Last Essays of Maurice Hewlett

Maurice Hewlett

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NOTE

Lovers of Mr. Hewlett's work will understand that these Essays have not been subjected to the severe revision which Mr. Hewlett would undoubtedly have given them before publication in this book. In one or two minor points his Executors have felt doubtful about the deletion or insertion of a passage, but in these cases the decision has always been the same—that his readers would prefer to have the Essays in Mr. Hewlett's original form.

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A RETURN TO THE NEST

Why it was that my great-grandfather left the village in Somerset in and on which his forefathers, I believe, had lived from the time of Domesday, why he forsook agriculture and cider for the law, married in Shoreditch, settled in Fetter Lane, went back to Somerset to bury his first child, and returned to London to beget my grandfather, be ultimately responsible for *me*, and break finally with his family cradle, I never understood until the other day when, in good company, I took the road, left the bare hills —how softly contoured, how familiar, and how dear —of South Wilts, topped the great rock on which Shaftesbury lifts, dived down into Blackmore Vale, and so entered my county of origin at its nearest point, namely Wincanton (where I saw, by the by, a palæolithic man alive and walking the world)—to find myself in a land of corn and wine and oil, or so it seemed, such a land as those who love deep loam, handsome women, fine manners and a glut of apples more than most things in this life (and there are few things better), would never leave if they could help

it. That is a long sentence with which to begin an essay, but it expresses what I did, and very much how I did it.

In a word, I left Broadchalke and drove to Yeovil, within ten miles of which thriving town the family to which I belong itself throve and cultivated its virtues, if any. My great-grandfather and I were not acquainted; but I remember my grandfather perfectly well, and can testify that he had virtues. He was on the tall side of the mean height, a deep-chested, large-headed old man, with hair snowy white, a rosy face, and cool, extremely honest blue eyes. He was hasty in his movements (and in his temper), trundled about rather than walked. I used to think as a boy that it could not be wholesome, and must be most inconvenient, to have such clean hands, such dazzling linen, and such polished pink filberts instead of finger-nails. I never saw him otherwise dressed than in black broadcloth, with shoes polished like looking-glasses, and a shirt-collar just so starched that it stood up enclosing his chin, yet so little that it took on the contours of his cheeks where they pressed it. He had a deep voice, with a cheer in it. I remember—for he had little else to say to me—how he used to put his hand on my head and murmur, as if to himself, “My boy, my boy,” in such a way that I felt in leaving him, as perhaps Jacob did with Isaac, that it would be impossible ever to do anything wrong again and betray such a noble affection. One other thing struck me, even then, young and ungracious as I was, and that was his extraordinarily fine manners. Since then, whenever I have considered manners, I have compared them with his. He is for me the staple of courtesy. They were the manners which bring a man more than half-way to meet you. He used them to all the world: to

me, to the servants, to the crossing-sweeper, to the clerks from his office who used to come for papers when he was too old to go into London. I know now where he got them. They were traditional West Country manners; and sure enough when I walked the village street where, if my grandfather never walked, my great-grandfather did, the first man of whom I asked information met me with just the same forwardness of service, and seemed to know tentacularly what precisely lay behind the question which I put him. I had always been proud of my grandfather; now I was proud of my county. For if manners don't make a man, they make a gentleman.

Let me call the village Bindon St. Blaise, to give myself freedom to say that I don't remember to have seen one more beautiful than it looked on that sunny autumn day, drowsing, winking in the heat of noon. The houses are of stone—and that stone saturated, as it seemed, in centuries of sunlight. Yes, I have seen Bibury in Gloucestershire, and Broadway in Worcestershire, Alfriston in Sussex, and Teffont in Wilts; and Clovelly, and Boscastle, and Ponteland, and many another haunt of peace; but never yet a place of grey and gold so established, so decent in age, so recollected, so dignified as Bindon St. Blaise, which my great-grandfather unwillingly, I am sure, forsook in 1780 or thereabouts. Nobody could tell me which of its many fair houses he had forsworn. The fancy could play with them at large. There was a long-roofed farm with gables many and deep, with two rows of mullioned, diamonded windows, each with its perfect dripstone, which I should like to think was once ours, except that it faces north, and therefore has gathered more moss than we should care about now. Perhaps it *was* ours, and he left it, seeking the sun. But would he have gone to look for

it in Fetter Lane? No, no. I incline, however, to a smaller house facing full south, with a walled garden full of apple trees, and a pear tree reaching to the chimney stack, and a portico—whereover a room looking straight into the eye of the sun. There was a radiant eighteenth-century house for a man to have been born in! Could I have brought myself to leave such a nest? Well, we shall see.

After luncheon at the Boulter Arms (let us call it), and an indication where we should find "the Great House," we went instead to see the house of God, which lay on our road to it, almost within its park. Like all that I have seen in Somerset, it is a spacious, well-ordered church, mainly perpendicular, with the square tower and lace-worked windows which belong to the type. The churchyard was beautifully kept, planted with roses and Irish yews: the graves were in good order, numerous, and so eminently respectable that, at first blush, it seemed as if we had stepped into the Peerage; for if we were not trenching upon a lord's remains, it was upon those of one who had had to do with a lord. Research was encumbered by this overgrowth of dignities: the great family, like its Great House, overshadowed the Valley of Dry Bones; and plain men, who in life perhaps had been parasites perforce, in death were sprawled upon by their masters. Hannah Goodbody, for instance, "for forty years in the service of the Right Hon. John Charles Ferdinand, sixth Earl Boulter, Viscount and Baron Boulter of Bindon St. Blaise"—had she not earned *quietus*, and need all that be remembered against her? Percival Slade, "for twenty years Groom of the Chambers to Ferdinand Charles John, seventh Earl"; Matilda Swinton, housekeeper; Peter Wain, gamekeeper; Thomas Duffey, storekeeper—I began to see what had been

the matter with my great-grandfather.

Inside, the church revealed itself as a family vault so encumbered with the dead that the living must have been incommoded. In the midst of life they were in death indeed. Earls in effigy slept (like Priam's sons in the Iliad) beside their chaste wives—flat in brasses, worn smooth in basalt, glaringly in plaster, as might be. A side-chapel was so full of them that the altar was crowded out: and why not? They were altar and sacrifice and deity in one. They spilled over on to the floor, splayed out on the walls in tablets as massy as houseleeks; and on the bosses of the vaulted roof one found the Boulter arms implanted in the heart of the Mystic Rose. O too much Boulter—but we were not shut of them yet. Discreetly curtained off was a Holy of Holies where the shining ones who survived worshipped their ancestors; a noble apartment, a withdrawing room, with a stove, a couple of sofas, some club-chairs, and a deeply padded elbow cushion. Magazines, an ash-tray, a match-stand—one missed them. There is, no doubt, a comic side to all this. "J'ai trente mille livres de rente, et cependant je meurs!" said the Abbé de Bonport. The same amazement might come upon an entrenched Earl Boulter at any minute in the midst of his cushioned ease. Neither coat-armour nor a private stove will ward off the mortal chills. However, I forgive them their quality, but not their oppression of other people's tombstones.

For we too were oppressed, and not diverted. We were seeking our ancestors, but they were not here. They had fled to Fetter Lane, and I cannot blame them. The doubt about my great-grandfather is solved. He left the village of Bindon St. Blaise because he saw no other way of escape from an Earl

on his tomb. He married, his wife bore him a son, which died young. Moved then by piety, he brought down the innocent to be buried, secure that upon that unknown life no great name could intrude. I should have done the same thing, I believe.

"AND NOW, O LORD …"

"And now, O Lord, permit me to relate to Thee an anecdote": that was how a minister, labouring with a good story, introduced it into the midst of his extemporary prayer. I ask to be excused a better exordium, if better there be.

Heaven knows what reminded me of it, but a friend of mine had an interesting experience at Hyde Park Corner one day. He had been riding in the Row, and was returning leisurely to Whitehall and official cares somewhere about eleven in the forenoon. At the gates of entry and issue he was held up in common with the traffic of east and west, which at that hour was almost at the flood. Omnibuses throbbed and simmered, dray-horses chafed at their bits, motors and taxis all stood obedient, bicyclists clung to whatever stays they could come by: in the midst two staunch policemen stood with their arms at danger. All that mighty heart was lying still, and there was a lane of emptiness, as if for royalty, from Constitution Hill. Along that presently there paddled a wild duck and her chicks in single file, the mother leading; all necks on the stretch, all eyes wide, all

beak a-twitter. Everybody was interested, but nobody laughed, so far as he could see. I would have given much to be there. We are a pretty degraded race, no doubt, yet we have instincts left us which, at our best, betray us for what we were intended to be. I myself, such as I am, once caused a motor to be stopped while a stoat and her family crossed the Blandford Road, and we have a tradition that my father once reined up a phaeton to allow a woolly bear to get safely over. I daresay he did: such things are inherited. I mention them in no spirit of boasting, but rather to show that Londoners, who seem to us here so machine-made, are of the same clay as the children of light.

You may see queer things in London still, though they are rarer than they used to be. Nature persists in spite of the electrification of most things. I saw a battle in the upper air between a crow and a heron one morning early, in Hyde Park. Heaven knows from what regions fair and far they were come—but there they were at it, hammer and tongs. I watched them for a quarter of an hour. The heron got home once, but not a true blow. It glanced off the skull, and the black shuddered and avoided. It was inconceivable how quick the blow was, a very lightning flash; yet the crow swerved in time, and swopped off sideways. The baffled heron turned heavily and gave no chase. More persistent, and with death in it, was a duel watched by a man I knew from a Foreign Office window, between a swan and a pelican. The broadsword there had no chance against the longer reach. The end must have been terrific, for the swan took his enemy by the neck and held his head under water until the battling of his huge wings ceased to churn it into foam, until the great creature itself became like a lump of white froth. Then, said

my friend, the swan lifted his own wings until they met above his back, threw his head up and back to rest upon them, and oared away towards the bridge. I would have given a good deal to see that also, perhaps six hours a day at the Foreign Office. There's no end to the tale of things you can see in London. Why, a lady in whom I have every reason to believe came in to lunch one day saying that she had just seen a hansom drive down Victoria Street with an eagle standing on the horse's back, balancing himself on outspread wings. What was one to say, except wish that one had been as lucky?

Against that extreme example of the picturesque I could only advance that I had seen an elm-tree fall on a man in Gray's Inn and kill him instantly. Or that, at the corner of Montague Place, I saw a runaway brewer's dray barge into a four-wheeler. It missed the cab (on whose box the driver sat intact), but caught the horse full and knocked him and the shafts with him down some area steps across the pavement—where indeed he remained as in his stall until he could be built up from below. Extreme urgency had hurtled him down the steps, but no persuasion, fore or aft, would move him up again. So they built him up with trusses of straw. Nothing quite so good as that ever happened to me in a four-wheeler; but I haven't done so badly either. I was driving once through Paris very early in the morning from the Gare de Lyon to Saint-Lazare. You are lucky to get a cab at all at such times, and I thought myself so to have a crazy old victoria and a horse tied together with string. We did not exactly go, but we got, into the rue Lafayette, where, without any warning, the victoria parted amidships. The driver on his box and two wheels went on with the horse; I and my companion fell forward into the road and the

hood of the thing atop of us. I set up a yell, half-laughter, half-alarm, which caused our man to look round. When he saw what had happened he pulled up, and very carefully descended from his perch. Did he come to help us? Not so. He went directly and deliberately into a cabaret, without any notice taken of any kind, and we saw him put away a noggin, or whatever it is, of cognac. Then, with the same meditated method, he came to extricate his charges. They, however, had by that time extricated themselves, and considered themselves shut of him.

When a Frenchman begins to drive anything, horse or motor, he seems to become intoxicated with progress, and content just to drive, not to guide, and never, at any rate, to stop. I have been the victim also of that generous ardour. It was in Algiers, ages ago, but not such ages that there were not tramcars along the sea-front. A baker in his covered cart was taking us to see some sight or other; and along the sea-front held his course magnificently indifferent to everything but the speed and joy of it all—aided not a little thereto by the fine afternoon, the business of the road, and the café tables hemming it, dense with customers. For it was the hour of absinthe. The trams flashed past us, coming or going, but little cared he for that. His object was to pass them, and he did pass one or two. Presently, however, at a curve he flogged his horse to pass one, on the wrong side, and just as he drew level, behold, another bearing swiftly down upon us! I confess that I blenched—but he did not; rather held on his way, and not until the last tick of our last minute on earth did it strike him that he must do something. And what did he do? He gave a wild shout and turned his horse sharply to the left. On his left was the overflow of a café—tin tables, bentwood chairs, syphons, opal-brimmed glasses,

citizens in straw hats, with straws to their mouths, with cigars or newspapers—as thick as a flock of sheep. Into the midst of this, as once Don Quixote hurled himself, we plunged, horse, cart and passengers. Tables flew right and left, citizens were upset, glasses shivered, waiters wrung their hands. You never saw such a sight. And what did we do? I and my companion sat where we were, laughing ourselves ill, fighting for breath. Our driver slowly dismounted and looked round. He disregarded entirely the havoc he had made, and thought only of his honour. The driver of the tram was waiting for him. They met, and each lifted a bunched hand, in which all the finger-tips met and formed a little cage, to within an inch of the other's nose. Then began *des injures*, which could only have ended in one of two ways. The arrival of the gendarmes decided in which of the two it was to end.

THE DEATH OF THE SHEEP

Alfred de Vigny, it seems, wrote a poem of stoic intention called *La Mort du Loup*, in which he apostrophised in his eloquent way that particular among other *sublimes animaux*. I have never read a line of it myself, but can well understand, when Sainte-Beuve regrets that it should have been written too much from the standpoint of seeking in nature at all costs subjects of meditative poetry, that Sainte-Beuve may have been right. The pathetic fallacy is a stumbling-block to the egoistic travellers we are. De

Vigny on his dead wolf may have been lifted as far, or nearly as far, as Sterne on his dead donkey. Personally, I am busking for a short excursion on a dead sheep; but although there were elements of the high sublime in the climax, and of the horrid in the anti-climax of the tragedy, it is not on their account that I wish to relate it; rather because it seemed to me at the time to be representative, exactly to prefigure the countryside in which I saw it all done. It may stand up as type, or as symbol, of the fells and the life lived there; it has in it much of their lonely grandeur and savagery, of their harshness and plainness, of their entire absence of amenity; in a word, of their Nordic quality which does not so much insist as take for granted, in a way disconcerting to the Southerner, that neither man nor woman, dog nor sheep more or less makes one straw's worth of difference to the day's work, but that we are all alike rolled round, as Wordsworth said, "with stocks and stones and trees." He himself, Nordic to the bone, saw nothing amiss with it; and no doubt it is all right.

The sheep must have died rather suddenly in the late afternoon. When I went down the fell-side, at six, to fish in the river there was nothing but greenness to be seen; when I came up again, round about eight o'clock, I saw, or thought I saw, a grey rock where had been no rock before. It was the sheep, and quite cold. She must have felt her time at hand, withdrawn herself from her companions, and descended the hill deliberately to be alone with fate. Then, as I see it now, she stood there, facing down the hill, which in health her kind never does, and awaited the end of all things. Then, as the chills crept up, she lay down and put her muzzle flatlings to that rooty earth which in life she had so diligently sought, and with

the scent of it to comfort her (the best thing she knew) given up what ghost she had. She looked, as I stood over her, to be asleep—asleep with large, bare eyelids covering her blank amber eyes—and grandly indifferent to me and the rest of us. I left her, a warrior taking her rest. There she lay all night; and in the morning, her former mates feeding all about her, there she was. A windless silver rain was falling, straight as rods of glass. The fell was blanched with it, as with hoar frost; but she took no notice of the rain. A crow or two wheeled about, and bore off in the haze as soon as I showed myself. I went down to look at the sheep. She lay easily, her nose to the ground, while others of her nation gazed at me, foolishly serious, heaving at the side. Whatever had taken place at that supreme hour of yesterday evening, it had changed this corruptible into something other than a sheep. Sheep-nature had gone; she had not a sheep's face any more. Her dead eyes looked wiselier through their lids than their empty ones unveiled, and fuller, too, as if charged with weightier news. Sterner, too, she appeared—with her lips curled back; the rabbit-look gone.

There she lay in the wet all forenoon, very dignified and at ease in death. But distresses were at hand. After mid-day I saw a thin white dog, come out of nowhere, high-trotting over the grass, his tail feathering, his nose in the wind. He tacked to the corpse, sniffed at it from a spear's length, then spurned it after the manner of his race, and slowly retired. Not for very long. He had discovered a hankering as he went, which became irresistible, and drew him back to satisfy it. I watched him. This time he came, not adventurously, but as on secret errand, furtively, creeping cat-footed by the stone wall—much, I thought, as Amina would have skirted the

graveyard. When he had to take to the open he approached by broad tacks north and south, and at the last came on with a rush. I saw him attack the silent thing, pull out large tufts of wool, from which he fiercely shook himself free. He did more than that before I shouted, and threatened with my hand. Then he slipped rapidly away, at a loping gallop, with many a look behind to where I stood on the brow. He was only the first. Looking out again, I saw a black-and-white dog, with his head busy in the carcase, and down by the river another on the way. I had seen in my day jackals about a dead camel, and did not want that sort of thing rehearsed in Eskdale. In my own country we feed our sheep-dogs, and should discourage them from helping themselves to braxy mutton, lest they might acquire a taste for meat of their own killing. Besides, I respected what had seemed to me a dignified end of days. So I drove off the two ghouls and went down to do what I could. I was too late. She had suffered the last indignity. She was dragged over on to her back, her head was awry, her lips riven apart to show her teeth; and she was disembowelled. However, I did what there was to do, covered her with a loose field-gate, heaped upon that coping-stones from the wall, made a kind of cairn. Then I went over to the farm to see the farmer's wife.

She said—merely humouring my queasiness—that the remains should be shifted. And they were. A leggy young thrall made short work of my defences, and dragged the sheep by a hind-leg into a spinney of sycamores near by. Thereabouts I saw the dogs gather themselves together at shut of day, and I heard their snapping and snarling over their uneasy meal. I heard it far into the night, where under cover of dark the dead sheep was consumed with obscene

rites. Nothing but bared bones will be left; but they will remain undisturbed to gleam in the murky wood for a season, inchmeal to be resumed into the soil.

THE SOLITARY REAPER

The Evangelist, when he said that the field was white already to harvest, was thinking of some grain which we know not in Wilts. Our broad acres are deep orange, some of them near the colour of rust. He might have had oats in his mind's eye, not a staple of ours. Here and there they show up patches of silver-grey; but most of our corn is red wheat, a noble increase. In a burning summer such as this the familiar scene takes on the bleached glare and fierce hue of Spain or Provence. I had a train journey yesterday across West Wilts through hills all drab and tawny. The corn is shoulder-high, heavy in ear, bolt upright; a sight, you would say, as I do, to thank God for. From all sides comes the sound of the reaper, a rattle when horse-drawn, but a scream when petrol drives it, a restless disagreeable noise, not only anti-social, but unsociable. I regret the happy accidents of the vanished harvests: the reapers with their attendant girls binding after them, the busy, thirsty, brawling Irishmen; the sharp swish of the scythe which succeeded the hook and was always a pleasant sound, whether as it slashed down the straw, or when the stone tinkled rhythmically against the blade; the work in file, the noonday rest in companies—all gone now. I passed a hundred-acre

field yesterday where cutting had just begun. One man was reaping it.

> Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain:
> O listen! for the vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.

It was indeed! For "she" was a machine.

"It may be wholesome but it is not good," as Nebuchadnezzar said, munching the "unfamiliar food." One misses the human note in agriculture, always its most pronounced and amiable feature, the thing in particular which gave poignancy to the festival which we shall celebrate this year earlier than any man here can mind our doing. The children's holidays begin, too, this week, in obedience to what is now a forlorn convention—a mere vestige like the human appendix. For the children now have no part in harvesting. They used to twist the bonds for their mothers and sisters; but the machine does all that now, the exorbitant monster, with twine. I suppose that the hiles, as we call them, are still set up by men's hands—that is all there is left of what used to be our high season of the mingling of both sexes, all classes, and all ages. I regret, and I fear too. If the "solitary reaper" is but the prelude to the golden age of Mr. Sidney Webb's dream, when farms are to be measured by their square-mileage, and farming conducted in a box by a man with a switch-board in front of him, a man who might be in Whitehall for anything that appears—why, then the country will become as the town; life will be a game of automaton chess-players; and I shall go and grow vanilla in a Pacific island. Of all

Utopias yet devised by the academic, Mr. Webb's appears to me the most ghastly, and luckily also the least likely to be realised. There are "little men" here still growing corn, reaping it still with sickle and hook; and perhaps some of them are threshing it with flails, and winnowing it in the wind on floors like that of Ornan the Jebuzite. They do that still in Greece, for I have seen the floors. I don't despair of seeing some here, where Mr. Webb's *automata* are not visible. We are most of us "little men" at heart.

INTERIORS

Now is the time of year when you see interiors at their best—interiors and all that they involve and imply. The warmth and light of the earth concentre there, and he is unhappy—a figure for Hans Andersen—who has not hearth to reach and household gods to await him. Meantime, however he be hastening towards them, he will look, not without longing, through still uncurtained windows, mark the leaping fire, the shaded lamp, the tea-table and its attendant guests, and feel a glow and (I am sure) a momentary pang. Perhaps we are exorbitant lovers, perhaps we dread to know how lonely we are. I don't care to say. But certainly we are creatures of the light; and where that is, there must we be.

Familiar as we are with ourselves, and often enough bored to tears with the fellow, we are so blankly ignorant of each other that we can set no bounds to

our curiosity. Thence comes part, at least, of the charm of lit interiors, that we think to surprise the inhabitants at their mysteries, catch them unawares and find out what they do when no one is looking at them—or they believe it. This is no case for Peeping Tom of Coventry: the need is much too urgent for unwholesome prying. Honestly, we require to be certified that we are not alone, unique in the world. Besides, inspection, you may say, is invited; or it is ignored. Your hastening steps down a village street at dusk may lead you through a picture-gallery, so free are the indwellers of their concerns: I have been gladdened by enchanting scenes through narrow window-frames or magic casements. Once it was of children—four little girls in pinafores, in a row behind a long table, all stooped over bread and milk in yellow bowls. The eldest I put at about ten; from her they ran down to four or five. So good, and so busy—"forty feeding like one!" But there were only four of them so far as I could see. As they stooped, their hair fell forward to curtain their faces. It was what the French call *cendré*, very glossy and smooth, and curling at the ends. They did not speak, just shovelled; but just as I passed I saw the little one at the bottom of the row perform the feat of turning a pretty large spoon completely round in a pretty small mouth; and as she did it she looked sideways at someone hidden from me (presiding, no doubt, over the tea-cups), to ascertain if she had been caught in the act. I declare that I saw triumph and anxiety contending in her eyes. And she *had* been caught, not by the president, but by her elder sister at the other end of the line. There too I saw reproof hovering. Happy, busy, neat little creatures! I tell you I felt myself an exile as I passed that haunt of peace and warmth! And so one always does, I believe,

whatsoever welcome await you at the end of your journey. You ask—or I did—How come they to leave *me* outside in the dark? Don't they know that I am one with them all?

I have seen a mother reading to her girls at work, and longed to know what the book was, whether I had read it. If, as I believed, it was Miss Alcott, then I was all right. I have seen a boy rigging a three-masted vessel at a table, and knew by the way he was biting his tongue how happy he was. And I have seen comedies for Molière. I saw topers once in a tap-room, and a man in a cut-away coat and a shocking hat standing up and trying to make good and not succeeding. He did not belong to their parts —that was evident. I guessed him to be an outlier from some race-meeting or other. But there he was, inside, warm, and at least smelling the good cheer, and there he hoped to remain. He was doing it, or trying it, on his gift—which was tongues. I don't suppose that I was thirty seconds passing that window, if so much; yet I could see decisively that he wanted them to believe in him, and how badly. They, a plain-faced, weather-seamed row, were not taking any. They were tired with their day's work, leaned to the wall, their legs, I am sure, stretched out at length. Each with one horny hand held his pipe in its place; one and all they looked down at their feet, and listened, and judged him for a poor thing. The things you see!

They are not always so pleasant. Sometimes they can be pretty tragic when you come to work them out. I passed a house once on the outskirts of a country town, and across a laurel hedge and iron fence, and between the branches of a monkey-puzzler, could see into a lighted room. Not much to be seen, you might

think. Gas was burning in a central chandelier behind ground-glass globes. An engraving in a gilt frame on a green wall; something in a tall glass case before the window. I did not see the *aspidestris*, which must have been there. Then, on one side of the fire a man in a black coat, asleep, and on the other a woman in a white shawl, asleep—and that was all. Yes, but wait. I remember a trial at some Assizes years ago, where a man was arraigned for killing his wife. He pleaded not guilty, as of course; but the evidence was clear. He had killed her with a chopper in the scullery. He was convicted and sentenced to death, having had nothing to say. Before his execution, but not long before it, he told the chaplain of the gaol what he had done, and why. He said that he had been married to the woman for twenty years; that they did not quarrel, but had got out of the way of speaking to one another, and, in fact, practically never did. It had not affected him for some time, he said; but one evening, suddenly, it did. One evening he was struck with horror, palsy-struck with the reflection: "Good God! I have sat dumb before this woman, she dumb before me, for twenty years, and we may have to sit so for another twenty." He said that from that moment the thought never left him, that the horror of the prospect daunted him, and that by and by his heart failed him. He knew then that he could not do it. Some wild resentment, some hot inconsiderate grudge wrought madness in him—to that shocking end. By ordinary we do not use our imagination, and so escape very likely as much misery as happiness, glory and the like. But if the picture-making faculty awake of itself, blaze the future at us, so vividly that we cannot doubt of its truth—what then? Why, then, as often as not, despondency and madness. I had no envy of that gas-

illumined room, and was contented to be a stranger to that disgruntled pair.

I have seen other things of sharper savour, where passion clearly was involved, and, as it seemed, the creatures themselves uncurtained as well as the room they occupied. Two of them, related long ago, I shall always remember: the first, seen by chance from a window of the Army and Navy Stores, which looked out over the purlieus of Westminster towards the river. That showed me a mean second-floor bedroom just over the way, and a little maid-servant in it, down at heels, draggled, her cap awry, dusting and tidying up. All familiar, uninteresting, a matter of routine, until suddenly I saw her throw her head up —a gesture of real abandonment—and fall on her knees beside the bed. She buried her face in her bare arm; and I moved away. That was no place for me. Startling though, to be jolted out of the smooth apparatus of shopping, away from obsequious service and the accepted convention, in return for my half-crowns, that I was a temporary lord of the earth. All a sham, that; but there across the street, in a frowsy bedroom, was reality—a soul and its Disposer face to face.

The other was revealed when, as a very young man, I had chambers in Old Buildings, Lincoln's Inn. My bedroom there backed upon slums, but was above them, being almost in the roof of a tall old house. One night, very late, I was going to bed, and leaned far out of my window to get air and see the stars. Before, and below me rather, rose a dark wall of houses, entirely blind but for one lighted window. That revealed a shabby sitting-room—a table with a sewing-machine and paraffin lamp; little else. There was a man sitting by the table in his shirt-sleeves; he

was smoking while he read the evening paper. Then a door opened and a tall, youngish woman came in. She was in white—evidently in her nightdress—and her loose hair was about her shoulders. She stood between door and table, resting her hand; I don't think that she spoke. The man, aware or unaware, went on reading. But presently he looked up: their eyes met. He threw down pipe and paper and went to her. He dropped to his knees, clasped hers, and bent his head to his hands. All that I had seen before —I knew what I was doing—but I saw no more. What did it mean? Husband and wife? Sinner and saviour? What do I know?

THE PLIGHT OF THEIR GRACES

The mills of God grind as the poet has declared, and they grind to the same measure both the illustrious and the obscure. Naturally one hears more of the sorrows of the great. The wailing of a duke will carry the length of the realm, and since America is now interested domestically in that estate it will reverberate in the Western continent also. The Duke of Bedford has lately exhibited a part of his case to readers of *The Times*, the Duke of Portland more explicitly his to his friends and neighbours. Both their graces say in effect that the thing can't be done. They do not tell us why not; but we can infer it. To do things properly, Welbeck and Woburn require some thirty housemaids; and how are they to find thirty housemaids, or, having found them, as things

now are, pay for them? They do not ask, but the question follows for the plainer sort, why should a man stand in the ridiculous position of requiring thirty housemaids?

It so happens that I have just been to Woburn for the first time in my life, have made the circuit of the great wall, some ten feet high and, I daresay, ten miles round, have entered at one fine gate and issued at another after a traverse of the noble spaces of the park, in which herds of deer, occasional ostriches, lamas, bisons, remote and solitary buffaloes, and heaven knows what, were to be seen peacefully feeding, as if no kind of anxiety was fretting the peace and amplitude of it all. The trees, the boscages, the lake, the great piled grey house unapproachable of the vulgar, the model villages with their cottage-fronts all stamped with a crowned B—all these splendid established things passed by me like an opium-eater's dream: all so seeming secure, inevitable and right; all, actually, so shaky, doomed, and infernally wrong. And with the Lord of Welbeck's wail in my ears, I also saw that, truly, it could not be done.

It is not a matter of housemaids alone. It is a matter of gardeners, of woodmen, of a permanent staff of masons and bricklayers—for with a wall of ten feet by ten miles there will always be repairs. Other services in proportion. Where are we then? I avoid arithmetic for excellent reasons; but I do see that thirty housemaids at £50 a year apiece plus board come to £3,000 a year, and that the others will figure out accordingly. How is it to be done? It is not. And why should it be done? God knows.

Whether their Graces know is another matter. I think

that they are beginning to know—but even so, they are only at the beginning of the problem. For it is not so easy as it sounds just to drop Welbeck or Woburn and live *en pension* at Dieppe. What are you to do with Welbeck in the meantime? And if you don't want it yourself, who, do you suppose, will want it? And let it be remembered that their Graces, besides Welbeck and Woburn, possess each another house, not made with hands, an indestructible house. They are dukes for ever after the order of Melchisedech. Like snails, wherever they go—to Dieppe, to a flat in the Temple, to a caravan, to the banks of the Susquehanna—they must carry that blazoned house on their backs. And I cannot imagine a more inhospitable or superfluous mansion for the life of me.

The only nobility worth talking about is one of birth, and even that won't bear talking about very seriously. Lord Chesterfield, the famous one of the family, had a gallery of ancestors which was a wonder to behold of completeness and splendour. But he was wise enough to correct it with two pictures: a scrubby old man, labelled Adam de Stanhope, and a scrubby old woman, Eve de Stanhope. He had the values straightened out thus wittily, at any rate for himself. Then there was the family-tree of the Wynns, or another Welsh house, which had an asterisk some distance down, with a note attached: "About this time the creation of the world took place." This is perhaps all very foolish, but we can understand it.

We supplemented that intelligible aristocracy in our country, first with an aristocracy of office, and then with one of rank; and it is on those in particular that the economic crisis presses. Noble birth is a matter of

tradition and, so to speak, of God's grace. If you are nobly born you may black boots, sell matches or beg at a church door. Hidalgos, grandees of Spain, do these things in their own country, and remain grandees of Spain. Even ignoble pursuits cannot stultify noble birth. There it is. Official nobility, too, is very well, while ability to office persists: but that kind died out because ability to office refused to be hereditary. The first Earls were governors of earldoms, that is of counties. The first Viscounts were Vicecomites, Sheriffs. But Lord Viscount Northcliffe is not a sheriff. If he is an aristocrat it is by virtue of rank. Now rank is not quite like beauty. Handsome is as handsome does, we know; but rank is as rank is able to be. You may make a man a duke, of course, but it is possible that he will make himself ridiculous; and if he does that, and if he does it often enough, and if there are enough of him, he will make the Fountain of Honour itself ridiculous. I don't know who was the first of our kings to ennoble, his Quelconques, his "unfortunate females," as Carlyle used to say: I think it was Henry VIII; but whoever he was he sowed the seed of a fungus in the ranks of the peers. One knows what the French kings did, what Charles II, what the Hanoverians did. Whether, when the politicians took control of the Fountain of Honour and commercialised its golden waters, they did any worse, it were hard to say. They made common what had already become vulgar. The peerage of late years is only less absurd because it is less conspicuous. That at least is to the good. Yet there remains this last thing to be said about it. An aristocracy of birth is self-sufficient, but one of rank demands self-evidence, quite a different matter. It drives you back upon wealth, without which it is an absurdity. A grandee of Spain selling matches will

pass—but how about a Caroline or Georgian marquess driving a taxi, or taking his turn at a music-hall?

M. Henri Lavedan wrote a novel upon that theme, a cynical, witty, bitter, rattling novel, too, called "Le Bon Temps." A party of Parisians, men about town and their ladies, is lunching *al fresco* at Armenonville or some such on a fine morning in May. A hurdy-gurdy sounds a familiar air outside, which touches the tender top of some quill in one of the *convives*. "Let's have the old chap in," he moves the company. "He's playing the *Blue Danube*, and will renew the youth for some of us." They have him in, a tattered, bearded, bright-eyed *vecchio*, his instrument slung by a greasy strap to one shoulder, on the other a foolish little troubled monkey in a red velveteen petticoat. He lifts his old hat and recommences his grinding. One of the guests covers his eyes, and so remains until the grinder has gone. Then he lifts his head. "Do you know who that was?" "Not I indeed!" "That was the Duc d'Epervier." Then he tells the story of *Le Bon Temps: Wein, Weib, und Gesang*, a rattling tale with a croak in it.

"Why do the people imagine a vain thing?" This is a case for tags.

THE VILLAGE

The gardener told my housekeeper, and she told me, that the policeman's wife had a baby. I said,

Splendid! or Good!—it was one or the other—which will show you that I knew what I was about. To have said less than that—to have said simply, “Oh,” or “Why not?” would have been to fail in tact. For in the village we take such a thing as a baby seriously. We call it Increase, not a baby, in the old fashion, and disregard the new probability that, while it may be so in one sense, there are several in which it may well be called Decrease. When a patriarch’s—or, I should say here, a Druid’s—wife had a baby, both she and the Druid knew that, barring accidents, it would work for him, if it was a boy, and in due course bring in a wife of its own, and Increase of its own—all to work for the Druid until he died. Or, if it was a girl, he would sell it to a neighbouring Druid for measures of corn or heads of cattle. Increase then all round, however it turned out. But it is different now. We have the name without the thing. If it is a boy, as in fact the policeman’s is, it will be no use to him until it is fifteen, and not much then. Suppose it gets a job somewhere handy, it will pay its mother, say, five shillings a week, a bare subsistence. At twenty, if still living at home, that may be increased to ten shillings. Clothes and a motor-bike will somehow come out of the rest. Precious little Increase there. And soon after twenty it will marry and disappear from the household. But still the village holds by the old fashion, and calls a boy-baby Increase. I have heard girls dignified by the same title, though it is not so invariable. Yet there is more chance of a girl proving useful to her parents than of a boy’s being so. It depends entirely on the mother, whether as the child grows up it finds out that she won’t stand any nonsense. There are still such mothers left—I know two or three; but their numbers diminish with every additional nonsense that crops

up.

Not only do we take babies seriously, but we take each other so. The first is enforced upon us by custom, which is simply the unwritten village law; the other comes about by circumstance, which provides that whether we like it or not—and, on the whole, I am pretty sure that we do like it—we are simply a large family. I don't necessarily mean that everybody is related to everybody else, though as a matter of fact he is, but rather that everybody, from the time he was anybody, has always known everybody else intimately: called him or her by his Christian name—within limits—known the exact state of his wardrobe, the extent of his earnings, the state of his pocket; what he had for dinner, or will have to-morrow, where he has been, what he was doing, whom he is courting, or by whom he is courted—and so on. I should fail entirely to make plain the sense in which this extreme and (to a townsman) extraordinary intimacy must be understood if I had not in reserve one crowning example of it, beyond which I defy anybody to carry intimacy. It is, then, the plain and literal fact that everybody in the village knows, or can find out, exactly the amount, condition, value and period of recurrence of everybody else's underwear. There is no exception to that. It is, it can be, it must be exposed to view and subject to criticism every Monday afternoon in the garden of every cottage. When you have a community with such a mutual knowledge among its members, how can you help their taking each other seriously?

Two of the fundamentals of village life have been expounded, I hope: Custom, which is the Law, and says that what you did the day before yesterday is

sanction for doing it the day after to-morrow; that, and exact mutual knowledge of your own and your neighbours' affairs. There is a third: common poverty. Everybody is poor—or if he is not, he must seem so. That is invariable, for where everyone is poor, and everyone's affairs known to everyone else, a very jealous eye is kept for any variation from the standard. Poverty—and by poverty I mean the state where you never have quite enough for the week's expenses, are never more than a week's pay off "the Parish," and have to trust to windfalls for mere necessaries—that kind of poverty is a state which can only be borne in company. In the village it is the general state, and while that is so the villagers will put up, it seems, with almost anything. Custom, which assures them that it was like that for their forefathers, enables them to accept their continual privations. I daresay there is nobody in the village, of cottage rank, who has ever known an ordinary day when he was not hungry after a meal. They say that that is good for you. My only comment is, Try it, and it won't seem to be so. They will stand that; and being cold in bed; and letting the fire out when you are not cooking something—so that you come home wet and tired to cold ashes, and must chop kindling before you can be warm or dry; and working incessantly, as the women do, for almost nothing or literally nothing; and wearing the same clothes until they fall off you; and washing at the sink downstairs because you are too tired to take water upstairs; and having windows that won't open, and doors that won't shut—but why go on? Worse things than any of these are endured in the slums of great towns. The village makes little of them, provided that they are shared; but the moment it knows, or has cause to suspect that any one of its number has had "a stroke

of luck," come into money, had a useful present made him, or found a well-paid job, then it is at once dissatisfied with its lot, and the lucky offender hears about it. It is not that village people are naturally unkind to each other—far from that, they are kindness itself in times of trouble. But they are incurably suspicious, and quicker to believe ill than well of each other. They grudge prosperity to a neighbour less than resent it. It seems a slight upon themselves. A hot and bitter question surges up, Why should that good fortune happen to her; and what have I done to be left out? By some queer jugglery of the mind, the first half of the question answers the second half; the happy one is so at the expense of the less favoured. If you engage a girl in the village for some daily task, her friends, as likely as not, will cut her in the street. I knew a woman in Norfolk whose husband was killed by a fall from a straw-stack. Compensation, insurance, club-money, presents from the benevolent flowed in to the widow, whose neighbours saw her not only free as air, but comfortably off according to village standards. They called her "the Lady," and some of her own family would have nothing to do with her.

Indiscriminate or heedless present-giving should therefore be avoided, unless you wish harm to come to the object of your alms. There was a man in a village over the hill who was doing a turn of work in the house of a newcomer, a rich young man with the most friendly intentions. Talking to his labourer one day and noticing his unconventional leg-covering, it suddenly shot across his mind that he had lately tried on a new pair of trousers and taken them off again in a rage because of their cut. "By George," he thought, "I like this chap. Now I'll give him those beastly trousers"—which he did. On Sunday, then, there

shone upon the church-going village young Richard in the newest pair of trousers it had ever seen, except, of course, upon the legs of a "gentleman," where they would have been simply unremarkable, *hors concours*. But now it was as if a private in a file should show up there in a cocked hat with feathers. The trousers were glossy from the iron, they caught the sun. The creases before or behind would have cut a swathe. In the after-dinner time, when some favoured corner hums with youth, it hummed to only one tune; and on Monday the children going to school called out after young Richard, "Who stole my trousers?" It will now be understood why no village can be found without its miser. Between hiding and hoarding there is only a difference of degree. The first is forced upon the villager, for public opinion is too many for him; he dare not let it be known that he has anything to put by. The mattress used to be the favourite place for your economies. If it is not used now it is simply to save the waste of good ticking which always followed a death. Now it will be a hole under the hearthstone, or in the thatch, or a *cache* under the third gooseberry bush as you go down the garden. Sometimes it is so well hidden that, if death be sudden, it is never found at all. Sometimes the hider will forget where he hid his money, and dig up the whole garden in the middle of the night. Mr. Pepys was in that predicament and, so feverishly did he hunt, lost quite a number of broad pieces. But the worst case is where he knows the hiding-place exactly, and going to recover his treasure, finds that somebody else had known it too; and so it has gone. Cruel dilemma! He dare not let his loss be known, nor, should he be able, accuse the thief. His only remedy in such circumstance is to steal from the stealer. I heard of an old woman who was robbed of

twenty pounds, which she kept in an old beehive, and who knew perfectly well where the money was. She said nothing at all, continued her acquaintance, and even used to have the thief to tea with her. I don't know how it was done—whether it dawned upon the guilty that she was suspected, and so compunction came. Anyhow, as I was told, the money was restored.

It may seem odd that when a villager rises in the world, as they often do, he ceases to be grudged. I am not sure that he really does; but no signs of grudging appear, simply because he ceases to be a villager. Rank is carefully observed—but it is all outside. There is no rank in the village itself. All are level there—except in one way. And that exception is not odd, either.

Walking down the street at certain hours of the day you will meet certain old men, elders of the people. Although they differ in no respect from any others you may find there, you will notice this about them that they will be "Mr." to everyone, and not, as is usual, Jack, Tom, or Jimmy. What has procured them their title of honour? Not always age, certainly never riches: as often as not the bearer of a title will be an old-age pensioner. Or he may be "on the rates." It doesn't matter. Some native worth or resident dignity forbids the use of his Christian name, which is otherwise of invariable application. That points to a real aristocracy, an aristocracy of character; the only one which can hope to be permanent, as founded upon reason and nature; and the one without which no democracy can expect to be permanent either. Walking with one of these patricians the other day, I observed before us a man of near his age. Presently there came towards us an

urchin homing from school, who passing our front rank, a man old enough to be his great grandfather, lightly acclaimed him with “Afternoon, George.” But to my companion it was, “Afternoon, Mr. M——.” With the women—married, of course—the decencies are observed in salutation, but not in reference. You will hear of one as old Liz Marchant, of another, always, as Mrs. Catchpole, or whatever her name may be. But, to each other, married women are strict formalists. Two girls who have known each other from childhood and been at school together will be Florry and Bess to the very church-porch. From the wedding day onwards, if they should live to be a hundred, they will be “Mrs.” to each other. That would fill me with wonder if I did not know how seriously the married state is taken in the village, the more so, I don’t doubt, because the single is more free than is convenient. Marriage, we say, sets right every irregularity. Perhaps it does; but in these parts it effectively prevents there being any more.

