poet echoed, 'a very poor creature.'

This manœuvre having naturally put me completely at my ease, they turned to talk of Lamb, or rather of his friend, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, who poisoned Miss Abercrombie because she had such thick ankles. Both now became animated. Concerning Wainewright the poet had a store of theories and some curious but not printable anecdotes which he had derived from another of Lamb's friends, Barry Cornwall. It was a mystery to him, he said, that Lamb with all his acuteness had been taken in by Wainewright—or 'Janus', as Lamb called him. The man must have had a very patent spuriousness. Still, everyone has a blind spot; and so forth. The talk remained with Wainewright and other poisoners until the meal ended.

After dinner Swinburne left the room first, again carrying in his recessional march his bottle, in which a few precious drops still remained, and in a short while we followed him to a large room upstairs, full of books, where he had spread out his Lamb treasures all ready for me. Chief of these was the edition of *Wither*, with marginalia, and he was just beginning to be exceedingly interesting, talking with animation and enthusiasm and rotund eloquence, when Watts-Dunton, tapping my arm and remarking that it was 'time to leave the Bard, or he would not sleep', led me out of the room and downstairs. It seemed to me that Swinburne resented this interruption of a conversation which was clearly very near to his sympathies—for he knew Lamb's life and writings minutely—but I may have been mistaken. Anyway, my turn was over.

On Epitaphs ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

NOR long ago I was staying in a village where the shortest cut to the inn lay through the churchyard, and passing and repassing so often I came to know the dead inhabitants of the place almost better than the living. Not with the penetrating knowledge of the author of *Spoon River Anthology*—that very extraordinary and understanding book—but in a kindly superficial way. Indeed, considering that they were total strangers and their acquaintance not now to be made by any but the followers of those doughty knights of the round (or square) séance table, Sir Oliver and Sir Conan, some of these dead people were absurdly often in my thoughts; but that was because of their names. Such names! Many of course were no longer legible, for Father Time had either obliterated them with his patient finger, dipped now in lichen and now in moss, or upon them his tears had fallen too steadily. But many remained and some of them were wonderful. Has it ever been explained why the dead have more remarkable names than the living? Did anyone ever meet ‘in the form’ a Lavender Wiseways? Yet there was a Lavender Wiseways lying beneath one of those stones. There was her sister too, lying close beside—Lavinia Wiseways. Neither had married; but then how could they have performed a deed which thereby lost them such distinction! And who now exchanges market greetings, with a gaitered gentleman named Paradine Ebb? Yet once there was a Paradine Ebb, farmer, not such a great distance from London, to shake by the hand, and chat to, and buy fat stock from, and, I hope, share a cordial glass with. And who—but if I continue I shall betray the village’s name, and that is against good manners. Too many real names get into print in these inquisitive days.

It was not however of strange dead names that I was

thinking when I took up my pen, but of the epitaphs on the tombstones, sometimes so brief and simple, sometimes so long and pompous, and almost always withholding everything of real importance about the occupants of the narrow cells beneath and almost always affecting to despise the precious gift of life. Why should not someone, greatly daring, go so far as to bid the mason engrave a tribute to the world that is being left behind? Would that be so impious? There is no indication that any of these dead ever enjoyed a moment.

Something like this, for instance:

HERE LIES

HENRY ROBINSON

WHO LIVED IN THE BELIEF—AND,
WITH MANY FAILURES, DID HIS
BEST TO ACT UP TO IT—THAT IF
YOU SPEND YOUR TIME IN TRYING
TO MAKE THINGS BETTER IN THIS
WORLD, THE NEXT CAN TAKE CARE
OF ITSELF.

The whole insincere suggestion of most churchyards now is that life has been spent in a vale of tears: a long tribulation, merely a preparation for another and better world. But we know that that is not usually the case, and we know that many lives, although unrelated to graveyard ideas of decorum and insurance, are happier than not. There is in the God's Acre of which I am writing more than appeal to the living to be wary of earthly serenity: surely a very unfair line for the dead to take and not unremindful of the fable of the fox and his tail. An elaborate stone close by the lych gate has a series of dreary couplets warning the passer-by that the next grave to be dug may be his; and on the assumption that he is being too happy he is adjured to a morbid thoughtfulness. The dead might be kinder than

that, more generous, more altruistic! I should like a head-stone to bear some such motto as:

‘DIE AND LET LIVE.’

But not only do the epitaphs suggest that life below is a snare; they are by no means too encouraging about the life above. The spirit they proclaim is a very poor one. Nothing can make death attractive; but even if some golden-mouthed advocate should arise whose eloquence half persuaded, the churchyard would beat him. The damp of it, the gloom of it, the mouldiness of it, the pathetic unconvincing efforts at resignation which the slabs record! We ought to be braver; more heartening to others. A rector who allowed none but cheerful epitaphs would be worth his tithes.

Would there be any very impossible impropriety in such an inscription as this:

HERE LIES
JOHN SMITH
WHO FOUND EARTH PLEASANT AND
REJOICED IN ITS BEAUTIES AND EN-
JOYED ITS SAVOURS; WHO LOVED
AND WAS LOVED; AND WHO WOULD
FAIN GO ON LIVING. HE DIED
RELUCTANTLY, BUT WISHES WELL
TO ALL WHO SURVIVE HIM.

CARPE DIEM.

Reading that, the stranger would not necessarily (I hope) be transformed into a detrimental Hedonist.

And now and then a human foible might be recorded by the stone mason without risk of undermining society's foundations. When our friends are dead why should we not disclose a little? Some secrets are better out. Here for example:

HERE LIES
 (in no expectation of immortality)
 THOMAS BROWN
 HE WAS NO FRIEND OF THE
 CHURCH BUT HE PAID HIS WAY,
 INTERFERED WITH NONE OF HIS
 NEIGHBOURS, AND HIS WORD WAS
 HIS BOND.

What would happen if Thomas Brown's friends paid for such lapidary style as that? Would the world totter? Again:

HERE LIES
 MARY JONES
 THE WIFE OF WILLIAM JONES.
 HONOUR HER MEMORY, FOR SHE
 WAS LENIENT WHEN HER HUSBAND
 WAS IN LIQUOR.

I should also like to see memorial verses beginning:

Physicians sore
 Long time I bore.

Kensington Gardens



FOR more than half a century the humorist gravelled for matter has found the ugliness of the Albert Memorial an easy escape from his difficulties. To mention it is to raise a laugh.

But is it so ugly?

Conceiving that the time was ripe to put my own authentic impressions above hearsay, I made a pilgrimage to this shrine on an afternoon during the recent enchanted weather and subjected it to the most careful examination.

I was amply repaid. Alike when resting on the comfortable seats around its enclosure, taking in the structure as a whole (as well as the evolutions of a band of Girl Guides would

permit), or when scrutinizing its sculptures at close range, I was pleasantly entertained, and I came to the decision that the Albert Memorial not only has more in it to attract than to repel, but is a very remarkable summary of the triumphs of Science and Art: as good a lesson book as bronze and stone could compile.

But even if this judgment is wrong, and the Albert Memorial really deserves the facile execration by you and me which so long has been its portion, that is not all. The subject is by no means closed. For you and I are not everybody; we are getting old and tired and exacting, and we are more disposed to complain of what we miss than to be happy with what we find. There are, in the world, others whose attitude is simpler than ours, whose views quite possibly are more important, to whose by no means foolish eyes the Albert Memorial is beyond praise—adequate, stimulating, splendid. I mean children.

Sir Gilbert Scott, the designer of the Albert Memorial, knowing, either consciously or subconsciously—but the result is the same—that the principal frequenters of Kensington Gardens are children, behaved accordingly.

Those coloured pinnacles, those queens and angels high up in the sky under the golden cross, those gay mosaics against the blue, fill them with wondering delight. The emblematical groups of statuary—America with its buffalo and Red Indian, Asia with its elephant, Africa with its giant negro—must be thrilling, too; and when it comes to the great men around the base—the musicians (Gluck's head is really masterly), the poets, with Homer between Shakespeare and Milton, the painters, with Turner transformed to elegance, the architects, the sculptors, all so capable and serene and bland, and all exactly the same height—I am with the children in their admiration.

This mass meeting of the intelligentsia is a reminder of all that is best in literature and art, but most noticeably does

it bring back the memory of great buildings—an unusual emphasis being laid upon those commonly anonymous and taken-for-granted masters, the architects. Indeed, such is this emphasis that Giotto and Michael Angelo each comes into the scheme twice, once as painter and again for structural designs.

The Albert Memorial contains all the materials for a pageant; it is, in fact, a pageant crystallized; and if the myriad figures in the frieze and in the groups were one moonlight night released by the magician who turned them to stone and, coming to life, were to march through Kensington Gardens, they would make, not only an impressive sight, as they wound among the trees, with Asia's elephant leading, but as representative a procession of the shining ones of the earth as Mr. Louis Napoleon Parker could invent.