I have been expounding, it should be seen, what are virtually the manners and customs of a nation widely different from that of most of my readers. It is not really an economic, but an historic difference; for the longer I study it the clearer it becomes that the village does not differ in any essential respect from its remotest original, the Neolithic settlements on the tops of these hills. From where I live, a quarter way up the chalk down, I could conduct the inquirer to three or four vestiges of communities exactly like this one. I could point out the holes in which they lived, the track by which they drove their flocks to and from the watering places, which are still *in situ* and still used. I could lay a wreath on the mound

which covers their dust, or I might by a chance of the spade uncover their bones, not dust yet. There has never been discovered, so far as I am aware, anything to show that any one man of that nation lorded it over his fellows. Lords and masters enough there have been since. From the time when the Alpine race invaded our country the Iberian stock which underlies us all has never lacked a master. *But they have none now.* They have employers, hirers, not masters. So far as I can see the West Country village community is now once more just where it was fifteen hundred years before Christ, or thirty-five hundred years ago. It is in the valley instead of on the hill, it is professedly Christian instead of heathen. But it is still guided by tradition, and governed by common opinion, and as near a democracy as may be: a democracy tempered by character.

THE CURTAINS

Your pair of muslin curtains, given time and place, may cost you anything in the region of four, eleven, three, as the shop will tell you; but if you add to that domestic calm, the amenities and a raw sconce they soon mount up. That was what they cost a man I know, and I say that they are not worth it. For, not to dwell for a moment upon his particular pair, muslin curtains don't fulfil the whole duty of curtains, but only a part of it, and the wrong part. They prevent you from seeing out of the window, which is the last thing you want of them in the

country; they don't prevent other people from seeing into it—which is the first thing. Particularly when you have the lamp alight. For instance, the other evening the whole village was informed inside of an hour that Mrs. Hobday, a young and pretty woman, had been trying on a hat with one hand and powdering her nose with the other. She herself was the last to know it, and the last to be allowed to forget it.

The Hobdays' neighbours are the Cosseys, and Mrs. Hobday and Mrs. Cossey from the first were bosom friends. That was very important if life were to be what you might call life, for the two front doors are under one lintel, and, said Mrs. Cossey, "'tis such close living that if you weren't one thing you must be t'other." But they were always the one thing until the affair of the curtains, though Mrs. Cossey was large and plain-faced, and Mrs. Hobday pretty and small; though Mrs. Cossey had two children and Mrs. Hobday was only expecting. However, from the very first we were told 'twas all as pleasant as pleasant. They lived in each other's houses, listened to each other's tales of courtship and marriage, admired each other's washing, and shook sympathetic heads over the unreasonableness of each other's husband. There were no clouds in the sky, nor the makings of them. The Cosseys had an Axminster, but the Hobdays a new drugget. Mrs. Cossey had a copper kettle, Mrs. Hobday a silver teapot. Things were "just so," neck and neck, and nothing to choose between them, when you came to add things up. O sweet content! And then, one mild morning, Mrs. Cossey was offered a seat in a motor-car going into town, and accepted.

It was a fine day; she was elated by her drive.

Market-day, too. She felt like going it, and she went it. Away flew five shillings on a pair of muslin curtains which were selling like hot cakes at a stall. Mrs. Cossey bought other things, but nothing to count. The curtains fair set her up, they did. She felt as though she were treading on air. Wherever she went about the town that day she had an eye for the windows, and saw nothing better anywhere. "I'll make Fred put 'em up after dark," she promised herself. "'Twill be a surprise for Mrs. Hobday in the morning." It was.

When Mrs. Hobday saw her friend's front-room window she felt her heart jump, then stand still. But she knew what was due to herself, and let not a sigh escape her. Mrs. Cossey found her busy on her knees over the doorstep, busier certainly than she had ever been before. It became necessary to call her attention to the curtains, which somehow took the edge off them. You can't explain it, but so 'twas. Then, of course, Mrs. Hobday admired; and when she had admired enough, she was told all about it; and when she knew all about it she said no more, but excused herself for being busy, and withdrew. Nor, if you will believe Mrs. Cossey, was she seen again for two days and nights; never so much as put her head outside the door. But Mrs. Cossey did not know how she had wept on Hobday's shoulder that evening of discovery, how she had pleaded (as they used to do at Assizes, poor things) her condition, and how Hobday had said she shouldn't want for anything, if it cost him ten shillin'—which it did. She knew nothing of all that; but in two days' time, when she stood at her front door, and, happening to look at her neighbour's window, might, so she said, have been knocked down with a feather—then indeed she knew all the blackness of Mrs. Hobday's heart.

Whatever she might have been knocked down with, she herself used a club, that is to say, most injurious words. The whole village heard them, at second-hand, from Tom Crewkomb, the sweep, who had been passing at the time. Warmed by eloquence, it seems, and her growing sense of triumphant suffering, Mrs. Cossey called Mrs. Hobday a saucy young piece; whereat Mrs. Hobday, as if whipped, struck out blindly and said that Mrs. Cossey was no better than she should be. It may have been true—it is true of most of us; but Mrs. Cossey took it to heart and, refusing all nourishment, could do nothing but repeat it to herself over and over again. The pair of cottages, resplendently curtained as they might be, became a house of lamentation. The breaking-point was reached when Hobday came home to tea, and being again wept upon, pushed fiercely into next door and called Mrs. Cossey to her face an old tantamount—a terrible word, whose implication no man could possibly know. For end thereof, not despondency but madness: for when Cossey understood that Hobday had called his wife a tantamount, he waited for him outside, and gave him what he called a pair of clippers over the ear. Hobday was a light-weight, and did his best, but he could not get near Cossey; and he went to grass. Mrs. Hobday had hysterics, and asked for the doctor; and then (such is human nature at its best) Mrs. Cossey ran in to her, called her a lamb, and put her to bed.

It is a boy.

Mrs. Cossey and Mrs. Hobday have better things to admire in each other now. But Mrs. Hobday knows that her curtains cost more. So also does Hobday.

HAPPINESS IN THE VILLAGE

Not far from me there lives a man with wife and child in a tenement not much better than a cowshed. It is exactly two rooms of a wooden building, with no other conveniences of any kind, not so much as a copper for the washing. It is built into a ledge cut out of the southern slope of the valley, consequently never looks the sun in the face. I know that the rain falls through into the bedroom. If one dared one would have the place condemned, if to do that would not condemn to the workhouse those who shelter there. Yet I have known those poor things envied. At a certain hour of the afternoon the wife comes to her open door, the child in her arms. After five minutes' watching, she sets the little creature down to totter up the road, down which comes a man, homing from his work. He too is on the look-out, and stands to admire. Then, when they meet, he picks up the baby, sets it on his shoulder, and back they go together to mother at the door. I have known that envied, I say, by the childless, by the unhappily mated, and by those whose days for children are over and done. Life has that in store for some of us, and I don't know that it has anything better. An allegory, that, in its way.

Four years ago, when Agriculture had a Wages Board, and hopes were high that a *carminis aetas* was opening for our oldest industry, a club was formed among the members of the Board for the ventilation of ideas. It was a gallant adventure, maintained with spirit so long as the parent Board was suffered to endure. Political exigencies, however, determined its

existence, and with it perished the Agricultural Club. Now its president and virtual founder, Sir Henry Rew, has published its remains in “The Story of the Agricultural Club” (P. S. King and Son), and we are able to judge of the remedies proposed for a sick profession. It may shortly be said of the club, as of the deceased board, that its very existence did more service to agriculture than any of its recommendations, if only because it was solid in Pall Mall while its remedies were, and largely remain, in the air. In that fine room of Schomberg House, which happens to have been Gainsborough’s studio, there met on the eve of every Board-meeting representatives of the landed interests from all England, squires, tenant-farmers and farm labourers, on terms of that complete equality which only clubmanship can guarantee. How extraordinary that was is illustrated by Sir Henry Rew as follows:

> “A year ago I had occasion to attend a meeting in the market town of a typical agricultural district. It purported to be a conference between the representatives of farmers and of farm-workers with regard to a dispute then in progress. I was shown into the conference room, where I found the farmers assembled in force round a large table, and I was honoured with a seat at the head of the table by the side of the chairman. After some discussion among themselves, the chairman announced that they were ready to receive the representations of the workers. About half a dozen

> of them entered, and were ranged on a form against the wall at the lower end of the room. The Chairman addressed them civilly enough, but with much the same air of condescension as a magistrate assumes in speaking from the Bench. I am sure that no offence was intended or taken. The position seemed perfectly natural to both parties. It was the normal and habitual relation of master and man in discussion."

It is fair to conclude, with Sir Henry, that the Wages Board and its club were "the expression of a new relationship," not that of "master and man," but rather of "man and man"; and it is not difficult to say what that may imply in latter-day village life. I am prepared by observation to say that at least it implies a definite heightening of status for the farm-labourer, of which he is very well aware. But whether it will work out for village prosperity and (a very different thing) village happiness, is still a matter of various opinion—opinion which is reflected in the papers read before the assembled club, and in the ensuing discussions.

These papers, as one might expect, are mainly practical in purpose. They deal with education, principally technical; they deal with cottage-building, not very fruitfully; they offer proposals for the formation of village-clubs; they touch, but gingerly, upon the ownership of land. The avowed ends of every proposition are two: how to keep the labourer in the village, and how to make him happy when he is there. It seems to me that readers and

debaters alike fell into the common error of confusing prosperity with happiness, and happiness with pleasure. The mistake is fundamental. If all men of pleasure were happy men, legislation might accomplish what philosophers have failed to do. If excitement had no reactions, then let village clubs abound and young ploughmen dance all night! Bread and circuses are within the discretion of Parliament, but not prosperity, and not happiness. A man must work for his happiness "as some men toil after virtue"; and the education which he must receive in order to attain it is in another technic than that which has been in the mind of the Club. The young villager must acquire mental alacrity, he must learn to be temperate, and he must get charity. Having those, he may pick up happiness like gold off from Tom Tiddler's ground, for the world is full of it. All the specifics of the Agricultural Club are palliatives of his lot, "consolatories writ." The elementals remain—to be sought elsewhere.

The virtues of the villager are well known. They are such as to deserve and frequently to obtain happiness, but they do not tend to his prosperity in the Club's sense. Nationalise the land to-morrow, and parcel it out in small holdings next week; by next year more than half of it will have run to waste. On the other half, for nine men who gain a bare subsistence off it there may be one who will do well. What is lacking? Mental alacrity. The peasant can plod with the best, rise early, work till dark; but he will do the thing to-morrow which he did yesterday. Mental sloth is temperamental: probably the Iberians had it. But there is nothing to prevent him from being happy; very many of them are so, and more than you might expect. Farm-labour, like farming, is a way of life; and so is happiness, in the sense that

the kingdom of Heaven may be within you. One might go so far as to say that the prosperity of which the labourer dreams would rather diminish his store of happiness than increase it. Some of the wisest of my friends of the village feel sure of it. There are men about here who have risen in the world, as they call it, and are not conspicuously better citizens, nor more contented ones for that. Getting and spending, they lay waste their time. The wise villager sees it, and if he would rather be happy than prosperous is in the way to remain so. In that resolve the papers of the Agricultural Club cannot help him. The elementals remain. Others abide our question, but not those.

OTHERWHERENESS

The man whom I found one day in the reading-room at the Club, searching the Court Guide to find out his own name, was quite good-tempered about it. It had suddenly occurred to him to send a telegram, and he had written it out: when it came to signing it he was beat. I told him at once what I believed his name to be; he verified it in Boyle. “I might have had to get a dressing-room,” he said. “It isn’t one of those things which you can ask the hall-porter.”

The really absent-minded are not irritated by those intrusions of the supra-liminal self. The sub-liminal so pleasantly employs them, habitually, that they can afford to put up with the other’s impertinence. But

occasionally he goes too far, as he certainly did with a dear and vague friend of mine when, horribly involved with a fishing line and a fly-hook in his sleeve, he hastily put his eye-glass into his mouth and his cigarette into his eye. Then indeed he broke into a flood of imprecation, so very unlike himself that one part of him "which never was heard to speak so free" really shocked the other part. "Oh, shameful, shameful!" I heard him say, and the profaner part was silenced. Here, of course, the whole assembled man was no further away than the whereabouts of the fly-hook, and not at all pleasantly occupied. Mostly, as Lamb says of his good friend, George Dyer:

> "With G. D., to be absent from the body, is sometimes (not to speak it profanely) to be present with the Lord. At the very time when, personally encountering thee, he passes on with no recognition—or, being stopped, starts like a thing surprised—at that moment, reader, he is on Mount Tabor—or Parnassus—or co-sphered with Plato—or, with Harrington, framing 'immortal commonwealths.'"

If he interrupted those happy sojournings, as he did once, to make a call in Bedford Square, and on learning that no one was at home, solemnly to sign his name in the visitors' book, it is not at all surprising that, wandering on and on, he should presently find himself again in Bedford Square, again inquire for his friends, again ask for the visitors' book and be brought up short, on the point of

signing it again, by his own name scarcely dry—as if, says Lamb, "a man should suddenly encounter his own duplicate." He may have been a little mortified, I daresay, but—it was worth it. A thing of the same sort happened to a very delightful lady of my friends—a lady of commanding presence, but occasional remarkable absences too. She went to call at a house in Eaton Square, no less, and found herself, when the door was opened by a footman, totally deprived of the name of the houselady. What did she? There was a moment of heart-beating and wild surmise; and then, with a smile of ineffable courtesy and sweetness, she held out her hand to the wondering man, pressed his own warmly as she said "*Good*-bye," and sailed serenely away to resume her commerce with the infinite. Such commerce, I know, she had. She told me the story herself, and saw nothing amiss with it. Nor was there anything amiss. She was one who could do simple things simply—which is a great and rich possession; but occasionally she presumed upon it—as when she assured herself of the same virtue in her daughters and expected them to carry out her simplifications. That, of course, was a very different thing; but I don't think she understood it. There is this also to be said, that women are much less self-conscious than men and do not go in such terror of being made ridiculous. Tell me of a man who could enter his drawing-room full of guests, and discovering himself without, say, his teeth, could laugh in the first face his eye encountered. "Forgive me—one moment—I must get my teeth"—tell me of such a man. *Mutatis mutandis*, I have been told of such a woman—and a great lady she was, too—by somebody who was there. It was not teeth, however.

The best of men—the George Dyers, whom, happily,

we have always with us somewhere or other—are as content as most women with their natural destiny. George Dyer dined one night with Leigh Hunt at Hampstead, dined, talked, and took his leave. Twenty minutes later the knocker announced a late-comer. It was G. D. "What is the matter?" asked Hunt. "I think sir," said Dyer, in his simpering, apologetic way, "I think I have left one of my shoes behind me." He had indeed shuffled it off under the table, and did not discover his loss until he had gone a long way. As I read that story, which is Ollier's (but I get it from Mr. Lucas), G. D.'s apologetics were directed to Hunt, whose rest he had disturbed, by no means to himself. A man less sublimely lifted was one with whom I had been staying in a Scotch country house. We came away together, and half-way to the station he struck himself on the forehead, and "Good God!" he said, "I have tipped the same man three times!" It appeared too true that he had: once in his bedroom, once in the hall, and once at the carriage door. Now he, if you like, was excessively mortified, and his reason may well have been that he had not been better employed, on Helikon or elsewhere, when he might have been noticing menservants. He was as blind as a bat, poor man, and a sense of infirmity may have stung him. The otherwhere men have no sense of infirmity—on the contrary, one of great gain. An ampler æther, a diviner air is theirs in which to exercise.

But of all divinely preoccupied men the best—unless Dyer be the best—is Brancas—the Comte de Brancas of whom you may read in Saint-Simon, in the Correspondence of "Madame," and in Tallemant des Réaux. Brancas was to the Paris of the *Grand Siècle* what Dyer was to the London of the Regency, or Dr. Spooner to the wits of my younger days. La Bruyère,

summarising him as *Ménalque*, overdid his study, and made him appear like the clown in a circus who gets horribly involved in the carpet, or kicks away the hat he stoops to pick up. It may be perfectly true that Brancas went downstairs, opened his front door, and shut it again, thinking that he had just come in—that I can perfectly understand. It is a thing I might have done myself. But to add to it that he presently discovered his nightcap on his head, his stockings down about his ankles, and his shirt outside his *chausses*, is to spoil the story. Never mind, he is out in the street finally, and walking briskly along, with his mind leagues away. By and by he is brought up short by a violent blow on the nose. "Who has attacked me?" he cries. Nobody. He has walked fiercely into the tilt of a market cart, which he had overtaken in his briskness. Or he goes to Versailles to pay his court, enters the *appartement*, and passing under the central chandelier, his perruque is caught and held there; but he forges along. The company gapes, then bursts into laughter. Brancas stops, looks inquiringly about, sees the swinging perruque and is delighted. "Whose is that?" He looks all about him to find the bare pate and exposed ears. Finally, of course, somebody claps it on his head. A good story, which may be true.

Two of them, at least, may be, as they are told by Madame in letters to her friends. Brancas went to church—to the *Salut*: he knelt down, and feeling in his pocket for his Book of Hours, pulled out a slipper which he had put there instead of it. Just outside the church, on leaving, he is accosted by a lackey who, with much deprecation, asks him if he happens to have taken Monseigneur's shoe by mistake. "Monseigneur's shoe!" It is the fact that he had paid a call upon a bishop that afternoon. "No, no—

certainly not"—then he remembers that he has, in fact, a slipper in his pocket. His hand goes in, to make sure that it is there. It is; but so is another slipper—which is precisely—Monseigneur's.

The next is even better. Brancas goes to mass at Versailles. He is late, and bustles up the nave between the kneeling company. He sees, as he thinks, a *prie-dieu* facing the altar. Most convenient—just the thing. He hastens, throws himself upon it. To his amazement it emits a strangled cry, gives way before him, and he finds himself intricately struggling on the pavement with a stout lady. His *prie-dieu* had been the Queen-Mother.

THE JOURNEY TO COCKAIGNE

I remember being taken ill in a small town on the Marne in 1906, desperately ill with copper poisoning. I say that I remember, as if there was a chance that I should ever forget it. The agony, the rigour and all the rest of it, were accompanied by high fever and delirium, which lasted all through a burning August night. It happened that a *fête nationale* had possession of the town: there were a fair, a steam roundabout, a horrible organ accompaniment. The grinding, remorseless tune, the uproar, the slapping of countless feet (though I tried to count them) on the pavement wove themselves into my racing dreams. I seemed to be a party to some Witches' Sabbath; and now, if I ever try to

imagine Hell, it always comes out like that. A dry, crackling, reiterated business, without rest, without mirth, without hope, without reason. One suffered incredibly, one was desperately concerned; the brain was involved in it; the more frivolous it was the more deeply the mind must work. I knew it was a festivity; all the familiar features of revel were there —and all horrible. The mind was so tired that you seemed to hear it wailing for mercy; but it went on jigging after the organ. The feet of the dancers were burnt by the paving stones, yet never stayed. Some mocking devil possessed the people, rode them with spurs. There was no zest, yet no pause; and through it all was the blare of the organ.

Life in London, in Ascot week, struck me, coming up after six months in the country, as very much like that night of fever. There was the same dry crackling, the same strife of noise, the symptoms of mirth without reality. London, of course, is much too big to be generalised from. The best is hidden behind shut doors. It is the froth of the ferment that you see. But there is now too much froth; one wonders what is working in the lees.

Londoners, as you pass them in a cab, are a crowd; you don't even suspect individuality there. They drift along the streets like clouds. The colours of them are so blurred down by the dust and din that they seem a uniform drab. Here and there a yellow jumper, or a grass-green sunshade catches the eye; but no personality behind it, no reasonable soul in human flesh subsisting. It requires stern attention on a fixed point if you would candidly consider your fellow creatures as London has made them, and, no doubt, been made by them. It happened to me that I was held up by a block in Piccadilly, at a favourable

point between Bond Street and the arcade of the Ritz. Four o'clock on a glaring afternoon; tea-shops crammed; motor buses piled skywards like market-carts: extraordinarily over-dressed young men, and extraordinarily undressed girls were on the pavement, all very much alike, and all apparently of one age.

Observe that I have not seen London in the season since the Armistice. Well, it seemed to me that the scythe had mown down much that I used to know. Here instead was a saturnalia of extreme youth. I saw thin girls in single garments of silk, with long white legs and Russian opera shoes; and young men walking with them, looking curiously at them, or talking to them urgently at shop windows. The girls said little; they were not there to talk, but to be talked to; they accepted what was said as a matter of routine. Their eyes wandered from article to article displayed. They seemed to me as purposeless as moths hovering about flowers at dusk. Love, I suppose, was their food—it ought to have been; but neither they nor their lovers showed any of the pride or triumph, the joy or the longing of love. Love, for once, was not a new thing; the wonder had left it. Fever had dried up the juices of nymph and swain alike. It was like a dinner off husks.

Next day was the first of Ascot, and I watched for some time the endless procession of motors in the Hammersmith Road. I had often seen it before—I mean before the war. It had been a big thing then; but now it was a monstrous thing, a nightmare of going to the races. A continuous stream there was, of long, low, swift, smooth-gliding machines, never stopping, almost noiseless. They were all covered and glazed, all filled inside with doll-like, silent, half-

clad, vaguely-gazing girls; with stiff and starched, black-coated, silk-hatted young men. I saw no one laughing; I thought the whole business a dream on that account; for, though you see and mix with crowds in dreams, there is never either talking or laughing. It was that absence of heart in the thing, or of zest for it, which made one so uncomfortable. Lavish outlay is rather shocking nowadays; but if you take away the only excuse for it, which is high spirits, it is much more than shocking; it is terrifying, it is hideous.

Where on earth, I asked myself, did the money come from? Who floated, and how did they float the balances at the banks? Every one of those motors must have cost a thousand pounds; every one of the chauffeurs (you could see at a glance) must have cost five pounds a week. The clothes, no doubt, you could have on tick; but not the champagne, and not the chauffeurs. From where I stood in Addison Road I could see, at the lowest, fifty thousand pounds' worth of motors. And the stream, mind you, at that hour reached from Ascot to Piccadilly, and was repeating itself on the Fulham Road and the King's Road, to say nothing of the Uxbridge Road. Who were those people? Were they all profiteers, or all in other peoples' debt? It was very odd. In the county where I live we are rather put to it how to keep going. The great houses are mostly shut up or in the market; the smaller houses are all too big for their owners and occupiers. There is a scale of general descent. The marquesses let their castles, if they can, and go in to the manors; the squires let their manors, and convert the farmhouses to their domestic use. I leave my old Rectory and hide in a cottage. We are all a peg or two down. Income-tax and the rates had done their fell work when there came upon us a coal

strike of three months long—a knock-out blow to many. Did it not touch London? Or were all those pleasurers Colonel and Mrs. Rawdon Crawleys who live at the rate of seven thousand a year, on tick? The Lord knows.

On the whole, I thought it well that the miners' wives, in the scorching grey villages of Durham and the Tyne, were not standing with me in Addison Road that first day of Ascot. Or if South Wales and Lanark had been there! I should not have wished them let loose on London just then. Nothing was further from London's mind than either of those vexed and seething provinces. It neither talked of them nor read about them. *The Westminster Gazette's* front page was entirely filled up with a cricket match; so, by the by, was the second. *The Times*—but since *The Times* has become sprightly I confess it is too much for me. An elephant on hot bricks! Nowadays, if I want to read the news I must send to Manchester for it. Thence I learn that the coal strike is in its third month, the English and Irish still murdering each other, and the Government still throwing overboard its own legislation. Golf news, cricket, polo, lawn tennis I can have from *The Westminster Gazette*.

The sea saw that and fled; Jordan was driven back. I stood it for three days, then came home to find the mallow in flower in the hedges, and men and women still afield getting in the last of the hay. Wilts was being careful over many things, but Ascot and thin girls were not of them. In London I was puzzled by the way the money was flying; but I was shocked, not by that, but by the absence of zest for a time-honoured pastime. If only some young couple had

laughed! Or made love as if it was the only thing in the world worth doing! But they were all as weary as the King Ecclesiast. That seemed to me the serious matter.

SUICIDE OF THE NOVEL

The epic faculty in us is never likely to atrophy, but will break out again presently in some unsuspected place; for while all men are children once, most of them remain so all their lives. Winter's Tales will go on, because there will always be winter evenings, and the most interesting thing, next to playing at life, is to talk about it. "There was a man—dwelt by a churchyard ...", or "Andra moi ennepé, Mousa...." So the romantic or the adventurous tale should begin, as it always did and always will. It is when he adds love to his chronicle of events and allows that to modify them that the tale-teller turns novelist and, in danger of over-sophistication, begins the road to Avernus; for love involves passion, and passion means sex, and sex invites curious philosophy, and philosophy calls in pathology; then comes Herr Freud with his abhorred complexes; and then you have something which may stimulate, may divert, may do you good, but (as the old tale goes) "is not Emily." There is no love in the *Odyssey*, none in *Robinson Crusoe*, none worth talking about (only gallantry) in *Gil Blas*. The animalism in *Tom Jones*, as in Smollett's gross tales, was but a vent for high spirits in a century which reckoned love among the appetites, and put women

and claret roughly in the same category. Speaking only for my own countrymen, I doubt if sex took on its romantic aspect or became a final cause of narrative fiction until the latter half of the last century. In Walter Scott and Jane Austen it does not exist. It hardly exists in Dickens, hardly, except as a butt, in Thackeray. Trollope's charming girls are satisfied with extremely little in the way of wooing. The Luftons and young Frank Greshams and Major Grantleys choose by liking, wait seven months or years for their Rachels, kiss them and go home—to write once in a while. Johnny Eames cherishes a flame—if it may be called a flame. We are asked to believe in Mr. Grey's passion for Miss Vavasour—but do we believe it, or are we the less entertained for our strong doubts? No, indeed.

In the latter half of the last century, Rossetti wrote sensuous poetry of a kind which was new to English literature, very different, say, from that of Keats. Swinburne wrote sexual poetry, as I apprehend, of a highly theoretical kind. I don't know exactly when Mr. George Moore began to write novels, but cannot recall any striking example of the French novel in English before his time, and should be inclined to commence our series of the grubby and illicit with him. George Meredith and Mr. Hardy were both well-established before that; but though there is passion in Meredith, and lyric passion too, and sex in Mr. Hardy, with much intensive imagining about it, *non ragioniam di lor*. They were alike in the old tradition. Neither Aphrodite or Priapus sat on the Muse's throne. At the utmost they did but "donner la chemise!" Meredith and Mr. Hardy wrote stories, not sex-fantasias. Mr. Moore will do very well as an illustration of the change which came over our novels when Trollope ceased to write, the change

which, as I say, made them French novels written in English. Before that change, love, sex, passion, as manifestations of life, had been part of the entertainment which the novel as a redaction of life had to offer. After it they *were* the entertainment, and thereupon and thereby the novel ceased to be a redaction of life. For, *pace* Herr Freud, all life is not sex. One resultant of the changed objective will account for that. There was no room for life in a sex-novel. If you set out to write a dithyramb of lust, or sex, your novel will be short. The subject is absorbing, once it takes hold of you, and the celebration of it will exhaust itself as the reality does. Such tales have always been short: *Daphnis and Chloe*, for instance, *Manon Lescaut*. One could not have filled the old three-decker with that kind of thing. Nobody except Richardson ever tried it. With the change of theme, then, conspired the change of form, and the bookseller and the novelist in a concatenation accordingly.

Other things followed of necessity. The novel ceased to be an interpretation of life and became a kind of poem. The preoccupied novelist wrote *à priori*. Observation ceased to procure novels to be written; the novelist, rather, stung by his gadfly into action, observed for his own purposes and those of his theme. His novel clothed his thought in appropriate draperies, to call them so, with which life had little or nothing to do. He did not in fact set up an image of life at all, but instead, a Hermes, on which he could hang garlands corresponding to his passion or indicative of his complaint. Novels of this sort, to call them so, are still being produced: I read three of them the other day, all written by women. One of them, which was “crowned” with a cheque for a hundred pounds, was a real pæan of sex: in the other

two sophistication had set in. They did not so much hymn the function as "peep and botanise" upon its grave. The three were episodic, "all for love, and the world well lost." The world indeed, for all that appeared, was standing still while half a dozen persons to a book were enacting their secret rites. If the end of all this be not despondency and madness it will be something quite as unpleasant.

That which led me into these speculations was Mrs. Stirling's excellent memoir of her sister and brother-in-law, Evelyn and William De Morgan, that happily-mated pair. She tells in its place the manner in which De Morgan fell into the writing of novels, how without effort they came to him. They were certainly the last of our novels which have offered us a comprehensive reading of life. It seems absurd to say of them that they are able, because ability, in the common use of the word, implies the conscious exercise of it. De Morgan's novels, however, seem effortless; they read as the most spontaneous things in the world, and Mrs. Stirling now says that they really were so. There is no apparent design, no contrivance. They are as formless as life itself.

> "'Be good enough to note,' he says in one of them, 'that none of the characters in this story are picturesque or heroic—only chance samples of folk you may see pass your window now, at this moment, if you will only lay your book down and look out. They are passing—passing—all day long, each with a story. And some little thing you see, a meeting, a parting, may make the next hour the turning point of

> existence.... This is a tale made up of trifles.'"

What he made of those stored and treasured-up trifles, with what humour, with what tenderness, what wisdom he combined and related them, what in fact was the harvest of his quiet eye, cannot be entered upon here. De Morgan had been harvesting for sixty-five years when he began! To me his books seem to be the wisest of our time. I know of none which, as Matthew Arnold said of Homer, produce the sense in the reader "of having, within short limits of time, a large portion of human life presented to him." They contain—like the *Iliad* in that, like *Tom Jones*, like *David Copperfield* and *Vanity Fair*, and *War and Peace*—sufficient of the world to create in us a strong illusion of the whole labouring, blundering, groaning, laughing, praying affair.

But De Morgan is too good for the end of an essay—he who has inspired so many. And he will write no more of his friendly, wise and comprehending books. And he is not the point. The point is that the novelist has bled his art down and out by urging it to make a poem of itself instead of a digest. I say nothing now of the pamphlet and the tract. Those things also the novelist has done without leaving the other undone. He, or his novel, is now dying of exhaustion, self-induced. Worst sign of all—he is beginning to note his own symptoms.

IMMORTAL WORKS

An editor—one, that is, of a race suspect to my species; for, as the herbivores fear the carnivores, so is it with the likes of me and of him—an editor, I say, has lately spread his nets before me, inviting me to "a symposium of well-known poets and critics." A banquet, I fear, like that last one of Polonius, "not where he eats but where he is eaten." The subject of our symposium, the staple of our feast, was to be "What poets since Wordsworth, *especially what living poets*, and which one or two of their poems ... should be given a place in the Golden Treasury of English poetry." Excellent, i' faith! Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly. I am by this time a fly getting on in years. I dine out as little as may be, and have developed something of an intuitive sense which tells me whether I am to dine or to be dined upon. So I decline the invitation in the following terms:

"Dear Sir,—I deprecate such proposals as yours, because I cannot think them intended seriously, or (even if they are) likely to be taken so. It seems to me that you are inviting me less to a symposium than to an exhibition, in which I am to be an exhibit. You are asking me, among others, to grant immortality, or deny it, to certain living persons, many of whom are my friends or acquaintances. Entry into a Golden Treasury is the hall-mark of no less a thing, the end and aim of every poet in the world. Once there, a poet is a peer, a knight of a round table. And you expect me to make of myself a Fountain of Honour, to dub knights, deal round coronets? No, indeed, my dear sir. I am many bad things, but I hope not so arrogant, nor such an ass. No man living can predict immortality for his friend, though he may dearly wish that he could.

"It is not possible to be sure of current literature for the plain reason that local and temporary interests must inevitably bias the judgment. I don't mean by that one's interest in one's friend. At this hour the war of 1914-18 is the most portentous thing we know or can think of. I would not mind staking a round sum upon the probability of nine out of ten of your banquetters selecting recent war poems by recent young warriors. And yet how many war poems are there in the existing Golden Treasury? *The Burial of Sir John Moore*, of course; but what others? And yet again, is it not only too possible that, before your new Golden Treasury were in the printer's hands, another war would be burning out the memory of its forerunner, and wringing from us new war poems whose appositeness would make immortality more obviously theirs than of any which you had in type? You see? That is one of the difficulties in which you would land me, supposing that you were serious."

So much for the editor of ——. We do not know, indeed, though we sometimes think and always hope that we do, what makes for immortality. Shakespeare, you say? Who (except Shakespeare himself) thought Shakespeare immortal on the day when he was alive and dead? Who thought Johnson's Dictionary immortal? Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*? Yes, I fancy that any serious reader of that book, when it was published, knew in his heart that it would live. But take smaller things. Why, out of all Landor's verse, was *Rose Aylmer* taken, and why were others left, many of them technically as perfect? You don't know. Nor do I. Well, then, which out of the beautiful numbers of *A Shropshire Lad* will live for six hundred years—as long as Chaucer? Which out of the quatrains of Fitzgerald's *Omar*? We may think

that we know. But do we? Really, all that we do know is that among the copious poets (and Landor was very copious) some produced more perdurable lyrics than others. We know that Burns did, that Heine did: we don't know how or why. Universality we say goes to immortality. It certainly does: the thing must go home to everybody. So does heart, whatever that is; the "lyric cry," the sense of tears. Look at *Auld Robin Gray*: that is immortal. Look at *The Wife of Usher's Well*. Those things might last as long as Homer or the Bible. The exact proportion, the exquisite admixture of those qualities I have mentioned, with others—felicity, limpidity, grace, and so on—do make certain poems as immortal as you please; and the want of them cuts others out. That is all there is to say.

On the whole, it is a good thing that we don't know the recipe. It is one of several things we had better not know. Immortality in this world, immortality in another! Suppose that we were as certain of the latter as we are of getting to Paris by the 11 a.m. from Victoria. Either the world would be emptied by suicide, or—it wouldn't! Suppose that immortality for a poem was a matter of formula. Take of universality so much, of heart so much, of grace so much: add tears, so much, and simmer gently till done ...! What would be the result? Everybody's poems would be immortal. The Golden Treasury would stretch from here to Easter. It would be as bad as the Order of the British Empire. Nobody would want to be in it. And the result of that would be that mortal poems would be the only immortal ones. To be too bad for the Golden Treasury would be a real title of honour. And somebody would compile a Platinum Treasury to put you in.

BALLAD-ORIGINS

Discussion and research into the origin of folk-songs, or epic poetry, or children's games, afford permanent recreation to a number of learned hands; and so they have ever since we left off taking things for granted. If nobody except the explorer is any the better, nobody except the other explorers is any the worse. There the ballads are, fruit for the thirsty mouth, as they were to Sir Philip Sidney. But research is good hunting, and discussion good talk: all makes for pattern and diversity in a life which, for most of us, runs too easily into drab. Whether Homer was written by Homer, or "by another man of the same name," has been, and still is being, debated. Herr Wolff started the ingenious suggestion that, instead of one or two Homers, there were dozens of him. The late Mr. Butler put up a woman for author of the Odyssey, and gave her a name. But Mr. Butler loved two things above all else in life: little jokes and annoying other people. He must not be taken seriously. Similarly, the authorship of the ballads has ever been in debate. The man of our time who knew more about them than any man who ever lived—Professor Child, to wit—knew so much about them that he never committed himself to any hypothesis of their origin. That showed indeed the supreme of knowledge of his subject. But Professor Kittredge, who followed him, built himself a little bungalow of theory; and Professor Gummere presently reared a mansion of it; and now comes Professor Louise Pound from Nebraska with pick and crowbar to level

them with the ground. It is very good fun, as I have admitted, except perhaps for Professors Kittredge and Gummere.

Professor Gummere gets the worst of it; but then he has put himself up a mansion of surmise. Professor Kittredge went no further than to declare a peasant-origin for ballad-poetry. Professor Gummere, according to his present housebreaker, erected a theory of something like spontaneous generation—a truly daring conception, one which makes ballad-poetry unlike any other poetry in the world. Throng-inspiration does not commend itself to me, knowing something of throngs and of inspiration. As Professor Pound has no difficulty in establishing, such a thing never happens now, and never happened to anything else, unless Horace Walpole's account of the effect of putting horsehair into a bottle of water may be accepted. But if it may not, and if it never happened to any other kind of poetry, why should it have happened to ballad-poetry? *Queste cose non si fanno.* These things are not done.

However, when Professor Gummere argues that the folk-ballads originated in folk-dancing he is building his house of theory upon a footing of rock. *Ballare* means "to dance"; there's no escape from that; and if ballads, or ballets, had nothing to do with dancing, why were they called ballads or ballets? Then he can put forward the refrains or burthens which a goodly number of ballads still retain: jingles like "Bow down," like "Eh, wow, bonnie," like "Three, three, and thirty-three." The first of those describes an act of dancing; the second is foolishness unless you dance it; the third, even now, insists on being danced. If he had left it at that, without piling upon it his additament of spontaneous generation, I don't

think Professor Pound could have done any good with her crowbar. But he was too ingenious by half; he soared—he soared into the inane. So down he comes, and we are where we were before.

With all respect for the courage and learning of Professor Pound, I don't think she has disproved the close connection of song and dance in my country's youthful days. But "dance" is a word of special connotation now, and it is necessary to remember a much wider application of it in times gone by. It was once a word of ritual significance, as when "David danced before the Lord," as now when the Canons of Seville dance at Easter; and it was once a word of sport. That, in all probability, is the right connotation of it where ballads are concerned. In certain phases of the dance as a game drama comes in. Drama involves dialogue, and may easily involve narration. "Here we go round the mulberry bush" is both drama, dance, and narration. "Sally, Sally Waters" is the same. So too "Ring a ring of Roses." But to say of such things, as I suppose Professor Gummere says, that the dancing-game generated the dialogue or narration is to put the cart before the horse. If, as I have said, the jingle "three, three and thirty-three" insists on being danced, is it not more reasonable to suppose that in all cases the jingle, or lilt, or sentiment—"the broom blooms bonnie and says it is fair"—inspired the dance? Personally, I can conceive of spontaneous throng-generation of a dance much more readily. Let the Professor try it, when next he has a throng of children in his garden. Let him begin to jig up and down, saying repeatedly "three, three, and thirty-three," and see what happens.

I am not at all concerned to say that all ballad-poetry

originated in dancing-games, nor concerned to argue against Professor Pound when she suggests that they began in church. She has there the support of the fact, for what it is worth, that the earliest ballads we can find are concerned with religion. That is a fact, though it will not take her as far as she would like. Unfortunately very few such things can be dated before the fifteenth century; and the Professor must remember that preoccupation with religion was by no means confined to the clerical caste. The thirteenth century was the flowering time of the friars. They carried religion into corners where no cleric would ever have set his foot. If religious balladry had a religious origin it would be Franciscan. She does not insist upon all this, however, and certainly I do not. All the concern I have with a possible religious origin of ballad-poetry is with the certainty it affords that, if the friars had anything to do with the beginning of popular epic-narration, as they undoubtedly had to do with that of popular drama, their efforts were addressed to the populace rather than to the court, to the market-square and village green rather than to the hall.

What does Professor Pound herself believe about this obscure matter? She quotes, and quarrels with, Andrew Lang, who said that “Ballads spring from the very heart of the people, and flit from age to age, from lip to lip of shepherds, peasants, nurses, of all that continue nearest to the natural state of man.... The whole soul of the peasant class breathes in their burdens, as the great sea resounds in the shells cast up from its shores.” That seems to me so obviously true of most of the ballads that I should require a stronger case than Professor Pound’s, and a case less weakened by strange oversights, to cause me to think

twice of it. Apparently Professor Pound's main belief about ballads is that they were by origin "literary." Being literature, that may be supposed by anybody without taking a body very far. But if she means by that that they were composed by professional "literary men," and not by or for the peasants, I have to suggest to her that there is much in the peasantry and much in the ballads themselves which she has not brought into account; and that that must be sought *within* the peasantry, and *within* the ballads, rather than round about them. It is, for instance, a serious error to assume a courtly origin—courtly poet or courtly auditory—in all ballads which deal with courtly people—Lord Thomases, Estmere Kings, Child Horns, Little Musgraves, and so on. Such personages are the stock-in-trade of romance, from Homer to the *Family Herald*. Reasoning of that kind will land the Professor in uncharted seas. There is a fallacy in it comparable to that in "Who drives fat oxen must himself be fat." Not a doubt of it but Professor Child's great book contains a number of courtly ballads—"Chevy Chase" and the like; it needs nothing but a knowledge of literature and the texts to settle it. I should compute the number of such in Child to be between a third and a half of the whole.

To decide upon the remainder, whether they are written by or for the peasantry (and it does not matter which, because in either case the traditions of the peasantry would be preserved), one must go to the ballads themselves. Within them such literary tact and peasant-lore as you possess—and you cannot have too much—will infallibly detect the origin of a given ballad. So much as that, at least, is involved in the very nature of literature. A ballad—any ballad—was either written *up* to the height of his own powers by an original poet (a Burns, a Clare), or written

down to the auditory's capacity, which is the way of the hack, or professional minstrel. According as you judge (*a*) apprehensions of fact, (*b*) locutions, (*c*) *parti pris*, you will put the thing down to the idiosyncrasy and origin of the poet *or* to the idiosyncrasy and *milieu* of the auditory; and you will nearly always be right. It may not be possible to be sure whether a peasant-poet wrote, though the probabilities will be high; it will always be possible to be sure whether a peasant-audience was addressed, and whether, consequently, by a peasant-audience the ballad was learned and preserved. Who in particular the poet may have been does not matter. But it matters very much, to us, that we should have all we can collect of the nature of our indigenes, though we shall never be able to get it with the clearness and precision with which Professor Pound can get at the nature of hers.

As good an example as anyone could want of the truth of the preceding paragraph is furnished by "The Twa Corbies." Everybody knows "The Twa Corbies," a cynical, romantic, highly literary, and most successful thing in the Scots manner; assuredly written for the gentry. But Professor Child juxtaposes to it an English version, called "The Three Ravens," and provides an instructive comparison. The earliest copy he finds of that is of 1611. It is as surely of peasant origin as the "Twa Corbies" is not. Firstly, it has a rollicking chorus, neither to be desired nor approved by the gentry; secondly, instead of being romantic, it is sentimental; thirdly, instead of ending with a wry mouth, it ends as genially as the circumstances allow. Cynicism has never "gone down" with the peasantry. I don't quote it, for considerations of space. Another interesting comparison can be made by means of "Thomas

Rymer" in Child's versions A. and C. In each Thomas takes the Queen of Faëry for her of Heaven, and in each she denies it. In A. she says:

> "'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
> 'That name does not belong to me;
> I am but the Queen of fair Elfland,
> And I'm come to visit thee.'"

But in C. she says:

> "'I'm no the Queen of Heaven, Thomas;
> I *never carried my head sae hie*;
> For I am but a lady gay,
> Come out to hunt in my follee.'"

The idiom there is quite enough to settle the question for me. But there is another point. The peasantry will never name the fairies if they can help it. They call them the "Good People" or the "Little People," and go no nearer. Well, observe, and let Professor Pound observe, how C. version gets round that difficulty.

Lastly, I will touch upon the delicate subject of ballads like "Sheath and Knife", "Lizzie Wan", "The King's Daughter, Lady Jean", and others. The romantic treatment of that subject is very rare in literature. Ford's play I believe to be the first case of it in ours; and after Ford you must travel down to Shelley for another. With a peasant poet or a peasant auditory there would be no difficulty. For all sorts of reasons, that class knew a great deal about such matters. If you are to conceive those particular ballads as written for the gentry you are adding to fine literature things unknown before the seventeenth century, and then out of sight until the nineteenth. Let the Professor perpend. It does not do

to be too exclusive in estimating ballad-origins.

REAL AND TEMPORAL CREATION

A chance remark of mine the other day to the effect that the worth of a novelist could be best ascertained by the number of souls he had added to the population has drawn me into more correspondence than I care for. You don't look—at least, I don't—for precision in such *obiter dicta*, but you must have plausibility, and I do think it plausible. You read your novel—say, *Emma*, and while you read, Emma and Jane Fairfax, Miss Bates and Mrs. Weston and all the rest of them live, and their affairs are your affairs. But when you have shut up the book and put it back in its place, Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates have not disappeared with their circle of acquaintance. You feel about them that they are in history. They have lived in a different way altogether. They have lived as Charles Lamb lived, or Oliver Goldsmith. You would know them if you met them; your great-grandfather may have met them. If you went to Leatherhead (if it *was* Leatherhead) you would want to visit their houses. Jane Fairfax is a girl in a book; Miss Bates is a person.

Surely that is true. Consider other cases. There's no doubt but that Falstaff has reality in a way in which Hamlet has not. Hamlet, so to say, is an *ad hoc* creation. He lives in the play. Falstaff lived in

Eastcheap. There's no doubt about "my" Uncle Toby. Certainly he must have served under Marlborough in Flanders. Neither of Tom Jones nor Sir Charles Grandison could so much be said. They were nobody's Uncle Tom or Uncle Charles, out of their books. Amelia would have been a delicious aunt, but I doubt if she was one. Well, then, there's no doubt about Mrs. Gamp, or Mr. F.'s Aunt, or Betsy Trotwood or Captain Cuttle. Dickens enriched the population enormously—but not always. There's a sense in which Dr. Blimber lived, and Major Bagstock did not. Generation was capricious, even with Dickens. Squeers never lived, Creakle did. Micawber lived, Pecksniff didn't. Trabb's Boy lived, the Fat Boy didn't. Cousin Feenix didn't, Inspector Buckett didn't—and so on. But if you go through Dickens methodically, as I did during a wakeful two hours in bed the other night, you will find five scores to one miss—in the minor characters. With leading parts it is another thing. I shall come to that presently.

Let me go on. The Wife of Bath—certainly a British subject. In Shakespeare—all the Eastcheap set, and Shallow and Slender; and Parolles, and Dogberry and Verges, and Bottom, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek; and Polonius, the only one in *Hamlet*; and Launcelot Gobbo, the only one in *The Merchant of Venice*. Walter Scott: the Baillie and Dandie Dinmont; Andrew Fairservice and Dugald Dalgetty. Last we have Don Quixote and Sancho, much more real to most of us than Philip II or IV, or Alva or Medina-Sidonia, or, for that matter, Miguel de Cervantes himself.

Those two last are enough to prove that it is not only eccentrics who have stepped out of their book-covers and found dusty death in the real world: though

generally, no doubt, it is the few lines which give life, and provide that the reader shall be one of the parents. You need bold undercutting, and elaboration is apt to blur the outline. The second part of the book might have robbed the pair of their immortality. Yet they live, and have lived, in spite of the Duke and Duchess and the Island. Falstaff, with the better part of two plays to his credit, is the only hero of Shakespeare's whose reality gets out of the theatre. I can't admit Hamlet or Macbeth or Othello or Shylock. At Malvolio I hesitate—but if you make a hero of Malvolio you turn *Twelfth Night* into a tragedy. In 1623, the year of Shakespeare's death, the play was called *Malvolio*; and King Charles I annotated the title, *Twelfth Night*, in his folio with the true name in his own hand. *Tantum religio potuit suadere—bonorum.* So is it with the women in Shakespeare: the heavy leads are not so persuasive as the small. Of Mrs. Quickly and Juliet's nurse there can be no doubt whatever. But of the heroines, I can only put forward Rosalind—but even Rosalind won't do. Compare her objectivity with Becky Sharp's. Who has not felt the immanence of Becky in Brussels? I am afraid that settles Rosalind.

Neither Scott nor Dickens succeeded with heroes and heroines; but Scott has a girl to his credit whose reality is historical: Jeannie Deans. I cannot listen to a doubt about that noble creature. If Scott had given her a burial-place I should have gone to look for her tomb, and never doubted of finding her name in the parish register. In that he beats Dickens, with whom and Shakespeare he must strive for the crown in this matter of adding to the population. In heroes Dickens has a slight apparent advantage with David Copperfield. At first blush you might think he had lived: turn it over and you won't think so. Even if

you decided for him that would only put Dickens level with Scott and Shakespeare; for his girls don't live in the pages of their books, and have not so much as temporal creation. I would put Colonel Newcome to Thackeray's score (with dozens of *minora sidera*: Major Pendennis, for instance!) and, personally, the handsome Ethel, on whose account I myself have been to Brighton, and who can bring strong testimony forward in the horde of maidens she has stood for at the font. Surely no other heroine of fiction has been so many times a godmother! Guy Livingstone and Sir Guy Morville, in their day, gave their names pretty handsomely, but—! I had nearly left out, but must by all means add, Alexandre Dumas, who devoted three novels to his musketeers, and, in Porthos, made a living soul. D'Artagnan had been one already, but Dumas barely added anything for all his pains; and with Athos whom he loved and Aramis whom he hated failed altogether. It was not, of course, Dumas' line to create an illusion by dialogue or description. His was the historical method; his people lived by incident. But Porthos lived anyhow, and would have lived without incident if needs were. "'En effet,' fît Porthos, 'je suis très incrédule.'" The man who said that was once a breathing giant.

What, then, is requisite to the production of this prolonged illusion? A relish, on the writer's part, a sudden glory, a saliency; nothing which will be a hair's-breadth out of character, and nothing too much. On the reader's part intimacy, relish too, the sort of affection you feel towards Sir Roger de Coverley, and a faith which is, like that of a lover, a point of honour. Just as—if I may hazard the comparison—to millions of simple Christians their

Saviour, though dead and risen, is still a Child, a *bambino*, so it is with them who have accepted Don Quixote, and have stood by his death-bed. Such a death must have been died, such a life lived indeed. "Believing where we cannot prove." The heart plays queer tricks with us.

Stevenson's is an odd case. He really spent himself to give reality to Alan Breck, and failed. He played with Theophilus Godall, the superb tobacconist, and with the Chevalier Burke, and behold, they lived! He added those two to the population. He could not go wrong with them, had them to a tick. It is observable that extravagance of matter is no bar to illusion. But what is wrong with Alan Breck?

PEASANT POETS

The peasant is a shy bird, by nature wild, by habit as secret as a creature of the night. If he is ever vocal you and I are the last to hear of it. He is as nearly inarticulate as anyone living in civilisation may be. Consequently a peasant sufficiently moved, or when moved, sufficiently armed with vocables to become a poet, even a bad poet, has always been rare. When you need to add genius to sensibility and equipment, as you must to get a good poet, you may judge of the rarity. Indeed, to put a name to him, *exceptis excipiendis*, I can only find John Clare. Other names occur, but for various reasons have to be cut out. There was a postman poet in Devonshire, a

policeman poet in Yorkshire; and there was a footman poet. One of those certainly had merit, even genius, and any one of them may have been a peasant in origin. But by the time they began to make poetry they had ceased to be peasants; and that rules them out, as it does Robert Blomfield and Thomas Hardy. Then there is Burns. But Burns was not a peasant. We in England should have called him a yeoman. Besides, his is one of those cases of transcendent genius where origin goes for nothing, but all seems the grace of God. At that rate the corn-chandlers might claim Shakespeare, or the chemists' assistants Keats.

But there's no doubt about Clare, a Northamptonshire peasant, son of peasants, brought up at a dame-school, and at farm labour all his working life. It is true that he was "discovered" by Taylor and Hessey, published, sold; that his first book ran into three editions in a year; that he was lionised, became one of the Lamb-Hazlitt-Haydon circle, and thus inevitably sophisticated with the speculations not of his own world. But roughly speaking, from start to close, his merits were the merits of the peasantry, and his faults as pardonable as theirs. He was never gross, as they never are; he was never common, as the pick of them are not; he was deeply rooted, as "The Flitting", one of his best poems, will prove; he was exceedingly amorous, but a constant lover; nothing in nature escaped his eye; and lastly, in his technique he was a realist out and out. Of his quality take this from "Summer Evening":

> “In tall grass, by fountain head,
> Weary then he crops to bed.”

“He” is the evening moth.

> “From the haycocks’ moistened heaps
> Startled frogs take sudden leaps;
> And along the shaven mead,
> Jumping travellers, they proceed:
> Quick the dewy grass divides,
> Moistening sweet their speckled sides;
> From the grass or flowret’s cup
> Quick the dew-drop bounces up.
> Now the blue fog creeps along,
> And the bird’s forgot his song:
> Flowers now sleep within their hoods;
> Daisies button into buds;
> From soiling dew the buttercup
> Shuts his golden jewels up;
> And the rose and woodbine they
> Wait again the smiles of day.”

The poem runs to length, as most of Clare’s do, but the amount of exact, close and loving observation in it may be gauged from my extract. It is remarkable, and worthy of memory for the sake of what is to follow. You may say that such microscopic work may be outmatched by gentle poets; you may tell me of sandblind Tennyson, who missed nothing, of Cockney Keats and the “Ode to Autumn,” and say that it is a matter of the passion which drives the poet. There is, I think, this difference to be noted. Observation induces emotion in the peasant-poet, whereas the gentle or scholar poet will not observe intensely, if at all, until he is deeply stirred. I don’t say that that will account for everybody: it will not

dispose of Tennyson, nor of Wordsworth—but it is true of the great majority.

There is one other quality I should look for in a peasant-poet, and that is what I can only go on calling "the lyric cry." It is a thing unmistakable when you find it, the pure and simple utterance in words of the passion in the heart. "Had we never lov'd sae kindly", "Come away, come away, Death", "The Sun to the Summer, my Willie to me", "Toll for the brave", "Ariel to Miranda, take", "I have had playmates", "Young Jamie lou'd me weel",—they crowd upon me. Absolute simplicity, water-clear sincerity are of the essence of it, and of both qualities the peasant is possessed; but to them it is requisite to add the fire of passion and the hue of beauty before they can tremble into music. These things cannot be told, since private grief is sacred, but I have had experience of late years in my intercourse with village people: men bereaved of their sons, girls mourning their lovers. Words, phrases have broken from them to which a very little more was needed to make them sound like this:

> "The wind doth blow to-day, my love,
> And a few small drops of rain;
> I never had but one true-love,
> In cold grave she was lain."

That is a perfect example of what I mean. It comes from Sussex, and if there could be any doubt of its peasant-origin the weather lore of the first two lines should settle it. And this from Scotland may be compared with it:

> "It fell about the Martinmass,
> When nights were lang and mirk,

The carlin wife's three sons came hame,
And their hats were of the birk.

"It neither grew in dyke nor ditch,
Nor yet in any sheugh;
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fair eneugh."

No gentle poet short of Shakespeare could get the awful simplicity of that; and Shakespeare, I think, only achieved it when, as for Ophelia's faltered songs, he used peasant-rhymes.

It is, to me, a task of absorbing interest to go through Child's huge repertorium piece by piece and pick out the folk-ballads which have the marks of peasant origin. So far as I can tell at present, certainly one half, and it may be three-fourths of them are peasant songs—I don't say necessarily made by peasants, but in any case made *for* them. If one could, by such means, form a *Corpus Poeticum Villanum* there would be a treasure-house worth plundering by more students than one. For as nothing moves a people more than poetry, when it is good poetry, so nothing needs truth for its indispensable food so much as poetry. If you have what most deeply touched and stirred a people you have that which was dearest to them, the blood as it were of their hearts. The *criteria* are as I have indicated: minute observation, stark simplicity, the lyric cry, and realism. You may add to those a preference of sentiment to romance, and a decided adherence to the law of nature when that is counter to the law of the Church. Thus incontinence in love is not judged hardly when passion in the man or kindness in the woman has brought it about; on the other hand, infidelity to the marriage vow never escapes. Again, that which the Italians call "assassino

per amore" is a matter of course in peasant-poetry; and another crime, universally condemned, except by about two of our gentle poets, is freely treated, and—not to say condoned—freely pitied. Perhaps one of the most curious of all the ballads is "Little Musgrave," which is English and of unknown age. It is quoted in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* of 1611. Little Musgrave and Lord Barnard's wife fall in love, and betray his lordship. He, however, is informed by his page, and rides out to clear his honour. Musgrave hears something:

> "Methinks I hear the thresel-cock,
> Methinks I hear the jay;
> Methinks I hear my Lord Barnard,
> And I would I were away."

But she answers him:

> "Lye still, lye still, thou Little Musgrave,
> And huddle me from the cold;
> 'Tis nothing but a shepherd's boy
> A-driving his sheep to the fold."

Lord Barnard breaks in and does his affair with the two of them. Then:

> "'A grave, a grave,' Lord Barnard cryd,
> 'To put these lovers in;
> But lay my lady on the upper hand,
> For she came of the better kin!'"

Realism indeed: but a poem.

DOGGEREL OR NOT

If Mr. Cecil Sharp, as I hope, is collecting his many and scattered publications under one roof, so to speak, he will be doing a service to a number of people besides me. I await his learned leisure, having now possessed myself of his *English Folk-Songs*, Vols. I and II. He will not achieve what I want to see done before I die, a *Corpus Poeticum Villanum*, because, being a musician before all things, he is only interested in peasant verse of which the music has survived. He won't do that, but he will help somebody else towards it with an indispensable supplement to Child, in an accessible form; and that will be great gain—goodliness with contentment, in fact.

Valuable variants of many and many a folk-song are to be found in his first instalment; though such was the phenomenal patience and far-flung activity of the American that in two volumes of a hundred songs Mr. Sharp has only been able to find one which is not in the great work. That is one which would have delighted the Professor—"Bruton Town." The *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* contains nothing at all like "Bruton Town"; yet the theme of it is one of those which was common to every folk, no doubt, in Europe. Boccaccio gave it its first fame, Hans Sachs followed him. In England we had to wait for Keats, who, so far as we are concerned, supplanted the Florentine and the Nuremberger; for all the Britains know something of Isabella and the Pot of Basil. It must, however, be noted that the specific note of those masterpieces is not the real theme, and never could have been. The horrid dealings with the murdered man's head are macabre embroidery

altogether too sophisticated for a folk-tale. The real theme is the Squire of Low Degree. You get it in the "Duchess of Malfy," and you get it in "Bruton Town." There is no instance of the morbid in a peasant-ballad. Elemental human beings dealt in elemental passions. Love, pride, scorn, birth, death were concern enough for them. So, in "Bruton Town," the theme is the trusty servant, his master's daughter, the young men's reprobation and vindication of their sister's "honour." Here is the opening:

> "In Bruton Town there lived a farmer
> Who had two sons and one daughter dear.
> By day and night they were a-contriving
> To fill their parents' hearts with fear.
>
> "One told his secret to none other,
> But to his brother this he said:
> I think our servant courts our sister,
> I think they have a mind to wed."

Doggerel or not, I don't see how that could be bettered. Mr. Sharp thinks something has been lost, but I think not. What could heighten the note of mystery and dread with which the second quatrain opens—"One told his secret to none other"? Mr. Sharp has not—he confesses it—been able to refrain from the temptation which has always beset the ballad-hunter, from Percy and Sir Walter onwards, of working on the ore which he finds; but that stroke of art in particular is unpremeditated and original, I feel sure. It is constant to all the versions of "Bruton Town" which I have seen.

The hasty whispered plot follows, the preparation of the "day of hunting," the murder, and the sister's discovery of the deed. She rises early and finds the

corpse. Then comes:

> "She took her kerchief from her pocket,
> And wiped his eyes though he was blind;
> 'Because he was my own true lover,
> My own true lover and friend of mine.'"

That again is constant, and could not be mended: though Mr. Sharp would mend it if he could, thinking that the hasty shifting of persons, from third to first, is awkward. It may be awkward, but is very characteristic and, as I think, evidence of authenticity. One more verse, which devotes the mourner to a shared grave, ends "Bruton Town" in pure tragedy; pity, terror, but not disgust. Boccaccio's additament is nasty, and Keats did not avoid it, though he was not so nasty as Boccaccio.

"Bruton Town" comes from Somerset, and is worthy of that songful shire. It carries in itself its own conviction of peasant origin. No other race of our people would have conceived the verse last quoted exactly like that, nor any other audience have accepted it as adequate. "Friend of mine" is the *pièce de conviction*: the sweetest name a village girl can give her lover is that of her friend. The pathos of "And wiped his eyes though he was blind" is the pathos of a wounded bird. It is beyond the compass of art altogether, one of those strokes of truth which puts art out of court. It is Nature's justification before the schools.

Doggerel, then, or not? There are other things in Mr. Sharp's volumes which may help to determine. There is the well-known "Little Sir Hugh," where the sacrifice of a Christian child by the Jews is sung. Mr. Sharp's version is in parts new. Take this out of it for

good doggerel:

> "She set him up in a gilty chair,
> She gave him sugar sweet;
> She laid him out on a dresser board,
> And stabbed him like a sheep."

Well, without any pretence at *curiosa felicitas*, that does its work. It is terse, tense, yet easy and colloquial. It is shocking rather than pitiful; but it means to be so. It might be evidence at the Assizes, where, term by term, they supply just the kind of thing which would have given that versifier what he wanted. Mr. Sharp's "Little Sir Hugh" in fact is not far from Catnachery, of which he gives some avowed examples. It has only to be set beside "Bruton Town" to settle it that if "Sir Hugh" is doggerel, the other is not. Ease, tensity, colloquialism both have; but then comes the difference. "Sir Hugh" shocks, "Bruton Town" moves; "Bruton Town" has in it the lyric cry, "Sir Hugh" has it not.

Take as a last case "The True Lover's Farewell," pure doggerel, but excellent of its kind. Everybody knows it, for a reason:

> "O fare you well, I must be gone
> And leave you for a while;
> But wherever I go I will return,
> If I go ten thousand mile,
> My dear,
> If I go ten thousand mile."

Now for the reason. Burns lifted that for his occasions, and hardly altered it. He took it and fitted it into its place among other verses on the same model—but this is how he began:

> "O my luve's like a red, red rose
> That's newly sprung in June:
> O my luve's like the melodie
> That's sweetly played in tune—"

An opening, observe, of three beats; and then, as a kind of chorus, the emotions quickened up, three four-beat verses of abandonment increasing in reckless simile, and ending with:

> "And fare thee well, my only luve;
> And fare thee well awhile!
> And I will come again, my luve,
> Tho' it were ten thousand mile!"

That is drawing poetry out of doggerel, the work of genius.

THE IBERIAN'S HOUSE

Not long ago I was on the Downs in pursuit of wild raspberries, which, as the old phrase goes, are very plenty this year. Although the days are still those of the dog, there was autumn in the air even then: a grey sky with a cool stream of wind from the west in which was that familiar taint of things dying which autumn always brings. The flowers were of autumn too—scabious, bedstraw and rest-harrow; mushrooms were to be had for the stooping, which we usually seek in dewy September dawns. On the other hand, there were the raspberries; the brambles

were in flower, and the corn just tinged with yellow. After a burning May and June, a dripping July, the times are out of joint—but I filled a hat full of raspberries.

I found the best of them in a pear-shaped hollow in the ground, a place rather like a giant's sauce-boat, in depth perhaps some six feet. Allowing for the slow accumulation of soil tumbled from the sides, for growth by vegetation and decay spread over many centuries, it may once have been another three feet down. Call it, then, nine feet deep. By outside measurements it was fourteen yards long by nine at the broad end of the pear, narrowing down to three where the stalk would have been. To-day the actual floor-space is barely two yards at the broad end. That is because the sides have fallen in, and made descent a matter of walking, which originally, no doubt, was contrived by some sort of a ladder, or by slithering down a tree-trunk. Vegetation is profuse in there: the turf like a sponge, the scabious as big as ladies' watches, the raspberries good enough for Bond Street. Well they may be, for they are rooted in the bones and household spoil of more than two thousand years. The place was a house long before Cæsar knew Britain, before the Belgae were in Wilts, before Wilts was Wilts. To revert to a convenient term, I picked my raspberries in an Iberian house.

I considered it that day in the light thrown upon its proportions for me (all unknown to the author) by a terrible little book, the more terrible for its dispassionate statement, called "The Woman in the Little House," whose author, Mrs. Margaret Eyles, has herself experienced what she writes of. Her Little House is one of, I daresay, a million; one of those narrow, flat-faced boxes of brick—"two up and two

down," as they are expressed—sprawling far and wide over the home counties about London, in which the artisans and operatives who work thereabout contrive, as best they may, to bestow themselves. It does not need—or should not—Mrs. Eyles's calm and good-tempered account to realise that such dwellings are bad for health and morals, fatal to the nerves and ruinous to the purses of their occupants. Yet she mentions more than one simple truth which proves immediately that the smallest house at the lowest possible rent may be much more costly than a large one—for instance, she points out that the smallness of the house and the want of storage room make purchase of stores in any kind of bulk out of the question. But I have neither the time nor the knowledge to develop these questions properly. I have only one criticism to make, and that is that the sufferings of the small householder cannot all be laid to size; that the difficulties of the Woman in the Little House are not only economic. Fecklessness in the Woman must take its share of blame. It is hard to bring up a family in the fear of God and the use of soap, where there seems to be neither room for the one nor chance for the other. It is wearing-down work to be nurse to many small and fretful children while you are carrying yet another, to keep order in a household which has neither scope for, nor desire of order, to deal with drunken husband, grudging landlord, quarrelsome neighbour—and so on. But Mrs. Eyles knows that these things can be done by the woman who realises that they must, that they have been done and are being done; and though both of us may grudge, as we do, the waste of nerve, youth, beauty, vitality which they involve, yet had we rather preach the gospel of such heroic dumb endurance, such constancy in adversity, such piety,

and their reward, than have the heroines fall back, flounder in the trough of the wave, or the "sensual sty." But for their lamps held up, indeed would "universal darkness cover all."

I seem to be far from my neolithic dwelling; yet am close to it; for that itself was not much smaller than the "Little House" of to-day, and yet is three thousand years older at the very least. To its successor, the Celtic and early English wattle-and-daub hut this brick box has succeeded, while here in the village under the Down there are two-roomed, three-roomed tenements in which may be found man, wife, and eight or ten children. So far as floor-space, air-space, headroom, sanitation go, they will be very little better than the hole in the chalk. So far as intellectual and moral outlook go, so far as foresight, restraint of members, mental capacity, while tradition is still the universal guide—a tradition which it is not easy to distinguish from mere instinct—there is little reason to suppose the occupants of the one differ materially from those of the other. I am not to regret it or reprove it, but to state it; and go on to say that when tradition is modified by character the state of a family so conditioned may be not only orderly, not only prosperous, but happy—and by that I don't mean merely contented, but consciously and avowedly happy. I know several which are so; and while I see, or hear, of their well-being I have no reason for being anything but glad of it. Sir Alfred Mond, to be sure, has had nothing to do with it; but it is my belief that when it comes to a tug-of-war between character and Sir Alfred Mond, character will pull the right honourable baronet all over the place.

I cannot bring myself to be that whole-hearted kind

of reformer who says, my sauce must be your sauce, or there is no health for the world. If I must provide a villager (as surely I must) with store-room for his potatoes, I would not give him a bath-room for the purpose. I am uncomfortable myself if I don't souse every morning in warm water; but I know several persons who do nothing of the sort, and are not in the least uncomfortable, nor (to the senses) unclean. I have been a guest in a house in Northumberland of the right Iberian kind, which consisted of one room only. A better-conditioned, more wholesome, more intelligent family than I found there I don't expect to find easily anywhere. Tradition explained, and character made tolerable, such a dwelling. I have not actually seen, but know the appearance of the house in Ecclefechan, where Carlyle was reared. I should be surprised to learn that it was more than "two up and one down," rather surprised if it was so much. I don't put Thomas Carlyle forward as an example of the modification of circumstance by character: he was much the reverse. But all that he tells me of his father and mother was written for my learning. The rule of Saint Use was well kept in Ecclefechan, or I am the more deceived. If Carlyle's mother would have exchanged her lot for that of any woman born she was not the woman he celebrates. And have we not heard of Margaret Ogilvie, and been the better of it? It is not the present-day practice to consider our social troubles from the moral end, and I am sorry for it. The economic end engrosses us altogether; yet it is not, strictly speaking, the "business-end." It is little use abolishing this or that institution while human nature remains as it always was.

There is one serious subject which Mrs. Eyles has had to deal with, into which I hesitate to intrude. Iberian women are kind, and their men clamative. As she has

heard it said by many a one of them, the day may be endured, but not the night. Well, there again character can modify use-and-wont, either by teaching acquiescence or by inspiring revolt. And yet I cannot but remember what was said to a friend of mine in a neighbouring village in the first of our terrible four years of war. The speaker was a woman, a mother of children, who for the first time in her life had enough money and her house to herself. “Ah, ma’am,” she said, “you may depend upon it, this war has made many happy homes.”

SCANDINAVIAN ENGLAND

The valley is narrow, not much more than a hundred and fifty yards wide, where I am stationed now. Of them some twenty are claimed by the headlong river and its beaches of flat grey stones, and perhaps eighty more by small green garths, divided by walls. Then broken ground of boulders, bent and bracken, and then, immediately, the fells rise up like walls to a ragged skyline. They stream with water at every fissure, are quickly clouded, blurred and blotted by rain; then clear, and shining like glass in the sun. The look of things is not the same for half an hour at a time. Fleets of cloud come up from the Atlantic, anchor themselves on the mountain-tops, and descend in floods of rain, sharp and swift as arrows. Or if the wind drive them they will fleet across the landscape like white curtains, and whelm the world in blown water. You don’t “make” your hay in this

country, you “win” it if you can: you steal it, as they say. As for your patches of oats, as likely as not you will use them for green fodder. Roots would be your crop if you had room for them among the stones—but in Eskdale you are a sheep-farmer, with a thousand head of sheep and a thousand acres of fell to feed them on.

I am new to this corner of our country, where Lancashire and Cumberland run so much in and out of each other that the people have given up county categories and call it all indifferently Furness Fells. I don’t know any other part of England so sparely occupied. The farms are few, large and far apart; there are practically no villages; and my own cottage (which was built for a dead and buried mining scheme, and is the last of its clan) is the only one to be found within miles of empty country. A plain-faced, plain-dealing, plain-spoken race lives here, in a countryside where every natural landmark has a Norse name, and one is recalled to the Sagas at every turn of the valley, and by every common occupation of man. The economy of life exactly follows that told of in the Icelandic tales. In the homestead live the farmer and his thralls, the wife and her maids. There are no married labourers, and board and lodging is part of every young man’s and young woman’s hire. Twelve such people live in the farmhouse nearest to me—twelve people, eleven dogs, an uncertain number of children, and a bottle-fed black lamb. Not only so, but it is true that the dalesmen and their servants are Icelandic in favour and way of speech. Dialect is not much to the point; intonation is a great deal to it. That runs flat, level and monotonous—unemotionally, like Danish. It makes a kind of muted speech, so that it is hard to know whether a woman is pleased or angry, or a man of agreeable or

offensive intention.

I never met with a people more innately democratic than the Danes until I met this year with this people of Eskdale. It is not at all that they seek to assert their equality: it is that they know it. The manners depicted in the Sagas are those of men dealing with men. Neither inflation nor deflation is deemed necessary, neither arrogance nor condescension. You make a statement, short and unadorned: it is for the other man to take or leave. Speech is not epigrammatic because minds move slowly here. But it is very terse—because it may rain before you have finished. Plainer than speech are manners. They were that in the Sagas, in more than one of which the starting-point of feud and vendetta was the persistent and obtuse besetting of a daughter of one house by the son of another. She was busy, or busied, as in all primitive societies the women are; but he was not. So he hung about her house, not attempting speech with her, not explaining or justifying or extenuating his oppressive behaviour, simply overshadowing the poor thing, causing her to be talked about, and scandalising her family. There was but one way of dealing with him in those days, which was to crack his skull. That was done, and so the drama put on its legs. Things are better than that now, yet the principle is the same. I remember the discomfort and alarm of three southern maids whom we once brought up with us to a farmhouse in Selkirk. At their supper-hour three strange young men were discovered sitting on a gate in full view of the kitchen window. Nothing makes an Iberian so uncomfortable as to be watched at a meal. But nothing would move the young men, not even the drawing of the curtains. They had no explanation to give, no excuse to make. One faintly whistled

between his teeth, and then said that it was a free country. So it was, if to make free is to be so.

It is much the same here. The young men of the farm regard every young woman, of whatever walk in life, as a thing to be whistled in, like a sheep-dog. They have the Saga knack of declaring the state of their feelings by imposing themselves upon its object. They beleaguer the house, shadow the desired, trust to wearing her down, hope to bore her into love. Or, rather, they don't care whether she love or not, so long as they are allowed it. Woman in the Sagas is a chattel, a thing to be bought or stolen. So she was to the Homeric hero. So she seems to be here.

The Danes, as we loosely call our Norse invaders, were a more dominant strain than whatever people they found in Furness. Not only have they implanted their form, feature and hue upon the Cumbrians, not only named their rivers and hills for them, or a great many of them, but they have established their social code. "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," is not a sentiment of Southern Britain. It is firmly implanted in the mind of the young Dalesman, who finds it right and proper.

OUR BLOOD AND STATE IN 1660

I believe that we have always had the good conceit of ourselves which we have still. We complain freely of our weather, institutions, habits, manners and customs—but that is a freedom which we arrogate to

ourselves: when foreigners do the same we are merely amused, not for a moment supposing either that their charges are true or that they really mean them. Though our grousing can hardly be dated with safety before Horace Walpole, our complacency is of pretty old standing, and goes back to the time when we began to look Europe over, to say nothing of America, and incidentally grew curious about our own country. Leland, Speed, Camden, Drayton, Coryat, and finally old Thomas Fuller, between them have fairly summed up what there can have been to say for us when we had emerged from the Middle Ages and were beginning to shape for posterity; and of all those Fuller is perhaps the least known and the best worth a thought, if only because his eyes were upon what he saw rather than what he knew. The rock upon which most of our eulogists split was archæology. There Leland foundered, Speed and Camden too. Drayton had his troubles elsewhere, and plenty of them, as a poet would. Avoiding Scylla, he barged into Charybdis, where mythopoiesis lurked for him like a mermaid, and sank him so deep that he never came up again. He is very nearly unreadable; he invites ridicule and wins disgust. Over and over his bemused corpus of rime, John Selden, a most learned spider, spun webs of erudition. It is difficult to read either of them, but of the two I prefer the poet. The present Laureate puts the antiquary first. But when you come to Thomas Fuller, D.D., his *Worthies of England*, that wordy work, encumbered though it be with texts of divinity, you do at least get your teeth into something upon which to bite. He did not live to finish it, though, and the piety of his son John, “the author’s orphan,” as he described himself, erected it as a monument to his memory in 1672.

Fuller, I think, set out with the intention of belauding the human products of our realm. He cast all mankind into categories and, with them for a sieve, shook out the shires to see what he could find. To that he added matter concerning the natural and manufactured commodities of England, which forms the best reading in him to-day. One does not particularly want to know what he had to say about Sir Walter Raleigh or Cardinal Wolsey; even his opinion of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson need not detain us long, though he seems to have known personally the pair of them, and to have considered Jonson considerably the greater man. Wit was always reckoned above genius in that day. But he admits Shakespeare as a worthy of Warwickshire, accords him exactly as much space as Michael Drayton, "a pious poet," and thinks that in our greatest man "three eminent poets may seem in some sort to be compounded"; a sufficiently qualified judgment. Those three are—"Martial, in the warlike sound of his surname"; Ovid, "the most natural and witty of all the poets"; and Plautus, "an exact comedian, yet never any scholar, as our Shakespeare (if alive) would confess himself." He goes on, "Add to all these, that though his genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could (when so disposed) be solemn and serious." Not extravagant praise. He does not know the date of his death, leaves it blank. And so much for Shakespeare.

It doesn't matter; nor are his judgments of Jonson and Donne of any more moment. But it is interesting to know what the counties were doing in 1660, though, except grazing, it was little enough. In fact, what he does not say is surprising. I had certainly understood, for instance, that Newcastle was exporting coal long before that; but Fuller has no

"natural commodities" to report of Northumberland. No coal in Lancashire, either. Lancashire's products were "oates," "allume," and "oxen," and her only manufacture, so declared, "fustians." Bolton, he tells you, "is the staple place for this commodity, being brought thither" from all parts of the county. But Manchester was spinning cotton. "As for Manchester, the cottons thereof carry away the credit in our nation, and so they did an hundred and fifty years ago. For when learned Leland on the cost of King Henry the Eighth, with his guide travailed Lancashire, he called Manchester the fairest and quickest town in this county, and sure I am it has lost neither spruceness nor spirits since that time." That is a good report, made no worse probably by the entire absence of Liverpool from the record. But there is more to come. "Other commodities made in Manchester are so small in themselves, and various in their kinds, they will fill the shop of an haberdasher of small wares. Being therefore too many for me to reckon up or remember, it will be the safest way to wrap them all together in some *Manchester-Tickin*, and to fasten them with the *pinns*, or tye them with the *tape*, and also (because sure bind sure find) to bind them about with *points* and *laces*, all made in the same place." That is as near to jocularity as Dr. Fuller can go. With much the same elephantine gambols used Mr. Pecksniff in a later day to entertain his daughters and pupils.

He records as proverbial of Lancashire her "fair women," not without pointing a moral. "I believe that the God of nature having given fair complections to the women in this county art may save her *pains* (not to say her *sinnes*) in endeavouring to better them. But let the females of this county know, that though in the Old Testament express

notice be taken of the beauty of many women, *a.* Sarah, *b.* Rebekah, *c.* Rachel, *e.* Thamar, *f.* Abishaig, *g.* Esther; yet in the New Testament no mention is made at all of the fairness of any woman." Grace, he would have you know, is all, and "soul-piercing perfection far better than skin-deep fairness." Two other facts about Lancashire are noteworthy: "It is written upon a wall in Rome, *Ribchester* was as rich as any town in Christendom"—that is one; and the other is that "About Wiggin and elsewhere in this county men go a-fishing with spades and matthooks." As thus: "First they pierce the turfie ground, and under it meet with a black and deadish water, and in it small fishes do swim." Such fish, he thinks, are likely unwholesome, and so do I; therefore I am pleased with his comfortable conclusion. "Let them be thankful to God in the first place who need not such meat to feed upon. And next them let those be thankful which have such meat to feed upon, when they need it." Very much in the manner of Dr. Pangloss.

Fuller's own fishing after "natural commodities" obliges him to use a small mesh. Even so he sometimes wins nothing. Cambridgeshire gives him eels, hares, saffron, and willows—a mixed bag; Essex oysters, hops and *puitts*, by which he intends peewits. Hants does better, with red deer, honey, wax, and hogs; but Wilts can only offer tobacco-pipes, and wool. Cornwall gives him diamonds! "In blackness and hardness they are far short of the Indian"—but there they are. He tops up a bumper basket down there with ambergris, garlic, pilchards, blue slate, and tin. Cornwall is easily his richest county, and next comes Cumberland, with pearls, blacklead and copper. Here are some poor ones: Dorset, "tenches," pipe-clay, and hemp; Berks, "oakes, bark, trouts";

Bedfordshire, “barley, malt, fullers’-earth and *larks*”; slightly better are Bucks, with “beeves, sheep and tame pheasants”; Kent, “cherries, sainfoin, madder”; Hereford, “wool and salmons.” Clearly it was a day of small things. Staffordshire was making nails; Derbyshire mining lead and brewing mild ale; Somerset produced serges at Taunton; Yorkshire bred horses and made knives at Sheffield, as she did in Chaucer’s time; and that is about all that “the painted counties” were doing in 1660. For the rest, it was grazing and small-farming, large families and the beginning of religious ferment which was to work for another hundred years before it came to a head.

But old Fuller himself was what he calls somebody else, “a cordial protestant,” and does not allow us to forget it for a page at a time. He cannot speak of salt in Cheshire without remembering Lot’s wife, nor of polled cattle without head-shaking over the calf in Horeb. “The historian,” he reminds himself, “must not devour the divine in me.” He never does. The Scriptures are his real affair, as they were coming to be ours in 1660. It would be an edifying exercise, remembering that, to reckon up our gains and losses out of his meandering pages.

“MERRIE” ENGLAND

The Athenians, I believe, used to round off their bouts of high tragedy with a farce of satyrs and

clowns, and the practice has survived almost to our own day. When Charles Lamb and his sister went to Drury Lane, *Pizzaro* or *Artaxerxes* would be followed by *Harlequin Dame Trot*, or *Harlequin Dick Whittington and his Cat*. I am not scholar enough to say of the Elizabethans that they were in the same tradition; but if they were I can perceive some intention in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, which has been newly edited and printed for Mr. Basil Blackwell of Oxford. Otherwise I confess myself at a loss. It is an Elizabethan or, as I think, an even earlier knockabout, in which those only who saw fun in a harlequinade would find the kind of thing that they liked. That it should have been contrived for the amusement of the Master and Fellows of Christ's College, Cambridge, is perhaps not so wonderful as it would have been if Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew's Fair* had not been revived the other day with some measure of success. And I suppose that the persons who were diverted by seeing Malvolio in the cage were very capable of being pleased with *Gammer Gurion's Needle*. It is no worse than Shakespeare at his worst, and much better than Ben Jonson in that it is much shorter. Launcelot Gobbos, Speeds, Launces fill the stage. There are no Dogberrys, nor Dame Quickleys; no Master Shallow, no Bottom, and of course no Falstaff. But the difference is of degree, not of kind. *Gammer Gurton* is written *de haut en bas*, as Shakespeare also wrote of rural life and manners. Its author, "Mr. S., Mr. of Art," whoever he was—and the editor thinks that he was William Stevenson, Fellow of Christ's in the fifteen-fifties—as heartily scorned the peasantry as William Shakespeare ever did; and I think that he knew quite as much about them. In fact, I am led to believe that the thing is not far from being a faithful picture, as nearly so, indeed,

as its comic intention will allow it to be. If that is so it deserves study. When we talk, as we are apt to do, of "Merrie England," it is as well that we should know in what England's merriment consisted.

Gammer Gurton is mending the breeches of her man Hodge when she sees the cat at the milk-bowl. Starting up to trounce the thief, she drops her needle, her "fayre long strayght neele that was her onely treasure." That is serious. The house is turned inside out and upside down. Tib the maid has to sift the rubbish-heap; Cock the boy spends his day on all-fours and his nose to the ground. Enters here the villain of the piece, the village half-wit, Bedlam Dick, and says that Dame Chat has the "neele." That prepares for the great scene of the play, a slanging match between the two old women, which ends in a tooth-and-nail affair. Gammer Gurton sends for the priest; Bedlam Dick primes Dame Chat. He tells her that Hodge is going to rob her hen-roost; and later, to the priest, he suggests a hiding-place whence he can spy on Dame Chat and the "neele" in felonious use. The priest edges in; Dame Chat thinks he is the chicken-thief, and cracks his skull for him. Mighty hullabaloo: the bailiff is called in to arbitrate. Bedlam Dick gives Hodge a smack on the buttocks, and drives the needle home. That is the plot, expounded in plain words which, no doubt, were exceedingly close to the bone.

According to Christ's College, Cambridge, the life of the English peasant in Reformation days was a purely animal process, punctuated only by foul language. Eating and drinking were the pleasures, working was the pain, contriving how to get liquor without working for it the only intellectual exercise. In *Gammer Gurton's Needle* there was not even love to

complicate existence. Ale was the Good, and the only good.

> "I cannot eate but lytle meate,
> my stomacke is not good;
> But sure I thinke that I can drynke
> with him that weares a hood.
> Thoughe I go bare, take ye no care,
> I am nothinge acolde:
>
> "I stuffe my skyn so full within
> of joly good Ale and olde.
> Back and syde go bare, go bare,
> both foote and hand go colde:
> But, belly, God send thee good ale inoughe
> whether it be new or olde":—

and so on for four clinking verses. The thing is a triumph; it sings itself. Out of its rollicking rhythm a kind of haze of romance has piled up, which select spirits like Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton still see as a rosy cloud. I suppose it is all right.

But the language of those "merrie" people! There was only one injurious thing for woman to call woman: it was reflected in man's accusation of man. If you named a woman the thing—and you always did—you named a man the thing's son. The impact varied according to the temper of the accuser. It pricked you to madness if anger lay behind it; often it was a term of affection. Gammer Gurton so called Tib her maid, Dame Chat her girl Doll; but that was to coax them. When the beldams belaboured each other with the imputation they made the fur to fly. Exactly that impotence of expression, even in moods of malice, is observable to-day—but in towns, not in the country. I have lived twenty years in a village

and never heard the taunt so much as whispered by one to another. But then nobody gets drunk out here now. Is there a holding link between ale and sterility of language? I suppose there must be.