It is my belief that if only a few jackdaws could be persuaded to make their home in its higher crevices, the Albert Memorial would automatically take its place among the worshipful structures and be mocked at no more. For that is what is needed. Beneath the jackdaw's wing, where so many of our cathedrals repose, sanctity and authority would be conferred upon it. As one looks up to the golden summit, one is conscious of the absence of this discriminating and aloof yet humanizing bird, black against the sky, critical if not actually censorious in his speech, and an unmistakable indication that the building is noteworthy.

Realization



WHY, late at night (under a full moon), should I, walking through a London street, suddenly see Pompeii in a new and terribly vivid way?

I was last in Pompeii in November 1916, on a still, hazy

day. It was doubly deserted, for it had its own normal desertion—the desertion of a city of ruin, a city without one inhabitant or a single roof—and it was deserted also by visitors, and I was struck again by the profound sadness of it all. Even after the centuries that have passed since its tragedy the place is sad; and if trippers can be light-hearted there, even on a spring day, they must be wonderful people. Honeymooners, too—does not Pompeii chill and frighten them? Thinking of Burne-Jones's wistful figures in 'Love among the Ruins', I fancy that it must. Save for a few custodians, I had it to myself, roaming about its streets until I was weary, noting how much had been done by the excavators since I was previously there twenty years before, and for the first time getting some of the bronzes in the Naples Museum into their right environment. I was also for the first time realizing the true scale of the place, for the impressions of the earlier visit had not included the minuteness of the rooms. But they are so impossibly small! Even those in the most sumptuous villas are tiny, while the streets are just alleys. I had forgotten about this. I had forgotten also how often the corner houses, where these alleys meet, are wine-shops, with the receptacles in the marble counter from which the wine—red or white—was ladled forth, often still intact.

A people who insisted on every utensil and household article being beautiful should, one would think after a visit to the Pompeian galleries in the Naples Museum, have had rooms large enough for those things to be seen; women who seem to have spent so much time on the adornment of the person—judging in part by the numbers of toilet-sets, manicure-sets, and so forth—should, one would think, have had spacious corridors and salons in which to make dignified progresses. But they did not. The forum and the theatre are the only buildings of any capacity; for the rest, there is not a room in Pompeii as big as those in a £50 London flat.

When, in 1915, I first passed through some of the destroyed

villages of the Marne, and in particular that portion of the town of Sermaize-les-Bains which was reduced to waste by the Germans, I exclaimed, 'How like Pompeii!' and now, in Pompeii, the recollection of the Marne was strong. But the sadness of the Marne is, of course, more poignant, for the calamities of to-day must ever exceed in gravity those of yesterday. And yet the mere fact that in every ruined French village you see a brave effort being made to save something from the wreck is mitigation. Here and there are always a few huts to which villagers have returned; and the unquenchable fires of human hopefulness and effort rob the Germans of their full triumph. But Vesuvius retains hers.

Being alone and, as I have said, having plenty of time, I was able to assimilate the dead life with a new thoroughness and the weather conditions were fortunate too, for the breathlessness of the day had a suggestion of doom in it, as though the volcano were thinking deeply before once again bursting forth into action or anger. And yet I could only guess at the tragedy. . . .

Quite recently, in a London street, under a full moon, I attained realization. It was the night of an air raid, and the guns were booming, and little flashes in the sky showed where our shells were bursting, when suddenly a shattering explosion was heard, and almost immediately a building some forty yards away broke into flames.

There is a Tube station near by, and to this station, as I reached it, came running four or five women holding hands and pulling each other frantically along, dishevelled and distraught, screaming with terror and sobbing for shelter. It was then that I remembered Pompeii, and saw it, not as I had seen it under the November sky of 1916, but as it was on the fatal day of A.D. 79 when it was overwhelmed and destroyed.

Sicilian Impressions



SICILY, after a week's enchanted sunshine in mid-winter, remains in my mind as a fairyland of oranges under a dominating mountain of changing but constant loveliness. I had often seen oranges on the Riviera, but small and innutritious and grown for show rather than use. It was not till I came to the slopes of Etna that I knew what an orange grove is like, and not till I tasted a little Sicilian mandarin that I knew what the flavour of that sweetest and most aromatic and tidiest of fruits can be. To be picking mandarins from the tree in blazing sun only two nights from London in January is an experience as novel as it was unexpected; but such was my happy lot.

The goat in England is not too ingratiating a creature. It is usually kept singly, on the end of a chain, and is to be approached only with misgivings. Will it respond to kindness or will it bring its armoury into action? Not that to be friendly with a goat is one of my strongest wishes, but one likes domestic animals to be trustworthy. The difference between the goat of the English countryside and the goat of Sicily is as wide as that between the sheep of the weald of Kent and the sheep of the mountains. A flock of goats in Sicily gives you at once the poetry of motion and the poetry of mischief: the old ones staid but graceful in every movement, the kids frisking and leaping with joy. You come upon them suddenly, forty or fifty strong, round a bend in the road, and in an instant the kids are high up on the bank, searching you with their narrow eyes, while the goatherds—dark careless boys, straight out of Theocritus but for their shabby modern clothes—are steering the parents into safety.

The motor-car being unlikely to be popular in Sicily until the island has better roads and more money—and

better roads and more money being distant Sicilian ideals—the donkey should long continue to rule it there. Without the donkey, Sicily, one feels, would be at a standstill; and one comes away with a new respect for this animal, whose character is with us always a kind of a joke, and his existence almost a reproach. But, as in Spain, so in Sicily, one feels that there must be more kinds of donkey than one, and that England has the worst; for the tradition of stubbornness and unwillingness with which our ideas of Neddy are saturated would seem to have no meaning out there, where the donkeys appear to be tractable, and unmistakably are alert and uncomplaining; perhaps proud of the universality of their service. They may be even more proud of the trust reposed in them, for after lunch many of the drivers, however wakeful they may have been in the morning, frankly give up the struggle and fall heavily asleep, leaving it to the animal to steer a safe course home.

There are a few emaciated horses, a few steady, unemotional mules, but everywhere you meet the donkey, laden with a back-load, laden with full panniers, laden with a peasant or even two peasants, laden with all the lot, or drawing one of the gaily coloured Sicilian carts with pictures on its panels. These pictures are representations either of incidents in the life of Christ and the Saints or scenes from the ballet and the drama. It is a grief to me that nowhere did I catch sight of either a carriage builder or an artist at work on the finished cart; and this is odd, considering that all Sicilians carry on their arts and crafts in the streets, outside rather than inside their houses. I saw lace-makers and net-menders, carpenters and basket-weavers, cooks and scullions, all busy, and all surrounded by large families of olive-skinned children with black curly heads; but never a decorator of little carts with scenes from the theatre or the Scriptures. Perhaps if we gave our donkeys such vehicles as these they would be less obstinate.

We might go further and put them into the elaborate harness which the Sicilian peasants are so proud of, glittering with a thousand tiny mirrors and splendid with tassel and pompon and gold. Neddy perhaps awaits such consideration.

But donkeys are not the only Pickfords. As in other lands where the sun is lord, the women seem to work harder than the men, particularly as carriers; and, watching them, one is again struck—as even more, of course, in Oriental countries—by the English disregard of the head. I mean as a bearer. No doubt we use our heads in ordinary ways, although not too conspicuously, as centres of thought and sagacity; but why should one nation carry things on its head while another poses upon it nothing weightier than hats? Every Sicilian peasant girl or woman (and you see only the peasants) carries a basket or a water-jug in this way, moving with stately circumspection, and having the hands free for extra burdens or to lead a child. In England only the porters at the big markets and the muffin-men carry things on their heads, and muffin-men are becoming extinct. An acrobat in the halls now and then exploits a younger brother in this way; but acrobats are usually foreigners: very likely Sicilians, although more probably of Teutonic origin. I noticed that, although when the water-bottle is full it is naturally carried vertically, when it is empty it is laid on its side, on the little pad that intervenes. One washerwoman that I saw at work was folding the linen and laying it piece by piece on her head. I don't say that England is the worse for this neglect of an extra 'arm', but there is no doubt that we should all walk better if we were taught as children to balance water-jugs in the Sicilian and Eastern way.

I have another Sicilian memory that will not soon fade. The waiter. Of all the waiters I have known, Antonio (as I will call him) was at once the simplest, the most solicitous, and the most good-natured. Like most members of that

strange calling, he was working far from his home, which was in Padua. He showed me photographs of his wife and three children, the youngest a little girl. Directly the Sicilian season was over he would rejoin them for awhile until the next season began, wherever it was—perhaps at the Lido; and so through the changing years.

‘What will you do with your two boys?’ I asked him; and his answer proved what a gulf is fixed between the English father and the Italian. He would make the elder a doctor, he said, and the other a waiter. Now can you imagine such a destiny being carved out for two sons of any English parent? The mixture is not known in our country; nor would the medical son tolerate it.