Religion provides the only other expletives there are in *Gammer Gurton*, and that makes the date of it an interesting matter. No earlier edition appears to be known than that of 1575; but a play called *Dyccon of Bedlam* was licensed to be printed in 1562, and one by the presumed author of *Gammer Gurton* was acted at Christ's College in 1553-4. However all that may fit in, there are internal evidences very much to the point. In the fifth act the bailiff is charged by the priest with Dick of Bedlam's arrest. "In the King's name, Master Bayly, I charge you set him fast," he says. That might be Edward VI if the Prologue had not an allusion directly in conflict with it:

> "Dame Chat her deare gossyp this needle had found;
> Yet knew shee no more of this matter (alas)
> Than knoeth Tom our Clarke what the Priest saith at masse."

Is that reminiscence of old practice? Hardly that, for if the mass was then being said in English it would be quite pointless. Beyond that, the play is crammed with Catholic catchwords, all of them oaths. "Gog's bread," "Gog's sydes," "Gog's malte"; numberless Our Ladys; "by gys" (by Jesus); finally this:

> "There I will have you sweare by our dere Lady of Bullaine,
> S. Dunstone, and S. Donnyke, with the three Kings of Kullaine,
> That ye shall keepe it secret...."

These things point to a familiarity with Catholic usage, whichever way you take them, exceedingly interesting. The chief thing which they point out to me is that there was no religious sense in the peasantry at all. The names and symbols of worship were augmentives of conversation, but no more. They meant nothing, and implied nothing but use and wont. Catholicism expired and Calvinism did not thrive, for the same reason. Neither of them touched the heart of the peasantry, which remained what it had been throughout, innately pagan, follower (as I put it) of Saint Use, but of no other divinity. That is as far as one has been able to go. Certainly *Gammer Gurton* will take us no further.

Dullness, bestiality, grossness: these stare you in the face. Between the lines of them you may discern the squalor and the penury of village life in Merrie England. Take this:

> *Gammer*: "Come hether, Cocke; what, Cocke I say.
>
> *Cocke*: Howe, Gammer?
>
> *Gammer*: Goe hy thee soone, and grope behind the old brasse pan,
> Ther shalt thou fynd an old shooe, wherin if thou looke well
> Thou shalt fynd lyeng an inche of whyte tallow candell,
> Lyght it, and brynge it tite awaye."

If that does not bring them home to us nothing will do it—except perhaps this:

> "And home she went as brag, as it had ben a

bodelouce."

ENDINGS

I

Not very long ago I took occasion to inquire into the beginnings of books. I found that the rules were simple, the formulæ few, and the practice seldom varied until near our own times. If you were an Epic poet, you invoked the Muse and stated the theme in which you desired her assistance; if you wrote prose narrative, you began with "Once upon a time," or "There was a man," and went on from there. You began, in fact, at the beginning; but if you were romantically inclined you contrived somehow to insinuate a hint of colour and what the artists call atmosphere. Whichever you were, poet or prosateur, like a musician, you had a prelude, and gave it as much work as it was capable of bearing, and sometimes rather more than it could bear. No matter for that: everything was in your favour: hope was high in your breast, and, no doubt, in your hearer's or reader's. The rules were simple; you laid out the theme, and off you went.

But the *ending* of your work is a very different thing. There are no formulæ for that. You are at the stretch of your tether, either thankfully or not; you are in your public's discretion; however you take it, you are judged already. You may amend all by your ending,

or you may make weariness more weary. In any case, you have somehow to "get off with it," and will find that your shifts to make a good end to your adventure are not easily reduced to rule or comfortably suited by convention. We don't hear so many sermons as we did; yet most of us know by experience that it is one thing for a clergyman to open upon his text, and quite another for him to turn to the East with credit. If he have prepared his peroration, and the way to it—what I may call his *coda* and *finale*—well or ill, he will let it off. If he have not, then in addition to his anxious care for what he is to say, he will have another for what he must by no means say. Let him beware, for example, of using the hortatory words "And now"; for so surely as he pronounces them the congregation will rise as one man, and then nothing for it but the rest of the Ascription. I have known that happen more than once, and never faced the preacher with nerve enough to reseat the congregation for one more turn.

The writer and the orator may be compared, since literature, by origin a spoken word, has never lost the habits it then acquired—or has only just now lost them. As the ancient bard, Homer or Demodocus, as the wandering minstrel, trouvère or balladist, faced his assize, somehow or other he had to get off his platform. What was he to do? He desired a supper, perhaps a bed: one need not shirk the probability that he was to send round his hat. Could he be sure of them without some kind of a bang? Should it be a long or a short bang? Was he to sum up the whole argument of his poem in its last twenty lines, condense it all into one compendious epigrammatic sentence? As we shall see, that was the means of one of our great prose-writers. Then, otherwise, should he perorate, and, in the musician's way, recall the

theme with which he began? As poet, perhaps he should—so indeed Tennyson more than once did; but as epic poet it was not always possible. No better poet than Homer ever lived, no better ending to an epic was ever made than that to the Iliad, whose last book shows Achilles, for once, generous, and Priam, in his simplicity, noble. But the Iliad does not end upon the matter of its beginning, nor with the hero of it. On the contrary, it ends with the hero's chief enemy; and its very last line,

> "So served they the last rites of Hector, tamer of horses,"

is remarkable, because it shows that the interest of poet and hearers alike had shifted during the progress of the poem. Homer, a Greek, singing to a Greek audience, finds it necessary to close his poem with Priam and Hector of Troy!

That shows you how difficult it is to end an epic. The Odyssey shows it you from another side. Everybody now agrees that what happens in that after the return of Ulysses, his revenge upon the suitors and recognition by Penelope, is anti-climax. We are not prepared, at the end of a long poem, to descend once more into Hades and listen to the ghosts of the wooers relate their griefs to the ghosts of Agamemnon and Achilles. We are not prepared for an outbreak of retaliatory war between the Ithacans and their recovered prince. *Nor were Homer's auditors.* Therefore Homer turned to the old stage device of the god from the machine; he brought an Athené to shut all down. No other means was open to him, and the knot was worthy.

I don't intend to deal with the drama in this place. It

has its own conventions, only occasionally of use to narrative writers. Most of them are impossible: the Chorus, for instance, which is an easy way of bringing down the curtain; or the attendants who carry off the dead bodies; or the curtain itself. The nearest approach to the curtain which a book can have is the *Explicit*, or *Colophon*; but I only know one case of its use in a great poem, and in that case it is used in a hurry, and (as I believe) certainly not by the poet. The poem I mean is the *Song of Roland*, which, as we have it now, has neither beginning nor end. Of what may have once been either there is no trace to be found. As it stands now, the last stave of it shows Charlemagne reposing after justice done upon Roland's betrayer, and the Archangel Gabriel announcing to him the call for new enterprise. Whereupon—

> "'God!' said the King, 'my life is hard indeed!'
> Tears filled his eyes, he tore his snowy beard";

and then the famous colophon which nobody can translate:

> "Ci falt la Geste que Turoldus declinet."

Clearly, if Turoldus made the *Song of Roland*, he did not put his colophon just there. Mr. Chesterton, in an introduction to the very accomplished version of the song made by Captain Scott-Moncrieff, devotes some eloquent lines to its defence; but he does it at the expense of criticism. It will not do. A poet is, after all, a man singing to, or writing for men. No man in the world would end a long story by beginning another. These things are not done.

The ending of the *Divine Comedy* is original and

characteristic at once. There is deliberate art in it; there is a kind of artifice or trick in it. But the trick is justified because it is both beautiful and, philosophically, true. Each of the three canticas ends with the same word and the same thought. The aim of the pilgrim through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven is to reach the stars. From the darkness and lamentation of Hell he issues

> "a riveder le stelle";

after his painful climbing of the Mount of Purgation he finds himself

> "Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle";

the Paradise begins by describing the glory of the Prime Mover of things; and ends by discovering that this Prime Mover of the universe is Love, and that Love it is which

> "muove il sole e l'altre stelle."

As I say, there is artifice in that. After it we are not surprised to learn that the number of cantos in each cantica, the number of verses, the number of words in each was approximately planned out and very closely kept. It is much of a question what is gained by such joinery; but there is no question at all of the starry endings. Philosophically and poetically they are beautiful and right.

Dante belonged to the scholastic age, and to the Middle Age; but he stood alone both in his art and his artifice. Poets less serious than he, poets like Boccaccio and Chaucer, had other cares. As they drew near the end of their occasionally very light-

hearted poems, they began to think about their own end as well as that of their poesy. Fears of the Archdeacon and his "Somonour," fears of a summons still more dread beset them. The more they had written about pagan antiquity as if they believed in it, the more necessary it became to make their peace with Heaven before they had done. *The Canterbury Tales* were never finished, so one cannot say whether Chaucer's wholesale recantation of the "worldly vanitees" of them, of *Troilus*, and of practically all that has made him immortal was really designed to fit on to the end of them or not. It certainly looks as if it was; and one can believe that The Wife of Bath, mine Host and others of the joyful company may have required some extenuation before the Recording Angel. So perhaps did *Troilus and Cresseide*, for which he provides a careful and solemn ending, following Boccaccio there as elsewhere. He shades off Troilus' death very artfully by the translation of his "light gooste" to the eighth sphere of Heaven, from which elevation he was able to look down at the mourners bewailing his decease. And then the poet is elevated in his turn and, dropping all his debonair detachment, himself translated, becomes a pulpiteer of the best. "Such fyn," he cries:

> "Such fyn hath then this Troilus for love!
> Such fyn hath all his greté worthinesse!"

It is fierce and powerful pulpit eloquence, mounting up and up until he reaches a height of scorning what he had previously loved, from which invective may be poured out like lava from Vesuvius:

> "Lo here, of payen's curséd oldé rights!
> Lo here, what all their Goddés may availe!"

which, considering he began his poem by invoking the help of those same gods, seems ungrateful, not to say ungracious. The last stanza is quite simply a doxology:

> "Thou one, and two, and three, eterne in life,
> That reignest aye in three, and two, and one,"

just such an accomplished and charming doxology as might be expected from Chaucer—but, all the same, a doxology. To such strange uses did poets lend their muse when they loved paynimry and were horribly afraid of it too.

Freed from the overshadowing of a wrath to come, Milton was able to concentrate upon poetic excellence, as indeed he did. You will look far before you find so serene and beautiful a close to a long poem as that of *Paradise Lost.* Pity and terror contend in the last paragraph. When the Archangel with his burning brand, and the attendant Cherubim, faces in the fire, descend and take possession of Eden, terror holds us; but then, pity:

> "They, looking back, all th' eastern side
> beheld
> Of Paradise so late their happy seat...."

They were mortal, that pair. Mortals have short memories, but long hopes. So—

> "Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped
> them soon;
> The world was all before them where to
> choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their
> guide.

They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and
slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way."

The dream was over. Life began its "search for rest." Beautiful indeed, and exactly observed.

I must here leave the Muse with barely a glance at the Victorians, which suffices nevertheless to reveal that they adopted the rhetorical device of the peroration. Tennyson uses it in *In Memoriam* and *Maud*, Browning in *The Ring and the Book*, Swinburne, very finely, in *Tristram of Lyonesse*, and very characteristically too with his usual catchword. I don't know how many considerable poems there may be of Swinburne's which do not end with the word "sea," but believe that the fingers of one hand would be too many for them. In *Sordello* Browning chose the mediæval colophon, the *Ci falt la geste*, when he shut down his long enigma with

"Who would has heard Sordello's story told,"

and laid himself open to the easy retort that it was not at all true. But the grandest finale of our times remains to be told: Tennyson's closing lines of *Idylls of the King*. I do not refer to the Envoy, which is only a postscript to the Dedication. I mean rather the end of "The Passing of Arthur": Sir Bedivere on the shore, "straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand" to see the barge out of sight, "down that long water opening on the deep"; to see it go,

"From less to less and vanish into light—"

Then one more line, one more picture:

"And the new sun rose bringing the new

year."

Superb! Nothing in the *Idylls* became Tennyson like the leaving them. They do not form an epic; but the end is epical.

And now for prose.

II

You cannot end a book of prose as you can a poem, for the simple reason that prose does not appeal to the emotions directly, as poetry does, but by way of the reason. By emotion you can carry off anything that you may have had the passion to begin and continue; but the reason asks another satisfaction. You may win emotional assent to a proposition that two and two make three, or five. In the heat of the moment it will pass. Reason won't take it in on the mere statement. If some such result is to be the outcome of your book—and it is that of many and many a novel—you must be careful how you conclude; and it will be seen, I think, that so the novelists have been.

The simplest way of ending a story, you might think, would be to say That's all, and get off your tub. It was the way, we saw, of the rough-and-ready intelligence which carved the *Song of Roland* out of some huge rhymed chronicle: *Ci falt la geste que Turoldus declinet*. It is the way of the colophon. But even the colophon must be meditated and prepared for; so it is not the real end but only part of it. Sir Thomas Malory had a long colophon to the *Mort d'Arthur*, including a bidding prayer on his own account; and then Caxton his printer puts in a word

for himself; but it is led up to by a page which sees Lancelot and Guinevere dead and buried, the realm of England disposed of, and the later fortunes of the few knights left alive. It is a deliberate, not a summary end to a great book—the end "in calm of mind, all passion spent," which such a book should have. It is, again, the way chosen by Gibbon for *The Decline and Fall*. You have a dignified and sufficient summary of the whole work in a sentence of twelve co-ordinate clauses, set stately apart by their semicolons. Then comes a brief reflection of the author's—"It was among the ruins of the Capitol that I first conceived the idea of a work which...." And then, after that momentary tribute to his personal share in it, he makes a formal submission of it "to the curiosity and candour of the public." Mannerly and contained to the last, the good Gibbon. Nobody ever came down from a tub with more self-respect; yet Boswell came down pretty well too:

"Such," he concludes, "was Samuel Johnson, a man whose talents, acquirements and virtues were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence." He was, at least, sufficiently moved to forget himself altogether—which is very much to his credit. Yet he does not satisfy like Gibbon.

Carlyle was tired with *Frederick*, and, may be, out of conceit with it. His conclusion is short, and his colophon barbarous. "Adieu, good readers; bad also, adieu," is rather bravado than bravery. More courteous, more inclusive, serener and braver is the conclusion of *The French Revolution*. One sniff there is, at the "Citizen King, frequently shot at, not yet shot," recollection of a Teufelsdröckian prophecy,

neither here nor there; and then a paragraph of valediction. “Toilsome was our journeying together; not without offence; but it is done.... Ill stands it with me if I have spoken falsely; thine also it was to hear truly. Farewell.” A beautiful colophon.

Carlyle was a scolding philosopher; Montaigne had been a shrugging one. His last essai, *De l’Expérience*, is very long, but appropriately the conclusion of a ripe and profitable book. The end of the matter deals with what, according to him, is the end of life itself, “de scavoir jouyr loyallement de son estre.” “So much art thou God,” he continues, “as thou knowest thyself for man.” His bidding prayer is on behalf of old age, addressed to the God of Health and Wisdom —“mais gaye et sociale.” It is very French to lay down in terms at once the nature of your God and your need of him. Compare with it old Burton’s “corollary and conclusion” of the *Anatomy*:

> “Be not alone, be not idle”:

then, as he must always be quoting,

> “Hope on, ye wretched,
> Beware, ye fortunate”—

encouragement and warning in one.

The novelist, whose aim has been your entertainment, and who has never lost the habit of the market-place in which he certainly began, had his own peculiar cares as the time approached for his last words. If he had earned applause and assent to heights and moments of his tale, could he make sure of them by a quiet end? Or must he earn them by a

final shock? Should he burst into a bouquet of stars in the upper air, like a rocket, or come down like its stick? Each way has been chosen. *The Mill on the Floss* ends sublimely in the air, or, strictly, the water; so in its own way—not at all sublimely—does *Tristram Shandy*; but the majority of novelists have favoured the gentle decline of the narrative to the marriage or death-bed, and generally speaking, the longer the novel the quieter the end. Efforts to endear, however, can always be discerned. The earliest novel of all shows us an expedient in practice which has remained in use down to the Victorian age, and only been discarded by the ultra-moderns even now. Daphnis and Chloe in Longus's old tale are married at the end of the book. The last picture in it shows the lovers in each other's arms; and the last words of it are these:

"And Daphnis now profited by Lykainion's lesson; and Chloe then first knew that those things that were done in the wood were only the sweet sports of children."

The shift is very plain. It is to recall to the memory the most moving or provocative episodes in your tale, in the hope that the thrill they afforded him once will revive in the reader and lift you over the end. It is a sound rhetorical device by no means disdained by high practitioners in the art. Sir Walter used it in *Waverley*, when, on the last page, he recovered the *poculum potatorium* for the Baron of Bradwardine. He had an affection for the Baron, it is obvious; but he rightly felt him to have been his strongest card, and relied on him to win him the last trick. Often the novelist may be mistaken and table the wrong card, as Dickens certainly was when he ended *Nicholas Nickleby* with tears upon Smike's

grave, believing that shadow to have been a trump. He should have led Mrs. Nickleby. How wisely Jane Austen played out her hand in *Emma*, whose last paragraph is enjewelled with reflections of Mrs. Elton's:

"Very little white satin, very few lace veils; a most pitiful business! Selina would stare when she heard of it!"

Jane Austen was incomparable alike in beginnings and endings.

Instead of recalling with insistence your strongest points, you may make a last effort to carry off what you doubt have been your weakest. There is much of that in both Dickens and Thackeray. In *Dombey and Son*, for example, it is evident that Dickens desired to extenuate what he felt had been an excess of starch in Mr. Dombey. The last page and a half of the book deglutinates him with a vengeance. The man of buckram ends up as a weeping goose. Agnes Wickfield in *Copperfield* had never been convincing, nor had Estella in *Great Expectations*. The last pages of those novels are devoted to the service of the pair of ladies; but the effort is too plain, and the reader withholds assent. So with Thackeray, who spends his last drop of ink in *Pendennis* on Laura, and in *Esmond* to pulling off the amazing marriage of a man and his grandmother. In vain! The end of *Vanity Fair* is tame, because Dobbin is tame; the true end of *The Newcomes* is the *Adsum* of Colonel Newcome: very beautiful and not to be bettered. The epilogue, with its trite exhibition of strings and wires, had been better omitted. It is on all fours with *Don Quixote*,

which really ends with the epitaph of Samson Carrasco upon the Ingenious Gentleman. The ensuing reflections of Cid Hamet Benengeli are not to the purpose, but, in fact, counter to it.

I have left almost to the last that conventional ending to novels best described as the Wedding Bells ending, or, in the consecrated fairy-tale phrase, "And they lived happily ever after." I wonder what is the attitude of the ordinary novelist to that? Fielding, now. Did he write the end of *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* with a shrug, or did he really believe that all was going to be for the best for the two charming women married to a couple of scamps? Moralist and satirist as he was to the roots, are those cynical endings? I cannot help suspecting it. No such doubt afflicts you with Anthony Trollope, who nearly always tied all his knots at the close. But Trollope worked in sober tones. His heroes and heroines had few rapturous moments, but loved temperately, hoped moderately, and if they longed, said little about it. His fondness for carrying over shows us some of his young people sedately and reasonably jogging along: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Gresham, Lord and Lady Lufton, Dr. Thorne and his Dunstable. We see them seated in the mean, contented if not happy. On the whole, I commend the cradle rather than the altar as a more hopeful ending. It is charmingly used by M. Anatole France in the most charming of all his books. M. France does not often incline to the idyll. The French do not. Consider the last words of Stendhal's *Chartreuse de Parme*:

"Les prisons de Parme étaient vides, le comte immensément riche, Ernest V. adoré de ses sujets, qui comparaient son gouvernement à celui des grands-ducs de Toscane."

Well may he have added to that the final address, To the happy few! I should do him wrong if I did not remark that it is on the last page of the novel that Stendhal mentions, for the first and only time in it, the Chartreuse de Parme itself.

The French novelists favour irony at the close. It may be that they owe it to Voltaire:

"Pangloss used to say sometimes to Candide: All the things that happen to us are linked one to another in this best of all possible worlds; for indeed if you had not been driven out of a fine castle by kicks behind for Cunégonde's sake, if you had not endured the Inquisition, traversed America on your two feet, driven your sword through the Baron's body, lost all your fine sheep of Eldorado, you would not at this moment be eating lemon preserve and pistachio nuts. It is well said, replied Candide; but we must go on digging our garden."

Flaubert adopted that sort of thing for *l'Education Sentimentale*, whose last is its best page. It is good to have arrived there, anyhow; and pleasant to depart on a happy thought.

How nearly the latter-day, strictly modern method allies the novel to the story of Cambuscan bold, I have no space left in which to tell the strictly modern reader—who also knows more about it than I do. Aposiopesis has its points, one of which certainly is that as anything you please has happened already, it can happen again, and may as well. But it presumes too much upon the immunity afforded by the printing-press. If the modern story-teller tried that game upon an auditorium, and proposed to take himself off with his characters left sitting, it is long

odds that he himself would not have anything worth talking about left to sit upon. The only requital open to the reader, unfortunately, is to cease to be one; and that is very much what I understand him to be doing.

BEAUMARCHAIS

I have often wondered what were the feelings of the growing boy upon whom it slowly dawned that his sponsors had had him christened Hyacinth, or Achilles. Was he conscious of inspiration or the reverse? The discovery must have been frequent in France, where the reign of Louis XV in particular was a flowering time for names. There was an Anarcharsis Klootz, there was a Maximilien Robespierre. When to the unremarkable patronym of Caron there were prefixed the resounding syllables, Pierre-Augustin, to the wearer of them at least the things became a trumpet. He shrilled himself upon them into the far corners of Europe. The Empress Catherine chuckled over him in her Winter Palace; her august neighbour had him read to her, evenings, in Vienna. Horace Walpole, while declining his acquaintance, wrote of him with astonishment to Mme. du Deffand; Voltaire at Ferney thought that there must be something in him. And there was. First and always, impudence. He would look anyone in the face, and never be discountenanced himself. Next, good humour: in his worst hours he bore no grudges, and in his best so few as make no matter.

When he had his enemy face to face, and was really at grips with him, he could always hold back from the fray to let off a joke or turn an attack by a compliment. There was a Madame Goëzman with whom he was badly embroiled in civil process. When they were before the registrar, and she was asked, Did she know the plaintiff—"I neither know nor desire ever to know him," said she. "Neither have I the honour of Madame's acquaintance," said Pierre-Augustin in his turn; "but having seen her, I am constrained to a desire exactly the opposite of hers." A happy gallantry which ought to have touched the court, but did not.

Morally, he was like an india-rubber ball: the harder you hit him the higher he leapt. The Goëzman pair, husband and wife, in the legal broil just referred to, thought to crush him out of hand by scorn of his degree in the world. They more than hinted that his father had been a watchmaker, that they themselves were "noble." Pierre-Augustin saw his chance and took it. He held up the Mémoire in which those injudicious nods and winks had appeared. "You open your *chef d'œuvre* by reproaching me with the fortunes of my ancestry. It is too true, Madame, that the latest of them added to other branches of industry some celebrity in the art of watchmaking. Forced as I am to suffer judgment upon that point, I confess with sorrow that nothing can cleanse me from your just reproach that I am the son of my father.... But there I pause, for I feel that he is behind me at this moment, looking at what I write, and laughing while he pats my shoulder."

> "You," he goes on, "who think to shame me through my father, have little conception of the generosity of

> his heart. Truly, apart altogether from watchmaking, I have never found another for which I would exchange it. But I know too well the worth of time, which he taught me how to measure, to waste it in picking up such trifles. It is not everyone who can say with M. Goëzman:
>
> > 'Je suis le fils d'un Bailli; oui:
> > Je ne suis pas Caron; non.'"

And so he left it.

However high he leapt, his aims were not high. I don't think he ever failed of his heart's desire. He wanted a title of nobility, and obtained one, or indeed, some. He was "Ecuyer, Conseiller-Secrétaire du Roi, Lieutenant Général des Chasses, Baillage et Capitainerie de la Varenne du Louvre, Grande Vénerie et Fauconnerie de France," which can hardly mean more, and may mean considerably less than it sounds; and all that, when he had earned a territorial name by marriage, enabled him to become Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. Next, he wanted money, and had it, and lost it, many times over. Then he wanted to be talked about; and for a long time Paris, and for some time Europe, talked of little else. That was when he was conducting two interminable lawsuits, one growing out of the other, and not only conducting them with a vivacity and geniality which nothing could tire, but issuing from the press bulletins of progress of the kind I have attempted to sample above. It was those Mémoires

which entertained equally Petersburg and Strawberry Hill. Delightful as they must have been to read when all the actors were alive and buzzing in the courts or on the quays, they are difficult to follow now. The original suit, which was to recover a debt on an estate from an executor, was made complex by French legal process, but the second (in which the Goëzmans were involved) was complex in itself. The exceedingly delicate point in it was that Beaumarchais had attempted to bribe a member of the Court, and actually got the money as far as his wife, where some of it remained, though the bulk was restored. To recover by law what was still held it was necessary for Beaumarchais to reject with vehemence the suggestion that he had tried to suborn justice, while bringing home the fact that Madame Goëzman had undoubtedly taken his money. He did not, naturally, succeed; but he incriminated the Goëzman pair, and with them was condemned in "infamy and civil degradation." But in reporting his daily engagements with them, and his verbal victories, he became simply the hero of the hour, and ultimately carried his main action against the Comte de la Blache with damages and costs.

That must be a parenthesis, to show how Beaumarchais climbed to his point of desire, whatever it was at the moment, serving himself alike of disaster and success. Many were his affairs of the kind, all pursued with unflagging *enjouement*—as, a breach of promise in Madrid on behalf of his sister, a row with the mad Duc de Chaulnes about an "unfortunate female," a more than dubious, a not at all dubious, plant upon Maria-Teresa, underground transactions with the Chevalier d'Eon, gun-running for the United States of America; and finally that upon which his present fame rests—two comedies

which broke all the records of the theatre for anticipation and realisation. I would not go so far as to say that he engineered the repeated delays in their performance which brought expectation up to hysteria if not delirium, but have no doubt that he courted them, and deserved, if not earned, the proud result that more people were crushed to death crowding in to the *Barbier de Seville* than had ever been so crushed before, and that it and its sequel, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, ran longer on end than any such things had ever done. When they threatened to flag their author was the man to revive them. He knew as much about advertising as Mr. Selfridge, and had as little use for modesty as Mr. Bernard Shaw. Like that salient dramatist, he published his plays, and wrote prefaces to them which are better reading than the text. The pair still hold the stage, as they were written, and as opera; and I should not be surprised to hear that they and their author were as generally known as most of Molière's and theirs. After all, the same could be said of Sheridan, with his pair, at the expense of Shakespeare.

Mr. John Rivers,[1] Beaumarchais' first English biographer, I believe, has evidently enjoyed his work, and will be read with enjoyment. He is right in claiming the Life of his hero as a challenge to fiction. It is first-rate picaresque, nearly as good as Gil Blas, and much better than Casanova. But I think he rates him too highly as a dramatist. He considers that Figaro ranks with "Falstaff or Tartufe." If he does, it is thanks to Rossini and Mozart: without their help the claim is surely preposterous. Luckily, he has taken the trouble to translate large portions of both plays, and so furnished the best corrective to

exaggerated pretensions that we could wish to have. Taken in such liberal doses, they don't march. In their original they are not easy reading, for Beaumarchais, though a brisk, was not a good writer. One does not ask for fine writing necessarily of a dramatist, but that he shall attend to his business. Beaumarchais conceives his to be the making of points. He is apt to be diffuse in reaching them, and to clinch them tightly when he has them. In French he is often difficult; in English he is both dull and difficult. It is like reading bad handwriting on foreign letter-paper. You never seem to get on with the thing.

The *Barbier* is not much more than a Commedia dell' Arte. It is a play of manœuvring, intrigue the whole affair. Stock characters will do for that, and you can manage without humour, if you have a sufficiency of wit. There is perhaps more effervescence than wit, and what wit there is not of the best kind. It is not concerned with ludicrous appositions; rather it is paradox, verbal antithesis, the Gratiano vein. Here is an example. Figaro is reporting to Rosine that Lindor is her lover, and asks leave to tell her so:

> "*Rosine*: Vous me faites trembler, monsieur Figaro.
>
> "*Figaro*: Fi donc, trembler! mauvais calcul, madame. Quand on cède à la peur du mal, on ressent déjà le mal de la peur....
>
> "*Rosine*: S'il m'aime, il doit me le prouver en restant absolument tranquille.

> "*Figaro*: Eh! madame! amour et repos peuvent-ils habiter en meme cœur? La pauvre jeunesse est si malheureux aujourd'hui, qu'elle n'a que ce terrible choix: amour sans repos, ou repos sans amour."

Beaumarchais can better that, though it is a fair sample of his handling. In the second Act, where Bartholo (Pantaloon) has patched up a reconciliation with Rosine (Columbine), whom he intends to marry, he closes the scene like this:

> "*Bartholo*: Puisque la paix est faite, mignonne, donne-moi ta main. Si tu pouvais m'aimer, ah! comme tu serais heureuse!
>
> "*Rosine* (baissant les yeux): Si vous pouviez me plaire, ah! comme je vous aimerais!
>
> "*Bartholo*: Je te plairai, je te plairai; quand je te dis que je te plairai! (Il sort.)"

That is very happy, because it has humour as well as wit. Pantaloon and Columbine have become human beings.

It is not all so good as that, and some of it is not good at all. It was written originally for an opera libretto, for which it is well suited. It would do equally well for marionettes. To such things the spectator can lend himself, because in the former the music, and in the latter the puppets, take the responsibility off him; nothing of his own is involved. But in a play the action and the dialogue

perform the resolution of life into art, with the audience as accomplice. Human nature is implicated; if we allow the cheap, we must cheat ourselves. If there is any resolution in the *Barbier*, it is into a jig, and condescension is difficult. Life is only there in so far as some of the personages wear breeches, and some petticoats. It is a mere trifle that the scene is laid in Spain, while all the characters are Italian.

The *Mariage de Figaro* is a more considerable work, if only because it is much longer and more complicated. Everybody is older, including Beaumarchais. Since the end of the *Barbier*, Count Almaviva has pursued hundreds of ladies, Rosina has almost left off being jealous, Figaro has become a cynic, and is inclined to give lectures. The romance would seem to have been rubbed off seduction, as you might expect when you consider that the Count has been at it all his life, and is now a middle-aged man, old enough to be Ambassador. It has been said —and Mr. Rivers says it—that Beaumarchais was deliberate in contriving the effect of satiety, which he certainly obtains—as if an author would set himself to work to be wearisome! Subversion, Mr. Rivers thinks, was his aim, moral revolt. He wrote, and it was played, on the eve of the Revolution. Was the *Mariage* not, therefore, a contributory cause?

> "*Figaro*, soliloquising: Parceque vous êtes un grand seigneur, vous vous croyez un grand génie!... Noblesse, fortune, un rang, des places, tout cela rend si fier! Qu'avez-vous fait pour tant de biens? Vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître, et rien de plus. Du reste, homme assez

> ordinaire; tandis que moi, morbleu! perdu dans la foule obscure, il m'a fallu déployer plus de science et de calculs pour subsister seulement, qu'on n'en a mis depuis cent ans à gouverner toutes les Espagnes: et vous voulez jouter ...!"

Is that contributory to revolution—or revolution contributory to it? It was surely current coin in 1784. Voltaire and Rousseau had encouraged cats to look at kings; everybody had made fun of the nobility. Titles of honour can have held little intimidation since Louis XIV had had the handling of them, and turned out dukes where his grandfather made marquises. What little there might be left to do had been done handsomely by his grandson. It is far more likely that Beaumarchais was easing grudges of his own, or that in the famous flight of paradoxes aimed at "la politique" he was recalling recent experiences in London and Vienna, where he came into collision with the real thing. Much out of character as it is, it is a good example of what both Figaro and Beaumarchais had become by 1784:

> "Feindre ignorer ce qu'on sait, de savoir tout ce qu'on ignore; d'entendre ce qu'on ne comprend pas, de ne point ouïr ce qu'on entend; surtout de pouvoir au delà de ses forces; avoir souvent pour grand secret de cachet qu'il n'y en a point; s'enfermer pour tailler des plumes, et paraître profond quand on n'est, comme on dit, que vide et creux; jouer bien ou mal un personnage; répandre des espions et

> pensionner des traîtres; amollir des cachets, intercepter des lettres, et tacher d'ennoblir la pauvreté des moyens par l'importance des objets: voilà toute la politique, ou je meure!"

Very brisk. But when Count Almaviva shortly comments, "Ah! c'est l'intrigue que tu définis!" the criticism is final, because it is completely just. Curious that a playwright should light up his Roman candle, and damp it down the next moment. Such speeches imperil the character of Figaro by making him so dominant a personality that there can be no fun in seeing him dupe his betters. Beaumarchais, I think, may have felt that objection, and attempted to restore the balance by having Figaro duped himself in the last act.

The balance is really adjusted in quite another way. Two new characters are brought in, one of whom, Marceline, a *vieille fille*, designs to marry Figaro, but presently finds out that she is his long-lost mother! The other is Chérubin, who saves the play, to my thinking, just as surely as Polly Peachum saves *The Beggar's Opera*. Chérubin—"création exquise et enchanteresse," says Sainte-Beuve—is the making of the *Mariage*, partly because he keys it down to its proper pitch, which is that of children playing grown-ups, and partly because he is truly observed and poetically presented. I don't see how the adage, "Si jeunesse savait," could be more tenderly exploited. All his scenes are good—the first with Suzanne, in which the young scamp, after betraying his occupation with three love affairs at once, snatches his mistress's hair-ribbon and dodges behind tables and chairs while the maid pursues him; the

second, with the Countess, where she is dressing him as a girl, and discovers her ribbon staunching a cut in his arm: in each of these scenes the delicious distress of his complaint is painted with a subtlety and sensibility combined which are first-rate art. Delicate provocation can go no further, or had better not. Beaumarchais' triumph is that he knows that, and does not add a touch in excess. The final touch is that the Countess, instead of feigning a desire for the restoration of the ribbon (which she did very badly), now really does desire, and obtains it. Enough said: there is no more. "Tu sais trop bien, méchante, que je n'ose pas oser," says the youth to Suzanne. That is his trouble, and a real one it is.

The imbroglio in this play is a thing of nightmare. "Que diable est-ce qu'on trompe ici?" The answer is the audience. Everybody deceives everybody, twice over and all the time. It surprises, if you like, by "a fine excess." It is not surprising, anyhow, that the last act was too much for Sainte-Beuve, has been too much for Mr. Rivers, and is too much for me. I do not, simply, know what is happening, but I do know that none of it is very funny. Compare it with *Sganarelle*, and you will see. In that little masterpiece you have four characters: Lélie and Clélie, the lovers, Sganarelle the jealous husband, and Sganarelle's wife. Clélie lets drop Lélie's portrait in the street, Sganarelle's wife picks it up, and is caught by Sganarelle admiring it. Presently, when Clélie faints, and is picked up by Sganarelle, it is his wife's turn to be jealous. Then Lélie, overcome by his feelings, is pitied by Madame Sganarelle and helped into her house. The fat is in the fire. Madame Sganarelle flies at Clélie for carrying on with her husband; Lélie believes that Sganarelle has married Clélie. Sganarelle pursues Lélie with a sword, and when he

is confronted, pretends that he brought it out because the weather looked threatening. It is a complete cat's cradle of a play, and as easily untied. The action is swift, the intrigue is easy to follow, the appositions are really comic. But who believes that Almaviva seriously wants Suzanne, or that Figaro has really promised Marceline, or that the Countess really loves Chérubin? The lack of plausibility causes the *Mariage* to turn unwillingly, like a mangle. It took four hours and a half to play: I can hardly believe that Figaro's inordinate soliloquy in the last act survived the first night. Figaro himself is overweight; Marceline is a very bad shot. She has at first a good Polly-and-Lucy slanging match with Suzanne; but in the discovery scene she grows serious—very serious, and rightly serious, no doubt, in any other play but this. But to suspend all the gallantries in progress for the sake of her diatribes upon gallantry, to shake the head over them, to say "True," and "Too true"—and then immediately to resume gallantries, has the effect of exhibiting neither gallantry nor the reprobation of it as serious; and as something in a play must be taken seriously, the Comédie Française, rightly deciding in favour of gallantry, cut out the whole scene; and it is so marked in my edition of Beaumarchais. It would have been a pleasant toil for Edward FitzGerald, who loved such work, to hew and shape this comedy. It has fine moments, but wants both the speed and the gaiety of the *Barbier*. Mozart gave it them—we owe to Beaumarchais the most delightful opera in the world.

Mr. Rivers translates the two plays freely, but I don't think very successfully. I have said already that Beaumarchais is not a good writer—too diffuse at one time, too terse at others—but no doubt he is very

difficult. Literal translation is useless. “Miss” is not a translation of “Mademoiselle.” “Mistress,” or “Young Lady” would be better—and so on. You cannot get the points sharply enough unless you translate ideas as well as idiom; and to do that you must take a wide cast. Rhetoric is rhetoric in whatever language you cast it. It has its own rules. Dialogue is another matter. There come in the familiarities, secrets of the toilette, secrets of the bower. How are these things to be done? I don’t know; but if Andrew Lang could not be natural with the 15th Idyll of Theocritus, it is no shame to Mr. Rivers to have failed with Beaumarchais.

If he desired to try his hand I wonder why he omitted one of his liveliest and wittiest sallies—the letter which he addressed to *The Morning Chronicle* in 1776, on one of his confidential visits to London. It is too long to give entire, but I must have a shot at pieces of it:

> “Mr. Editor,” he says, “I am a stranger, a Frenchman and the soul of honour. If this will not completely inform you who I am, it will at least tell you, in more senses than one, who I am not; and in times likes these, that is not without its importance in London.
>
> “The day before yesterday at the Pantheon, after the concert and during the dancing which ensued, I found at my feet a lady’s cloak of black taffetas, turned back with the same and edged with lace. I do not know to whom it belongs; I have

> never seen, even at the Pantheon, the person who wore it; all my inquiries since the discovery have taught me nothing about her. I beg of you then, Mr. Editor, to announce in your journal the discovery of the cloak, in order that I may punctually return it to her who may lay claim to it.
>
> "That there may be no possible mistake in the matter, I have the honour to give you notice that the loser, upon the day in question, had a head-dress of rose-coloured feathers. She had, I believe, diamond ear-rings; but of that I am not so positive as of the remainder of my description. She is tall and of elegant appearance; her hair is a flaxen blonde, her skin dazzlingly white. She has a fine and graceful neck, a striking shape, and the prettiest foot in the world. I observe that she is very young, very lively and inattentive, that she carries herself easily, and has a marked taste for dancing."

He then proceeds to deduce all these charming properties from the taffetas cloak—some from a single hair which he finds in the hood, some from minute particles of fluff and fur; others, more carefully, from measurements; others, again, from the position in which the cloak was lying—all of which led him to conclude infallibly that "the young

lady was the most alert beauty of England, Scotland and Ireland, and if I do not add, of America, it is because of late they have become uncommonly alert in that particular country." Sherlock Holmes!

> "If I had pushed my inquiries," he concludes, "it is possible that I might have learned from her cloak what was her quality and rank. But when one has concluded that a woman is young and handsome, has one not in fact learned all that one needs to learn? That at any rate was the opinion held in my time in many good towns in France, and even in certain villages, such as Marly, Versailles, etc.
>
> "Do not then be surprised, Mr. Editor, if a Frenchman who all his life long has made a philosophical and particular study of the fair sex, has discovered in the mere appearance of a lady's cloak, without ever having seen her, that the fair one with the rosy plumes who let it fall unites in her person the radiance of Venus, the free carriage of the nymphs, the shape of the Graces, the youth of Hebe; that she is quick and preoccupied, and that she loves the dance, to the extent of forgetting everything else in order to run to it, on a foot as small as Cinderella's, and as light as Atalanta's own."

He has done it with the unfailing humour and neatness which carried him in and out of the lawcourts, took him to prison and enlarged him again. And he was then only forty-four, and had another twenty years before him. Impudence and good humour. The first was his shield and buckler—triple brass. The other enabled him to support it in all companies without offence. When at long last his suit with La Blache was ended, and in his favour, the Comte not only restored the estate without a murmur, but gave him a fine portrait of the testator. Beaumarchais may have been a bad lot; but he was evidently a good sort.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] "Figaro: the Life of Beaumarchais," by John Rivers. Hutchinson. 18s.

THE CARDINAL DE RETZ

No student of France and literature can afford to neglect this gay and hardy little sinner, though the use of that very word might show that I was not fitted to expound him. It has here, however, an æsthetic significance and not an ethical. Poets and moralists have this in common that, owing their power to the strength of their prejudice, they make bad historians. Carlyle, very much of a poet, illuminating his heroes with his own fire, did no harm to Cromwell, whose wart was a part of his

glory; but Frederick the Great showed up oddly. The higher the light rayed upon him the more ghastly stared his gashes under the paint. Michelet was a good deal of a poet too, and rootedly a moralist. Naturally he came to blows with the history of his country. The Fronde made him angry, the *grand siècle* shocked him. Edification may be served that way, not truth. It is, I grant, difficult to read the History of France as that of a sane, hard-working, penurious people; difficult to decide why the Revolution, instead of coming in 1789, did not come in 1689; or why, having begun in 1649, it did no more, as Bossuet said, than "enfanter le siècle de Louis." To understand that would be to understand the Fronde, but not how the state of things which evoked the Fronde and made possible the Memoirs of de Retz, could have come about. A royal minority, a foreign regent, a foreign minister, and a feudal aristocracy will account for a good deal—not for all. The Italianisation of manners which began with the last Valois kings, and was renewed by Henry's Florentine wife, has to be reckoned up. To a nobility convinced of privilege it opened the ways of *Il Talento*.