A Glimpse of Civilization

THE sign of this inn, like that of so many in the fair land of France, was ‘Les Quatre Fils d’Aymon’; and who Aymon was, and what his four sons did, I wonder how many English people know. Aymon was the Duke of Dordogne, and his sons were Renaud, Guiscard, Alard, and Richard, and you may read of them in a twelfth-century French romance and in Victor Hugo’s *Légende des Siècles*. So much I can state, but no more. There are certain things that one’s memory will not retain, and the story of Aymon and his four sons is one of them. I have equal difficulty in remembering for certain whether the pen is mightier than the sword or the sword mightier than the pen.

But Aymon and his quartette matter nothing. What does matter is that in a French inn you may be as witty as you can, as intelligent as you can, but someone there will be more intelligent, more witty. We came to this inn, which is some three leagues distant from Paris, about five in the

afternoon on a bitter, snowy day. We made the journey in a motor-car through the bleakest country I ever saw, chiefly over *pavé*, right from the heart of Paris, and the sign of Aymon and his family was the first to greet our eyes, strain them as we might. Hence, since there are few pleasures to compare with that of entering a warm inn while one is on a cold journey, we were very happy when the door closed behind us, and the rays of the circular stove in the middle of the room drew us to it like tentacles.

Where was the *patron*? (We had heard of the *patron* as a character.) The *patron*, being also the chef, was in the kitchen—a vast, clean kitchen, with a glowing fire, and myriad copper pots on the walls; but he very willingly called in a lieutenant, and then brought certain hot cordials and himself to our table. Consider an English inn-keeper being found at five in the afternoon in a spotless kitchen, himself in spotless white, and leaving it to discuss the world at large with two guests of a few minutes! For that is what we did—we discussed affairs. He had the ‘Petit Journal’ before him, and we went through the pictures, and he dismissed men and matters with grunts and chuckles. He knew the world. He had lived and he knew. Napoleon III had once dined in this very inn, and a copper pipkin was still preserved on the kitchen wall in which part of the Imperial meal had been cooked; but it was nothing to our little host. President Fallières lunched there only a few months ago—in that very chair—but that also was nothing to him. Life is an individual business; life comes first; and an inn-keeper has as much life to live as anyone else, be it Emperor or President.

He is a short man, between fifty and sixty, with close-cropped, grizzled hair, a grizzled imperial, and a fierce, grizzled moustache in perpetual danger of being burned by his cigarette. As a young man he was cook to his officers’ mess, chiefly in Algiers, where he had a touch of sun, which

accounts for a certain excitability and nervousness. (At a performance of 'Biribi' at Antoine's Theatre he had to be led out, it was so true and he so over-wrought.) He would certainly have written poetry had his parents been rich. Trouble also he would as assuredly have plunged into; and indeed his life is not too smooth as it is, for he is terribly susceptible (those African sunstrokes!) and Madame had to keep both eyes very wide open before she ceased to care.

In his youth, before his Army period, he had been a valet in London, in Half-Moon Street, and though it was only for a few weeks and he speaks no English, it brings him into touch with English people a little quicker; and after a glass or two, if he likes you and Madame is absent, he will tell you of how the only woman he ever really loved was the English girl that he met in London. But this vein is not to be encouraged, since it ends in tears. For the most part he is a mocker—laughing and cynical—appraising everything and everybody in modern life with a French shrug or a French gesture, never wholly serious and never wholly thoughtless, living in that busy, materialistic French way that makes such contented citizens and such an efficient nation and is yet the despair of every moralist in Tunbridge Wells.

After a while the door opened, letting in an icy blast and a little woman in a plaid shawl. Her head was bare, her light brown hair being pulled back from the forehead in the French way. She had large diamond earrings, a pair of cold blue eyes capable of much surface mirth, and a shrewd calculating face. It was Madame. She sat down at once and began to talk, and talked on, cleverly, commandingly, till we left—cynical as her husband, but more alert. Her readiness was amazing. She took every point and added to it points of her own; while with every new customer that entered for a glass of coffee or cognac or an *apéritif* she had a sentence or two of greeting and jest, flung across to their tables—for in this land of France, where people talk little

of the conduct of life, but live it industriously, every man who wants refreshment may have a seat for his comfort and a table on which to stand his glass, and may sit there as long as he wishes.

On Secret Passages ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

I WAS hearing the other day of an old house in Sussex where, while doing some repairs, the builders' men chanced on the mouth of an underground passage which they traced for two miles. Why should that discovery be interesting? Why is everything to do with underground passages so interesting? It is, I suppose, because they are usually secret, and the very word secret, no matter how applied (except perhaps to treaties), is alluring: secret drawers, secret cupboards, secret chambers; but the secret passage is best, because it leads from one place to another, and either war or love called it into being: war or love, or, as in the case of priests' hiding-holes, religious persecution, which is a branch of war.

Nothing can deprive the secret passage of its glamour: not all the Tubes, or subways, or Thames tunnelling, through which we pass so naturally day after day. Any private excavation is exciting; to enter a dark cellar, even, carries a certain emotion. How mysterious are crypts! How awesome are the catacombs of Rome! How it brings back the lawless, turbulent past of Florence merely to walk through that long passage (not underground but overground, yet no less dramatic for that) which, passing above the Ponte Vecchio, unites the Pitti and the Uffizi and made it possible, unseen by the Florentines, to transfer bodies of armed men from one side of the river to the other!

It was the underground passage idea which gave the Druce Case such possibilities of mystery and romance.

That a duke should masquerade as an upholsterer was in itself engaging; but without the underground passage connecting Baker Street with Cavendish Square the story was nothing more than an ordinary *feuilleton*. I shall always regret that it was not true; and even now someone ought to take it in hand and make a real romance of it, with the double-lived nobleman leaving his own home so regularly every morning (by the trap door), changing *en route* somewhere under Wigmore Street, and appearing unseen (by another trap door) in the Bazaar, all smug and punctual and rubbing his hands. It would be not only thrilling, but such a satire on ducal dulness. And then the great Law Court scenes, the rival heirs, the impassioned counsel, the vast sums at stake, the sanction of the judge to open the grave, and finally the discovery that there was no body there after all—nothing but bricks—and the fantastic story really was fact! There has been no better plot since *Monte Cristo*, and that, you remember, would be nothing had not the Abbé Faria excavated the secret passage from his cell through which Edmond was able to re-enter the world and start upon his career of symmetrical vengeance.

What, of course, gave such likelihood to the Druce allegations was the circumstance that the Duke of Portland spent so much of his life at Welbeck underground. A man who is known to do that must expect to be the subject of romantic exaggerations.

Another reason for wishing the Druce story to be true is that, if it were true, if one aristocrat thus duplicated and enriched his life, others also would do so; for there are no single instances; and this means that London would be honeycombed by secret underground passages constructed to promote these entertaining deceptions, and shopping would become an absorbing pastime, for we should never know with whom we were chaffering. But alas. . . !

Just as an ordinary desk takes on a new character directly

one is told that it has a secret drawer, so does even a whisper of a secret passage transfigure the most commonplace house. Arriving in Gloucester not so very long ago and needing a resting-place for the night, I automatically chose the hotel which claimed, in the advertisement, to date from the fourteenth century and possess an underground passage to the cathedral. The fact that, as the young lady in the office assured me, the passage, if it ever existed, no longer is accessible, made very little difference: the idea of it was the attraction and determined the choice of the inn. The Y.M.C.A. headquarters at Brighton on the Old Steyne ceases to be under the dominion of those initials—four letters which, for all their earnest of usefulness, are as far removed from clandestine intrigue as any four letters could be—and becomes a totally different structure when one is told that when, long before its conversion, Mrs. Fitzherbert lived there, an underground passage existed between it and the Pavilion for the use of the First Gentleman in Europe. Whether it is fact or fancy, I cannot say, but that the Pavilion has a hidden staircase and an underground passage to the Dome I happen to know. A hidden staircase has hardly fewer adventurous potentialities than a secret passage. I was told of one the other day while I was at Greenwich Hospital: in the wing built by Charles II is a secret staircase in the wall leading to the apartments set apart for (need I say?) Mistress Eleanor Gwynne. These rooms, such is the deteriorating effect of modernity, are now offices.

The Hofbrauhaus



‘Do you never look at anything but pictures when you go abroad?’ I was once asked. The question no doubt I brought on myself; and yet there ought, by this time, to

be a certain weight of evidence in the other direction. At Munich, for example, one refreshes oneself for the next day's visit to the Pinakothek by sitting quietly at a place of entertainment watching the living Bavarian at his pleasures. The good Karl Baedeker makes you. On no account, he says, should one miss the Hofbrauhaus; and although it is permissible to look upon some of his instructions as counsels of perfection, this at any rate I obeyed. The only difficulty about the Hofbrauhaus is finding it, for it is hidden away on the Platen, a street in Munich which leads nowhere and to which, in spite of the presence of this palace of conviviality, no other street seems to lead, except by accident. In fact, it is quite easy to overlook the Hofbrauhaus altogether, and to leave Munich, after weeks of toilsome adventure, under the impression that one has seen all, totally unconscious that all the time some half the population of that city, day and night, have been comfortably seated within the Hofbrauhaus walls, not only hidden thereby from one's gaze, but concealed even more completely in other ways, their bodies being invisible in smoke and their faces submerged in their mugs.