Il Talento is the Italian description of the state of mind induced by desire and the means to gratify it on the spot. Iago is the standing type; but Cæsar Borgia is a better. For him and his likes, *The Prince* of Machiavelli was the golden book. In France the princely families—those of Lorraine, Bouillon, Condé and Savoie—found it a kindly soil; and one of its best products was naturally the Cardinal de Retz, whose memoirs are as good as Dumas, very much like him, and the source of the best chapters of *Vingt Ans Après*. Here was *Il Talento* in fine flower, existing for its own sake; whereas Mazarin hid it in avarice, and Richelieu had lost it in statecraft. You cannot read

Retz with pleasure, to say nothing of profit, if you do not allow for the point of view—which you will have no difficulty in doing if you remember that, less than a hundred years before the Cardinal's day, his ancestor, Alberto Gondi, had been as familiar with the Ponte Vecchio as he himself was with the Pont-Neuf.

In his "portrait" of Mazarin, Retz accused his brother-cardinal of common origin, but if you went back to his own family's beginnings I do not know that the Gondis were more than respectable according to French standards. But the future Cardinal, Jean-Francois-Paul, was born the son of a Duc de Retz, a great man of Brittany, was a Knight of Malta in the cradle, and when, later, it was thought well to make a churchman of him, tumbled into abbacies as became a young prince, and had a bishopric as soon as he cared. He says of Mazarin's youth that it was shameful, that he was by bent and disposition a cardsharper. He might have said worse and not been wrong; yet the account he gives of himself is so frank, shameless and extremely flagrant that the reproof has an odd sound.

> "I did not affect devotion," he says of himself as Abbé, "because I could never be sure that I should be able to keep up the cheat. But I had great consideration for the devout, and from their point of view that is in itself a mark of piety. I suited my pleasures to the rest of my habits. I could hardly get on without gallantry, but I continued it with Madame de Pommereux, young and a coquette, whose ways suited me

> because, as she had all the young people not only about her but in her confidence, her apparent affairs with them were a mask for mine with her."

This equivocal conduct so far succeeded that the pious agreed with St. Vincent de Paul that, though the Abbé de Retz was not truly religious, he was "not far from the Kingdom of Heaven"—quite as near, in fact, as the young gentleman desired to be. And then he tells a story which he thinks is to his credit:

> "A short time after I left college, my governor's valet, who was my humble servant, found living with a wretched pin-maker a niece of hers, fourteen years old and of remarkable beauty. After he had shown her to me, he bought her for one hundred and fifty pistoles, took a little house for her at Issy, and put his sister in to look after her. I went there the day after she was installed, and found her extremely cast down, but attributing it to her modesty, was not at all surprised. She was still more so the next day, a fact about her even more remarkable than her good looks, which is saying a great deal. She talked with me straightforwardly, piously, without extravagance, and cried no more than she could possibly help. I saw that she was so much afraid of her aunt that I felt truly sorry for her, admired her disposition, and

> presently her virtue. I tested that so far as it could be done, and took shame to myself. I waited till it was dark, then put her into my coach and took her to my aunt de Meignelais. She put the child into a convent of religious, where eight or ten years later she died in the odour of sanctity."

One must not expect too much from a *grand seigneur* in a cassock. The story has more implication than he was able to perceive; but at least it shows that he had pity in him, if not piety.

In time he was appointed coadjutor to his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, with a promise of survivorship, and a fancy title of Archbishop of Corinth. He tells us that he took six days to consider how he should regulate his conduct, how restore the credit of the archiepiscopate (which was very necessary) without losing any of his pleasures. "I decided to do evil with deliberation—no doubt the most criminal course in the eyes of God, but no doubt also the most discreet in those of the world." In his opinion that was the only way open to him of avoiding "the most dangerous *absurdity* which can be met with in the clerical profession, that of mixing sin and devotion." "Absurdity" is remarkable.

His first duty as coadjutor was a severe trial to his fortitude. It was necessary to make a Visitation of the Nuns of the Conception; and as the convent held eighty young ladies, "of whom several were handsome and some adventurous," he had many qualms about exposing his virtue to such a test. "It had to be done, though; and I preserved it to the

edification of my neighbour. I did not see the face of a single one, and never spoke to one unless her veil was down. This behaviour, which lasted six weeks, gave a wonderful lustre to my chastity. I believe, however, that the lessons which I received every evening from Madame de Pommereux strengthened it materially against the morrow."

Such was the Coadjutor-Archbishop of Paris, and such his efforts to restore the credit of that see. He did not continue them long. Other things engrossed him, one being to obtain from Mazarin a recommendation to the Cardinalate, another by all, or any, means to obtain his benefactor's disgrace. Before the first could take effect, or the second be effected, the parliamentary Fronde began, and Retz was in it to the neck. What he wanted, except to enjoy himself, is not at all clear. He despised rather than hated Mazarin; he forsook the only man—Condé—for whom he seems to have had any real regard; he invited his country's enemies to Paris; and he got nothing out of it. But I am sure he enjoyed himself.

His strong card was his popularity with the Parisians. He earned that partly by hard money—the Barricades, he says, cost him some thirty-six thousand *écus*—and somewhat on his own account too. After he had been enthroned as Coadjutor, he gave himself no airs. On the contrary, "Je donnai la main chez moi à tout le monde; j'accompagnai tout le monde jusqu'au carrosse." Then, when he was firmly established as the most affable seigneur in the city, suddenly he jumped in a claim for precedence before M. de Guise, and had it adjudged him. It

enhanced his prestige incalculably. “To condescend to the humble is the surest way of measuring yourself against the great,” is the moral he draws, but another is that if you aim at popularity, you should stand up to a great man, and beat him. Retz had courage, and the Parisians loved him for it. So did the Parisiennes, according to his own account, though many things were against him. He was an ugly little man, a little deformed, black man, Tallemant reports him, very nearsighted, badly made, clumsy with his hands, unable to fasten his clothes or put on his spurs. No matter. Whatever he could or could not do, there is no doubt he could give a good account of himself in the world, upstairs and downstairs and in my lady’s chamber. Not only does he say so in Memoirs, written, as he is careful to say, for the instruction of Madame de Caumartin’s children, but his enemies allowed it. It may even be that Mazarin paid him the compliment of being jealous of his midnight conferences with Anne of Austria; at any rate, Retz seriously thought of cutting him out. Then he was a good preacher, a ready debater, and a born lobbyist to whom intrigue was daily bread. Those were his cards for beggar-my-neighbour with Mazarin, and not bad ones. The weakness of the hand resided in the player. He had as little heart as conscience. He cared nothing for his country, for his friends or for his mistresses when their interests conflicted with what for the moment were his. If he had an affection for anyone it was for Condé. Yet he was against him all through, and chose rather to back the poor creature, Monsieur—to his own undoing, as he must have foreseen if he had given it a moment’s thought. Gaston simply let in Mazarin again, through mere poltroonery; and Mazarin once in, Retz must be out. And so he was.

The Fronde, the first Fronde, began seriously, like our Civil War, on a question of principle. The Parlement of Paris took advantage of the Regency to restore its old claim to be more than a Court of Record. It claimed the right to examine edicts before registering them—in fact, to be a Parliament. Atop of that came the grievance of the Masters of Requests, who, having paid heavily for their offices, found their value substantially reduced by the creation of twelve new ones. The masters struck, and their offices were sequestrated. Then came the 26th August 1648, when the Court, exalted by Condé's victory at Lens, first celebrated the occasion by *Te Deum* in Notre Dame, and immediately afterwards by causing Councillor Broussel, Father of the People, to be arrested and carried off to Saint-Germain. Retz, the coadjutor, was in both celebrations, as we can read in *Vingt Ans Après*. It was the day before the Barricades. Directly the news of the arrest became known the town, as he says, exploded like a bomb: "the people rose; they ran, they shouted, they shut up their shops." Retz went out in rochet and hood—to watch, no doubt, over the harvest of his 36,000 sown *écus*. "No sooner was I in the Marché-Neuf than I was encompassed by masses of people who howled rather than shouted." He extricated himself by comfortable words, and made his way to the Pont-Neuf, where he found the Maréchal de La Meilleraye, with the Guards, enduring as best he could showers of stones, but far from happy at the look of things. He urged Retz, who (though he had had an interchange of repartees with the Queen overnight) did not need much urging, to accompany him to the Palais-Royal and report. Off they went together, followed by a horde of people crying, "Broussel! Broussel!"

> "We found the Queen in the great Cabinet with the Duc d'Orléans, Cardinal Mazarin, Duc de Longueville.... She received me neither well nor ill, being too proud and too hot to be ashamed of what she had said the night before. As for the Cardinal, he had not the decency to feel anything of that kind. Yet he did seem embarrassed, and pronounced to me a sort of rigmarole in which, though he did not venture to say so, he would have been relieved if I had found some new explanation of what had moved the Queen. I pretended to take in all that he was pleased to tell me, and answered him simply that I was come to report myself for duty, to receive the Queen's commands, and contribute everything that lay in my power towards peace and order. The Queen turned her head sharply as if to thank me; but I knew afterwards that she had noticed and taken badly my last phrase, innocent as it was and very much to the point from the lips of a Coadjutor of Paris."

Then follows one of his famous Machiavellian aphorisms: "*But it is very true that with princes it is as dangerous, almost as criminal, to be able to do good as to wish to do harm.*"

Retz might play the innocent, no one better, but neither Queen nor minister were fools. It is not to be supposed that they had heard nothing of his

distribution of *écus*. Then the Maréchal grew angry, finding that the rioting was taken lightly, and said what he had seen. He called for Retz's testimony, and had it.

> "The Cardinal smiled sourly, the Queen flew into a rage.... 'There is a revolt even in the intention to revolt,' she said. 'These are the stories of people who desire revolt.' The Cardinal, who saw in my face what I thought of such talk, put in a word, and in a soft voice replied to the Queen: 'Would to God, madame, that all the world spoke with the same sincerity as M. le Coadjuteur. He fears for his flock, for the city, for your Majesty's authority. I am persuaded that the danger is not so great as he believes; but scruple in such a matter is worthy of his religion.' The Queen, understanding this jargon, immediately altered her tone, talked civilly, and was answered by me with great respect, and a face so smug that La Rivière whispered to Bautru, ... 'See what it is not to spend day and night in a place like this. The Coadjutor is a man of the world. He knows what he is about, and takes what she says for what it is worth.'"

The whole scene, he says, was comedy. "I played the innocent, which I by no means was; the Cardinal the confident, though he had no confidence at all. The Queen pretended to drop honey though she had

never been more choked with gall." But what comedy there was was not there very long. The Queen, who had declared that she would strangle Broussel with her own hands sooner than release him, was to change her mind. La Meilleraye and Retz were sent out again to report, and La Meilleraye, losing his head, nearly lost his life. At the head of his cavalry, he pushed out into the crowd, "sword in hand, crying with all his might, 'Vive le Roi! Broussel au large!'" More people, naturally, saw him than could hear what he said. His sword had an offensive look; there was a cry to arms, and other swords were out besides his. The Maréchal killed a man with a pistol-shot, the crowd closed in upon him; he was saved by Retz, who himself escaped by the use of his wits. An apothecary's apprentice, he says, put a musket at his head.

> "Although I did not know him from Adam, I thought it better not to let him know that. On the contrary, 'Ah, my poor lad,' I said, 'if your father were to see this!' He thought that I had been his father's best friend, though in fact I had never seen his father, and asked me if I was the Coadjutor. When he understood that I was, he cried out, 'Vive le Coadjuteur!' and they all came crowding round me with the same cry."

La Meilleraye knew very well what he had done. He said to Retz, "I am a fool, a brute—I have nearly ruined the State, and it is you that have saved it. Come, we will talk to the Queen like Frenchmen and men of worth." So they did, but to no purpose. She

believed that Retz was at the bottom of the whole *émeute*, and was not far wrong. But there was no stopping it now. The barricades were up at dawn the next morning, and it was clear that Broussel must be given back. He was. Then came the flight of the Court, which Dumas tells so admirably.

After the evasion of the royalties, the Fronde became largely comic opera. Certain of the princes—for reasons of their own—joined the popular party: Beaufort, le roi des Halles, who wanted the Admiralty; Bouillon, with claims upon his principality of Sedan; Conti, Elbeuf, Longueville. Retz had the idea of bringing their, and his, ladies into it. He himself fetched Mesdames de Longueville and de Bouillon with their children to the Hôtel de Ville, "avec une espèce de triomphe."

> "The small-pox had spared Mme. de Longueville all her astounding beauty; Mme. de Bouillon's, though on the wane, was still remarkable. Now imagine, I beg you, those two upon the steps of the Hôtel de Ville, the handsomer in that they appeared to be in undress, though they were not at all so. Each held one of her children in her arms, as lovely as its mother. The Grève was full of people over the roofs of the houses. The men shouted their joy, the women wept for pity. I threw five hundred pistoles out of the window of the Hôtel de Ville."

After their debonair fashion these high people played at revolution. “Then you might see the blue scarves of ladies mingling with steel cuirasses, hear violins in the halls of the Hôtel de Ville, and drums and trumpets in the Place—the sort of thing which you find more of in romance than elsewhere.” Nothing came of it all; a peace was patched up with the Parlement, and each of the grandees got something for himself, which had been his only reason for levying civil war. Beaufort was assured of his Admiralty, Longueville was made Viceroy of Normandy, Bouillon compensated for Sedan—and so on. La Rochefoucauld, too, who had taken up arms for the sake of Mme. de Longueville—

> “Pour mériter son cœur, pour plaire à ses
> beaux yeux,
> J’ai fait la guerre aux rois; je l’aurais fait aux
> dieux”—

we must suppose that he also was rewarded. There is an interesting page in the Memoirs of André d’Ormesson, one of an upright family of lawyers, which by stating the mere facts lets in the light upon the Fronde. All he does is to draw up a list of the *grands seigneurs* of 1648-55, with a statement of how often they changed sides in the seven years. It should be studied by all who wish to know how not to make civil war. But Retz too gives the spirit of the thing equally well. When his quarrel with Condé was coming to a head, and he was preparing, as he threatened, to push that prince off the pavement, he collected his friends about him, and among them two light-hearted marquises, Rouillac and Canillac. But when Canillac saw Rouillac he said to Retz, “I came to you, sir, to assure you of my services; but it is not reasonable that the two greatest asses in the kingdom

should be on the same side. So I am off to the Hôtel de Condé." And, he adds, you are to observe that he went there!

Retz alone, who, if he had been serious, might have been master of Paris, had nothing—except, of course, his Cardinal's hat, which he would have had anyhow. The Court came back, Mazarin was forced out of France for a couple of years. But the Queen had him in again; and then it was *his* turn. Retz was persuaded into the Louvre, immediately arrested and carried off to Vincennes. It was a shock to his vanity that the populace took it calmly. There were no barricades for him. From Vincennes he was presently removed to Nantes, whence, with the assistance of his friends—and I cannot but suspect the connivance of the governor—he escaped to the coast, landed at San Sebastian, was allowed to cross Spain and re-embark for Italy. He fetched up in Rome, where he remained for a year or two, taking part in conclaves and thoroughly enjoying himself. He spent large sums of money, which he did not possess, but never failed to receive from his friends. The French Ambassador and all the French clergy steadily cut him—but he did not take any notice. The Pope did, though, and Retz was given to understand that he had better remove himself. He went to Germany, to Switzerland, Holland, England in turn. Mazarin was dead, and Charles II restored by the time he came here. I don't think that he did anything to the purpose with our Court, though no doubt Charles was glad of him. Neither Evelyn nor Pepys have anything to say about him; and I fancy that he was only a passing guest. As soon as he could he crept back to Court, to which he had already surrendered his coadjutorship. Louis employed him once or twice; but his day was over. He lived mostly at Commercy,

where he tried economy, and made periodical retreats, as La Rochefoucauld unkindly says, "withdrawing himself from the Court which was withdrawing itself from him." He was four million *livres* in debt, but managed to pay them off, and even to contemplate a snug residuary estate which he intended for Mme. de Grignan, Mme. de Sévigné's high-stomached daughter. But Mme. de Grignan snubbed him consistently and severely, and nothing came of it. He died in 1679, drained of his fiery juices, making a "good end." The stormy Coadjutor had become "notre cher Cardinal."

His Memoirs, taken on end, are wearisome, because endless intrigue, diamond-cut-diamond and chicanery are wearisome, as well as intricate, unless some discernible principle can be made out of them. It seems that Retz did nothing except talk—but, as Michelet points out, that was what France at large did when the Gascons were let into Paris with Henri IV. Read desultorily, they are delightful, witty, worldly-wise, untirably vivacious, thrilling and glittering like broken ice. His Machiavellisms are worth hunting out:

> "The great inconvenience of civil war is that you must be more careful of what you ought not to tell your friends than of what you ought to do to your enemies.
>
> "The most common source of disaster among men is that they are too much afraid of the present and not enough of the future.

> "In dealing with princes it is as dangerous, if not as criminal, to be able to do good as to wish to do harm.
>
> "One of Cardinal Mazarin's greatest faults was that he was never able to believe that anyone spoke to him with honest intention."

When the Queen-Regent was working her hardest for Mazarin's return, she tried to win Retz over to help her. He told her bluntly that such a move would mean the ruin of the State. How so, she asked him, if Monsieur and M. le Prince should agree to it? "Because, Madam," said Retz, "Monsieur would never agree to it until the State was already in danger, and M. le Prince never, except to put it in danger." Excellent, and quite true.

After Retz's death, the Président Hénault, writing about his Memoirs, asked how one was to believe that a man would have the courage, or the folly, to say worse things about himself than his greatest enemy could have said. The answer, of course, is that Retz had no suspicion that he was saying bad things about himself. He said a great deal that was not true. Other chronicles of the Fronde give detailed accounts of such days as that of the Barricades, with not a word of the Coadjutor in them. But even if it had all been true, it would have seemed a perfectly simple matter to him. If you have no moral sense, the words "good" and "bad" have only a relative meaning. It is much harder to understand why he did the things which he relates, or why, if he did not do them, he

said that he did. What was he trying to get done? Did he hate Mazarin? There is no evidence that he did anything more than despise him. La Rochefoucauld, whom he accuses, by the way, of having tried to assassinate him, explains him and his Memoirs alike by vanity. “Far from declaring himself Mazarin’s enemy in order to supplant him, his only aim was to seem formidable, and to indulge the foolish vanity of opposing him.” If Retz knew of that “portrait”—and he did, because Mme. de Sévigné sent it him—his own more benevolent one of its author must be reckoned in his favour. He had written it in his Memoirs, but allowed it to stand there unaltered except for one little word. He had originally said that La Rochefoucauld was the most accomplished courtier and most honest man of his age. He scratched out the honesty.

Personally, I picture a happy *rencontre* in the Elysian Fields in or about 1679, when the Cardinal de Retz should have arrived and greeted his brother in the purple. A lifting of red hats, a pressing of hands —“Caro Signore, sta sempre bene?” and so on. There had been bitter war on earth; each was a keen blade, each an Italian. Each had had his triumphs. Retz had twice driven Mazarin out of Paris and once out of France. But Mazarin had proved the better stayer. He had returned, put Retz to flight, and died worth forty millions. Retz came back, made a good end, and only just cleared his debts. And what had it all been about? Some say, Anne of Austria, an elderly, ill-tempered, fat woman; some say vanity, some ambition. I say, *Il Talento* and the joy of battle: the brain taut, the eye alert, the sword-hand flickering like lightning on a summer night. Greek was meeting Greek. Inevitably that must have been. There was not room for two Italians of that stamp in France.

But let us always remember that he was mourned by Mme. de Sévigné, who said that he had been her friend for thirty years. There is the best thing to be known about him.

"L'ABBESSE UNIVERSELLE": MADAME DE MAINTENON

Few of the outstanding names in history have received the hard measure which has been meted out to Madame de Maintenon's. She has had it, so to speak, both ways; been blamed for what she did not, and for what she did. First, she was to be held abominable because she was not the King's wife; next, and even more so, because she was. All that falls to the ground if it can be shown that her life before the marriage was as irreproachable, morally, as it was after it. Madame Saint-René Taillandier, in a recent admirable study of the misjudged lady, has no difficulty in proving that it was so. She proves it positively by showing of what nature Madame de Maintenon really was, and negatively by exploring all possible sources of contemporary evidence, and finding nothing worth consideration. Dull, narrow, bigoted, obstinate, over-busy about many things, more occupied with to-day than to-morrow, falling in too readily with Louis' view of himself and his place in the universe (a view which she shared with the entire French nation)—these things she may have been, and done. But she was a good woman, a pious

woman, one who was severely tried, one who did her immediate duty and gave to the poor. She had a long and unhappy life, and died worn out. There can be no doubt of all this. All sorts of reasons for hating and slandering her can be urged: none of them good ones.

The reproaches of the historians are not so summarily to be dismissed. It is not necessary to go so far as Michelet did when he said that the price of her marriage with Louis was the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. That's absurd. Madame de Maintenon neither bargained nor sold her hand. But it is hard to believe—impossible to believe—that she was not in consultation with the King, and Louvois, and the priests about the Revocation, or that, if consulted, she would not have urged it. Saint-Simon, who is her first accuser here, is writing after her death, and writing as an historian. I feel sure that he is right. It is, of course, true that she was a Huguenot by descent, a grand-daughter of that truculent, serio-comic old Agrippa d'Aubigné, whose portrait, savagely grinning, is so extraordinarily like those of his king, *le Béarnais;* and it is true also that, though she was converted before she was a grown woman, she never lost her fanatic hold upon religion, but simply changed its direction. Throughout her life, says Madame Taillandier, she showed Huguenot characteristics. She could never take to the devotion of the rosary; she could never find any enthusiasm for convents; she invoked neither the Virgin nor the Saints; continued the reading of her Bible. No matter for that: she was hungry for souls. As Saint-Simon puts it, with evident truth: "Elle eut la maladie des directions ... elle se croyait l'abbesse universelle.... Elle se figurait être une mère d'église." She converted

whomsoever she could touch, and as she grew in influence she could touch a many. Concerned in the Revocation, besides Louis, there were Louvois, Father le Tellier, Bossuet, her own spiritual director, the Bishop of Chartres, and all the Jesuits. Everything that we know about her shows to which side she would incline; and nothing that we know about her makes it likely that she had any conception what statesmanship meant. Louis called her "Sa Solidité." Her solidity showed itself in her care for detail: nothing was too small for her—she loved to order a household, knew how many chickens you should get in for a small family, how much wine for the servants, how many pounds of candles. She could design the quasi-conventual robes for Saint-Cyr, costumes for ballets and so on. But the economic or political outcome of the Revocation of the Edict; the ruin of her country, the humiliation of the King, all the immediate results of the "affreux complot" were entirely outside her power of vision. "Four regiments of infantry," Madame Taillandier pleasantly says, "two of cavalry were ordered to follow the Duc de Noailles into Languedoc, and *trample a little* on the Huguenots." My italics! Well, Madame de Maintenon expected to save souls like that. I don't think that she can be let off her share in the *dragonnades*, or in the Revocation.

Never mind. She was more of a saint than a sinner, though she lacked the severity and suavity, the "sweet reasonableness" of the true Saints. She was bleak, in herself and in her outlook; her life had always been, and after her marriage was long to be, cheerless and unutterably dull. What a life it was, throughout its eighty-three years! Born in a prison in 1635, and living thereafter on charity, with one relative or another; hounded from Huguenot pillar to

Catholic post; clinging to the faith in which she had been reared until she was "converted" almost literally by force; still a pauper, often a drudge; then at seventeen married to an elderly balladist, crippled by disease, Paul Scarron, a scribbler of pasquinades and squibs, author of a travesty of Virgil and what not; married to this incapacitated rip; living with him in Grub Street on what he could pick up by the hire of his pen—a libel here, a dedication there, a lampoon elsewhere, a broadside for the street corner or bridge-end; living so from hand to mouth, married but not a wife—what a life for a young girl gently born, grand-daughter of King Henry's old friend! Nothing is more pathetic in Madame Taillandier's account of her than the gallant fight she put up in her little salon in the Rue Neuve Saint-Louis—polite conversation in her bed-chamber with her friends, while Paul and his tore the decencies to shreds below-stairs. And she succeeded, too, in making good and herself respected. She had valuable friends. Madame de Sévigné was one, Madame de Coulanges another, Madame de Lafayette a third. Through them she became acquainted with yet higher persons, among them with Madame de Montespan, then in league with the highest of all. By those means she fell under the King's eye. He did not like, but he esteemed her, and chose her out of all the Court and all Paris to govern Madame de Montespan's children. She did it, by all accounts, admirably. If she had no other qualities, she had two rare ones: she did her duty, and held her tongue.

When, by public Act, the children were made Enfants de France, they were removed from Paris to Saint-Germain; and there was Madame Scarron in daily intercourse with Louis. That was the beginning of her

astounding ascent. Madame de Montespan was uneasy, and had reason to be. The *gouvernante's* influence was steadily against her. Madame Scarron disapproved of her and all her kind; and sure enough, from the hour of her entry into the King's family, the mistress's star began to wane. Finally, what the preachers—Bossuet, Bourdaloue—could not do the ghastly business of "the Poisons" settled. La Montespan was in that up to the neck, and Louis knew that she was, and held his peace, not to save her neck, but to save his face. Montespan was exiled, and took, as George Meredith said, "to religion and little dogs." Madame Scarron remained in charge of the children, and was ennobled with a fief and a Marquisate. The Court called her "Madame de Maintenant"—but she had not fully earned that. The Queen died—and Louis almost immediately married the Marquise. There is not a ghost of a doubt of it. Saint-Simon gives the date, the hour, and the names of celebrant, assistants, and witnesses. Everybody knew it—but nothing was said. From that hour Louis was hardly ever out of her company until the end, when she was forced to leave him before the breath was out of his body.

What did she gain except unutterable weariness, suspicion, fear, slander, and unending labour? Read Dangeau's diary of the dreary, splendid routine of Versailles, Marly and Fontainebleau; read in Madame Taillandier a letter from the poor woman describing one of her days. She had her Saint-Cyr in which she really delighted. She could play universal Abbess there, and be interested and at peace for a time. But even there chagrin and disappointment dogged her. She brought in Madame Guyon, Quietism, and other things taboo. She became involved in Fénélon's disgrace; and presently she had to submit to Rome

and turn her beloved “Institution” of ladies into a convent of nuns.

No—she was bleak, and had a narrow mind; but, as she saw her duty, so she did it. Her duty led her into thorny wastes and desert places; it led her to be one of the thousand idle parasites yawning and stretching at Versailles, slowly and endlessly revolving like dead moons round le Roi Soleil. We may pity Madame de Maintenon for what life made of her, but not blame her.

PIERRE DE L’ESTOILE

Rich as they are in the possession of the *diverticula amoena* of history—and much richer than we are—for all that the French have no Pepys. “Many an old fool,” said Byron of Coleridge at his lecture, “but such as this, never.” So it may be put of the French memoirists: many a burgess of plain habit and shrewd observation, many a rogue husband too; but the like of one who, being both, turned himself inside out for the wonder of posterity, never. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine a Latin Pepys. The French do not discharge their bosoms on paper without reason; and the reasons which moved Pepys, whatever they were, would not approve themselves to their minds. Cynicism, or vanity, might suggest self-exhibition to one or another, as it did to Casanova the Venetian, but the truth is not served that way. There was a leaven of puritanism in Pepys

such as Huguenotry never deposited in a Frenchman. That leaven did double work in our man. It seasoned for him his pleasant vices, and gave also a peculiar thrill to his confessions, as if his pen, like his hair, was standing on end as he wrote. No Frenchman needed a relish for his foibles of the kind; and as for thrills, his nation has always kept faith and works in separate compartments. We cannot do that.

However, they are rich enough without him. If they have no Pepys, they have in their Pierre de L'Estoile one whom we cannot match. Imagine a citizen of London in Elizabeth's last and James's first years, observing, recording each day as it came. We have in John Evelyn, fifty years later, a diarist of higher quality, who yet, and for that reason, was of less historical value. He seldom stooped to the detail in which the Parisian was versed: would that he had! L'Estoile will furnish no such picture as Evelyn's of the Gallery at Hampton Court on a specimen afternoon. On the other hand, in L'Estoile, the brawling, buzzing, swarming streets of old Paris come before us at every turn of the leaf—and there at least he was like Pepys. If by happy chance one John Chamberlain, a private citizen of London, whose letters were published last year, had kept a diary, and could have kept it out of harm's way, he might have given just such a particularised account of his town as L'Estoile gives of the Paris of the League, the Seize, and *La Religion*. But he was fearful of the post, and never committed himself. Nor would he, of course, have had such cataclysmic matter to report, England in James's reign was drifting towards the whirlpool: France was already spinning madly in it.

Pierre de L'Estoile was an official of the Chancellery

in Paris. His title was “Audiencier,” and his duties, as nearly as I can ascertain, were more like those of one of the Six Clerks of our Court than of him whom we call Auditor. He was a man of family, of the *noblesse de Robe*, of landed estate, of education, and of taste. He had Greek, and Latin, bigotry and virtue; he collected coins and medals, books, ballads, pamphlets, bibelots of all sorts. He began to keep a diary on the day when Charles IX died, “enferme, comme un chien qui enrage”—Whitsunday, 1574; maintained it through the riot and effrontery, the anarchy and intrigue in which Henry III and the *mignons* killed and were killed; through the open war of the League, and through the Siege of Paris. He saw the entry of Henry IV; judged while he loved that ribald king; and caught up the flying rumours of that day which hushed all the city, that day when he was stabbed to the heart, “au coing de la rue de la Ferronnerie, vis-à-vis d’un notaire nommé Poutrain,” as he sat in his coach listening to a letter which Epernon was reading to him. He went on until 1611, and only laid his pen down because he was about to lay down his life. His last entry is of the 27th September: on the 8th October he was buried. He had lived under six kings of France, had three of them die violent deaths, had been an eyewitness of the Saint-Bartholomew. A seasoned vessel.

As he was never a courtier he could not have witnessed all the great events which he relates. I think he saw the entry of Henry of Navarre, if not his shocking exit. But he was out and about, all agog; he had highly placed friends; and collected for his diary as he did for his cabinet. I imagine he must be a “source” for such a tragic scene as the murder of the Duc de Guise, which might have gone bodily into *Les Quarante-Cinq* if that fine novel had not stopped a

few months short of it. Everything is there to the hand. As first, the presages: how on the 21st of December (1588),

> "the Archbishop of Lyon, having overheard the proud speeches which the Duke had made the King in the gardens of Blois, told him that he would have done well to use more respect, and that a more modest bearing would have been becoming: whereupon, 'You are wrong,' the Duke replied: 'I know him better than you do. You have to take him boldly. He is a king who likes to be made frightened.'"

And then another: on the next day,

> "As the Duke went to table, to his dinner, he found a note under his napkin wherein was written that he ought to be on his guard, because they were on the point of doing him a bad turn. Having read it, he wrote upon it these three words, 'They dare not,' and threw it under the table. The same day he was told by his cousin the Duc d'Elbœuf that on the morrow there would be an attempt against his life, and answered with a laugh that, plainly, he had been searching the almanacs."

On the 23rd he and his brother the Cardinal attended

the Council, on summons:

> "They found the guard strengthened, and more hardy than usual. They demanded money, and asked the Duke to see to it that they were paid, using (as it seemed) a new manner of address, less respectful than he had been accustomed to hear. Taking no notice, they went their ways; and for all that the Duke had had warnings from many quarters of what was working against him—nine of them, indeed, on that very day, whereof he put the last in his pocket, saying aloud, 'That is the ninth to-day'—nevertheless, so blind was that high mind of his to things as clear as daylight, he could not bring himself to believe that the King intended to do him an ill turn; for God had blindfolded his eyes, as He generally does of those whom He designs to chasten. Being then come into the Council, in a new coat, grey in colour and very light for the time of year, the eye on the scarred side of his face was seen to weep, and he to let two or three drops at the nose—on account of which he sent a page out for a handkerchief.... Presently the King sent Revel, one of the Secretaries of State, for him, who came up just as he was shutting down into the silver box he used to carry, the plums and raisins which

> he used for his heart-weakness. He rose immediately to attend his Majesty, and just as he came into the ante-chamber one of the Guards in there trod upon his toe; and though he knew very well what that meant, notwithstanding he made no sign, but went on his way to the Chamber, as one who cannot avoid his fate. Then, suddenly, he was seized by the arms and legs by ten or a dozen of the Quarante-Cinq ambushed behind the arras, and by them stabbed and murdered, uttering among other lamentable cries this last, which was plainly heard, 'God! I am dying! My sins have found me out. Have mercy on me!' Over his poor body they flung a mean carpet, and there he lay exposed to the gibes and indignities of them of the Court, who hailed him 'fair King of Paris'—the King's name for him."

Detail like that must have been got at first hand. When he comes to the Cardinal, he contents himself by saying that he was despatched in the Capuchin Convent on Christmas Eve. But the account of the Duke carries conviction. L'Estoile had a friend at Blois—an official of the Council, or an usher of the door. Though there is pity in his words, "Sur ce pauvre corps fut jetté un meschant tapis," his judgment was not disturbed. His account closes with the stern words,

> "Et ici finist le règne de Nembrot le Lorrain."

Henry being what he was, and whose son he was, it was plain to him that the only thing to do with the head, and crownable head, of the League was to remove it. After the Saint-Bartholomew murder was a recognised arm of kingship, a sort of *jus regale*, in France. But Catherine de Médicis, who taught her sons the uses of the dagger and the dark, was not consenting to this particular use of them. Her worthless son might be the last of the Valois; but she dreaded the first of the Bourbons much more than the extinction of her own race; and when Henry was fool enough to boast, "Now I am the only King," and (says L'Estoile) "began immediately to be less of one than ever," she, sickening of such inanity, took to her bed, and died in it on the 5th of January following the *coup d'état*.

A year later the League gave the counterstroke. Henry was murdered at Blois by its creature, Clément the Jacobin: "poorly and miserably slain," says L'Estoile, "in the flower of his age, in the midst of his garrison, surrounded, as always, by guards; in his chamber, close to his bed, by a little rapscallion of a monk, with a jerk of his nasty little knife." The thing was miraculously simple, a touch-and-go which just came off. Clément asked for an audience, was refused: Henry heard of it and insisted on seeing him. The man was let in, found his victim undressed and at disadvantage, gave him a letter, and while he was reading, drove a knife into his bowels and left it there. He was himself killed on the spot, having done what the League intended, and more than that by a good deal. L'Estoile notes it at the moment: "The King of Navarre is made King of France by the League." So he was.

Civil war followed: Paris in the grip of the Seize, with the Duc de Mayenne as Regent for the League. L'Estoile lost his appointment; for the Chancery followed the King, and he himself could not. A Court of a kind was maintained in the city, and he, in order to live, was forced to serve the Seize, whom he detested and feared. He had good reason for that. Famine and pestilence were on all sides of him, and treachery and suspicion—under the bed, at the street corners, in the churches, wherever people came together—and the gibbet expecting its daily tribute. When the news came in of Arques or Ivry, of the capitulation of Chartres or what not, it was as much as your neck was worth to be seen to smile. Lists of names went about—you might see your own on it any day. By a letter attached to it you could know your portion. P. stood for *pendu*, D. for *dagué*, C. for *chassé*. L'Estoile saw his own, with D. against it. He went in fear, naturally, but I think he was more scandalised than afraid when they began their new Saint-Bartholomew by hanging the President of the Council, Brisson, and two of his fellow members. It took place in prison, and L'Estoile, though he was not present, reports the manner of it, and the harangues of the victims. His conclusion is good enough: "Thus, on this day, a First President of the Court was hanged—by his clerk." The King, he hears, "gossant à sa manière accoustoumée," said that he had no better servants in all Paris than the Seize, who did his business for him better than anything they did for their masters, and cost him no doubloons neither.

Meantime the city was beleaguered, and very soon hungry. Cauldrons of broth and boiled horse were set up at street-corners, and people fought each other to get at them; bread was made of oats and bran, and

doled out by pennyweights as long as it lasted. When they had eaten all the horses they came to the dogs, then to the cats. The siege was maintained, the people starved. They ate tallow, dog-skin, rat-skin, cat-skin. They made bread of men's bones from the cemeteries; they hunted children—L'Estoile has no doubts; many lay still, awaiting the mercy of death. "The only things which went cheap in Paris," he says, "were sermons, where they served out wind to the famished people, giving them to understand that it was very pleasing to God to die of starvation—yea, and far better to kill one's children than to admit a heretic as king." A man, he says, came to his door to beg a crust of him to save a child's life. While L'Estoile was fetching the bread the baby died, in the father's arms. He himself sent away his wife and infant son to Corbeil: the leaguer had been raised for that purpose, and many took advantage of the grace. Unfortunately Corbeil was taken by the Spaniards, and his people held to ransom. There were fierce riots; but the Seize knew that their own necks were in peril (as proved to be true), and held out. Finally, after the farce of conversion solemnly enacted, Henry entered his good town. As a last resource the League had ordered the descent and procession of the Châsse of Ste-Geneviève a few days before. L'Estoile gives the warrant in full, with this note in addition: "Its virtue was shown forth, five days afterwards, in the reduction of Paris." He always girded at the Châsse. It was brought down in July 1587 to make the rain stop. "She did no miracle, though liberally assisted. The moon before had been a rainy one, and they brought her down on the fifth of the new moon when there was promise of a little fine weather. Nevertheless, it began to rain harder than ever the next day." He called Madame Sainte-Geneviève

Diana of the Parisians.

Well, the Béarnois came in, and heard *Te Deum* at Notre Dame. He made a torchlight entry, dressed in grey velvet, with a grey hat and white *panache*. His face was "fort riant"; his hat always in his hand to the ladies at the windows, particularly to three, "very handsome, who were in mourning, and at a window high up, opposite Saint-Denys-de-la-Chartre." L'Estoile must have seen that, and admired the ladies. And he certainly saw—he says so—the reception of Mesdames de Nemours and Montpensier. They were held up by the passing of troops, and put out of countenance by the insolence of the bystanders, who "stared them full in the face without any sign of knowing who they were." And that to Madame de Montpensier—"Queen-Mother" to Paris besieged!

Next day Henry played tennis all the afternoon, and hazard all night; but L'Estoile loved that king without approving of him. His tales tell for him and against, his esteem rises and falls. He liked his easy manners, his old clothes, his *Ventre-Saint-Gris*, his cynicisms and mocking humour. He does not seem to think the monarchy let down by such *sans façon*. Anyhow, there it is; and two things are made clear by the diary—first, that Henry was not the good fellow he is generally reputed, and second, that he was not then thought to be so. He himself, may be, had been too much knocked about by the world to have any illusions left him. There was an attempt against his life in 1595. The people seemed frantic with delight at his escape. L'Estoile relates how he went in procession to Notre Dame.

> "You never heard," he says, "such approbation of a king by his people as was given that day to our good Prince whenever he showed himself. Seeing it, a lord who was close to his Majesty, said to him, 'Remark, sir, how happy are all your subjects at the sight of you.' Shaking his head, the King replied, 'That is the people all over. And if my greatest enemy was where I am now, and they saw him go by, they would do as much for him as for me, and shout even louder than they are doing now.'"

No, there were no rose-coloured curtains between Henry of Navarre and this transitory life. He did not even pretend to approve of himself; and if he was ashamed, as it seems he was, of his amorous entanglements with the young Princesse de Condé, it is certain that they shocked L'Estoile to the heart. When it comes to apologies there, there was no spirit left in the respectable man. For this diarist was as moral as our John Evelyn, and so far as I can find out on as good a foundation. He could express himself on such matters with point. For instance:

> "Sunday the 12th February, which was Dimanche des Brandons, Madame had a splendid ballet at the Louvre, where nothing was forgotten that could possibly be remembered —except God."

A sharper saying than Evelyn would have allowed himself. But it is the fact, as I have said, that good King Henry was not found so good living as dead.

Afterwards—under Richelieu, under Mazarin, during the Fronde, under the Edict of Nantes—by comparison he shone. During his lifetime he had many more enemies and far fewer friends than was supposed. The Maréchal D'Ornano, in 1609, told him in so many words that he was not beloved by his people, and that a very little more on the taxes would bring back the civil war. The King said that he knew all that, and was ready for it. D'Ornano then said that he could not advise rough measures. "I shall freely tell you, sir, that the late King had more of the *noblesse* for him than you have for yourself, and more of the people too than you will have if there be trouble. For all that, he was obliged to leave Paris and his own house to rebels and mutineers, and the rest of us thought ourselves lucky to get off with our heads on our shoulders." L'Estoile had that from "a brave and trustworthy gentleman" who was close by at the time. The gentleman said that the King was at first moved to anger by D'Ornano's plain speaking, but thanked him for it afterwards.

Bad stories of King Henry are to be had for the asking; perhaps the worst in L'Estoile is told in a poem which he picked up, and reports. A Madame Esther had been the King's mistress in La Rochelle, and had borne him a son. The child died, the King tired, and forsook her. She came to see him at Saint-Denis when he was busy, distracted, seeking other game: he refused to see her or hear what she had to say. She was ill, and died in the town where he actually was, and being of the religion, a grave was denied her. What became of her body is not known, but "they raised to her memory," L'Estoile says, "the following *Tombeau* (epitaph), which was rehearsed at Saint-Denis and everywhere:

“Tombeau de Madame Esther

"Here Esther lies, who from Rochelle,
Called by the King, her master, came,
Risking the life of her fair fame
With him to whom her beauty fell.

"Faithful she was, and served him well,
Bore him a son who had no name,
And died: so then her lover's flame
Sought other kindling for a spell.

"Forsaken, hitherward her steps
Strayed, and to God she tuned her lips
For mercy, dying so: but earth

"Was closed against her. Ah, it's bad—
No yard of all his lands and worth
For her who gave him all she had!"

A touching and simple piece. It should have gone home to a man whose intentions were always better than his inclinations, yet always gave way to them. The end of him, sudden and shocking as it was, can have surprised nobody. He had enemies everywhere, and few friends. The Catholics had never believed in him, the Protestants had ceased to believe in him. The day before his last he had had Marie de Médicis crowned with all the forms, though unwillingly. L'Estoile was there, and observed two notable facts: "the first was that it had been thought proper, on account of the subject-matter, to change the gospel of the day, which is from Mark x—"*And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife, tempting him.*" That sounds to me a little too apt to be likely.

"The other was that at the *largesse* of gold and silver

coins, which is usual at coronations of kings and queens, there was never a cry *Vive le Roy*, nor yet a *Vive la Reine*—which, it was remarked, had never happened but at this coronation." His next entry relates to the assassination:

> "*Luctus ubique, pavor, et plurima mortis imago*," is his conclusion of it all: "the shops are shut; everyone goes weeping or holding up his hands, great and small, young and old; women and maids pluck at their hair. The whole town is very quiet: instead of running for arms we run to our prayers, and make vows for the health and welfare of the new king. The fury of the people, contrary to the expectation and intent of the wicked, is turned upon the infamous parricide and his accomplices, seeking only to ensue vengeance and to have it."

De mortuis! That is always the way. And distrusting the Queen as he plainly did, and abhorring Concini, not the first, and not the best, of the implanted Italians, there is little wonder at the diarist's dismay. He goes on, without circumlocution, to lay the crime at the door of the "Society of Judas," as he calls a famous companionship, a society to whose new church the King's heart had been promised, by whose means, he as good as says, it was now obtained. Not without scandal, it was presently conveyed there.

Enormous crowds viewed the king's body, which lay in state in the Louvre. The Jesuits were among the first to come; he says:

> "Class them as you please: everybody knows the maxim they preach, that it is lawful to kill the king who suffers two religions in his realm. Nevertheless (*vultibus compositis ad luctum*) they played affliction above everyone. Father Cotton, with an exclamation truly smacking of the Court and the Society, 'Who is the villain,' cries he, 'to have killed this good prince, this pious, this great king? Was it not a Huguenot, then?' They tell him, No, it was a Roman Catholic. 'Ah, deplorable, if it be so!' he says, and signs himself with three great crosses. Someone present, who had overheard him, was himself overheard to say, 'The Huguenots don't play those tricks.'"

But the Society took the heart to Notre-Dame-de-Boulogne.

L'Estoile survived to see the little king in Paris. He watched him benevolently always, and has tales to tell of him, of which the prettiest is about Pierrot, a village boy of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. When Louis had been there as Dauphin, Pierrot used to play with him; and now that he was King, and at the Tuileries, he had the notion of going to see him.

> "The King was playing down by the lake, with a fine company about him; but as soon as he was aware of Pierrot, his old play-fellow (who still called him M. le Dauphin, and to

> those who reproved him, swore his round Mordienne that he did not know what else to call him), he left them all where they were to go to Pierrot, into whose arms he flew, and kissed him in the face of everybody. He told M. de Souvrai that they must find clothes for his friend the very next day, so that he might stay with him, but Pierrot said he could not do that, but must go home for fear of being beaten. His father and mother had not been willing to let him go—but he had gone for all that, and had brought M. le Dauphin (he called him) a present of some sparrows."

"Simplicité rustique," L'Estoile calls it, and praises Louis for going half-way to meet it. He is then very near the end of his record, and of his earthly tether too.

Misfortunes were gathered thickly about the honest man. He was out of his employment through age; money was very short with him. He sold his collections piecemeal, and was glad to make fifty francs or so here and there. He does not name the most serious of his ailments, but I fear that it was malignant, and put recovery out of the case. In September 1610, feeling himself in extremities, he demanded the Sacrament, and it became a question of confession. Father des Landes, a Jacobin and a friend of his, was chosen for the office, and demanded of him a protestation that he would die in the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman faith. The first two—yes, said L'Estoile; but boggled over the third. He

relates the course of the argument which he held with the Jacobin. It branched off, as they will, into all sorts of side issues: invocation of the Saints, Council of Trent, errors of the Popes, and what not. He comes as near as he ever does here to putting down what he really did—or at least what he really did not—believe. He was an eclectic, but desperate of remedy. He would have seen the Reformed Church Catholic, and the Catholic reformed. But that, he is aware, is a counsel of perfection. “Three things forbid: lack of charity, lack of zeal for the glory of God, and stubbornness, which is the last trench of the ignorant.” And he concludes on the whole matter: “I shall hold on then to that old stock, rotten as it is, of the Papacy. The Church is in it, though it is not the Church.” And thereupon he had his absolution and the Sacrament. Father des Landes was a liberal-minded Jacobin.

I have fallen into the old easy way of confounding historical persons and history, but that is L’Estoile’s fault at least as much as mine. I might have stuffed my account of his book with criminal records, or with sermons; for next to the doings of the great those are the matters which concern him. Few days pass, never a week, in which he does not record an execution or several of them. I don’t know whether the Paris of the Henrys was worse than the London of James, and failing an English L’Estoile, I shall never know. But Paris would be bad to beat—not only for bestial crime but for bestial requital of it. In London you might be decapitated or hanged: burning was rare towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign. In Paris you might be hanged, or hanged and strangled, or broken on the wheel, or hanged and burned; or, if you were respectable enough you could be executed with a sword. Burning was reserved for heresy: for

lèse-majesté there was death by horses—four of them. L'Estoile saw Ravaillac die that death. He died, the wretch, at the "deuxième tirage." These things are shocking, as the crimes were which they were designed, after the ideas of the times, to fit. Then there were the duels which reached in France a point not known in our country. The *mignons* quarrelled in companies. That happened when Quélus, Maugiron and Livarrot met d'Entragues, Ribérac and Schomberg in the Marché-aux-Chevaux. Maugiron and Schomberg were killed outright; Ribérac died the next day, and Quélus, with nineteen wounds, lingered for a month, and died then. The King kissed the dead, cut off and kept their fair hair, and took from Quélus the ear-rings which he had himself put into his ears. "Such and the like ways of doing," says L'Estoile, "unworthy indeed of a great king and a high-hearted, as this one was, caused him by degrees to be despised ... and in the Third-Estate, to be made little by little their faction, which was the League." No doubt that is true.

Let me remember, as I end, this curious piece of news: on January 8th, 1608, it was so cold that the chalice froze in Saint-André-des-Ars, and they had to get a brazier from the baker's to thaw it. Saint-André was L'Estoile's favourite, or perhaps his parish church. The law cares nothing for trifles, but history lives upon them. My last scrap, however, is not of an age but of all time. "J'ay trente mil livres de rente, et cependant je meurs!" said the Abbé of Bonport in his last agony.

LA BRUYÈRE

If we can still contrive to hold up our heads in the world it is not the fault of the writers of maxims, who have seldom had a good word to say for us. We may ask, as we wilt but read on, Have we then nothing which can face unashamed the microscopic eye? Does not virtue lend itself to aphorism? Should it not be possible to make pithy summaries of our good qualities, of our reasonable institutions? La Rochefoucauld's answer would be, Inform me of your virtues, show me your tolerable institutions, and I will tell you if I can reduce them to maxims. Nobody took the trouble to do it. He was read, as he wrote, for entertainment; and entertainment certainly comes if we don't read too much of him at a time. He is for the bedside or the dressing-table. You can glance at him as you shave: but if you linger on him, you had better put away the razors. He has himself detected the source of the entertainment. "In the misfortunes of our best friends we can always find something which is not unpleasing." He is dreadfully right; and it was his accuracy, no doubt, which Madame de Sévigné found to be "divine." I obtain my own consolation out of the fact that, poor things as we are, it has been possible for one at least of us to write us down so well. But I am under no delusions about this duke. He is not necessarily a good man struggling with adversity, but as human as the rest of us. His only right to the microscope is that of user; and the pose that he who sees so many beams in his neighbour's eyes has no motes in his own, it is fair to say, is not consciously assumed, but inseparable from the aphoristic method.

In La Bruyère, the French Theophrastus, who has

tempered his maxims with "portraits," I think that the Rhadamanthus-attitude is deliberate. La Bruyère is indignant, and takes it for righteousness. You cannot call him cynical; he is a *censor morum*. He combines the methods of La Rochefoucauld and Tallemant des Réaux, but is more human than the first because he condescends to scold his victims, and much less so than the other because he cannot bring himself to consider them as of the same clay with himself. La Bruyère, you may say, never takes off his wig and gown; Tallemant never puts his on. In *Les Caractères* is but one paragraph of unstinted praise; the *Historiettes* is full of them. Tallemant, however, did not write for publication, and La Bruyère did. It is possible that he would have praised more generally than he did if it had been as safe to praise as to condemn. But it was not. He had been rash enough at starting to call attention to Bishop Le Camus, and to be astonished at the red hat conferred upon a pious and devoted man. Then he learned, first, that the King had been very much offended by the Pope's action, and secondly, that the Pope had intended him to be. Just in time he cancelled the passage. No—a writer had to be sure of his ground when he went about to praise. You were only perfectly safe, indeed, in praising His Majesty.

His "pleasant" saying of Dangeau, as Saint-Simon calls it, that he was not a grandee, but "after a grandee," is typical of him, at once acute and direct. It says more exactly what Dangeau was than a page. The page is there too, but the few words shine out of it like an electric light. It is as if he was talking round about his subject, seeking the best aspect of it, and then, suddenly, with a pointing finger, you get "*Pamphilius* in a word desires to be a great man, and believes himself to be one; but he is not; he is after a

great man." The rest of the page goes for little. It is Thackerayan, as we should say. Whether Thackeray owed anything directly to La Bruyère I am not able to determine; but he owed a fair amount to Steele, who assuredly did.

If La Bruyère had desired to learn the worst of mankind he could not have been trained in a better school than that which he found for himself. He had been one of the Accountants-General in the Bureau of Finance at Caen for a few years when M. le Prince —le Grand Condé—called him to Chantilly to be tutor—one of several—to his grandson the Duc de Bourbon. There, and at Versailles, he remained for the rest of his life, and at Versailles he died. Of Condé, of Henri-Jules, his terrible son, and of the grandson, "very considerably smaller than the smallest of men," as Saint-Simon declares him, and very considerably more of a degenerate than most men, this learned, accurate, all-observant, deeply-meditating man was content to be the servant and the butt. When his pupil left his hands he stayed on as "gentleman" to the father, who was in his turn M. le Prince. Prince as he was, he was also, quite simply, a wild beast, biting mad; and his son was little better: a pervert and proud of it, crafty, malicious, tyrannical, and "extremely ferocious." One does not know how life with such masters can have been tolerable. La Bruyère was both neglected and despised. He had nothing to do, for even as "gentleman" he was a supernumerary—yet he must be there. To understand it you must accept the *sang royal* in its fullest implications. His book, which yielded eight editions in his lifetime, went for nothing at Chantilly, though the King himself had

heard of it, and had his harangue at the Academy read to him at Marly. Yet one of the inmates of Chantilly (Valincourt), while admitting that "La Bruyère meditated profoundly and agreeably, two things which are rarely found together," went on to say that "he was a good fellow at bottom, whom, however, the fear of seeming pedantic had thrown into its ridiculous opposite ... with the result that during all the time he spent in the household of M. le Duc, in which he died, he was always held for a figure of fun." It seems that he tried to be sprightly, would dance, put on airs and graces, make jokes, and walk on his toes. We may regard all that as protective colouring, the instinct of the creature to hide his continual mortifications. Elsewhere—in Paris, naturally—he had made himself a personage. His book sold, if not to his profit, very much to his credit; he had made himself imposing enemies, and had the better of them at every turn; Bossuet was his friend, Pontchartrain, Racine and the like. He still held his sinecure office at Caen. Why, then, did he hang about Chantilly, and lodge in an attic at Versailles when M. le Prince was there? Who is to say? That particular prince was a human tiger—but in his service he lived on, and died. I think he ought to have put himself into his own book—and perhaps he did:

> "I see a man surrounded, and followed—he is in office. I see another man whom all the world salutes—he is in favour. Here is one caressed and flattered, even by the great—he is rich. There is another, observed curiously on all hands—he is learned. Here is another whom

> nobody omits to greet—a dangerous man."

At any rate, his experiences provided that one of the shrewdest sections of *Les Caractères* is that headed "Of the Court."

> "The Court does not satisfy; it prevents you from satisfaction anywhere else.
>
> "It is like a house built of marble: I mean that it is made up of men, very hard, but polished.
>
> "One goes there very often in order to come away again and be therefore respected by one's country gentry, or the bishop.
>
> "The most honourable reproach which can be made against a man is to say of him that he knows nothing of the Court. In that one remark there are no virtues unimputed to him.
>
> "You speak well of a man at Court for two reasons: the first, that he may learn that you have done so; the second that he may so speak of you.
>
> "It is as dangerous at Court to make advances as it is awkward not to make them."

The man who penned those caustic little sentences knew what he was talking of. Yet La Bruyère's portrait of himself sets him forth as a creature apart,

pointedly distinguishes him from *Clitiphon*, who has been too busy to heed him.

> "O man of consequence and many affairs," he says to *Clitiphon*, "when you in your turn have need of my good offices, walk into my lonely study. The philosopher is at your service, and will not put you off to another day. You will find him there, deep in Plato's dialogues, dealing with the spiritual nature of the soul, distinguishing its essence from that of the body; or, pen in hand, calculating the distance from us of Jupiter or Saturn. I am adoring God in those books of his, seeking by knowledge of the truth to conduct my own spiritual part into better ways. Nay, come in, the door is open; there is no ante-chamber in which to be wearied while you wait. Come straight in, without announcement. You are bringing me something more to be desired than gold and silver if it is a chance of serving you. Speak then, what do you desire me to do for you? Am I to leave my books, studies, work, the very line which I am now penning? Happy interruption, which is to make me of service to you!"

Overwhelming invitation! The butter, you will agree, is spread too thick. On another page he quotes the saying of the Roman patriarch, that he had rather

people should inquire why there was no statue to Cato, than why there was one. But it had perhaps not occurred to Cato as calculable that he might have to erect a statue to himself.

"Voilà de quoi vous attirer beaucoup de lecteurs, et beaucoup d'ennemis," said M. de Malezieu to La Bruyère on perusing *Les Caractères*. There was no doubt about that. Although he set out with a translation of Theophrastus, in going on to be a Theophrastus himself the temptation to draw from nature was obvious, and not resisted. Theophrastus generalised; he wrote of abstractions, Stupidity, Brutality, Avarice and what not. If he had had instances in his head, nobody knew what they were, and nobody cared. But La Bruyère did not write of qualities: he wrote of things and of people—women, men, the Court, the sovereign; and by his treatment of them in examples, in short paragraphs, with italicised names, with anecdotes, snatches of dialogue and other aids to attention, provided the quidnuncs with a fascinating game. "Keys" sprang up like mushrooms in a night. The guess-work was dangerously unanimous. The instances he had chosen were recent: there could not be much doubt who were *Menalcas* and *Pamphilius*, *Clitiphon* and *Arténice*. Three editions were called for in 1688, a fourth in 1689, and then one a year until 1694. On the whole he came off very lightly. The *Mercure Galant* and its supporters furiously raged together. But the King had been elaborately flattered, and no harm came to La Bruyère.

Les Caractères is a book both provocative and diverting, written in the clear, sinewy, reasonable language of Pascal and Fénélon: by no means without malice, but with a malice robbed of its virus

by the air of detachment which La Bruyère has been careful to give it. When he pleases to be severe he uses the dramatic method. The portraits interspersed with his judgments enable him to move more freely than La Rochefoucauld. He is better, because livelier, reading, and the effect is not so depressing. However, his debt cannot be denied. He would be an acute critic who knew which was which in these:

> "A woman with but one lover believes that she is not a coquette: she who has several that she is only that.
>
> "A woman forgets of the man she no longer loves even the favours he has had of her.
>
> "In her first passion a woman loves her lover. In the others she loves love."

Here is La Rochefoucauld at his best: "Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue"; and here is La Bruyère when he chooses to sting: "There is wanting nothing to an old lover from the woman who claims him except the name of husband; but that is much. If it were not for that he would be a thousand times lost." As a rule he is more of a moralist than the Duke, as here where his reflection flows from his axiom:

> "A woman unfaithful, if the interested party knows it, is just faithless; if he believes her true, she is false. This advantage at least accrues from a woman's falsity, that

you are cured of jealousy."

The reflection flows, I say—but is it true? It is safe to say that the man who generalises about women is as often wrong as right. "Women," he says, "are always in the extreme, better or worse than men"; and again, "The generality of women have no principles. Their hearts direct them; they depend for their conduct upon those they love." I should say that there were as many exceptions to those rules as examples of them. Then, what of this: "It costs a woman very little to say something which she does not feel; and a man still less to say something which he does"? It needs La Bruyère himself to determine from that which of the sexes is the more sentimental; but he leaves it there. I like the following, and believe it to be entirely true:

> "It is certain that a woman who writes with transport is carried away, less so that she is touched. It would seem that a tender passion would render her mournful and taciturn; and that the most urgent need of a woman whose heart is engaged is less to persuade that she loves than to be sure that she is loved."

The second term of that aphorism is an enlargement of the first. A woman, he would say, really in love would hide it by instinct. Her need is rather to be loved.

Try him on another tack. Here is a parallel with La Rochefoucauld. The Duke says, "Old men are fond of

giving good advice, to console themselves for being no longer able to set bad examples." La Bruyère's is equally sharp:

"A modern writer will generally prove to you that the ancients are inferior in two ways—by reason and example. The reason will be drawn from his own taste, and the examples from his own works." Very neat both, but I think La Bruyère's has the more comic turn. If the Duke had had less prudence, or more bitterness (with as much reason for it), we might have been able to compare his treatment of *la Cour*. But he hardly touches it. La Bruyère cannot leave it alone. "Let a favourite," he says, "have a sharp eye on himself; for if he keep me in his ante-chamber a shorter time than usual; if his look be more open; if he frown less, listen more willingly, show me a little further from the door, I shall be thinking him in the way of losing credit; and I shall be right." Then he breaks into this bitter reflection: "A man can have little resource in himself if he must fall into disgrace or be mortified in order to become more human, more tractable, less of a brute and more of a good fellow."

There is a note very familiar to us in this:

> "How comes it about that *Alciopus* bows to me this morning, smiles, throws himself half-way out of the carriage window for fear of missing my eye? I am not a rich man—and I am on foot. By all the rules he ought not to have seen me. Is it not rather so that he himself may be seen in the same coach with a lord?"

Thackeray all over; but I don't think Thackeray had it straight from *Les Caractères*. The first translation into English was in 1699, and by "Eustace Budgell, Esq." There were many others—two, anonymous, in 1700 and 1702, one by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, one by "H. Gally" in 1725. Was not Budgell one of the *Spectator's* men? Steele and Addison both may have quarried in his version. Here is a specimen *Spectator* paragraph:

> "*Narcissus* rises in the morning in order that he may go to bed at night. He takes his time for dressing like a woman, and goes every day regularly to mass at the *Feuillants* or the *Minims*. He is an affable fellow, who may be counted on in a certain quarter of the town to take a *tierce* or a *cinquième* at Ombre or Reversi. So engaged you will see him in his chair for hours on end at *Aricia's*, where every evening he will lay out his five gold pistoles. He reads punctually the *Gazette de Hollande* and the *Mercure Galant*; he will have read his Cyrano, his des Marete, his Lesclache, Barbin's story books, assorted poetry. He walks abroad with the ladies; he is serious in paying calls. He will do to-morrow what he does to-day and did yesterday; and after having so lived, so he will die."

The sting in the tail is perhaps too sharp for Steele, though it is not for Addison. You will find the former more exactly foreshadowed in the fable of *Emira*, an

insensible beauty of Smyrna, who finds that she cannot love until she has first been jealous, and finds that out too late. Style and handling are the very spit of Steele's. I have not seen the suggestion anywhere, and put it forward for what it may be worth, that Budgell's translation inspired our pair of essayists to hit off friends and foes under the stock names of *Belinda*, *Sacharissa*, *Eugenio* and the like. The "portrait" had been a popular literary form in France from the days of Richelieu; but it was new to England when Addison and Steele went into journalism. Are there "keys" to the *Spectator* and *Tatler*? I suppose so.

Not all his portraits are malicious, not all of them so simple as that of Narcissus; but some of them are really malignant. It is safe to say that a man of whom Saint-Simon had nothing but good to report, had nothing but good to be reported. Such a man was the Duc de Beauvilliers. La Bruyère says of him that he was greedy after office—exactly what he was not. The Comte de Brancas, who figures as *Menalcas*, is very good fun. Brancas was the George Dyer of Paris and his day, *distrait* in ways which a knowledge of his time will excuse. The best story of him, when he failed to see the Queen Mother using a certain *prie-dieu*, and knelt on her, has been told. Another shows him at home, putting down his book to nurse a grandchild; then, when a visitor was announced, jumping to his feet, and flinging the baby on to the floor, where he had just flung the book. There are dozens of such tales, none of them ill-natured. Probably even La Bruyère could not have been unkind to Brancas.

He is certainly more severe than Tallemant, but that is because he will always introduce himself into the

story, and always to his own advantage. Tallemant never does that, but uses the historical method invariably. A good example of La Bruyère's intrusion is in his dealing with a Lord Strafford of ours, a peer whom Saint-Simon calls "une espèce d'imbécile," and accuses of having 50,000 *livres de rentes* in England and spending them in Paris. La Bruyère calls him Philémon, and strikes the attitude of Diogenes in his regard:

> "Gold, you tell me, glitters upon *Philémon's* coat? It glitters as keenly at the tailor's. He is clothed in the finest tissue? Is it less well displayed in shop-lengths? But the embroideries, the enrichments make him splendid! I praise the needlewoman. But ask him the time, and he will pull out a masterpiece of a watch: the guard of his sword is of onyx; there is a diamond on his finger of a water ...! You have managed to make me curious at last. I must see these priceless things. Send me Philémon's clothes and gimcracks. You may keep Philémon."

That is the better part of it. In the next paragraph he turns to scold the old lord, and calls him a fool in so many words. That is a mistake of his. It is not playing the game of satire, but the kind of game which is played at the street corner. On the same page is Harlay, the very unepiscopal Archbishop of Paris, but only a part of him. He leaves the bishop out of the question (as assuredly he was), and gives us the courtier. Harlay was famous for his manners.

Theognis, as he calls him,

> "is careful of his appearance, goeth forth adorned like a woman. He is hardly out of doors before he has composed his looks and countenance so that he may appear all of a piece when he is in public, the same thing to all men. Passers-by are to find him graciously smiling upon them; and nobody must miss it. He goes into the corridor, turns to the right where everybody is, or to the left where there is no one: he will salute those who are there, and those who are not. He will embrace the first man he comes across and press his head to his bosom; then he will ask you who it was he was greeting. Perhaps you have need of him in some little business or other, you go to him, ask him to help. *Theognis* lends you a ready ear, is overjoyed to be of use, implores you to find him other chances of serving your occasions. Then, when you urge your immediate affair, he will tell you that he cannot manage that; he will ask you to put yourself in his place, judge for yourself. So you take your leave, escorted to the door, caressed, and puzzled, but almost gratified to have been refused."

That is excellent, done with a light-hearted malice worth all the *coquins*, *fats* and *sots* in the world. But of all his "portraits" by far the most agreeable is that

of Madame de Boislandry, whom he calls *Arténice*. It appears as a fragment in the section *Des Jugements*, but I don't think really belongs there. There is nothing else like it; it has a gusto and charm of its own. Steele comes to mind again, with his Lady Elizabeth Hastings. It must be my last example:

> " ... He was saying that the mind of that beautiful person was like a well-cut diamond; and continuing his talk of her, 'There is,' he added, 'a ray of reasonableness and charm in it which engages at once the eyes and the hearts of those who converse with her. One hardly knows whether one loves or admires: she has that in her to make her a perfect friend, and that too which might lead you beyond friendship. Too young and too lovely not to please, too modest to dream of it, she makes little account of men but upon their merits, and looks for no more from them than their friendship. Brimming over with life and quick to feel, she surprises and attracts; and while perfectly aware of the delicate shades and subtleties of the best conversation, she is yet capable of happy improvisations which among other charms have that of inspiring repartee. Her intercourse is that of one who, without learning of her own, is aware of it, and desires to inform herself; and yet she listens to you as one who, after all, knows a

> good deal, can appraise the worth of what you say and will lose nothing that you may choose to impart. Far from seeking to contradict you, she takes up your points, considers them as her own, enlarges and enhances them. You find yourself gratified to have thought them out so well and to have put them forward better than you had supposed....'"

There is more in that strain of intense appreciation, done by a writer who knows that what he says of you is worth having, even if it be flattery. La Bruyère had his reasons for flattering *Arténice*: it is agreed that he was very fond of her. So were many others: she had her adventures, though he did not share them. Evidently he knew that she was not for him; for there is no tarnish of jealousy upon his praise. He was one whom there were few to love, and he found very few to praise. But he praised and loved Madame de Boislandry.

Although he became a person of consequence from the day his book was out, he was not chosen to the Academy until 1693, and then not without several postponements, considerable effort on the side of his friends and strenuous opposition from Fontenelle and his partisans, whom he had fustigated as Les Théobaldes in his *Caractères*. When he was in fact chosen it was a very near thing. A M. de la Loubère, who blocked his road, retired in his favour and transferred to him the suffrages of his own supporters. For that generous act La Bruyère paid him a handsome and a happy compliment in his

address of reception:

"A father," he said, "takes his son to the theatre: a great crowd, the door besieged. But he is a tall man and a stout. He breaks a way to the turnstile, and as he is on the point of passing in, puts the lad before him, who, without that foresight, would either have come in late or not come in at all."

A pretty turn to give his gratitude! Apart from that he was unnecessarily provocative. He went out of his way to praise Racine at the expense of Corneille, which, seeing that Thomas Corneille was a brother, and Fontenelle a nephew of the great man, and that both were present was asking for trouble. Trouble there was—efforts to refuse him inscription in the archives, a foaming attack in the *Mercure Galant*, a plot to print and publish separately the address of his co-nominee, and so on. But the Abbé Bignon stood by him; both addresses were published together, La Bruyère's with a fighting preface, and inscription in the records followed.

In his preface he girds at his critics for not having seen what he was driving at in *Les Caractères*. They had taken it, he says, for a collection of aphorisms and sentences loosely assorted under headings, with portraits here and there of distinguished persons, scandalous or malicious as might be. They took it, in short, for a nosegay of flowers of speech, selected more for their pungency than their fragrance, relieved by foliage luxuriant enough, but beset with thorns. That was not at all his own idea of it.

"Have they not observed," he asks, "that of the sixteen chapters comprised in it, there are fifteen which, applied to the discovery of what is false and absurd in the objects of the passions and attachments

of mankind, aim only at breaking down the growths which first enfeeble and presently extinguish the knowledge of God in men—nothing therefore but preliminary to the sixteenth and last, in which atheism is attacked, and possibly routed."

I confess that if the critics had not detected all that in the plan or content of Sections I-XV, there is much excuse for them. I am in the same condemnation. It is true that those sections may be said to attack false gods in general: folly, ostentation, vainglory, evil concupiscence and such like. It is true that La Bruyère is a *censor morum*, like many a man before him and since. But it is not at all obvious that he is clearing a way by his analytic philosophy for a synthetic which will seat the true God firmly on his throne in the heart. Nor is the effort to do that conspicuous. "I feel that there is a God," he says in his sixteenth section, "and I do not feel that there is no God. That is enough for me; all the reasoning in the world is beyond the purpose: I conclude that God is." Very good; but then, why all the reasoning in the book? Pascal said the same thing, rather better. "It is the heart that feels God, not the reason. That is faith: God sensible to the heart, not to the reason." It is probably as near as one can go. But how does La Bruyère make it more pointed by what has gone before? If you prove to demonstration that the goods of this world are but vanity, does that of itself imply, first that there is another world, whose goods (secondly) are not vain? Not at all. My impression is that La Bruyère had no such large intention when he began, and that if he had had it, he would have declared it in his opening observations. He was moralist and satirist both; but as much of one as the other. Character rather than characteristics attracted him, as I think, and the sharp sentences he aimed at

were more literary than ethical. As for maxim-drawing, although he drew plenty, he expressly disavowed it. “I ought to say that I have had no desire to write maxims. Maxims are the laws of morality, and I own that I have neither the authority nor the genius which would fit me to legislate.... Those, in a word, who make maxims desire to be believed. I, on the other hand, am willing that anyone should say of me that I have not always well observed, provided that he himself observe better.”

And the last sentence in the book is this: “If these *Caractères* of mine are not relished I shall be surprised; and if they are I shall be equally so.”

There is a pose in that; but it is a literary pose.

He did not live long to enjoy his academic dignity. He made but one appearance at the table, and then supported the candidature of somebody whose name was not before the assembly. His proposal was of Dacier the classic, but he owned that he should prefer to see Madame Dacier chosen. On the 10th of May 1696, just a month after Madame de Sévigné, he died of apoplexy at Versailles. He had rooms in the Chateau opening on to the leads—bedroom, book-closet, and dressing-room. The inventory of his effects shows him to have been possessed of some three hundred books. Very few of his letters exist: one to Ménage about Theophrastus, one to Bussy, thanking him for his vote and sending him the sixth edition of *Les Caractères*, others to Condé, of earlier date, about the progress of his grandson. Two letters to him from Jérôme Phélypeaux, the son of Pontchartrain, survive, which hint at a happy

relationship between the scholar and the young blade. Phélypeaux, who was just one-and-twenty, chaffs the philosopher; calls him a “fort joli garçon,” suspects him of being “un des plus rudes joueurs de lansquenet qui soit au monde.” La Bruyère’s solitary letter to his young friend is in a light-hearted vein too, chiefly about the weather.

It is so hot, he says, that yesterday he cooked a cake on his leads, and an excellent cake. To-day it has rained a little. Then he plays the fool very pleasantly. “Whether it will rain to-morrow, or whether it won’t, is a thing, sir, which I could not pronounce if the health of all Europe depended upon it. All the same, I believe, morally speaking, that there will be a little rain; that when that rain shall have ceased it will leave off raining, unless indeed it should begin to rain again.” It is evidence of a sound heart that a learned man can write so to a young friend; and as it is much better to love a man than not, I close upon that frivolous, but happy note. La Bruyère was to live a year more in his attic on the leads. Let us hope that he baked some more cakes and wrote many more letters to young M. Phélypeaux.

COULEUR DE ROSE

Sainte-Beuve, in one of his early *Lundis*, tells a touching story of Madame de Pompadour, the frail and pretty lady who was forced by circumstances rather than native bent into becoming a Minister of

State, and one, at that, who had to measure swords with the great Frederick of Prussia. At one stage of her career she had hopes of a match between a daughter of her married state and a natural son of Louis. There seemed to be the makings of a Duc du Maine in the lad, of a Duchess consequently for her family. And that was the simple objective of those of her faction who favoured the scheme. But her own was simpler still. She spoke her real mind about it to Madame de Hausset, her lady-in-waiting, from whose Mémoires Sainte-Beuve quotes it.

"Un brevet de duc pour mon fils," she said, "c'est bien peu; et c'est à cause que c'est son fils que je le préfère, ma bonne, à tous les petits ducs de la Cour. Mes petits enfants participeraient en ressemblance du grand-père et de la grand'-mère, et ce mélange que j'ai l'espoir de voir ferait mon bonheur un jour."

Interesting revelation. "Les larmes lui vinrent aux yeux," says Madame de Hausset. She was bourgeoise, you see, this poor Pompadour, with the homely instincts, the longing for the snug interior, the home, the family life which characterise the plainly-born. She had been a Mademoiselle Poisson. Poisson indeed! What had a Mademoiselle Poisson to do with a Fils de Saint-Louis, or in a Parc aux Cerfs? Nothing whatever in first intention, at least; rather she was all for love and the world well lost. She had had her dreams, wherein Louis was to be her "jo," and they were to climb the hill together. The ideal remained with her, for ever unrealised, always, it seemed, just realisable; and her foreign and military adventures, the certain ruin of her country, were so many shifts to arrive—she and Louis together, hand in hand—at some Island of the Blest. No beautiful end will justify means so unbeautiful, but to some extent it excuses

them.

Exactly on a level with that tale is one which I read somewhere lately: also a French tale. It was about the exorbitantly-loved mistress of some officer, who craved the rights of a wife, and worried him until she had them—with the result that she obtained also the wrongs. She in fact became what the man's wife was at the moment: in her turn she was *trompée*. And what were the rights for which she risked, and indeed lost, everything she had? To preside at his breakfast-table, to dine *vis-à-vis* at home instead of at a restaurant, to sleep with her head on his shoulder. That was all. And when she had it, her pride and joy became his ineffable weariness. He carried his vice elsewhere. There is the whole difference between two classes there—between Louis le Désiré and his Poisson; between two instincts—Sentiment and Curiosity; between two ideals—Distraction and Fulfilment. There is very nearly all the essential difference that exists between men and women, the active and the passive principle in human nature.

Behind the sentimental there is always a moral reality. It may not be all the sentimentalists believe it; they may mistake appearance of the thing for the thing itself; but there is a reality. To preside over a man's tea-cups is symbolic; to be his wife is more than symbolic, for a symbol may be a sacrament—and that is a reality. The wedding-ring is a sacrament for those who seek fulfilment of their being. To those who seek distraction of it, it simply puts a point to their need. To the seekers of distraction there is neither end, nor symbol, nor sacrament. Mr. Hardy once wrote a parable upon the theme—the Pursuit of the Well-Beloved it was called; and after his manner he gave a mocking twist to it. In it a nympholept, a

sort of Louis XV, pursued successively a woman, her daughter and her grand-daughter, and having caught them one after another, found that there was nothing in it. Last of all, the man died also, but not without feeling pretty sure that if he could have waited for the great-grand-daughter all would have been well with him. Such shadows we are, pursuing shadows. But women are realists. They can see detail and fulfil themselves with that, failing the great thing. That is a strength which is also a weakness, fatal to them in many cases. Only, even so, it is not always easy to decide which it is. Was it strength or weakness in Romney's wife? She nursed him through a fever, herself then a young girl, and he married her for her pains. He lived with her for five years, gave her a family, and left her. He hardly saw her again for forty years, when he returned, broken and old, to Kendal, where he had left her, to be nursed once more out of illness. So far as we know, she had no reproaches for him. He died in her arms. What reality she may have found to support her constancy one can hardly say; but at least she had more than the nympholept had ever found in his forty years in the wilderness. Enough indeed to give her fulfilment at the last.

I have touched a thing there, or I am the more deceived, which Mr. Lucas has entirely overlooked in a recent book of his. By so doing he has turned what might have been a touching piece of sentiment into something which, luckily for us, exists mainly in club arm-chairs. We have had *Science from an Easy-Chair*, and none the worse for being so delivered. But arm-chair ethics is another matter. In Mr. Lucas's *Rose and Rose* a doctor, with a good cook (an important factor) and an Epicurean friend, who has the knack of making cynicisms sound true, by using a genial

manner, becomes guardian of a child, who grows up into a nice girl, and in due course falls in love. She chooses a man whom the doctor dislikes, whom she, however, prefers to several other candidates, against whom there are really only nods and winks from the doctor and the Epicurean on the sofa. She marries, and isn't happy. Her husband, without being a prig—he had not enough colour for that—was a precisian, careful of his money, who did his own housekeeping. He had not such a good cook as the doctor had, and may have felt that Rose's education in housewifery had been neglected. Probably it had. A good cook will coddle her clients, but not impart her mystery. I daresay the husband was trying; but he seems to have been good-tempered and honourable; he paid his way, and he gave Rose I a Rose II. That at least should have been an asset on his side of the account. But not at all. After a time, not clearly illuminated, in which nothing particular seems to have happened—except one thing—Rose I ups and elopes with the one thing, leaving her husband and Rose II in the lurch. She had known her lover before marriage. He had very white teeth, and she had nursed him through an illness. Well, when she found him again, his teeth were still quite white, and he had another illness. So there you were. She went off with him, I think to Singapore, and did not reappear until the last chapter, by which time her ailing lover had cleaned his teeth for the last time. The doctor, who still had the good cook, and had adopted and brought up Rose II to the marriage-point, then received back with a beating heart his Rose I.

A doctor of seventy, with a good cook and digestion, an arm-chair and a rather good cellar of port, fortified also by the caustic wit of an epicurean patient, is capable of much. He might think (as Mr.

Lucas's did) that it was all right. He would be for the line of least resistance, and that would certainly be the baby. He happened to like them—which put him in a strong position. But his Rose I went much further than even Jean-Jacques had gone. He took his superfluous children to the *Enfants Trouvés*. Rose simply dropped hers. "De Charon pas un mot!" And so far as I can find out not a word afterwards, until she came home in the last chapter, as if nothing had happened. Then, if you please, Rose II takes the prodigal mother to her bosom, and they all lived happily ever after. Life is not so simple as all that. It could not be while women were women.

The poor "unfortunate females" with whom I began this article are against it. Mrs. Romney is against it. To the best of my belief the middle-class, to which the Roses belong, is still against it. Many marriages are unhappy, and many children left to shift; but not yet in the middle-class to any dangerous extent. A doctor in an easy-chair, with a good cook and cellar, does not count. His cook has unclassed him.

ART AND HEART

GEORGE SAND AND FLAUBERT

Flaubert is, or was, the fashion in high-art circles; George Sand was never that, and to-day is little more than a name in any circle. Yet in the familiar letters, lately published in translation, translated by Aimée McKenzie, between a pair so ill-assorted in

temperament, so far apart in the pigeon-holes of memory, it is she who proves herself the better man.

Gustave Flaubert will live for times to come less by what he did than by his gesture in doing it. He was, before all, the explicit artist, the art-for-art's-sake, neck-or-nothing artist; and as such he will stand in history when these strange creatures come up for review. He made the enormous assumption of an aristocracy of intelligence. As, once upon a time, Venice, and later on we British, claimed to hold the gorgeous East in fee, so Flaubert, and the handful of poets, novelists and playwrights whom he admitted as his equals, looked upon the world at large with its hordes of busy people as so much stuff for the workshop. Bourgeois all, Philistines all. They were the quarry; upon them as they went about their affairs he would peep and botanise. He would lay bare their hearts in action, their scheming brains, their secret longings, dreams, agonies of remorse, desire, fear. All this as a god might do it, a being apart, and for the diversion of a select Olympus. It was useless to write for the rest, for they could not even begin to understand you. More, it was an unworthy condescension. It exposed you either to infamy, as when they prosecuted you for an outrage against morals, or to ridicule, as when they asked you what your novel "proved." Write for ever, wear yourself to a thread, hunting word or *nuance*; but write for the Olympians, not for the many. Such was the doctrine of Flaubert, gigantic, bald, cavern-eyed, with the moustaches of a Viking, and the voice of a bull; and so Anatole France saw him in 1873:

> "I had hardly been five minutes with him when the little parlour hung with Arab curtains swam in the

> blood of twenty thousand bourgeois with their throats cut. Striding to and fro, the honest giant ground under his heels the brains of the municipal councillors of Rouen."

That was the sort of man who, in 1863, struck up a friendship with George Sand.

And she, the overflowing, mannish, brown old woman, his antithesis; her vast heart still smouldering like a sleepy volcano; she who had kicked over all the traces, sown all the wild oats, made spillikins of the Ten Commandments, played leapfrog with the frying-pan and the fire; written a hundred novels, as many plays, a thousand reviews, ten thousand love-letters; grandmother now at Nohant, with a son whom she adored, a little Aurore whom she idolised; still enormously busy, writing a novel with each hand, a play with each foot, and reviews (perhaps) with her nose; she of *Elle et Lui*, of *Consuelo* and *Valentine* and *François le Champi*—how on earth came she to cope with the Berserk of Croisset, who hated every other person in the world, took four years to write a novel, and read through a whole library for the purpose? The answer is easy. She made herself his grandmother, took him to her capacious bosom, and handled him as he had never been handled before. Affectionately—to him she was "cher maitre," to her he was her "pauvre enfant" or her "cher vieux"—but she could poke fun at him too. She used to send him letters from imaginary bourgeois, injured by his attacks, or stimulated by them, as might be. One was signed, "Victoire Potelet, called Marengo Lirondelle, Veuve Dodin":

> "I have read your distinguished

> works, notably Madame Bavarie, of which I think I am capable of being a model to you.... I am well preserved for my advanced age and if you have a repugnance for an artist in misfortune I should be content with your ideal sentiments. You can then count on my heart not being able to dispose of my person being married to a man of light character who squandered my wax cabinet wherein were all figures of celebrities, Kings, Emperors ancient and modern and celebrated crimes...."

A delicious letter to write and to receive.

With all that, in spite of her impulse to love, to admire, to fall at his feet, she saw what was the matter with her "pauvre enfant." *Madame Bovary* hurt her because it was heartless. She understood the prosecution of that dreadful book; she saw that the passionless analysis of passion may be exceedingly indecent. She is guarded in her references to it, but she saw quite well that the book was condemned, not because it was indecent (though it was indecent), but because it was cruel. She thought *L'Education Sentimentale* a failure; ugly without being reasonable:

> "All the characters in that book are feeble and come to nothing, except those with bad instincts; that is what you are reproached with ... when people do not understand us it is always our fault.... You say that it ought to be like that, and that M.

> Flaubert will violate the rules of good taste if he shows his thought and the aim of his literary enterprise. It is false in the highest degree. When M. Flaubert writes well and seriously, one attaches oneself to his personality. One wants to sink or swim with him. If he leaves you in doubt, you lose interest in his work, you neglect it, or you give it up."

Not a doubt but she was right. You cannot with impunity leave your heart out of your affair. I will not say that a good book cannot be written with the intellect and the will; but I am convinced that a great book was never yet so written. The greatest books in the world's history are those which the world at large knows to be good; and to the making of such books goes the heart of a man as well as his brain.

But eighteen-seventy was at hand. Isidore, as they called him, was diddled into war. Everything went badly. French armies blew away like smoke, France was invaded, the Prussians were at Rouen, and there was no time to theorise about art. Sedan; the Prussians in Paris; then the senseless rage of the Commune. Flaubert took it all *à sa manière*:

> "I shall not tell you all I have suffered since September. Why didn't I die from it?... And I cannot get over it! I am not consoled! I have no hope!"

And in another letter:

> "Ah! dear and good master, *if you could only hate!* That is what you lack—hate.... Come now. Cry out! Thunder! Take your lyre and touch the brazen string; the monsters will flee."

Poor wretch, with the only remedy of the arrogant! But the fine old priestess of another heaven and earth did as he bid her; cried out, thundered, in a noble letter, which should be engraved on gold plates and hung up on the Quai d'Orsay:

> "What then, you want me to stop loving? You want me to say that I have been mistaken all my life, that humanity is contemptible, hateful, that it has always been and will always be so?... You assert that the people has always been ferocious, the priest always a hypocrite, the bourgeois a coward, the soldier a brigand, the peasant a beast?... The people, you say? The people is yourself and myself.... Whoever denies the people cheapens himself, and gives the world the shameful spectacle of apostasy...."