I have great difficulty in describing this resort, because we have nothing like it. But I can do something. Think of the largest building you were ever in. Then double it. Give it three floors, and fill it with tobacco smoke. Now you have a rough notion of the Hofbrauhaus. It is as though one entered the Hotel Cecil (shall I say?), and on opening the door found oneself peering into the dark recesses of a hall measureless to man, in which sat thousands of artisans drinking beer; and then climbed a staircase and found smaller rooms filled in the same way; and then climbed again and opened another door and found another room like the first, only higher and brighter, where the middle classes, also in their thousands, or even possibly millions, sat smoking and chattering and drinking beer and then more beer.

If that flight of fancy does not help you to visualize the Hofbrauhaus, I would add the counsel to imagine one of Ostade's tavern scenes modernized as to costume and multiplied to infinity. One difference, however, between the old roisterer and the new is that the old roisterer seems to have got very drunk, and to have preferred an inverted barrel for his table, whereas the new roisterer, as he is to be observed at the Hofbrauhaus, sits in tightly jammed rows at long tables, as though he were a director, and sends pint after pint pursuing each other through his astounding system, with his daughter on one side of him, and his wife on the other, and his old mother, maybe, opposite.

For it is a family resort, this Hofbrauhaus: it is both hearth and club and mahogany tree. It is also a concert-room; for on one of the nights that I visited it I had to pay threepence admission, in order to make one of the millions who listened in rapture and perfect silence to the strains of a violin which emerged ravishingly from the smoky profound. In the intervals of the music I set out to count the mugs which my neighbours were emptying, but the task was too great, and I turned rather to the consideration of the differences between the Münchener and the Londoner, which make it possible for the one to spend his evenings quietly, if extravagantly, thus, with his family about him, and a boundless thirst blessing the board and never disgracing it (for I saw none drunk in this city), while the other, the Londoner, in a similar position, leaving his wife and children in their home, must roam from bar to bar, fuddling his brains, and hearing nothing but gramophones or mechanical pianos whose keys are depressed by no earthly fingers.

Another difference between this temple of Gambrinus and our own drinking-places is that the Hofbrauhaus has one tap only—the Hofbrau. If you do not like it, you stay away; if you do like it, you consume it inordinately. It is brought

by quick little women, far liker old and trusted domestic servants than the barmaids of Albion. Long may they flourish, these efficient and active Hebes! Long may they make it an easy thing for forty thousand Bavarians to drink as one!

Olla Podrida

At Trinity College ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

TO GEORGE WHERRY

AUGUST, 1924

DEAR MR. WHERRY, I was very sorry to read of the death of Charles Sayle, whom I shall always think of as the best kind of self-effacing enthusiastic book-man. On the morning after the Charles Lamb Dinner of 1910 I went round the Trinity Library with him and Aldis Wright, and I remember noticing with what reverence he came to every treasure, although to handle them was, I suppose, his constant task.

It has amused me, at this distance of fourteen years, to set down such impressions as I retain of that visit to Cambridge, hoping that they may amuse you too.

I stayed on that occasion at Trinity College with the Master, the late Dr. Butler, and I was honoured by being given a bedroom with historical associations of a somewhat formidable character, for a brass plate recorded the fact that it had been once occupied, many years before, by Queen Victoria and her Consort. The servant who showed me to it expressed the wish that I would not smoke as I dressed; but he need not have troubled: I should never have dreamed of desecrating such a sanctuary.

I had not yet seen the Master, whom I found waiting in the hall ready to drive to the University Arms Hotel in a brougham; and I was struck by the disparity between his fine great authoritative head, as of a Biblical patriarch, and the soft caressing, almost deferential, voice.

And so we started for the slaughter, I nervous as all public occasions—even so friendly a one as this—make me, and

not in the least fortified by the circumstances that directly we arrived the Master changed his boots; for I wondered if this was one of those sacred Cambridge customs which even strangers ought to know about; and I had but the one pair I was wearing!

I was placed on the Master's right; with you on my other side, and I remember realizing that I had never met a student of Lamb with so much knowledge, zeal, and generosity. Later in the evening I had some talk with one whose work I had long admired and even fattened on—Dr. Giles of the *Chinese Biographical Dictionary*. I also met A. C. Benson for the first time, in the not inconsiderable flesh.

The actual dinner, which piously included sucking-pig, would have been more alluring if the knowledge was not weighing upon me that, when it was finished, I should have, as the guest of the evening, to stand and deliver; but the fact that I had prepared something which could frankly be read made it possible to eat a mouthful here and there and to drink, with less difficulty, the wine that you provided. The Suffragettes were then at the height of their revolt, and I remember creating, before I began to read, a fairly good impression as one who knew his Lamb by suggesting that if they carried out their threat to burn down the Houses of Parliament, they should not waste them but roast a pig or two in the process.

This pleasantry going well, I started to read with the more confidence, but my reading aloud is, as a matter of fact, merely another way of keeping matters secret; and the circumstance that the Master was sleeping softly by my side did not heighten my spirits. As the paper, however, was printed in the following number of the *Cambridge Review* (February 17th, 1910), under the title 'Cambridge and Charles Lamb', in course of time some idea of my drift got about.

When I had finished reading, the Master made a few

apposite remarks in perfectly turned phrases, which showed either that he could slumber with one ear open, or that years and years of familiarity with public speakers had provided him with very definite and accurate data as to their line of attack.

On our return to the Lodge we found Bishop Montgomery, another guest (also of Harrow and Trinity), waiting up for us, in a room to which tobacco might penetrate, and the Master, now wide awake, the Bishop and I sat on for an hour talking not about Charles Lamb but about one of the few subjects to which Lamb never makes any reference whatever, either in his works or correspondence—in short, to cricket: a subject on which the Bishop is an authority. As we talked, the Master, with perfect urbanity, brought the conversation round to some verses of his own which I had unhappily misquoted in a recent book. The famous Harrow poem, in praise of Frederick Ponsonby and the Hon. Robert Grimston, begins thus:

Old Damon and Old Pythias,
They always found together;

but I, being not an Harrovian but only a busybody, had changed the second line to:

Were always found together.

I am glad of the error, because it led to a long digression on Harrow slang and other early reminiscences. The Master's references to cricket ranged from his school days to the banquet in honour of Ranjitsinhji at which he had taken the chair, and, as usual, he seemed to know all.

The next morning Aldis Wright and Charles Sayle came to breakfast, and Aldis Wright filled me with complacency and pride by trusting me to take away the original exercise book in which Edward FitzGerald had written down his

notes on Charles Lamb. I assure you that it was punctually returned.

I see from your list that Walter Raleigh was the guest of the evening in the following year. No one could speak about Charles Lamb better than he, and I have always regretted that the notes of an address he delivered at the Times Book Club were irrecoverable.

Believe me, dear Mr. Wherry,

Yours sincerely,

E. V. LUCAS.

Namesakes and Hermits ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

WITH no wish to be unduly personal, I must record my distress on learning the other day that the name of the most successful forger of pictures nominally by Goya is 'one with mine'. Having seen in Paris a very remarkable series of oil pictures representing scenes in the bull-ring, I was talking about them to a connoisseur of painting, who, true to the tenets of his clan, immediately jumped to the conclusion that they must be by somebody else. (What the authentic painters were doing with their lives is a mystery, because all the pictures that bear their names, or even their hall-marks of style, are forgeries.)

'Very unlikely that they are by Goya,' he said; 'all the Goyas are known; probably they're by Lucas.'

'They look like Goyas,' I replied.

'Yes,' he replied, smiling darkly, 'Lucas was a very clever man.'

Since then I have inquired into the history of this flexible craftsman, who, with considerable talents of his own, was willing to pretend to be someone else (which I should never care to do), and I find that he was baptized Eugenio, and left the world two years after I entered it. The photographs of

much of his work that I have seen are certainly very similar to Goya; but there are other pictures to his name that have individuality. Why then did he forge?

This adaptable Spaniard is one of the Lucases of whom one thinks with mixed feelings. He was, however, only a forger. How am I to express my emotions upon learning that the original of Bill Sykes was also of the tribe of the physician-artist-evangelist? According to a correspondent, Dickens took at any rate the externals of the ruffian in *Oliver Twist* from a rat-catcher at Edmonton named Lucas, who was never without a savage but devoted dog at his heels. Whether or not Dickens ever went to Edmonton, I cannot say: he might have made a pilgrimage thither to get a glimpse of Charles Lamb, who died there when the novelist was twenty-two and whom he revered; but the rat-catcher could have been seen elsewhere, as his range was wide and he was a familiar figure at many an inn between Edmonton and London. Even as late as the sixties, he was faithful to the same cut of clothes: a narrow-brimmed beaver hat, velveteen coat with poacher's pockets, moleskin shorts laced at the knees, woollen stockings and heavy shoes—showing that even if Dickens had not seen him, Cruikshank had. To my relief, however, no stain of turpitude attaches to this forerunner: he merely looked like a tough, as we say now, and practised an unattractive profession; no more. Beneath that velveteen coat may have beaten an honest, unselfish, and ever loving heart.

I pass over certain historical Lucases—including Lamb's darling, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, who was, however, I regret to say, a Lucas only by marriage—and come to a very odd specimen indeed, also far from normal: the Hermit Lucas, or 'Mad Lucas', or 'Squire Lucas', of Red-coat's Green, whom I have a dim and perhaps imagined memory of seeing, through his bars, when I was a very small boy staying either at Luton or Hitchin. As he died when I

was six, four years after Eugenio, the meeting is not impossible. At any rate, the possibility set me upon investigations as to his strange, pitiful and sterile career, and thanks to information from many private sources, to a number of newspaper articles and to a memoir called *The Hermit of Hertfordshire*, published at Hitchin in 1874, and still in print, I have most of the facts.

James Lucas was born in London in 1811 or 1813, the son of a rich Liverpool merchant of Irish extraction. His mother was a Beesley. His one brother, George Lucas, became very wealthy and survived him; of the two sisters, one married the Count de Taaffe, an Austrian, and as a widow resided at Hitchin, and the other married a lawyer named Walker. The family home was Elmwood House at Redcoat's Green, in the parish of Great Wymondley, Hertfordshire, now pulled down, and it was the kitchen of this house that, after mania descended upon him, James Lucas made his abode for thirty-five years.

We have the evidence of a friendly road-mender that the Hermit would walk about at night, but by day he remained in his cell, where he kept a fire always burning, refusing to let the cinders, which gradually filled the room, be removed. There was no glass in the windows, which, with the door, were strongly protected. He ate only bread and milk and herrings, and though he kept large jugs of gin beside him, that fluid was apparently reserved for visitors. His dress was a blanket pinned together, and he had no bed and no chair but the cinder-heap. Later, after an attack on his life by a tramp, he was attended night and day by watchmen. Although isolated thus impregnably, he was by no means a recluse otherwise. He was ready to talk with anyone who stopped, and he asked a thousand questions as to affairs of the moment; while he constituted himself an almoner for the destitute. Sums of money in small coins were regularly sent to him from Sharples' Bank at Hitchin (now absorbed

into Barclay's) and he rarely refused to give. To one of his visitors he said that he had relieved as many as twelve hundred vagrants in a week. To those who could repeat their 'Paternoster' he was specially liberal. As some token of gratitude his vagrant dependants called him 'Squire'.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this pathetic object was his affection for children. He gave a children's party every Good Friday and presented each of his guests with a penny, a hot-cross bun, lollipops, and, if they were equal to it, a glass of gin and water. He had as many as two hundred about him on the last Good Friday of his life. Looking again at the Hermit's photograph, which a correspondent sends me, in which he resembles a terrifying monster in a dime museum, snarling in a cage, I am amazed at the temerity of these children. Their willingness to visit him proves that he must have had depths of great kindness and even sweetness.

One of the little girls whom he entertained remembers that when she refused ginger wine, saying it would go to her head, he replied that his was a special brand that went only to the heels. Another of these little girls, who are now mature ladies, tells me that her sister, who led her to the Hermit, sang a song which gave that strange creature much satisfaction. A third confesses to asking him boldly if he were 'Old Lucas', and getting quickly on terms of friendliness. She displayed her doll and he gave her raspberry drops, very thoughtfully not handling them, but pouring them from the jar into a piece of paper and passing it through the bars. He also threw her a threepenny-bit with a hole in it, for luck and 'in remembrance of Old Lucas'. She cannot forget the oddity of this exceedingly grimy and hairy man wearing a monocle.

As a boy he had been odd; as a youth he developed anti-social habits to such an extent that he would not leave his

room, to which all his meals had therefore to be carried; and as he then refused to surrender the plates, crockery famines were frequent in the house. He rode a horse bareback at night. He declined to have his hair cut—but, except with women, this is no longer a sign of dementia. Part of his education was at a private school at Clapham, part at a parson's at Bedford, where, he told another visitor, he would never open a book. He seems later to have been put with a doctor, and he pretended to some medical knowledge whenever a tramp needed it. In conversation he revealed a wide knowledge of Shakespeare and the English classics of the eighteenth century, and he is said himself to have written verses, but none of my correspondents have sent me any specimens. One, however, has provided a copy of a dreary piece of doggerel of which my poor namesake was the cause, by G. Cowley of Luton, which I regret to say had reached, in the pamphlet form which lies before me, its 28th thousand.

Many reasons for Lucas's way of life have been given. That which has most currency is, that grief at the death of his mother, when he was thirty-eight, completely unhinged him. He sat by her body for thirteen weeks, and after the funeral had been enforced, closed the house and retired to his one room. The country people of the neighbourhood naturally preferred that he should have been crossed in love. But taking into consideration the fact that he was never normal, I see no reason to question the explanation that he once gave to a neighbour who was admitted upon unusual terms of intimacy. He was forced, he said, to live like this, in apparent poverty and in fortified seclusion, because of the enmity of a relative, who could be frustrated by no other means. This—for a madman—seems to me to be reasonable enough. Obviously, the Hermit thought his wealth was coveted and therefore he affected to have none; or his person was in danger of attack, and therefore he had strong bars

and a bodyguard. It was all a delusion, but, being mad, he was entitled to it.

I see no reason to doubt the story that Dickens, before writing his description of Mopes, in one of the *All the Year Round* Christmas numbers, paid a visit to Redcoat's Green and had a conversation with Lucas, even though Lucas denied it. Many strangers called and chatted every day, and Dickens would not necessarily have given his name. According to the account, Dickens was staying with Bulwer Lytton at Knebworth, which is not far away, and was driven over; and it is on record that John Forster, the friend of both novelists, who was a Commissioner in Lunacy, examined Lucas and found him sane—or as sane as one need be. How natural for Forster to tell Dickens about him and urge a meeting. But Lucas denied it and looked upon the description of Mopes as a libel, written at the instigation of his deadly foe. Where all must have been distasteful, I fancy that what annoyed him most in the article was the sentence which I have put into italics: 'Mr. Mopes, by suffering everything about him to go to ruin, and by dressing himself in a blanket and skewer, and by steeping himself in soot and grease and other nastiness, had acquired great renown in all that country-side—far greater renown than he could ever have won for himself if his career had been that of any ordinary Christian or decent Hottentot. *He had even blanketed and skewered and sooted and greased himself into the London papers.*' That was the offending passage, I fancy; Lucas did not mind emphasis being laid on his horrible appearance, but he resented the suggestion that he lived thus for notoriety. The conclusion, in which he was summed up as 'a compound of Newgate, Bedlam, a debtor's prison, a chimney-sweep, a mud-lark, and the Noble Savage', would probably have hurt him less.

Certain of his opinions on affairs have been recorded, many of which are shared by the sane. He was against

elections, believing in government by two or three strong men—a despotism, in short. He held that rival parties did harm to the country, and that Parliament was full of rogues. He was against education: ‘People are happier when they are ignorant,’ he said; ‘education leads to a man getting hanged or transported.’ He had no religion, but if a tramp or beggar could prove he was a Catholic he received twopence or threepence, as against the Protestant mendicant, who was given only a penny. But the Hermit had to be satisfied that the story was true; and he was very skilful in cross-examination. He read no newspapers: ‘All bosh and lies,’ he said. He was against taxation, except of the rich. ‘The rich should pay,’ he said. He was so staunch a Jacobite and opponent of the reigning House that, even before his retirement, he would not affix to any document a stamp with Queen Victoria’s head on it. Although as a rule courteous and even charming, he could on occasion be caustic, as when, on being too closely scrutinized by a visitor from Martinique, he returned the stare through his eyeglass and then, to her intense indignation, remarked, ‘A little of the coolie caste, I should say.’

By his tendency to garrulity and inquisitiveness, Lucas becomes the less the hermit. It is a question whether hermits should talk with their fellow-creatures at all; it is still more doubtful if they should distribute gin. Such sociability smacks of having it both ways; and hermits, of all men, should have it but one. St. Simeon Stylites, on the top of his lofty pedestal, well out of earshot of the world he had despised and left, is a better example of the conscientious anchorite. It was agreed to call James Lucas ‘the Hermit Lucas’, but too little thought was given to the matter; the *mot plus juste* would be ‘the Eccentric’. And he did other things that must be against strict eremitical rules. His children’s parties, for example—were they quite ‘in the picture’? Should hermits entertain the young? He once

sang to a visitor from Wales a Welsh song. Should hermits do that? Not the best hermits, I am sure.