That is plain speaking; but she goes on to be prophetic. It would seem as if she had foreseen a war and its aftermath infinitely more terrible than that of 1870:

> "We shall have to pity the German nation for its victories as much as

> ourselves for our defeats, because this is the first act of its moral dissolution. The drama of its degradation has begun.... It will move very quickly.... *Well, the moral abasement of Germany is not the future safety of France, and if we are called upon to return to her the evil that has been done us, her collapse will not give us back her life.*"

Is not that nobly said? And then her great cry:

> "Frenchmen, let us love one another ... let us love one another or we are lost."

She was but five years off her death-bed when she wrote that. In a sense it was her swan-song. Had she never loved so blindly, she might have been a better woman it may be. But she loved kindly, too, and will be forgiven no doubt because she loved much. Love at any rate inspired her to better purpose than Flaubert's hate could have done. The world is not to be advantaged by intellectual arrogance; nor does it appear from these letters that poor Flaubert was at all advantaged either. It served him but ill in literature and not at all in the adventure of life. One must be a man before one can be an artist. Whether George Sand was an artist or not, she neither knew nor cared. There is no doubt at all, though, of her manliness.

A NOVEL AND A CLASSIC

LA PRINCESS DE CLÈVES

The first novelist in the world as we know it (I say nothing of the Greeks and Romans) was, I believe, a Pope—Pius II. It is not what we have come to expect from the Vatican; but his novel, I ought to add, was "only a little one." The second, if I don't mistake, was Mademoiselle de Scudéry, who did the thing on a large scale. *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus* is in twenty volumes; and though men be so strong (some of them) as to have read it, it is not unkind to say that, for the general, it is as dead as King Pandion. "Works," then, won't secure more for an author than his name in a dictionary. You must have quality to do that. The little *Princesse de Clèves*, written by a contemporary of Mademoiselle's, all compact in a small octavo of 170 pp., has quality. First published in 1678, at this hour, says Mr. Ashton, in his study of its author,[2] "there are preparing simultaneously an art edition, a critical edition, and an édition de luxe, to say nothing of the popular edition, which has just appeared." Here is "that eternity of fame," or something like it, hoped for by the poet. I suppose the nearest we can approach to that would be *Robinson Crusoe*.

The authoress of the little classic was Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, who was born in 1634. She was of *petite noblesse* on both sides, but her mother's remarriage to the Chevalier Renaud de Sévigné lifted her into high society, and brought her acquainted with the incomparable Marquise. If it had done nothing else for her, in doing that it served two delightful women, and the world ever after. But it

did more. It procured for Mlle. de La Vergne her entry to the Hôtel de Rambouillet; it gave her the wits for her masters; it gave her the companionship of La Rochefoucauld; and it gave *us* the Princesse de Clèves. She married, or was married to, a provincial seigneur of so little importance that everybody thought he was separated from his wife some twenty years before he was. When separation did come, it was only that insisted on by death; and through Mr. Ashton's diligence we now know when he died. Nothing about him, however, seems to matter much, except the bare possibility that the relations between him, his wife, and La Rochefoucauld, which may have been difficult and must have been delicate, may also have given Madame de Lafayette the theme of her novels.

She wrote three novels altogether, and it is a curious thing about them that they all deal with the same subject—namely, jealousy. Love, of course, the everlasting French triangular love, is at the bottom of them: inclination and duty contend for the heroine. But the jealousy which consumes husband and lover alike is the real theme. Only in the *Princesse de Clèves* is the treatment fresh, the subject deeply plumbed, the *dénoument* original and unexpected. Those valuable considerations, and the eloquence with which they are brought to bear, may account for its instant popularity. It has another quality which recommends it to readers of to-day—psychology. To a surprising extent, considering its epoch, it does consider of men and women from within outwards—not as clothes-props to be decked with rhetoric, but as reasonable souls in human bodies, and sometimes as unreasonable souls.

Here's the story. Mademoiselle de Chartres, a high-

born young beauty of the Court of Henri II—is there any other novel in the world the name of whose heroine is never revealed?—is married by her mother in the opening pages to the Prince de Clèves, without inclination of her own, or any marked distaste. The prince, we are told, is "parfaitement bien fait," brave, splendid, "with a prudence which is not at all consistent with youth." I do not learn that he was, in fact, a youth. All goes well, nevertheless, until the return to Court of a certain Duc de Nemours, a renowned breaker of hearts, more brave, more splendid, more "bien fait," and much less prudent, certainly, than the Prince de Clèves. He arrives during a ball at the Louvre; Madame de Clèves nearly steps into his arms by accident; their eyes meet; his are dazzled, hers troubled, and the seed is sown. For a space of time she does not know that she loves, or guess that *he* does: the necessary discoveries are provided for by some very good inventions. An accident to Nemours in a tournament, in the trouble which it causes her, reveals him the truth; his stealing of her picture, which she happens to witness, reveals it to her.

Discovery of the state of affairs, naturally, spurs the young man; but it terrifies the lady. Greatly agitated, she prevails upon her unsuspecting lord to take her into the country. Nemours follows them, as she presently learns. Then, when her husband insists on her return with him to Paris and the daily intercourse with the person she dreads, driven into a corner, she confesses that she dare not obey him, since her heart is not her own. Nothing will induce her to say more; and the prince, disturbed as he is, is greatly touched by the nobility and candour of her avowal. Unfortunately, he is not the only one to be touched; for Nemours, who had been on the point of

paying a visit to his enchantress, stands in the anteroom and overhears the whole conversation. He knew it all before, no doubt—but wait a moment. He is so exalted by the sense of his mistress's virtue that, on his way back to Paris, he casts the whole story into a tale of "a friend" of his, but with such a spirit of conviction thrilling in his tones, that it is quite easy for him who receives it to be certain that "the friend" was Nemours himself. That is really excellent invention, quite unforced, and as simple as kissing. Naturally the tale is repeated, and puts husband and wife at cross-purposes, since it makes either suspect the other of having betrayed the secret. More, it tells the husband the name of his wife's lover. Further misunderstandings ensue, and last of all, the husband dies of it. I confess that that seems to me rather stiff. Men have died and worms have eaten them—but not the worms of jealousy.

The end of the book is perfectly original. When her grief and remorse have worn themselves out, what is to prevent the lovers coming together? A curious blend in her of piety and prudence, which again seems to me very reasonable. Madame de Clèves feels that, practically, Nemours was the death of her husband. He had not meant to be, did not suspect that he was: she knows that, and allows that time might work in his favour. "M. de Clèves," she admits, "has only just expired, and the melancholy object is too close at hand to allow me to take a clear view of things." Leave all that to time, then, by all means. But, says she, at this moment "I am happy in the certainty of your love; and though I know that my own will last for ever, can I be so sure of yours? Do men keep their passion alight in these lifelong unions? Have I the right to expect a miracle in my favour? Dare I put myself in the position of seeing

the certain end of that passion which constitutes the whole of my happiness?" M. de Clèves, she goes on, was remarkable for constancy—a lover throughout his married life. Was it not probable that that was precisely because she did not at all respond? "You," she tells the young man, "have had many affairs of the heart, and will no doubt have more. I shall not always be your happiness. I shall see you kneel to some other woman as now you kneel to me." No—she prefers him to dangle, "always to be blest!" "I believe," she owns, with remarkable frankness, "that as the memory of M. de Clèves would be weakened were it not kept awake by the interests of my peace of mind, so also those interests themselves have need to be kept alive in me by the remembrance of my duty." This lady would rather be loved than love, it is clear; but how long M. de Nemours would continue to sigh, being given so unmistakably to understand that there would be nothing to sigh for, is not so well established.

He was very much distressed, but she would not budge. "The reasons that she had for not marrying again appeared to her strong on the score of duty, insurmountable on that of repose." So she retired to a convent, "and her life, which was not a long one, left behind her an example of inimitable virtues."

So far as we are concerned to-day, the *Princesse de Clèves* lives upon its psychological insight. But for that I don't see how it could possibly have survived. It is a recital, in solid blocks of narrative interspersed with harangues. It is extremely well-written in a terse, measured style of the best tradition; Love is its only affair; nobody under the rank of a Duke is referred to; as Horace Walpole said of Vauxhall in its glory, the floor seems to be of beaten princes. None

of these excellencies are in its favour to-day. Why then does it exist? Because it exhibits mental process logically and amusingly; and because it offers a fresh and striking aspect of a situation as old as Abraham.

FOOTNOTE:

[2] *Madame de Lafayette: La vie et ses Œuvres*, par H. Ashton. Cambridge University Press.

THE OTHER DOROTHY

Two Dorothys in our literature showed themselves worthy of a name declaratory of so much. Dorothy Osborne was one, Dorothy Wordsworth, much more famous, was another. If I were teacher of the Sixth Form in a girls' school I should take my class methodically through the pair, satisfied that if I did my duty by them it would have as fair a view of the moral and mystical philosophy of its sex as needs could ask or require. The text-books exist; little but appreciation could be expected from the teacher. Dorothy Wordsworth's Letters and Journals fill the better part of three small volumes. They need but little annotation, save cross-references to her brother's poems, and to Coleridge's. She was the muse of those two, and had perhaps more of the soul, or substance, of poetry in her than either. They informed what she taught them, and she taught them through the great years. Of the two Dorothean voices hers was of the heights. More beautiful interpretation

of nature hardly exists in our tongue. “She tells us much, but implies more. We may see deeply into ourselves, but she sees deeply into a deeper self than most of us can discern. It is not only that, knowing her, we are grounded in the rudiments of honour and lovely living; it is to learn that human life can be so lived, and to conclude that of that at least is the Kingdom of Heaven.” If I quote from a paragraph of my own about her, it is only to save myself from saying the same thing in other words. It is the only thing to say of a woman long enskied and sainted by her lovers.

Dorothy Osborne, whose little budget of seventy-seven letters and a few scraps more has been exquisitely edited by the late Judge Parry, did not dwell apart: starry as she was, she was much before her world. She was daughter of a stout old cavalier, Sir Peter, and shared with him the troubles of Civil War and sequestration of goods under the Commonwealth. For six years, also, she was the lover and beloved of William Temple, whom, until the end of that term, she had little hope or prospect of marrying. Her father and his had other ideas of the marriage of their children, and means of carrying them out. Sir Peter Osborne had lost heavily by his defence of Guernsey for the King, and sought to re-establish himself in the settlement of Dorothy. Sir John Temple gave his son an allowance and was not disposed to increase it, except for a handsome equivalent from the other side. When Sir Peter died it was no better. Dorothy’s brothers brought up suitor after suitor, of whom Henry Cromwell, the Protector’s second son, was the most formidable, and Sir Justinian Isham, an elderly widower, with four daughters older than herself, the most persistent. She was fairly beset; and when she made her guardians

understand that her heart was fixed, the truth came out that they disliked and distrusted William Temple. They doubted his principles, accused him of being sceptical in religion, and (not without cause) of lukewarmness in politics. Temple was a prudent youth, and was already on the fence, which he rarely left all his life. During the Commonwealth he was a good deal abroad, but whether abroad or at home, neither for the King nor his enemies. He was moderately educated—Macaulay says that he had no Greek—but it may have been too much for the Osbornes. Possibly he gave himself airs, though Dorothy did not think so. However it was, the lovers could only meet by accident, and must correspond under cover. That correspondence, a year and a half of it, is all we have of her writing, and good as it is, the thing it does best of all is to measure the extent of our loss. Love-letters apart—and there must have been the worth of five years or more of them lost—she was writing, we hear, at one time weekly to her bosom-friend, Lady Diana Rich, a beauty of whose mind she had as high an opinion as of her person. All that has gone. Later, when she had been many years married, she made another close friend in Queen Mary II, but the letters which went to her address in what a relative of Dorothy's describes as a "constant correspondence," letters which were greatly admired for their "fine style, delicate turn of wit and good sense," are supposed to have been burnt among her private papers just before the Queen died. So they have gone too, and with them what chance we may have had—as I think, a fair chance—of possessing ourselves of a native Madame de Sévigné. It does not do, and is foolish, to press might-have-beens too far, if only because you cannot press them home. How are you to set off seventy-odd letters, for one thing,

against seventeen hundred? There are obvious parallels, however, with Madame de Sévigné which there is no harm in remarking. She and Dorothy were almost exactly coevals. Both were born in 1627; Madame died in 1696, Miladi Temple (as she became) in 1695. Each was well-born, each had one absorbing attachment, each was handsome. Dorothy, in the portrait prefixed to the *Wayfarer* edition, has a calm, grave face, remarkable for its broad brow, level-gazing, uncompromising eyes, and fine Greek nose, not at all a "petit nez carré." She looks, as her letters prove her to have been, a young woman of character and breeding. She does not show the enchanting mobility of Madame de Sévigné, nor can she have had it. At any rate, she was a beautiful woman, whose conversation, as I judge, would have been distinguished by originality and a "delicate turn of wit," as her letters certainly are. Further resemblances, if there are any, must be sought in the documents, to which I shall now turn.

We are to read a woman's love-letters, always "kittle work," however long ago the pen has fallen still, whether they are the letters of a fond mother to her child or of a girl to her sweetheart; yet there is no reason why we should shrink from the one intrusion and make light of the other. Indeed, of the two, it is Madame de Sévigné who displays the pageant of her bleeding heart, and is able more than once to make the judicious grieve, and even the injudicious uncomfortable. There was nothing of the "jolie païenne" in Dorothy Osborne. She served no dangerous idolatry. There is not a phrase in her touching and often beautiful letters, not even in those where her heart wails within her and the sound

of it enfolds and enhances her words—not there, even, is there a word or a phrase which imperils her maiden dignity. She loved, in her own way of speaking, "passionately and nobly." It is perfectly true. At all times, under all stresses, her nobility held her passion bitted and bridled. She rode it on the curb, not, as was Madame's delightful weakness, "la bride sur le cou." Her extreme tenderness for the man she loved is implicit in every line. Nobody could mistake; but when, man-like, he seemed to demand of her more and ever more testimony, she was not to be turned further from her taste in expression than from "dear" to "dearest." Towards the end of the long probation—and in our seventy-seven letters we have, in fact, the last year and a half of it—a certain quickening of the pulse is discernible in her writing, a certain breathlessness in the phraseology. "Dear! Shall we ever be so happy, think you? Ah! I dare not hope it," she writes to him in one of the later letters, and cutting short the formalities, ends very plainly, "Dear, I am yours." Nothing more ardent escapes her throughout, yet in that very frugality of utterance, never was exalted and faithful love made more manifest. When—as did happen—misunderstandings were magnified by Temple's jealousy, and aggravated by her honesty, she was hurt and showed it. Separation then seemed the only remedy; despair gave her eloquence, and we have for once a real cry of the heart:

"If you have ever loved me, do not refuse the last request I shall ever make you; 'tis to preserve yourself from the violence of your passion. Vent it all upon me; call me and think me what you please; make me, if it be possible, more wretched than I am. I'll bear it without the least murmur. Nay, I deserve

it all, for had you never seen me you had certainly been happy.... I am the most unfortunate woman breathing, but I was never false. No; I call Heaven to witness that if my life could satisfy for the least injury my fortune has done you ... I would lay it down with greater joy than any person ever received a crown; and if I ever forget what I owe you, or ever entertain a thought of kindness for any person in the world besides, may I live a long and miserable life. 'Tis the greatest curse I can invent: if there be a greater, may I feel it. This is all I can say. Tell me if it be possible I can do anything for you, and tell me how I can deserve your pardon for all the trouble I have given you. I would not die without it."

Eloquent, fierce words, indignant, dry with offended honour, but certainly not lacking in nobility. It is the highest note struck in the series, and can hurt nobody's delicacy to read now. Happily the storm passed over, the sky cleared, and the sun came out. From the sounding of that wounded note there is a *diminuendo* to be observed. The very next letter is lower in tone, though she has some sarcasms for him which probably did him good. In the next but one: "I will not reproach you how ill an interpretation you made (of the attentions of Henry Cromwell), because we'll have no more quarrels." Nor did they, though they were still a year off marriage. So much of the love affair which called the letters into being I must needs have given. I shall not refer to it again.

Her head went into her letters as well as her heart; and though love was naturally the fount of her inspiration, she wrote as much to entertain and enhearten her lover as to relieve herself. There is enough literary quality in what we have left to make it a valuable possession. It is by no means only to be

learned from her with what courage a seven years of star-crossed love may be borne; how gently the fretting and chafing of a self-conscious man turned; how modesty can veil passion without hiding it. At her discretion raillery can be pungent without ceasing to be playful, and the rough and dirty currency of the world handled without soiling her fingers, with a freedom bred of innocence of thought. This still and well-bred Dorothy was a critic of her day, and though she was pious had no fugitive and cloistered virtue. All about her were living the survivors of a Court not quite so profligate, perhaps, as that of the first or the third Stuart king, but profligate enough. It was not the less so for being in hiding. She did not approve of much that her acquaintance did, but she accepted it and, as far as might be, excused it. “I am altogether of your mind,” she writes, “that my Lady Sunderland is not to be followed in her marrying fashion, and that Mr. Smith never appeared less her servant than in desiring it. To speak truth, ’twas convenient for neither of them, and in meaner people had been plain undoing of one another, which I cannot understand to be kindness of either side. She had lost by it much of the repute she had gained by keeping herself a widow; it was then believed that wit and discretion were to be reconciled in her person that have so seldom been persuaded to meet in anybody else. But we are all mortal.” From that, which is temperate statement, go on to consider a passage of temperate argument which is surely notable in a girl of her age. She was twenty-six when she wrote:

“’Tis strange to see the folly that possesses the young people of this age, and the liberties they take to themselves. I have the charity to believe they appear very much worse than they are, and that the want of

a Court to govern themselves by is in great part the cause of their ruin. Though that was no perfect school of virtue, yet vice there wore her mask, and appeared so unlike herself that she gave no scandal. Such as were really as discreet as they seemed to be gave good example, and the eminency of their condition made others strive to imitate them, or at least they durst not own a contrary course. All who had good principles and inclinations were encouraged in them, and such as had neither were forced to put on a handsome disguise that they might not be out of countenance at themselves."

Is that not excellent discourse upon the subject of "young people" from a girl of six-and-twenty? Dorothy, it will be seen, writes the modern as opposed to the seventeenth-century English, but does it in mid-career of the century. Comparison with her contemporary, the Duchess of Newcastle, is proof enough. "Madam," writes that very "blue" lady, "here was the Lord W. N. to visit me, whose discourse, as you say, is like a pair of bellows to a spark of fire in a chimney, where are coals or wood, for as this spark would sooner go out than inkindle the fuel, if it were not blown, so his discourse doth set the hearer's brain on a light flame, which heats the wit, and inlightens the understanding." And so on—like a wounded snake. Dorothy, I think, was almost the first to do what Milton never did, and what Dryden was to make the standard of good prose. James Howell preceded her slightly in that use, but was not so sure a hand at it. In cogency and simplicity of expression hers is like good eighteenth-century letter-writing. She apologises to her lover for "disputing again." He had been a churl to find fault with such sagacious reflections.

There is no sign that she was the least bit "blue," though she read the books of that *coterie*, and esteemed them, with reservations. She had the Cléopâtre of Calprenède, the *Grand Cyrus* of la Scudéri, and passed them on, volume by volume, to Temple, remarking of "L'amant non aimé" in the latter that he was an ass. She had Lord Broghill's *Parthenissa* hot from the press. "'Tis handsome language," she says of it. "You would know it to be writ by a person of good quality, though you were not told it; but, on the whole, I am not much taken with it." The stories were too much like all the others, she thought—and certainly they were: "the ladies are so kind they make no sport." One thing in *Parthenissa* made her angry. "I confess I have no patience for our *faiseurs de Romance* when they make women court. It will never enter into my head that 'tis possible any woman can love where she is not first loved; and much less that if they should do that, they could have the face to own it." That is high doctrine, yet inquiry yields the best sort of support to it.

So far from being a *précieuse*, Dorothy quarrelled with *Parthenissa* on account of preciosity. "Another fault I find, too, in the style—'tis affected. *Ambitioned* is a great word with him, and *ignore*; *my concern*, or *of great concern* is, it seems, properer than *concernment*?" She expects Temple, nevertheless, to fit her up with the newest town-phrases. "Pray what is meant by *wellness* and *unwellness*; and why is *to some extreme* better than *to some extremity*?" She has her own ideas about style. "All letters, methinks, should be free and easy as one's discourse; not studied as an oration, nor made up of hard words like a charm." Then she pillories "a gentleman I knew, who would never say 'the weather grew cold,'

but that 'winter began to salute us.'" She had "no patience with such coxcombs." A jolly word of her own is "pleasinger." I have not met it anywhere else. "'Twill be pleasinger to you, I am sure, to tell you how fond I am of your lock." His "lock" was a lock of hair which he had sent her on demand before he went to Ireland. For a moment it charmed her out of her reserve. "Cut no more on't, I would not have it spoiled for the world. If you love me be careful on't." For once she lets herself go. "I would not have the rule absolutely true without exceptions that hard hairs are ill-natured, for then I should be so. But I can allow that soft hairs are good, and so are you, or I am deceived as much as you are if you think I do not love you enough. Tell me, my dearest, am I? You will not be if you think I am yours." That charming little outbreak, written *à bride abattue*, concludes a letter which begins, as all of them do, with the formal "Sir." In its complete unaffectedness and spontaneity it is not far behind *Notre Dame des Rochers*.

To return to Dorothy's reading, I do not know that, country for country, she was far behind her contemporary. Novel apart, she is reading the travels of Mendez Pinto, quotes the action, not the words, of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, has Spanish proverbs at command, writes a note in French, takes a part in *The Lost Lady*, knows Cowley's poems, and was a "devote" of Dr. Jeremy Taylor. From that goodly divine she takes a long argument upon resignation of the will, nearly word for word, and holds it up for Temple's admiration. She is more reticent about her religious opinions than Madame was, having to deal with a lover suspected of being something of a Gallic instead of a daughter adept in Descartes. If she was primed with Jeremy Taylor she was in a good way.

Yet I don't know what that doctor would have said to this:

"We complain of this world," she says, "and the variety of crosses and afflictions it abounds in, and for all this, who is weary on't (more than in discourse), who thinks with pleasure of leaving it, or preparing for the next? We see old folks that have outlived all the comforts of life, desire to continue it, and nothing can wean us from the folly of preferring a mortal being, subject to great infirmity and unavoidable decays, before an immortal one, and all the glories that are promised with it."

"Is not this very like preaching?" she asks. It is less like the preaching of the author of *Holy Dying* than that of six-and-twenty in love; but undoubtedly it proceeds from common experience. She was merciless to bad sermons, able to make such good ones of her own. "God forgive me, I was as near laughing yesterday where I should not. Would you believe that I had the grace to go hear a sermon upon a week-day?" Stephen Marshall was the preacher, a roaring divine of the prevailing type. "He is so famed that I expected rare things of him, and seriously I listened to him at first with as much reverence as if he had been St. Paul; and what do you think he told us? Why, that if there were no Kings, no Queens, no lords, no ladies, nor gentlemen, nor gentlewomen in the world, 'twould be no loss at all to God Almighty. This we had over some forty times, which made me remember it whether I would or not.... Yet, I'll say for him, he stood stoutly for tithes, though, in my opinion, few deserved them less than he; and it may be he would be better without them." Marshall should have known better than to try his levelling doctrine at Chicksands.

To the making of all good letter-writers, all those to whom it is a natural vent for the emotions, goes quality, that which we call style, an entire naturalness of expression turned in a manner of one's own, an incommunicable something not to be mistaken. All the best have it; the second-best have something of it. Into literary quality goes, of course, moral quality, *l'homme même*. Now, Dorothy Osborne has quality: little as we have, there is enough to show that. She can be playful, but not sparkle, not ripple like the Marquise nor set a whole letter twinkling like the sea in a fresh wind; hers is a still wind. Nor has she such news to impart, to be "le dessus de touts ses panniers." Chicksands was not Paris. She has spirit, but not gallantry. Madame de Sévigné's chosen defence was always attack. Dorothy is as quick to see her advantage, but has a more staid manner of execution. She will be slower to believe herself menaced; and when she discovers it will reason plainly with the offender, as much for his good as for her justification. Take this for an example. Temple, who was a fussy man, a precisian, had been scolding her for fruit-eating. You could hardly expect a lady to approve lectures upon her digestion from her lover. She replied:

"In my opinion you do not understand the laws of friendship aright. 'Tis generally believed it owes its birth to an agreement and conformity of humours, and that it lives no longer than 'tis preserved by the mutual care of those that bred it." Is there no style in that? "'Tis wholly governed by equality, and can there be such a thing in it as distinction of power? No, sure, if we are friends we must both command and both obey alike; indeed, a mistress and a servant sounds otherwise; but that is ceremony and this is truth. Yet what reason had I to furnish you with a

stick to beat myself withal, or desire that you should command, that do it so severely?" Observe her conduct of the relative there! "I must eat fruit no longer than I could be content you should be in a fever; is not that an absolute forbidding of me? It has frighted me just now from a basket of the most tempting cherries that e'er I saw, though I know you did not mean that I should eat none. But if you had I think I should have obeyed you."

Evidently she had tossed her head over his dictation; but how well in hand is her temper, how admirable her style! It is very much in the manner of Madame when her querulous daughter had hurt her feelings; and entirely in that manner Madame would throw up the sponge at the end of a successful attack—entirely as Dorothy does here, with her, "If you had I think I should have obeyed you." Dorothy is not, however, so quick to veer from the stormy to the rainy quarter. She can be fierce, as I have shown, when her feelings are overstrained, but there is no hysterical passion. Modesty forbade. "Love is a terrible word," she says, "and I should blush to death if anything but a letter accused me on't." She could be bold on such occasions; she could be as saucy as Rosalind, and as tender. When it is a case of his going to Ireland, on business of his father's, which may advance their personal affair, she urges him to be off. But when the hour has come—"You must give Nan leave to cut off a lock of your hair for me.... Oh, my heart! What a sigh was there! I will not tell you how many this journey causes, nor the fears and apprehensions I have for you. No, I long to be rid of you—am afraid you will not go soon enough. Do not you believe this? No, my dearest, I know you do not, whate'er you say...." Any good girl in love would feel like that, but not everyone could let you hear the

quickened breath in a letter three hundred years old.

Sévigné was wise, and so is Dorothy. She read and could criticise, she read and remembered. With less philosophy, and no fatalism, she looked her world in the face, and had no illusions about it. But she was in love, and it was a good world. Cheerfulness kept breaking in. “What an age we live in, where ’tis a miracle if in ten couples that are married, two of them live so as not to publish to the world that they cannot agree.” Yet she thinks that one should follow the Saviour’s precept, take up the cross and follow. She believes that the trouble is mostly of the woman’s making, for as for the husband, if he grumbles, and the wife says nothing, he will stop for lack of nutriment, and nobody be any the worse. A splenetic husband of her acquaintance had the trick, when harassed, of rising in the night and banging the table with a club. His wife provided a stout cushion for the table, and was not disturbed.

Sévigné is merry, and so is Dorothy, though much more demure. In her seventy letters you will find no *tours de force*—nothing like the “prairie” letter, the marriage-of-Mademoiselle, or the “incendie” letter. She can touch you off a situation in a phrase excellently well, as when after a quarrel comes a reconciliation between her and her brother Henry, and she says, “’Tis wonderful to see what curtseys and legs pass between us; and as before we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly now the most complimental couple in England”; or, asking “Is it true my Lord Whitelocke goes Ambassador?” she comments upon him, “He was never meant for a courtier at home, I believe. Yet ’tis a gracious Prince.” Another Commonwealth lord, whose title depended upon the standing of the

Court of Chancery, has a flick in the same letter: "'Twill be sad news for my Lord Keble's son. He will have nothing left to say when 'my Lord, my father,' is taken from him." Those are both brisk and pleasant; more ambitious is her discussion of the "ingredients" of a husband, which opens with sketches of impossible husbands. He "must not be so much of a country gentleman as to understand nothing but horses and dogs, and be fonder of either than his wife"; nor one "whose aim reaches no further than to be Justice of the Peace, and once in his life High Sheriff"; nor "a thing that began the world in a free school ... and is at his furthest when he reaches the Inns of Court." He must not be "a town gallant neither, that lives in a tavern and an ordinary," who "makes court to all the women he sees, thinks they believe him, and laughs and is laughed at equally"; nor a "travelled Monsieur, whose head is all feather inside and outside, that can talk of nothing but dances and duels, and has courage enough to wear slashes when everybody else dies of cold to see him." In fact, "he must love me, and I him, as much as we are capable of." Those impersonations might have come as well from Belmont as from Chicksands.

I said just now that we have no "prairie" letter from Dorothy. We have something not far from it, though, and I will give as much of it as I dare. It is of her very best in the way of unforced, happy description; but after it I must give no more. The date of it is early May, 1653:

"You ask me how I pass my time here. I can give you a perfect account not only of what I do for the present, but of what I am likely to do this seven

years if I stay here so long. I rise in the morning reasonably early, and before I am ready I go round the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. About ten o'clock I think of making me ready, and when that's done I go into my father's chamber, and from thence to dinner, where my cousin Mollie and I sit in great state in a room and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr. B. (a suitor of Dorothy's, a Mr. Levinus Bennet) comes in question, and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working, and about six or seven o'clock I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads. I go to them and compare their voices and beauties to some ancient shepherdesses that I have read of, and find a vast difference there; but, trust me, I think these are as innocent as those could be. I talk to them, and find they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so."

I could go on to empty the whole paragraph on to the page, for it is all excellent; but will stop with that happily rounded period. Charm, or the deuce, is in it.

Beyond it I will not go. Too little straw has been allowed to the making of my brick. With twice as much more—with some of the letters to Lady Diana or Queen Mary, freed from the preoccupations of a love affair—who can say that we might not have had something to set off against the letters to Mesdames de Lafayette, de Coulanges, de Guitant? We have something very distinctive and charming, at any rate, enough to certify us that we have missed of a letter-writer of excellence who need not have feared

comparison with our best. She had not the vivacity, or the opportunities of Lady Mary; but she had what that lively observer missed of, a heart wherewith to inform her writing. She had not the wit of Lady Harriet Granville, but she had more humanity. I would not put her up, in a Court of Claims, to "walk" before Mrs. Carlyle, or plead her sagacity and tenderness against that unhappy woman's brilliancy. Yet who would hesitate in the choice of one of them for correspondent? Whose book would you sooner have at the bed's head? Such questions, however, do not arise. You judge Literature like coins at the Mint. You are either good or bad. If you ring false—out you go.

REALISM WITH A DIFFERENCE

Moll Flanders, which has now received the large octavo honours due to a classic, was written, Defoe tells us, in 1683. The statement is almost certainly part of the cheat, for it was published in 1722, two years after *Robinson Crusoe*; and if it had been true he would have performed a feat which has never been equalled, that of writing his first novel with the accomplishment shown in that of his prime. Nothing in the technique of *Crusoe* shows any advance upon *Moll Flanders*. Its greater popularity is, of course, due to its matter: it is more *simpatico*, more moving, more endearing to youth. The adventures upon the island are more arbitrary and more surprising. They come from outside the hero, not from his inside. Anything

shocking may happen upon a desert island, even the greatest shock of all, which is to find that it is not deserted. *Suave mari magno* ... the tag holds good when you are thrilled by a tale in the first person. The flesh creeps; but it is like being tickled by a kindly hand. The pleasure to be had from *Moll Flanders* comes when we know enough of the world to have need of large allowances. Then it is that we are interested in the liabilities of character, and love to see the oracle worked out. In *Moll Flanders* we do. With the single premise that Moll was the abandoned child of a thief and baggage, cast upon the parish by gypsies, everything that happens to her follows as inevitably as night the day. She engages the compassion of a genteel family, and is taken in quasi-adoption. She grows up with the children of the house, petted by the daughters, and in due time, naturally, by the sons, one of whom "undoes" her. But by the time that happens we know something of Moll's temperament, and nod sagaciously at what, we say, was bound to be. So it goes on from stave to stave to make out the promise of the title-page that, born in Newgate, she was "Twelve Year a *Whore*, five times a *Wife* (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a *Thief*, Eight Year a transported *Felon* in *Virginia*, at last grew *Rich*, liv'd Honest, and died a *Penitent*." It sounds uncommonly like Boccaccio's tale of the Princess of Babylon, not at all unlike *Gil Blas*; but the point is that it is most of all like Life, that the lurid programme is smoothly and punctually kept, and that we never withhold our assent for a moment —not even from the added statement that it was "Written from her own Memorandums." It is no more necessary to believe that than that it was written in 1683; but there is no difficulty in believing either.

Defoe, if he began to write novels at fifty-eight, came

by his method as Athené by her ægis; it sprang fully armed from his brain. He never varied it for a worse, and could not have for a better. It was to tell his story in plain English without emotion, and to get his facts right. That is his secret, which nobody since his time has ever worked so well. The *Police News* style has often been used, and many a writer has laboured after his facts. Some have succeeded—very few—in smothering their feelings, and some, of course, have had no feelings to smother. Defoe alone accomplishes his ends with consummate mastery. He is certainly our greatest realist, and there are few in France to beat him. Perhaps the nearest approach to him was made by the Abbé Prevost in *Manon Lescaut* (1731)—but put Zola beside him if you would judge his method fairly. Zola, who went about his business with stuffed notebooks, succeeded in various aims of the novelist, but not in commanding assent. He could not control himself; the poor man had an itch. Artistically speaking, he did unpardonable things. Some of the bestiality of *La Terre* might have happened in a Norman village; a Norman village *might* have been called Rognes. To conjoin the two in a realistic romance is paltry. It absolutely disenchants the reader, and gives away the writer and his malady with both hands. You may call a town Eatanswill in a satire; but *La Terre* is not a satire. As for *Manon*, astonishingly documented as it is, the conviction which it carries does not survive perusal, though it revives in every re-perusal. Its intention, which is rather to suggest than to narrate, to provoke than to satisfy, is apparent when the book is shut. No such aims are to be detected in *Moll Flanders*, concerned apparently with the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The triumph of the method, used as Defoe only can

use it, remains to be told. *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.* We can all see round Moll Flanders, behind her as well as before. The current of the tale, every coil and eddy and backwash of it, is not only exactly like life, it puts us in a position to appraise life. Conviction of such a matter, rare as it is, is not so difficult to secure as the understanding of it. There are, of course, extenuating circumstances in every guilty course. One finds them for oneself as a neighbour, in the jury box, on the bench. One finds them or invents them. In *Moll Flanders* they steal upon us unawares until, quite suddenly, we find ourselves with her in a human relationship. Her close shaves, her near-run things in shop-lifting give us thrills; but when she is rash enough to steal a horse we are aghast. Mad-woman! how can she dispose of a horse in a common lodging-house? When she is finally lagged we agonise with her. Why? We know that she could not help herself. But there's more than that. She is never put beyond our moral pale. She steals from children, but suffers both shame and sorrow. She robs a poor householder of her valuables in a fire, but cannot forget the treachery. She picks the pocket of a generous lover when he is drunk, but repents and confesses. He forgives her, and so do we. All her normal relations with her fellow-creatures are warm with the milk of human kindness. For instance, she puts herself, for business purposes, in the disposition of a "Governess," that is, an old gentlewoman who is procuress, midwife, baby-farmer, and receiver of stolen goods. But the pair are on happy and natural terms. Moll calls her Mother; the old thing calls Moll Child; and when she is transported as a convicted thief she entrusts "Mother" with all her little fortune, and is faithfully served in that and other concerns. The pair of them,

rascals together, are bad lots, if you will—and good sorts too. That's the virtue of the realistic method when you are not on the look out for bad smells.

In her dealings with my sex, certainly she was often and unguardedly a wife, as well as something else not so proper. Yet kindness was her only fault. Whatever else she may have been as a wife, she was a good one, faithful, affectionate, sympathetic, and most responsive. If the young man who undid her had kept his promises, I daresay she would have lived to be Mayoress of Colchester and mother to some sixteen children, without a stain upon her character. As it was, she must have had half that number. She is never a beast. She never revels, nor wallows, nor is besotted; she is no slave to appetite. She plays hazard one night and wins a matter of fifty guineas. She will not play again for fear of becoming a gamester. She continues a thief for many years, though often moved to break away. Why does she not break away?

> "Though by this job I was become considerably richer than before, yet the resolution I had formerly taken of leaving off this horrid trade when I had gotten a little more, did not return, but I must still get farther, and more; and the avarice joined so with the success, that I had no more thoughts of coming to a timely alteration of life, though without it I could expect no safety, no tranquillity in the possession of what I had so wickedly gained; but a little more, and a little more, was the case still."

What could be more human, and on our footing more reasonable, than that? That, in fact, which saved *The Beggar's Opera* from being an immoral, cynical, even a flagrant work, was precisely that which gives Moll Flanders our sympathy—its large humanity. There is heart in every average human being, as well as much vice and an amazing amount of indolence; but to see it there you must have it yourself, and to exhibit it there you must be a good deal of a genius. We feel for Moll without esteeming her: we say, "There but for the grace of God...." What saves us? Well, caution, timidity, the likes of those; but chiefly the grace of God.

MR. PEPYS HIS APPLE-CART

It is hard to deal fairly by Samuel Pepys, and that because he has dealt so fairly by himself. You cannot even put that amazing candour of his down to his credit, for reasons which grow upon you as you read. If he was candid it was to please himself, and, as one must suppose, nobody else in the world. Whatever his motive was, it certainly was not to read a moral lesson to mankind. But that he is all in his Diary, the whole of him, inside and out, is evident upon any prolonged perusal of it. He has neither been blind to himself, nor kind; he never excuses himself, and rarely accuses. He pities himself, when he has been found out, and hugs himself when he has made a good deal, or played the fortunate gallant; but he rarely indeed pities anybody else, and if he hugs

other persons, always mentions it. Though we cannot impute his honesty to righteousness, nevertheless it seems rather hard that he should have to suffer for it.

Anyhow, his merits would have transpired without a diary. State papers exist to testify to them; his mounting credit is its own record. Evelyn liked him, so did the King and his brother, so did Sir William Coventry. Undoubtedly he was an able Clerk of the Acts, and by the standard of any times but some which are still modern history, an honest public servant. Had he lived in the golden age of the Civil Service, an age which only ended a few years ago, he would not have taken any commissions at all. As things are now, he took very few; as they were in his day, what he took was negligible. I feel sure that the Crown did uncommonly well by him. Then, socially, he was a brisk, companionable creature, with an infectious laugh, a taste for languages, the drama, parlour-science and chamber-music. He had curiosity, which always makes a man good company; he was both dilettante and connoisseur; he was affable with all sorts and conditions, gave himself no airs, had vanity, but little conceit. Women liked him; he had a way with him. And then he liked them. I cannot imagine Pepys for five minutes in a woman's company without her knowing all that she need about him, and about it. Morally, he was a beast, without pity or scruple, or personal shame, or courage, or honour. He was depraved, and knew it, and didn't care so long as no one else knew it. He was the slave of public opinion, and in moments of apprehension what that might be, sacrificed his companion in his dealing without a thought. And yet women liked him, and suffered him. Psychologically, he is, so far, an unsolved problem. Nobody has found out why on earth he wrote himself down what he did

write down; I have seen no account which satisfies. To that I should add that no attempt to explain him seems to have been made since we received all that we ever can receive of his Diary.

R. L. Stevenson's exegesis was based upon Minors Bright, who is now superseded by Wheatley. It is elaborate, and I think fanciful. I doubt if it could have been accepted upon the then available evidence: it is clean out of date now. Shortly, it was that Pepys, taking (as he did) infinite pleasure in the minutiæ of memory, was careful to make a hoard of such things for his after-needs. But even when that theory was propounded we knew that Pepys recorded his shames and humiliations, and it is difficult to allow that he might have looked forward to recalling those towards his latter end. Now, however, we know the worst that Pepys could say of himself, and lack nothing but the literal details of his acts. We know how he glorifies and how he humiliates himself—for he writes down all his failures along with his triumphs; we can see him splash in the bagnio, and afterwards get rolled in the gutter. It can be no question of remembrance. What is it, then? Any man may conceive, and many will do the things which Pepys did: but not record them, complacently, with the grin of relish. Why on earth did he do that? I have a suggestion to make, though I am not certain that it meets the whole case. My first opinion was that he derived that cerebral excitation out of his details which it is to be supposed the lad may who defaces walls with a stump of pencil, or the lover who, writing about kisses, or craving them as he writes, ends up his letter with a pullulation of little crosses—paraphrases of his passion. Reading him again, I see that that is not all. It is part of the truth; it is true of the middle of the Diary. But it is

not the whole truth—not true of the beginning, not true of the end. I now believe that he originally intended his entries of delinquency as an act of penance or humiliation—and that is supported by the accounts he gives of all his shifts and turns under the screw of jealousy—but that out of that act he found himself obtaining a perverse pleasure, which overlaid his first intention and supplanted it. In the earlier diary you will find him expressing his relief over lapses avoided or temptations withstood; from 1663 onwards that is exceedingly rare; then, at the very end, when he has been found out and has lost conceit in his delight, his reflections are as contrite as you please. For the moment that explanation satisfies me.

Pepys's Diary covers ten years of his life, his twenty-seventh to his thirty-eighth. They would be critical years in the life of any married man, particularly when, as was the case, they coincided with the Restoration and the sudden unlocking of all doors. When he began to record he had been married five years, to a woman seven years younger than himself, a diligent, handsome, thrifty, responsive little French girl, whom he ruled, evidently, upon a theory; for he says more than once that he found it desirable to give way when she showed a knowledge of what her rights were. Being, as she was, exceedingly alive to them in one essential matter, so long as those were observed she was easy about others. Therefore, for the first two recorded years, Pepys had very much of his own way. He kept her short of money, stinted her in clothes and fal-lals[3]; and left her much alone while he pursued business and pleasure abroad. All that she took in good part, until her eyes were

opened to what was going on. She did not, for instance, mind his going to the theatre three or four times a week, until she found out what he did when he was there. But when she became aware of Mrs. Knipp and Mrs. Pierce and Mrs. Gwynne, and of relations which were not scenic, there was great trouble at home. After it she insisted on going with him, and he hardly dared show his nose in a playhouse without her. But that was later on: for for the first three years of the diary, beyond a little kissing, or staying up "playing the fool with the lass of the house" when he was on a jaunt, there was little for Mrs. Pepys to worry over. Kissing, indeed, of the ceremonial kind, she did not mind in the least. It was the English habit, as it still is in one class of life at least. Pepys himself was advised to put up with it when his wife was so distinguished. "So to Mrs. Hunt, where I found a Frenchman, a lodger of hers, at dinner, and just as I came in was kissing my wife, which I did not like, though there could not be any hurt in it." Surely not.