James Lucas, as I have shown, was an eccentric suffering from monomania, rather than a hermit. It would be interesting to know if real hermits still exist in England. Few figures, at any rate in legend and romance, are so attractive, for they are always made wise, looking upon life from a very peculiar angle; indeed, the oddity of their condition may be held to indicate that once they had 'great wits'. The ordinary reason for this cloistered evasion is a desire to be nearer God; but it might equally be a distaste for man. The hermit who retreats to a cave for spiritual exaltation is, it must be conceded, less attractive than the hermit who has had enough of a disenchanting world. Women would scent a broken heart somewhere.

I was once shown, from a steamer, a mountain in Spain, to the east of Gibraltar, where (the captain said) a hermit had lived for many years, upon whom pilgrims called for advice on all kinds of problems, civil as well as religious; and it seemed to me as excellent a use as any to which a mountain could be put. I should not greatly object to such a career myself, although feeling no confidence as to the sageness of my counsels. This solitary mentor on his rocky height, and James Lucas, in his Hertfordshire dungeon, are the only hermits to whom I was ever near; and the sea sundered me from one, and my visit to the other may be pure imagination.

The Town Week

It is odd that 'Mondayish' is the only word which the days of the week have given us since Monday is not alone in possessing a positive and peculiar character. Why not 'Tuesdayish' or 'Wednesdayish'? Each word would convey

as much meaning to me. 'Tuesdayish' in particular, for Monday's cardinal and reprehensible error of beginning the business week seems to me almost a virtue compared with Tuesday's utter flatness. To begin a new week is no fault at all, though tradition has branded it as one. To begin is a noble accomplishment; but to continue dully, to be the tame follower of a courageous beginner, to be the second day in a week of action, as in Tuesday's case—that is deplorable, if you like.

Monday can be flat enough, but in a different way from Tuesday. Monday is flat because one has been idling, perhaps unconsciously absorbing notions of living like the lilies; because so many days must pass before the week ends; because yesterday is no more. But Tuesday has the sheer essential flatness of nonentity; Tuesday is nothing. If you would know how absolutely nothing it is, go to a week-end hotel at, say Brighton, and stay on after the Saturday-to-Monday population has flitted. On Tuesday you touch the depths. So does the menu—no chef ever exerted himself for a Tuesday guest. Tuesday is also very difficult to spell, many otherwise cultured ladies putting the 'e' before the 'u': and why not? What right has Tuesday to any preference?

With all its faults, Monday has a positive character. Monday brings a feeling of revolt; Tuesday, the base craven, reconciles us to the machine. I am not surprised that the recent American revivalists held no meetings on Mondays. It was a mark of their astuteness; they knew that the wear and tear of overcoming the Monday feeling of the greater part of their audience would exhaust them before their magnetism began to have play; while a similarly stubborn difficulty would confront them in the remaining portion sunk in apathy by the thought that to-morrow would be Tuesday. It is this presage of certain tedium which has robbed Monday evening of its 'glittering star'. Yet since

nothing so becomes a flat day as the death of it, Tuesday evening's glittering star (it is Wordsworth's phrase) is of the brightest—for is not the dreary day nearly done, and is not to-morrow Wednesday the bland?

With Wednesday, the week stirs itself, turns over, begins to wake. There are matinées on Wednesday; on Wednesdays some of the more genial weekly papers come out. The very word has a good honest round air—Wednesday. Things, adventures, might happen very naturally on Wednesday; but that nothing ever happened on a Tuesday I am convinced. In summer Wednesday has often close finishes at Lord's, and it is a day on which one's friends are pretty sure to be accessible. On Monday they may not have returned from the country; on Friday they have begun to go out of town again; but on Wednesday they are here, at home—are solid. I am sure it is my favourite day.

(Even politicians, so slow as a rule to recognize the kinder, more generous, side of life, realized for many years that Wednesday was a day on which they had no right to conduct their acrimonious business for more than an hour or so. Much of the failure of the last Government may be traced to their atheistical decision no longer to remember Wednesday to keep it holy.)

On Thursday the week falls back a little; the stirring of Wednesday is forgotten; there is a return to the folding of the hands. I am not sure that Thursday has not become the real day of rest. That it is a good honest day is the most that can be said for it. It is certainly not Thor's day any longer—if my reading of the character of the blacksmith-god is true. There is nothing strong and downright and fine about it. Compared with Tuesday's small beer, Thursday is almost champagne; but none the less they are related. One can group them together. If I were a business man, I should, I am certain, sell my shares at a loss on Monday and at a profit

on Wednesday and Friday, but on Tuesday and Thursday I should get for them exactly what I gave.

I group Friday with Wednesday as a day that can be friendly to me, but it has not Wednesday's quality. Wednesday is calm, assured, urbane; Friday allows itself to be a little flurried and excited. Wednesday stands alone; Friday to some extent throws in its lot with Saturday. Friday is too busy. Too many papers come out, too many bags are packed, on Friday. But herein, of course, is some of its virtue; it is the beginning of the end, the forerunner of Saturday and Sunday. If anticipation, as the moralists say, is better than the realization, Friday is perhaps the best day of the week, for one spends much of it in thinking of the morrow and what of good it should bring forth. Friday's greatest merit is perhaps that it paves the way to Saturday and the cessation of work. That it ever was really unlucky I greatly doubt.

And so we come to Saturday and Sunday. But here the analyst falters, for Saturday and Sunday pass from the region of definable days. Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, these are days with a character fixed more or less for all. But Saturday and Sunday are what we individually make of them. In one family they are friends, associates; in another as ill-assorted as Socrates and Xantippe. For most of us Saturday is not exactly a day at all, it is a collection of hours, part work, part pleasure, and all restlessness. It is a day that we plan for, and therefore it is often a failure. I have no distinct and unvarying impression of Saturday, except that trains are full and late and shops shut too early.

Sunday even more than Saturday is different as people are different. To the godly it is a day of low tones, its minutes go by muffled; to the children of the godly it is eternity. To the ungodly it is a day jeopardized by an interest in barometers that is almost too poignant. To one man it is an

interruption of the week; to another it is the week itself, and all the rest of the days are but preparations for it. One cannot analyse Saturday and Sunday.

But Monday? There we are on solid ground again. Monday—but I have discussed Monday already: that is one of its principal characteristics, that it is always coming round again, pretending to be new. It is always the same in reality.

The Just Appraisalment ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪

THE talk was running on the wonderful bargains in Old Masters that had recently been picked up, and as usual nothing was being said about the Old Masters that are picked up and turn out not to be bargains at all: Old Masters whose lineage, in racing phraseology, might be described as by Thought out of Wish. Of these there are many; of the others there are just enough to lunch and dine out on every few weeks.

‘I don’t know anything about pictures,’ one of the guests began.

‘But,’ another put it, ‘you know what you like.’

The first speaker, Edmarsh, looked round with a pained expression. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I wasn’t going to say that. I was going to say, “but I know what I don’t like.” And at the present moment too many artists are occupied in adding to that branch of knowledge. What was I intending to tell you before I was interrupted,’ he continued, ‘was the story of the first picture I ever bought.

‘I wasn’t in need of one, but there were so many connoisseurs among my friends that I caught the infection and thought I would begin collecting too. So one morning, on my way to the Underground, seeing in a marine-store

window a little darkish interior in an old frame, I stepped in and asked the price.

“The man said it was half a crown.

““Very well,” I said, “I’ll have it.” But when I felt in my pockets for the money I found that I had come out with only a few pence.

““No matter,” I said; “I’ll come in to-morrow at the same time.”

‘Here ends,’ he added, ‘chapter one.’

The superior man smiled knowingly.

‘You can guess,’ said Edmarsh, ‘what happened.’

‘More or less,’ replied the superior man oracularly. ‘There are certain fixed varieties of this kind of story, and no doubt yours conforms to one of them.’

‘What are they?’ our hostess asked.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘one is that in the interim another passer-by spots the picture, offers much more, and the shopman lets the first customer down, saying that he is sorry but he has since found that the picture had already been bespoken. Later the customer comes across a photograph of it in the papers, with a paragraph underneath stating that it was recently discovered by Sir Potiphar Tureen, the famous dealer and expert, under romantic if squalid circumstances; that it has turned out to be the missing Giottibelli, and that it has been sold to the American millionaire Mr. Canvass B. Duck, of Pittsburg, for fifty thousand pounds—pounds, not dollars. For the rest of his life the customer is eaten up by chagrin, haunts marine stores with his pockets full of money and has no further luck. That,’ he said, ‘is one of the variants.’

‘Yes,’ we said, ‘you are strangely interesting.’

‘Another,’ he went on, ‘takes this form. On the next morning the picture is still there, but the shopman says that in the interim he has had an offer which would make a vast difference to his affairs. He admits that in justice the bargain

is yours, but—well, he throws himself on your mercy. It is then up to you to pay the extra money or to decline. There are three forms of sequel. One is that you pay and the picture is worth it; another, that you pay and it isn't; a third, that you don't pay and the picture is more than worth it, and again you kick yourself for the rest of your life.'

'Yes,' said Edmarsh. 'And the third version of the main story?'

'Oh, that can also come into this last. It turns on conscience. The customer, after discovering that he has made a most remarkable find, and after selling it at a huge profit, debates in his mind the ethical question as to whether or not he should let the dealer participate and, if so, to what extent.

'Those,' he concluded, 'are the three main lines on which this kind of story runs. And of course,' he added, 'but that wouldn't be worth telling, there is the commonest incident of all, in which you merely buy rubbish at the price named, take the rubbish home and it remains rubbish.'

'True,' said Edmarsh; 'but may I say, with all due deference to such an authority, that my experience happens to be different from any that you have mentioned.'

'Perhaps you will tell us,' said the superior man.

'I was going to,' Edmarsh replied. 'This is what happened. When I entered the marine store on the next morning as arranged, and said to the man, "Here I am. I've come for the picture," he replied, "Yes, that's all right. Here it is. But I'm afraid it's not half a crown any more."'

Edmarsh paused.

'Hal' exclaimed the superior man. 'Didn't I tell you?'

'Wait a minute,' said Edmarsh. 'This story now takes a turning of its own. Very well,' he resumed, 'when the man handed me the picture he said, "Here it is, but I'm afraid it's not half a crown any more; it's three-and-six. You see, after you had gone we looked at the back and found it was by Rembrandt."'

In a New Medium ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

THE OLD COUNTRY; OR, WRIT IN WAX

FOR most authors, and indeed all who confine themselves to prose and never dabble in words for music, the busy bee performs a large part of his labours in vain. In other words, they have no use for these preparations of wax with which gramophone records are made. But now and then even a writer of prose is susceptible to aberration, and it was during one such mood, not so long ago, that the idea came to me to put together some couplets which, when repeated by the gramophone with certain realistic accessories, might have the effect of reminding distant emigrants of the England that they have left, possibly fill them with home-sickness, and incidentally be of assistance to me in adding butter to bread.

At the first blush one might say that such a motive savoured if not of cupidity at any rate of inhumanity; but I believe that people derive more pleasure from a pensive melancholy, a brooding, lingering wistfulness, than from many positive delights; and it was this seductive nostalgia that my verses were designed to bring to them.

The suggestion came to me, suddenly, as I listened in a music hall to a French gentleman in evening dress whose special genius lay in the imitation of birds. Such was the fidelity with which he trilled forth the notes of the nightingale on the cold January evening on which I heard him, that he made the thought of June almost unbearable: and upon that pain of my own I resolved to try and erect an edifice of not disagreeable unhappiness in others.

Talking over the project with one who is behind the scenes in Edisonian mysteries, I obtained my first glimpses into the rules that govern the activities of the talking machine. Possibly these facts are commonplaces to the

reader; but to me they are startling novelties. Each record, he told me, has to be of a definite length, of which two minutes is the extreme, and whatever words and effects I was aiming at must therefore be compressed into that space. This meant an instant modification of my scheme, for I had planned no more than enough material for one minute; and it was then that the skylark fluttered into the heavenly choir, and the catalogue of the country's charms, as you will shortly see, divided itself into day and evening.

The next thing that the expert told me was that one must not be too clever.

Here of course I bowed, murmuring something about impossibility.

By too clever, he went on, without paying any attention to my deprecation, he meant too literary. The gramophone public was not absurdly discriminating: the appeal being through the ear alone, and a swift one at that, there must be no ambiguity, no preciousness; each word must do its own work, and do it emphatically.

I agreed, and was conscious again of that feeling of respect which always comes upon me in the presence of one of those rare masterful beings who know what the public want.

'Why not,' he went on, 'complete the picture? Call the first part "The Village", and then provide a city pendant for the other side of the record, so that the town-dweller as well as the country-dweller may be *roped in*?' (The italics are his.)

'Why not indeed?' I replied.

'With city effects which will occur to you,' he said.

'Of course,' said I, and walked thoughtfully away, realizing once more how dangerous a matter is impulse. Why had I ever embarked on this scheme? Why had I abandoned my old friend prose? Why was I flirting with science? . . .

None the less as I went on I found a certain amusement in writing verses for wax, and gradually 'The Old Country'

was finished—Part I, The Village, and Part II, The Town—and ready to be converted into magic.

To what extent gramophone recording rooms differ I cannot say; but the one in which 'The Old Country' was prepared is on a top floor in the city of London, with large windows through which more than one of Wren's spires may be seen. In it, when I arrived, were gathered the orchestra, the conductor, the chief operator (in a long surgical coat), the elocutionist who was to deliver the lines into a metal funnel, the French gentleman with an aviary in his throat, my friend the expert, and a number of supernumeraries for London's cries and tumult—some of which indeed we could then hear by opening the window, but not loudly enough for our dramatic purpose.

Everyone seemed composed and at peace with the world, except the elocutionist, who paced the floor muttering my poor verses over to himself in an agony that did me no credit; myself, who could not but be infected by his distress; and the French gentleman, who wandered disconsolately among the company, talking to no one, but occasionally refreshing his memory as to the differences of note between the two birds he was engaged to reproduce: certainly an important point to settle definitely before we began.

Of the gramophone itself nothing was visible, for the recording was done behind the partition. Penetrating thither, I found that it consists of nothing but a revolving disk of yellowish brown wax, into which a needle, vibrating to the elocutionist's voice and my wonderful poetry, was to plough furrows, throwing up a churning wake of gossamer shavings as it did so; these furrows, which are of every shade of depth, by Edisonian black art registering and subsequently giving forth again my exact syllables for all the world to hear. But how or why I shall never understand.

I have vague recollections of an explanatory lecture on the subject from the chief operator; but science being a

sealed book to me, I can pass none of its secrets on. The telephone and the telegraph, the Marconigraph and the automatic piano-player, will never be anything but the darkest enigmas; and almost before any of them comes, for marvellousness, the gramophone. But to the chief operator in his surgical coat its simplicity is a matter for laughter. So different are we all! Of such variety is human intelligence!

The three or four rehearsals, for time signals and so forth, being completed, we began. This was the procedure. First, absolute silence. Then the electric lamp on the operator's partition turning to red, the orchestra played a bar or so of 'Home, Sweet Home', into which the elocutionist, who had now taken off not only his coat but his collar, for the better grappling with my muse, broke with the following lines:

*O England, country of my heart's desire,
Land of the hedgerow and the village spire,
Land of thatched cottages and murmuring bees,
And wayside inns where one may take one's ease,
Of village greens where cricket may be played,
And fat old spaniels sleeping in the shade—
O homeland, far away across the main,
How would I love to see your face again!—
Your daisied meadows and your grassy hills,
Your primrose banks, your parks, your tinkling rills,
Your copses where the purple bluebells grow,
Your quiet lanes where lovers loiter so,
Your cottage-gardens with their wallflowers' scent
Your swallows 'neath the eaves, your sweet content!
And 'mid the fleecy clouds that o'er you spread,
Listen, the skylark singing overhead . . .*

It was here that my part of the production began, for the French gentleman, whose understanding of the whole matter seemed still exceedingly misty, in spite of rehearsals and instructions, had been placed wholly in my charge, and at the given moment I was to lead him as close as might be to the funnel, tap him, as agreed, on the shoulder, and thus

let loose his skylark. Had there been no other bird, all would have been simple, but the presence also of the night-ingale, in the same receptacle, was an embarrassment; and twice through nervousness he liberated the wrong chor-ister, and we had to begin again, while once I myself ruined an otherwise perfect record by exclaiming, when I thought it all over 'Bravo!' and slapping the French gentleman's back—this unfortunate remark attaching itself inseparably to the recitation.

It was not, I ought to say, exactly at the end of the verse that the skylark was to begin; but at the word 'spread', the last line being spoken through the bird's notes. After that the blithe spirit had it all its own way for about ten seconds, when I tapped Monsieur sharply once more and drew him swiftly and silently away, while the reciter took his place at the funnel and with a sigh of satisfaction completed the first verse with these words:

*That's the old country, that's the old home!
You never forget it wherever you roam.*

Instantly the orchestra plunged into the opening of 'The Swanee River', and again the reciter began, while I clung to the French gentleman in an agony, for the only expression on his countenance was one of determination to be a night-ingale, whereas that on no account must he become until the words 'they and I', almost at the end. With my arm firmly through his I awaited in a cold perspiration the cue. Here is the second verse:

*I know an English village O so small!
Where every cottage has a whitewashed wall,
And every garden has a sweetbriar hedge,
And there's a cat on every window ledge.
And there's a cottage there with those within it
Whom I in fancy visit every minute.*

*O little village mine, so far away,
 How would I love to visit you to-day!
 To lift the latch and peep within the door
 And join the happy company once more—
 I think I'd try and catch them at their tea:
 What a surprise for every one 'twould be!
 How we would talk and laugh, maybe and cry,
 Living our lost years over, they and I,
 And then at dusk I'd seek the well-known lane
 To hear the English nightingale again.*

This time all went well. At 'they and I' the nightingale broke in and continued until the concluding rounding-up couplet:

*That's the old country, that's the old home!
 You never can beat it wherever you roam.*

So much for Part I, The Village. It was the end too of the French gentleman, at any rate for a while, and he went off to wet one or more of his many whistles, while the supernumeraries gathered together with designs on city illusion. One (a minute Osborne cadet, who appeared mysteriously from nowhere) carried a motor horn; another, a fire bell; another, a policeman's call; and a fourth, a wooden rattle which, when turned slowly, made a series of cracks resembling shots in a rifle saloon.

All being ready, we froze into silence and awaited the incarnadining of the lamp. Then one of the musicians struck Big Ben's chimes on a series of metal pipes, the orchestra followed with a bar or so of 'Sally in our Alley', and the elocutionist plunged into Part II, The Town:

*O London, once my home but now so far,
 You shine before me brighter than a star!
 By night I dream of you, by day I long
 To be the humblest even of your throng:
 Happy, however poor, however sore,
 Merely because a Londoner once more.*

*Your sights, your sounds, your scents—I miss them all:
Your coloured buses racing down Whitehall;
The fruit stalls in the New Cut all aflame;
The Oval with its thousands gathered there;
The Thames at evening in a mist of blue;
Old Drury with a hundred yards of queue.
Your sausage shops, your roads of gleaming mud,
Your pea-soup fogs—they're in my very blood;
And there's no music to my ear so sweet
As all the noisy discord of the street.*

At these words the reciter stepped aside and conceded the funnel to bus conductors shouting 'Higher up!' policemen ordering people to move on, newspaper boys with 'All the Winners!' and costermongers noisily commending fruit; while in the background the Osborne cadet pinched the motor horn without mercy. At a signal, peace suddenly was restored, and

*That's my dear London, that's my old home,
I'll never forget it wherever I roam,*

said the elocutionist.

For the introductory bars of the second verse I had wanted 'The Old Bull and Bush', but copyright difficulties intervening, we had to fall back upon 'There is a tavern in the town', with which these words merged:

*And ah! the London pleasure parties too!—
The steamboat up to Hampton Court or Kew;
The walk among the deer in Richmond Park;
The journey back, all jolly, in the dark!
To Epping Forest up the Mile End Road,
Passing the donkey barrows' merry load;
Or nearer home, to Hampstead for a blow;
To watch old London smouldering below;
Between the Spaniards and Jack Straw's to pace
And feel the northern breezes in one's face;*

*Then at the Bull and Bush perhaps to dine
And taste again their famous barley wine!
Ah me! I wonder is it all the same
Is Easter Monday still the good old game?
I hear it yet, though years have rolled away,
The maddening medley of Bank Holiday.*

Here came our greatest effect at realism. The band broke into a typical roundabout waltz, through which rifles snapped, whistles blew, cocoanut-shy men exhorted you to roll, bowl, or pitch, and a showman bellowed forth the importance of visiting a fat lady. And with the words:

*That's my dear London, that's my true home,
I'll never forget it wherever I roam,*

the record was complete.

What New Zealand and Australia, Johannesburg and the Yukon think of it, I have yet to learn. Nor has the butter begun to blossom on the bread. But it was great fun.

The Oldest Joke



MANY investigators have speculated as to the character of the first joke; and as speculation must our efforts remain. But I personally have no doubt whatever as to the subject-matter of that distant pleasantry: it was the face of the other person involved. I don't say that Adam was caustic about Eve's face or Eve about Adam's: that is improbable. Nor does matrimonial invective even now ordinarily take this form. But after a while, after cousins had come into the world, the facial jest began; and by the time of Noah and his sons the riot was in full swing. In every rough and tumble among the children of Ham, Shem, and Japhet,

I feel certain that crude and candid personalities fell to the lot, at any rate, of the little Shems.

So was it then; so is it still to-day. No jests are so rich as those that bear upon the unloveliness of features not our own. The tiniest street urchins in dispute always—sooner or later—devote their retorts to the distressing physiognomy of the foe. Not only are they conforming to the ancient convention, but they show sagacity too, for to sum up an opponent as 'Face', 'Facey', or 'Funny Face', is to spike his gun. There is no reply but the cowardly *tu quoque*. He cannot say, 'My face is not comic, it is handsome'; because that does not touch the root of the matter. The root of the matter is your opinion of his face as deplorable.

Not only is the recognition of what is odd in an opponent's countenance of this priceless value in ordinary quarrels among the young and the ill-mannered (just as abuse of the opposing counsel is the best way of covering the poverty of one's own case at law), but the music-hall humorist has no easier or surer road to the risibilities of most of his audience. Jokes about faces never fail and are never threadbare. Sometimes I find myself listening to one who has been called—possibly the label was self-imposed—the Prime Minister of Mirth, and he invariably enlarges upon the quaintness of somebody's features, often, for he is the soul of impartiality, his own; and the first time, now thirty years ago, that I ever entered a music-hall (the tiny stuffy old Oxford at Brighton, where the chairman with the dyed hair—it was more purple than black—used to sit amid a little company of bloods whose proud privilege it was to pay for his refreshment), another George, whose surname was Beauchamp, was singing about a siren into whose clutches he had or had not fallen, who had

an indiarubber lip

Like the rudder of a ship.

—So you see there is complete continuity.

But the best example of this branch of humour is beyond all question that of the 'Two Macs, whose influence, long though it is since they eclipsed the gaiety of the nation by vanishing, is still potent. Though gone they still jest; or, at any rate, their jests did not all vanish with them. The incorrigible veneration for what is antique displayed by low comedians takes care of that. 'I saw your wife at the masked ball last night,' the first Mac would say, in his rich brogue. 'My wife was at the ball last night,' the other would reply in a brogue of deeper richness, 'but it wasn't a masked ball.' The first Mac would then express an overwhelming surprise, as he countered with the devastating question, 'Was *that* her face?'

'You're not two-faced, anyway. I'll say that for you,' was the apparently magnanimous concession made by one comedian to another in a recent farcical play. The other was beginning to express his gratification when the speaker continued: 'If you were, you wouldn't have come out with that one.' Again, you observe, there is no answer to this kind of attack. Hence, I suppose, its popularity. And yet perhaps to take refuge in a smug sententiousness, and remark crisply, 'Handsome is as handsome does,' should now and then be useful. But it requires some self-esteem.

There is no absolute need, however, for the face joke to be applied to others to be successful. Since, in spite of the complexion creams, 'plumpers', and nose-machines advertised in the papers, faces will continue to be here and there somewhat Gothic, the wise thing for their owners is to accept them and think of other things, or console themselves before the unflattering mirror with the memory of those mortals who have been both quaint-looking and gifted. Wiser still perhaps to make a little capital out of the affliction. Public men who are able to make a jest of the homeliness of their features never lose by it. President

Wilson's public recital of the famous lines on his countenance (which I personally find by no means unprepossessing) did much to increase his popularity.

As a beauty I am not a star,
There are others more handsome by far.
But my face, I don't mind it,
For I keep behind it;
It's the people in front get the jar.

And an English bishop, or possibly dean, came, at last, very near earth when in a secular address he repeated his retort to the lady who had commented upon his extraordinary plainness: 'Ah, but you should see my brother.' There is also the excellent story of the ugly man before the camera, who was promised by the photographer that he should have justice done to him. 'Justice!' he exclaimed. 'I don't want justice; I want mercy.'

The great face joke, as I say, obviously came first. Because there were in the early days none of the materials for the other staple quips—such as alcohol, and sausages, and wives' mothers. Faces, however, were always there. And not even yet have the later substitutes ousted it. Just as Shakespeare's orator, 'when he is out', spits, so does the funny man, in similar difficulties, if he is wise, say, 'Do you call that a face?' and thus collect his thoughts for fresh sallies. If all 'dials' were identical, Mr. George Graves, for example, would be a stage bankrupt; for, resourceful as he is in the humour of quizzical disapproval, the vagaries of facial oddity are his foundation stone.

Remarkable as are the heights of grotesque simile to which all the Georges have risen in this direction, it is, oddly enough, to the other and gentler sex that the classic examples (in my experience) belong. At a dinner-party given by a certain hospitable lady who remained something of an *enfant terrible* to the end of her long life, she drew the

attention of one of her guests, by no means too cautiously, to the features of another guest, a bishop of great renown. 'Isn't his face,' she asked, in a deathless sentence, 'like the inside of an elephant's foot?' I have not personally the honour of this divine's acquaintance, but all my friends who have met or seen him assure me that the similitude is exact. Another lady, happily still living, said of the face of an acquaintance, that it was 'not so much a face, as a part of her person which she happened to leave uncovered, by which her friends were able to recognize her.' A third, famous for her swift analyses, said that a certain would-be beauty might have a title to good looks but for 'a rush of teeth to the head.' I do not quote these admirable remarks merely as a proof of woman's natural kindliness, but to show how even among the elect—for all three speakers are of more than common culture—the face joke holds sway.



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