But Pepys himself was not content with kisses of ceremony, nor did he select proper objects of ceremony for his attentions of the sort—that is, when once he was fairly on the primrose path. At first it was, "God forgive me! what a mind I had to her, but did not meddle with her." That did not last. In September of that very year—it was 1662—he both had the mind and the opportunity; he followed his inclination; and though he recorded his first total lapse with great contrition, he was past praying for, and with increasing frequency past writing about. Vivacious man of pleasure as he was, and as his portrait shows him, he discovers himself to us as voracious too. He cast a wide net, and took all fish that came, gentle and simple, mistress and maid,

mother and daughter. Not a shop that had a handsome woman in it, not a tavern with a pretty maid, between Fish Street Hill and Westminster Hall, but he drew it regularly, like a covert. I am sure he was no worse than his superiors; I think he may have been a good deal better than most of them; he was never a corsair, like Rochester, Sedley, Jermyn; he was in too small a way for that. But we can only guess at the whole of their malpractice by adding two to two, and we know all about his; therefore our gorges rise. Even his peculiar depravity was probably not peculiar at all.

> "Yet to our buzzards overfed
> Virtue was Pandarus to Vice;
> A maiden was a maidenhead,
> A maidenhead a matter of price...."

That was the foible of a hateful age, and it was Pepys's. He preyed upon modesty. He must overcome virtue. He could not tire of that, and wrought in his way incurable mischief. In short, he was a middle-class Minotaur, a devourer of virgins.

I shall not follow him in his hateful bird-netting except just as far as may be necessary to relate the manner of his discomfiture. It is sufficient to say that, given time to spread his lures, he succeeded often enough. His office and patronage were favourite decoys of his. So Mrs. Bagwell, who pleased him as "a virtuous modest woman," became something else by his leading her to suppose that he would get her husband a good job, he being a carpenter in Deptford Yard. So it was with other unfortunate creatures who courted his dispensing of places to their men. But he had an easier prey, a natural prey nearer home, in his wife's maids. It lay

among their duties, it seems, to assist him at his levee and coucher: he certainly had a way with him —so what were the poor girls to do? They had no chance. It does not appear that any one of them escaped altogether, though, thanks to his lively fear of Mrs. Pepys, no one of them found Mrs. Bagwell's fate. That was not their fault, poor things; they were mostly as wax under his hands. But Mercer, Mary Mercer, faced him and got off with nothing worse than a little fondling. She was a girl with both wit and courage; remained on friendly terms with the household afterwards, visiting terms; and, when once she had shown him her mind, was not chased by the destroyer. But she, who came of good people—"a decayed tradesman's daughter"—was an accomplished young woman, with a singing-voice which had been well trained, and plenty of *savoir faire*. Really, I think, Pepys, taught by a rebuff, came to respect Mercer. In August 1665 he noted of her in his jargon that he had his head combed "by my little girle, to whom I confess que je sum demasiado kind ... mais il faut que je leave it lest it bring me to alcum major inconvenience." That was just what it did lead to. Mercer left the house on the day the Fire of London broke out, and for the best Pepys could do did not choose to return. The Fire gave him other and healthier thoughts for a time: presently when he met her in church, she refused to look at him. So she escaped, slightly chipped; and afterwards, when, as I say, she came to be on visiting terms with Mrs. Pepys, there are signs that she came and went unmolested. But to her succeeded by-and-by Deb Willett, the last victim of the Minotaur of Axe Yard. It was the addition of this girl to his harvest which upset his load of Hesperian apples.

He was disposed to her on hearsay, before he saw

her; for Mrs. Pepys had been light-minded enough to declare the engagement of a pretty girl—the very thing to set him on fire. So presently, on the 27th September 1667, "while I was busy at the office, my wife sends for me to come home, and what was it but to see the pretty girl which she is taking to wait upon her: and though she seems not altogether so great a beauty as she had before told me, yet indeed she is mighty pretty; and so pretty that I find I shall be too pleased with it.... She seems, by her discourse, to be grave beyond her bigness and age, and exceeding well bred as to her deportment, having been a scholar in a school at Bow these seven or eight years. To the office again, my head running on this pretty girl." It certainly did, if we may trust the Diary. She kept him awake at night; and when she came, brought by Mr. Batelier, he was more than smitten with her, he was impressed. "So grave as I never saw a little thing in my life," he says. "Indeed, I think her a little too good for my family, and so well carriaged as I hardly ever saw." His next recorded sentiment is, "I wish my wife may use her well." How are you to deal with a man like that—except by remembering that all men are like that?

She accompanied her employers to Brampton and gave satisfaction at least to one of them. By the middle of October that had been observed by the other, for he writes of that day that they had been to see "The Coffee House" at the Duke's Theatre; and "here, before the play began, my wife begun to complain of Willett's confidence in sitting cheek by jowl by us, which was a poor thing; but I perceive she is already jealous of my kindness to her, so that I begin to fear this girl is not likely to stay long with us." She stayed too long for her comfort, or for his.

On December 22nd Pepys "first did give her a little kiss, she being a very pretty humoured girle, and so one that I do love mightily." In January she is promoted to be "Deb" in the Diary; in March she is kissed, and more than kissed. Then comes the last volume.

By the time that was reached, Pepys's weakness had become a mania. His apple-cart, so to speak, was full to overflowing, Deb Willett, though he had no suspicion of it, the last fruit he was to add to it. His work suffered, his mind suffered; there were omens of dirty weather. June 18th, 1668: "At noon home to dinner, where my wife still in a melancholy, fusty humour, and crying, and do not tell me plainly what it is; but I by little words find that she hath heard of my going to plays, and carrying people abroad every day in her absence; and that I cannot help [fearing] but the storm will break out, I think, in a little time." At night it was no better: "My wife troubled all night, and about one o'clock goes out of bed to the girl's bed, which did trouble me, she crying and sobbing, without telling me the cause." That ought to have warned him, if he had not gone too far. But he had. He pursued his course unabated; and then, October 25th, came the crash. It was Sunday. He rose, "discoursing with my wife about our house and the many new things we are doing of"; he went to church, saw Jack Fenn and his wife, "a pretty black woman"; he dined at home, had his wife and the boy to read to him; at night "W. Batelier comes and sups with us"—all well so far. And then—thunder, out of a clear sky, pealing about his ears. "After supper, to have my head combed by Deb, which occasioned the greatest sorrow to me that ever I knew in this world, for my wife, coming up suddenly, did find me embracing the girl...." (*sic*).

A comic scene, but humiliating to all three. “I was,” he says, “at a wonderful loss upon it, and the girle also, and I endeavoured to put it off, but my wife was struck mute, and grew angry, and so her voice come to her, grew quite out of order, and I to say little, but to bed.” To bed, but not to sleep. At two in the morning the storm which had been massing itself in the heart and mind of Mrs. Pepys broke over his head, at first in tears and a secret. That—and it was a shrewd hit—was that “she was a Roman Catholic, and had received the Holy Sacrament.” Pepys, who had always been a Puritan at heart, was very much disturbed, yet dared no reproaches, so that the blow failed of its mark. She went on, then, “from one thing to another,” until “at last it appears plainly her trouble was at what she saw.” Yes, but what had she seen? “I did not know how much she saw, and therefore said nothing to her.” Towards morning “a little sleep.” If he thought that the end of it, he was to find it only the beginning. Mrs. Pepys, outraged on her tenderest side, grew from strength to strength; and as for her deplorable spouse, for the first time in his Diary, if not in his days, he really felt something which reads like remorse. His mind, he says of it next day, “was mightily troubled for the poor girle, whom I fear I have undone by this, my wife telling me that she would turn her out of doors.” That threat was not at once executed. Deb was treated with severe clemency for the better part of a month, allowed to visit her friends and suit herself with a new situation; made to feel, however, that she was in disgrace, and definitely cut off from any further assistance at her master’s toilette. The miserable man hardly dared look at her; not a word seems to have passed between them, though after a while, forced to take a line of conduct by his wife’s reiterated attacks, Pepys

"did by a little note ... advise her (Deb) that I did continue to deny that ever I kissed her, and so she might govern herself." Deb read it and threw it back again as he bade her; but she could not "govern herself." The very next day Mrs. Pepys examined her, and everything came out. Pepys had to dine alone that night, for his wife kept her room, and when he went up to see her, blazed out upon him his infidelity and perjury together. To make it all the worse for him, she then told him of temptations which had been put in her own way—by Captain Ferrers, Lord Sandwich and other friends of his. *A la guerre comme à la guerre.* All which "I did acknowledge, and was troubled for, and wept."

Without a leg to stand on, he must do as he was told. On the 12th November, therefore, he must call Deb to his chamber in the presence of his wife, "and there did, with tears in my eyes, which I could not help, discharge her, and advise her to be gone as soon as she could, and never to see me, or let me see her more while she was in the house, which she took with tears too." She had found herself a place, and went to it; and Pepys looked forward now to a peace which he had not known, he says, for twenty days. He did not get it, because he was both knave and fool. Which this shows him to be I don't pretend to decide. He writes on the very day the girl left: "The truth is, I have a good mind to have the maidenhead of this girl, which I should not doubt to have if je could get time para be con her." The Italians used to call the compound of inclination and ability *il talento*, a word which our language lacks. Under the spur of *il talento* this incurable rascal hunted London to find Deb's whereabouts. He had reason for suspecting Holborn, and quartered that; then Whetstone Park seemed probable, in the service of one Dr. Allbon.

Not known there. In Eagle Court, off the Strand, he presently found out that "this Dr. Allbon is a kind of poor broken fellow that dare not show his head, nor to be known where he is gone." Nevertheless, he did finally run down his doctor in Fleet Street or thereby, even met a man in his employ, bribed him to take a message "to a little gentlewoman, one Mrs. Willett, that is with him," and waited in the court of Somerset House for an answer. He did not have it till after dark. She was well, and he might see her if he would, "but no more." That was enough for Pepys. Off he went in a coach, "it being now dark," and "she come into the coach to me, and je did baiser her...." Then the real, the incredible Pepys: "I did nevertheless give her the best council I could, to have a care of her honour, and to fear God, and suffer no man para avoir to do con her as je have done, which she promised." The advice was sound and, from him, infallible. To-morrow was to prove that much to him. I must afford myself the morrow's entry.

"19th. Up and at the office all the morning, with my heart full of joy to think in what a safe condition all my matters now stand between my wife and Deb and me, and at noon, running upstairs to see the upholsterers, who are at work hanging my best room ... I find my wife sitting sad in the dining-room; which enquiring into the reason of, she begun to call me all the false, rotten-hearted rogues in the world, letting me understand that I was with Deb yesterday, which, thinking it impossible for her ever to understand, I did a while deny, but at last did, for the ease of my mind and hers, and for ever to discharge my heart of this wicked business, I did confess all, and above stairs in our bed chamber there I did endure the sorrow of her threats and vows

and curses all the afternoon.... So with most perfect confusion of face and heart, and sorrow and shame, in the greatest agony in the world I did pass this afternoon, fearing that it will never have an end; but at last I did call for W. Hewer, who I was forced to make privy now to all, and the poor fellow did cry like a child, and obtained what I could not, that she would be pacified upon condition that I would give it under my hand never to see or speak with Deb while I live, as I had before with Pierce and Knipp, and which I did also, God knows, promise for Deb too, but I have the confidence to deny it to the perjury of myself."

It is extraordinary that Pepys, who could face with sangfroid committees of Lords and Commons, marshal his facts and figures and come off with credit, could be such a poltroon in this domestic inquest as to deny what was obviously within his wife's knowledge. But when to terror you add a sense of guilt, a man will tell you anything. It is still more incredible that that did not finish the story—but it did not. The next day, what must he do but send W. Hewer off to Deb, "to tell her that I had told my wife all of my being with her the other night, so that if my wife should send she might not make the business worse by denying it." The alert Mrs. Pepys made it her business to find out the whole of that, no doubt from W. Hewer himself; so that when Pepys came home the whole thing began all over again, and this time with violence. She "did fall to revile me in the bitterest manner in the world, and could not refrain to strike me and pull my hair, which I resolved to bear with, and had good reason to bear it." He was driven to call in Hewer again as intermediary; but this time the conditions were terrible. Nothing would suit Mrs. Pepys but a letter

conceived in the most insulting and outrageous terms to the girl, who was not what it styled her, from Pepys, who had done his best to make her so. Even he was shocked at it, and once wrote it out without the word. Mrs. Pepys tore it up. Then, on a wink passing from Hewer, he wrote it down, and domestic fury was satisfied. It was handed to Hewer to deliver, with "a sharp message" from Mrs. Pepys. That was the climax. No man could be more deeply degraded than that; and to do Pepys credit, he knew it, and could hardly bear himself. Hewer, on his own motion, it would seem, delivered but half of the letter; the other, the injurious half, was brought back to the unfortunate sinner. Deb never knew the worst of him, and, so far as the Diary reveals, never saw him again.

Love will lead a man any lengths, and justify itself, at least to himself; but not lust. That is a sensitive plant, and shrivels in the cold. Pepys, it will have been seen, was not prepared to go a yard out of his prosperous way in pursuit or defence of the favourites of his whim. If it is to his credit that he reports at length his humiliating rebuffs, that is all that can be said for him. If he affords a disagreeable spectacle, luckily it is also exceedingly ridiculous, and the only thing about it difficult to understand is that he *does* afford it. To me it is much more interesting to speculate upon the attitude of his victims towards these amorous advances. Concerned they must have been; but were they interested, amused, embarrassed, or bored? Did they take it as all in the day's work; had they resentment and feared to show it; or were they, poor children, led to take him seriously? I am not thinking of the Knipps and Pierces, Betty Lanes and half-dozen Nells—hardy perennials—but of his fresh young Mercer, "decayed

tradesman's daughter," or grave young Deb, carefully educated at Bow, come also of a good Bristol family, with established aunts and uncles, and all the rest of it—girls who certainly came new to the kind of thing. Is it possible that Deb thrilled to a possible romance? And how did she accept the discovery of what in fact it was? With the one exception of Mercer, they are almost lay figures in the Diary, mute and passive under his greedy hands. Some were baggages, no doubt, or baggages-elect. They cannot all have been baggages. Deb, with her gravity and measured speech, what was she? There's no telling. I don't commend her for having seen him again, certainly not for sitting with him in the coach. Then I remember that she was barely twenty years old. She escaped, however, with some smirches, and one may hope that she found a good husband. *Bocca baciata non perde ventura.*

FOOTNOTE:

[3] In 1665, for instance, he laid out, at one blow, £55 on his own, and £12 on her clothes.

ONE OF LAMB'S CREDITORS

There are writers upon the roll of whom nobody demands, "How begot, how nourishéd"—not many, but one or two. Milton, for instance: does anyone try to derive Milton? Or Cowper? Or Wordsworth? Others, nearly all the others, abide our question, and

no wonder. Is not all creative effort the agony of recalling? Is not the brain a sponge? Is there anything new except arrangement? Very well—then Defoe must have been a borrower, though he seems stark new. We know that Charles Lamb picked up words, phrases, cadences as a magnet steel-filings; but his latest and best biographer now goes further and seeks to lay his mental habit to somebody. He has devoted an essay to deriving his whimsicality, as he calls it, for want of a more comprehensive term, which shall include the freakish humour which is peculiarly Lamb's, and the "unreluctant egoism" which he thinks Lamb was the first of us to signalise. I could quarrel with him there, "if I had the mind," being very sure that Lamb was not the first egoist in English Literature by a very long way. If he was, then Mr. Lucas must devote another essay dealing with the claims of Sterne, Colley Cibber, Sir Thomas Browne, Cowley, Pepys, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, to name no more. However, let that go. Lamb's cast of humour, a glancing, many-faceted thing, as wayward as the wind, but like the wind, from whatever airt it blow, bringing upon it the scent of what garden plots, hedgerows, beanfields and thymy uplands it may have crossed—*that* Mr. Lucas has been driven, seeing that he must needs buckle it to his egoism, to obtain from the mild mock-epic of Cowper, which does seem to me a wide cast to have made, with a small fry netted for his pains. When I came upon and had read that essay, in Mr. Lucas's *Giving and Receiving*, I gazed for a few minutes thoughtfully into the fire, then got up and took down from the shelf the second volume of the *Life* of Charles by the same hand. In a useful Appendix III, upon "Charles Lamb's Books," I found what I wanted.

Before I say what it was I wanted, and what found, I ought to acknowledge that Mr. Lucas draws a proper distinction between the Essays of Elia and the Letters of Charles Lamb, one, however, which he might not have drawn if the Letters of Cowper had not been published long after Lamb began to write letters. That being the fact, he has to derive Lamb's Letters from Cowper's Poems, and Elia's Essays from Cowper's Letters, rather a *chassez-croisez* piece of work. Except for that necessity I think he might have gone as near as Mr. Saintsbury does (in *A Letter Book*) to fining the difference between Essays and Letters to one of "full dress" and "undress." To me the difference is much greater, is precisely, indeed, the difference between Charles Lamb and Elia. Lamb's alias was not (like Sterne's) a stalking-horse; it was a mask and domino. With the name he put on the thing signified, or as much of it as he cared for, gave himself Lincolnshire ancestry, shifted at ease his own relatives, his early loves, the haunts of his youth, and used them the more freely for his occasions. Yet he treated his form with respect, neither let it run down, nor stepped out of character. Elia sometimes borrowed from Lamb. The "Convict" letter to Barron Field yielded its bitter-sweet to an essay, but was transformed in the taking. Not to speak profanely, there was an Assumption of the Lamb. In the Letters whim is master: Lamb is Will o' the Wisp. From essay to essay Elia may change like Harlequin, but each single essay is ruled by one mood. Elia was evidently, if not avowedly, a debtor. Whiffs of Sir Thomas Browne, of Addison, Burton, Shakespeare, Montaigne (or Florio) float up from the page as you read. So they do in Lamb's Letters. But there is one very signally in Lamb, not so evident in Elia, and it was that which I looked for in Mr. Lucas's

Appendix III, where, sure enough, among Lamb's books I found:

Howell (James), *Epistolae Ho-Elianae*, 1645-55.

There, beyond doubt, is the source of more than a little of Lamb's whimsicality.

James Howell, who was born in 1593, third of the many children of the Reverend Thomas Howell, curate of Llangammarch and other places in Brecknockshire, was a fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, a good deal of a scholar (able, as he boasted, to say his prayers in a different language on every day of the week and in all of them on Sundays), something of an adventurer, much of a traveller, and a man who never lost a job for lack of asking for it. He was variously employed, commercially in France and Italy, diplomatically in Spain (where he was when Prince Charles would, and did, a-wooing go), in Germany also, and the North of England: a traveller to better purpose than Coryat, who slightly preceded him. He returned from each country he visited set up in its language, and able to discourse reasonably upon its politics, religion and economics. None the less, as I suppose, he was idle, for he never made money or kept an employment. He was perpetually scribbling, if you can call that an employment; the bibliographical list of his "Works" contains something like seventy numbers. Many of them are pamphlets, political, controversial, allegorical and what not. If there had been any journals he would have been a journalist—for that, out of due time, was he born. He wrote much on philology, and pretty well; he wrote a deal of poetry too, and very badly. I shall only inflict two specimens upon the reader. This is the opening of a

“small hymn” for Christmas Day:

> “Hail holy Tyde
> Wherein a Bride,
> A Virgin (which is more)
> Brought forth a Son,
> The lyke was done
> Ne’er in this world before—;”

and this is the beginning of an elegy upon the Earl of Dorset,

> “But is great Sackville dead? Do we him lack,
> And will not all the Elements wear black?”

and this the middle,

> “Thus have I blubber’d out some tears and
> verse
> On this renownéd heroe and his herse,”

and this the end,

> “In the meantime this Epitaph shall shut,
> And to my Elegy a period put—”

on which the only commentary I feel able to make is, Oh!

He wrote in all the languages he had. “I would have you know,” he writes to his friend Young, “that I have, though never married, divers children already, some French, some Latin, one Italian, and many English; and though they be but poor brats of the brain, yet are they legitimate, and Apollo himself vouchsafed to co-operate in their production.” It may be doubted whether any of them survived their father except his *Familiar Letters*, those Epistolae Ho-

Elianae which were published and republished in his lifetime, and many times afterwards, have survived even to this day, been favourites with Thackeray as well as Charles Lamb; and are in fact the first of our private letters to each other to enter an admitted chapter of our Literature. If we could hope to see ourselves abreast of France it would be by means of Howell that we should get there. Exactly at the time when Guy Patin was writing his vivacious, very modern letters to his confrère in Lyons, here was our man, quite as brisk and even more modern in tone. Unfortunately for us, France had her Balzac, well under way, and writing in a prose as easy and reasonable as Renan's. But Howell is strikingly modern compared, say, with Donne or Milton. He reports, for example, that the Prince Palatine has got together "a jolly considerable army"; and to a poetical friend he avows his ambition (on what pretence we have seen) to become a "Lord of Parnassus," and to be the choice of "those nice girls," the Muses! It has been said by more than one critic, that not all Howell's bullets found, or were intended to find, their billets, that in fact letters addressed to Sir K. D., to the Lord Sa., and more explicitly to the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Clare and so on, were really addressed to the air, or the public. It may be so. Others were certainly real enough. There is little doubt, though, that he wrote with an eye to publication. Some of the longest of them are less letters than treatises, and good as they are of their kind, contain none of the additaments which make a letter a much better thing than a library of treatises. By far the greater part are real letters, and excellent letters too. Howell was something of a pedant, something perhaps of a coxcomb. Thackeray called him a prig. Certainly, to address a long letter

containing many anecdotes *ad hoc* and a "Gradual Hymn tending to the honour of the holy name of God" to a ship's captain upon his "frailty" of "swearing in all his discourses deep and far-fetched oaths," is the act of prig or coxcomb—but I think Howell was the latter. A prig believes that he can do you good, and the coxcomb desires to air his talents. That was Howell's simple design, and so I am sure the captain took it. But I should like to know how Ben Jonson, of whose tribe at the Devil Tavern Howell professed himself, took a similar reproof. The burly poet had hurt the feelings of Inigo Jones by putting him in a play as Vitruvius Hoop: whereupon Howell addressed his "Father Ben" as follows:

> "You know,
>
> Anser, apis, vitulus, populos et regna gubernant ... but of the three the pen is the most predominant. I know you have a commanding one, but you must not let it tyrannise in that manner, as you have done lately. Some give it out that there was a hair in it, or that your ink was too thick with gall, else it would not have so bespattered and shaken the reputation of a royal architect."

Of his whimsicality I find examples enough to drown in. There is his pleasant tale to a cousin just off to the Dutch wars, of the soldier who had been there and returned, and being asked what exploits he had done, answered, That he had cut off a Spaniard's legs. "Reply being made that that was no great matter, it had been something if he had cut off his head; O, said he, you must consider his head was off

before." And the other, truly excellent, of that Earl of Kildare who, arraigned before the Lord-Deputy for having set fire to, and burned down, the Church of Cashel, excused himself by saying that he would never have done such a thing had he not understood that the Bishop was inside. But here is from a letter a piece so exactly in Lamb's vein when he is turning a whimsical notion about and about, and at each turn enhancing it, that I feel sure Howell *aut diabolus* must have taught it him:

First, the theme—"I was according to your desire to visit the late new-married couple more than once, and to tell you true, I never saw such a disparity between two that were made one flesh in all my life; he handsome outwardly, but of odd conditions; she excellently qualified, but hard-favoured; so that the one may be compared to a cloth of tissue doublet cut upon coarse canvas, the other to a buckram petticoat lined with satin."

Then, like Lamb, he begins to hang up his conceits:

> "I think *Clotho* had her fingers smutted in snuffing the candle when she began to spin the thread of her life.... A blind man is fittest to hear her sing; one would take delight to see her dance if masked, and it would please you to discourse with her in the dark, for then she is best company. When you marry, I wish you such an inside of a wife, but from such an outward phisnomy the Lord deliver you."

Phisnomy, or visnomy, is a word which Lamb has

made his own.

How often has Lamb held this vein too. “The French are a free and debonair, accostable people, both men and women.... Whereas the old rule was that there could be no true friendship without comessation of a bushel of salt, one may have enough there before he eat a spoonful with them. I like that Friendship which by soft gentle passes steals upon the affection and grows mellow with time by reciprocal offices and trials of love.” And here is an example of pictorial quality which I must not leave out. In the stress of Civil War he writes to a friend in Amsterdam, “While you adorn your churches, we destroy them here. Among others, poor Paul’s looks like a great skeleton, so pitifully handled that you may tell her ribs through her skin. Her body looks like the hulk of some huge Portugal Carake that having crossed the line twelve times and made three voyages to the East Indies, lies rotting upon the Strand.... You know that once a stable was made a temple, but now a temple is become a stable.”

Lamb, we all know, had a love of tags and proverbs, and could string them with anyone. Not more surely than Howell could, who has a long letter of advice to a friend, upon marriage, consisting entirely of them. As thus:

> “Sir, although I am none of those that love to have an oar in everyone’s boat, or such a busybody as deserves to be hit in the teeth, yet you and I having eaten a peck of salt together, and having a hint that you are upon a business that will make or mar you, for a man’s best fortune

> or his worst's a wife, I would wish you to look before you leap, and make more than two words to a bargain."

He keeps it up with immense zest for two full sheets, and ends all with "yours to the altar." If Lamb knew that, he would never have forgotten it—and I believe he never did.

CROCUS AND PRIMROSE

This year, it deserves to be recorded, the first crocus and the first primrose flowered together on January 18th. I know not when this article will appear; it may well be that Spring will have set in with its usual severity, in other words, that in mid-March we may be snowbound, and in mid-winter, as is now customary, before my record can be read. That is as may be, but my duty is clear. For the moment, and until we have become used to the new procession of Seasons, a first crocus and first primrose on the 18th of January constitute an event in South Wilts, if they do not in the rest of England. And lest any caviller should arise, as assuredly he will, and tell me that my primrose was the last, not the first, I may as well nip him in the bud of his endeavour by declaring that leaf and flower are alike new growth. It is true that many primulas have a second flowering—my *japonicas* always do. But I do not observe that they make new leaf twice a year. Here, the primrose,

which is comparatively rare even in the woods, and unknown in the hedges, disappears altogether, like the cowslip, until new growth begins. The cowslip is our only native primula.

Such things—I don't mean the early flowering, but the flowering of such things at all—are events in the garden, red-letter days in its year. The flowers themselves, to some one of them, to some another, are vocal; for there is a real language of flowers, very different from that made out of them by the love-sick. It has no syntax, and is incommunicable by speech. Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard ...! So with flower-language. The first wild crocus talks to me immediately of Greece, where on the top of rugged Chelmos I saw it in perfection burning its way into the snow. I had climbed up there to see Homer's Στυγὸς ὑδατος ἀιπὰ ῥέεθρα, a sight, I am bound to say, not at all remarkable. Charon could have hopped over it. It was the crocuses that I remarked: the orange, called, I think, *bulbo-codium*, and a white striped with brown, which I have always known as the Scotch crocus, but which in botany is named *biflorus*. It is no use my saying that that is the way to grow them. It is Nature's way, but cannot be ours, unless they will seed themselves, as some will. So far as I know, those two will not. They will increase otherwise; but by seeding flowers alone will you get the happy accidents which make a natural wild garden. They tell me, by the by, that you can hardly now obtain that most beautiful of all crocus, the blue *Imperati*, an autumn flower. I don't know whether I am singularly favoured—I hope not; but at any rate, I can obtain, within reason, as much *Imperati*—not as I want, for that could never be, but as is good for me. I put some few dozen into a rock-garden which I then had, some fifteen years ago, and

it has increased a hundredfold. So have some other species of crocus. *Imperati* grows very large and, unfortunately, very lax. Heavy rain in September will beat it down to a purple jelly. But when fair weather lasts out that loveliest month of the year crocus *Imperati* is a theme for poets.

As for the nurseryman's crocus, colour is its real point; and it should be grown in masses for that alone; in masses where it can get the sun, and the bees can get *it*. Unfortunately it has many enemies. In London it lures the sparrows into Bacchic orgies; obscenely they tear it petal from petal. In the country field-mice seek it in the bud and eat the embryo flower. I have tried everything, Stockholm tar and sand mixed in layers in the barrow; read lead and paraffin; strawberry netting, soot and such like. I owe my best remedy to the discovery I have made that, much as mice like crocuses, they like toasted cheese yet more. One or two traps with that for a bait will save vast numbers of crocuses, for it is a mistake to suppose that many mice are involved. A pack of field-mice is a terrible thought, but only a nightmare happily. One mouse, with the whole night before him, will ruin a border.

The primrose is vocal of my childhood and the Kentish woodlands. There they used to grow marvellously, though now I daresay that Lord Beaconsfield and his League have made an end of them. Wherever the axe had been there were they, in sheets, in a galaxy, even to the scent of milk in the spicy air. I remember now, whenever I see my first primrose of the year, the almost fainting rapture with which we used to see, smell, taste, and handle them again—on some still warm April day—after the

waiting through the long winter. For winters really were long, and wintry, then—or I think so. One used to wake in the morning and find the water-bottle frozen solid, the sponge like a brick. One used to learn to skate (for which now we go to Switzerland and catch influenza in a super-heated hotel), make snowmen, blow on one's fingers to fasten one's shirt-collar. But I have lived in the West of England this twenty years, and can only remember one snowy Christmas. Ah, and how many warm Aprils? Perhaps as many.

But the primrose is not common here. You will find it over the hills in the greensand, and again just over the Dorset border, in Cranborne Chace: not in this valley. I make it grow, importing it, because I can't do without it; and so do the villagers, for the same reason. But they like it coloured, and have a rooted belief that if you plant a primrose upside down it will come up with red flowers. I tell them that it is Cruelty to Primroses. They point me out red-flowering roots which have been obtained in this way; and I end the inconsequent argument by saying, Well, anyhow, I don't want it—village logic.

As I said just now, wild gardening, by which I mean the garden use of wild flowers, is to be confessed a failure unless you can induce the flowers to seed themselves. Once you can do that, you may talk about your wild garden. Once I saw a corner of a man's garden, where there was a waterfall, and *ramondia* growing as it does in the Pyrenees. That was a memorable sight. I have had my own moderate successes of the sort. Anemone *blanda* has become as common as groundsel; but *apennina* refuses to seed. The Widow iris, *tuberosa*, which started in life in a dry ditch under Vesuvius, and came to South Wilts in

a sponge bag, is another weed. I left a garden with more of that growing in it than anybody can want. Fritillary is not a native, but seeds freely in my water meadow; colchicum, another alien, increases like coltsfoot. Both the cyclamens, the Neapolitan and the Greek, have large families, which can never be too large—and so on. Such are some of my little triumphs, of which I dare not boast lest I be rebuked as once I was by a high lady in garden society. It was not kind of her, though no doubt she did it for my good. It was a time when I was growing cushion irises, with enormous pains and exiguous results. However, one fine Spring I did induce *Iris iberica* to utter its extraordinary flowers—six of it, to be exact. Of that feat, meeting her at a party, I vaunted to the high lady. I can still see the glimmering of her eyelids, hear her dry voice commenting, "*I* had four hundred." It may have been good for me, but was it good for her? If I had known then, as I knew afterwards, that she had flowered her four hundred at Aix-les-Bains, I think I might have rebuked her—so far as high ladies can be rebuked—by telling her that she could have had four thousand on such terms. But I knew nothing of it. There she had me.

I would not now give twopence for *Iris iberica* unless it would increase in my plot. I have come to make that the staple of good gardening, and would set no bounds to feats of the kind. Certainly, I am not with the purists who say—or said—that it is inartistic to grow foreign things in wild spaces. The Reverend William Mason, in the eighteenth century, who turned Capability Brown into poetry, was plainly of that opinion. It may be inartistic, but it is very jolly. I am experimenting just now with some of the plants and shrubs from Tibet which poor Farrer gave us before he died. I find that most of them grow like

Jack's beanstalk, but care very little about flowering. I have a briar-rose, a grey-leafed, bushy, spiky thing rather like *Rosa Willmottia*, which gives me canes tree-high, but so far no flowers. Farrer's behymned *Viburnun fragrans* grows apace: its fragrance has yet to be tested. He said that it was like heliotrope, and I hope that it may prove so. Then I have a Spiraea from Tibet, which came to me from Wisley in a thumb-pot, marked "Rosa-species," but is unmitigated Spiraea. You may practically see the thing grow if, like it, you have nothing else to do. It is now as big as a bamboo-clump, and impervious to frost. So far as it is concerned, this might be the valley of Avilion. Once only has the vast affair considered flowering. Two years ago buds showed themselves at the end of August and, with a leisureliness for which the stock had not prepared me, were ready to expand by the middle of October. They then looked as much like bunches of bananas as anything else, and if all had gone well, would no doubt have been the talk of the county. But, as you might suppose, by the time they were ready,

> "Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
> And frost in the mist of the morning rode;"

and the Spiraea, deeply offended, did nothing at all except slowly rot, and, to pursue *The Sensitive Plant*,

> "Fill the place with a monstrous
> undergrowth,"

as was only to be expected. Since that check to its ardour, it has devoted itself to root-action and the results; and all I can do is to admire its rapidly maturing timber, and consider whether it or the

house should be removed.

Lucky accidents, or happy experiments, will acclimatise difficult things sometimes. I don't know how often or in how many places I had tried to make the Alpine gentian, *verna*, feel at home, when I happened to meet a soldier somewhere who lived in Ireland. He told me of his own efforts with it in artfully prepared moraines and joy-heaps of the kind. It lived, and it flowered, as it has lived and flowered, and also died, here—but it did not spread. It existed, not throve. Then, perhaps by inspiration, he put some of it into a gravel path, and left it there. Or perhaps it drifted there by itself, as such things will —I don't remember how it was. There, at any rate, it increased and multiplied and replenished the earth, growing indeed as you may see it in Swiss pastures in early Spring, deep blue stars afloat in the streaming waters—one of earth's loveliest sights. Ah, what an "event" for a gardener to nail that miracle every year as it comes round. I would wait for that as I do for the cuckoo. But first I must wait for a gravel path.

DAFFODILS

I don't suppose that any flower in England, except the rose, has been more bepraised, as somebodys aid, by poets who were not gardeners, and gardeners who were not poets; and it is certainly difficult in dealing with it to leave Wordsworth out. I shan't be able to

do it, because I shall want him, but I shall do my best to reach the end of this article without quoting from *A Winter's Tale*. It is satisfactory, at least, to be certified, as I am from Parkinson, that all of our poets, from Shakespeare to Mr. Masefield, have been exercised about the same plant. Parkinson says that we had two English daffodils, one which he calls Peerless Primrose, and another which can be identified as the double daffodil, and which, he says, Gerard found in an old woman's cottage garden—just where we find it now. Neither Parkinson nor, I suspect, any of the poets had a notion that, strictly speaking, the daffodil was the Asphodel; but how it came about that the word changed its designation I am not able to say. Branching asphodel grows wild in Ireland—not, I believe, in England—and classical poetry is, of course, full of it, though it puts the stiff and stately thing to strange uses. Poets who, as it was freely declared, reclined upon beds of asphodel and moly had not found out the best sites in the Elysian Fields. No flower, however, more eloquently reports the South. I never see mine, whose seed I collected on the Acropolis at Athens, but I remember the Pont du Gard, and the sharp smell of the box-bushes, or Greece, where it clouds the slopes of Hymettus with pink, and burns brown against the sky as you labour up the winding path to Acrocorinth. It will do in England, and do well, if you can secure it sun and drouth.

Our own name for the wild daffodil is Lent Lily, a beautiful and sufficient one, and, to judge by the poets again, the plant has been well distributed. Shakespeare saw it in Warwickshire, and Herrick in Devon; Clare in Northamptonshire, and Wordsworth in the Lakes. Mr. Housman knows it in Salop, and Mr. Masefield in Worcestershire. I know that it is in

Sussex and Cornwall, and on the edges of the New Forest. It may be in North Wilts, almost certainly is in the upper Thames Valley; but it is not here, to the best of my belief. I imagine that it does not care for chalk, for though I make it do, it does not thrive, that is, spread itself. Rather, it degenerates, as it used in Kent, where I lived as a boy, and in two or three years turned itself into the old "greenery-yallery" mophead which, whatever Parkinson may say, is not a true variety at all but a bad kind of recidivist. Now, my expert friend, Mr. George Engleheart, who lives across the hills, but on loam, grows daffodils which are a wonder of the realm; but the point is that his discards, which he throws into ditches or stuffs into holes to take their chance, never degenerate into doubles. His ground is a soapy yellow loam, on which you can grow any mortal thing; and a visit to his daffodil fields, as it were just now, is an experience which I have had and promise myself again. All the same, honesty moves me to say—*miror magis!* He, of course, is a scientist who has grown grey in the pursuit, and I am a sciolist. The beautiful things whose minute differences of hue and measurement are of such moment to him; the nicety of the changes which you can ring upon perianth and calyx—such modulations do not, in my judgment, give the thrill or sudden glory which flowers growing freely and in masses give me: such a thrill as you get from Poet's Narcissus in a Swiss pasture, or such as Wordsworth's sister, and then Wordsworth, had from the wind-caught drift of daffodils in Gowbarrow Park; or such as I had in an orchard in North Cornwall, where, as it seemed, under a canopy of snow and rose some god at a picnic had spilled curds and whey all over the sward. The flowers were so thick together as to be distinguishable only as colour:

they streamed in long rivers of yellow and white down the hill. My description is less poetical than literal. The things looked eatable, they were so rich.

If you can get such a thrill on your own ground it is by the grace of God. Mr. Engleheart does not grow bulbs for the thrills of the unscientific, though no doubt he has some of his own. But there is one glory of the unskilled and another of the skilled—indeed, the latter has two, for as well as the pure delight of having "pulled off" a delicate bit of cross-breeding, there is added the hope of gain. Your new daffodil should be a gold-mine, and rightly so, because it may represent the work, the thought, and the anxieties of seven years or even more. I heard of a grower once who, at the season of distribution, had his bulbs out upon his studio table, where they were being sorted, priced and bestowed. In one heap he had certain triumphs of science which were worth, I was told, £90 the bulb. From that point of bliss you could run down through the pounds to the shillings and bring up finally upon the articles which went out at ten shillings a hundred, or even less. There then they lay out, "so many and so many and such glee." And then, O then—"a whirl blast," as Wordsworth says, "from behind the hill" swept in at the open door, lifted all the sheets of paper and their freight together, and scattered the priced bulbs higgledy-piggledy on the floor. There was tragic work! Bang went all your ninety pounders; for a bulb in the hand may be worth a thousand on the floor.

One of those unaccountable facts in entomology which are always cropping up in gardening has much exercised my learned friend. Although he has never imported a bulb, nevertheless into his bulb-farm there has imported itself the daffodil parasite—out of

the blue, or the black. He showed it me one day, a winged beast somewhere in appearance between a wasp and a hoverfly. I saw bars upon its body, and short wings which looked as if they were made of talc. This creature has a *lues* for laying its eggs in the daffodil bulb, and to do so pierces it through and through. Last of all the bulb dies also. There seems to be no remedy but pursuit, capture and death. Just so have the figs at Tarring called up the *beccafico* from Italy. Can these things be, without our special wonder?

To grow and bring to flower every daffodil you put in the ground is not what I call gardening. Reasonable treatment will ensure it, for the flower is in the bulb before you plant it. As well might you buy from the florist things in full bud, plunge them into your plots, and call *that* gardening. Yet it is the gardening of the London parks, and of certain grandees, who ought to know better. If you are graced by nature or art to make daffodils feel themselves at home, you are in the good way. Wisley is so graced; not, I think, Kew. At Wisley they have acclimatised those two charming narcissi, *bulbocodium* and *cyclamineus*, which really carpet the ground. When I was last there they were all over the paths, in the ditches, and in the grass. I daresay they required drastic treatment, for Wisley, after all, was made for man, and not for daffodils. Yet if Wisley were my garden, I know that I should be so flattered by the confidence of those pretty Iberians that I should let them do exactly as they pleased. If a plant chose to make itself a weed, I would as readily allow it as I would a weed which chose to make itself a plant—within reason. I add that qualification, that tyrant's plea, because I have just remembered what

occurred when I was once rash enough to introduce *Mulgedium alpinum* from Switzerland. There is no shaking off that insatiable succubus. I was reconciled to giving up a garden on its account, and full of hope that I should never see it again. But I brought with me a peony and some phloxes, and *Mulgedium* was coiled about their vitals like a tapeworm. It is with me to this hour.

The prettiest thing that a narcissus ever did was done to an old lady I used to know who lived in a cottage in Sussex. Somebody had given her half-a-dozen Jonquil bulbs, which she planted and left alone. They took kindly to her and her cottage garden, and seeded all over it. When I came to know her, the little patch of ground, the dividing ditch, the bank beyond it, and some of the arable beyond that were golden with jonquils; and on days of sun-warmed wind you could smell them from afar. As, with trifling exceptions, it is the sweetest and most carrying scent in the garden, that is not surprising. Hawthorn is such another. Somewhere in Hakluyt's *Voyages* is an account of the return of an embassy from the Court of Boris Godounov. The sailors knew that they were near Sussex before they could see the white cliffs by the smell of the may wafted over sea. What a welcome home!

WINDFLOWERS

"Anemones, which droop their eyes

> Earthward before they dare arise
> To flush the border....”

says the poet, and says truly, for I believe there is no exception to his general statement. The point is really one in the argument between the gardeners and the botanists, as to whether you are to reckon hepaticas as anemones. I shall come to that presently, and here will only point out that hepaticas do *not* droop their eyes, or hang their heads, as I prefer to say. Let that be remembered when the scientist tries, as he is so fond of doing, to browbeat the mild Arcadian. Except for that remark I don’t call to mind that the poets have sung about the windflowers. None of them has likened his young woman to a windflower. Meleager, indeed, when he is paying a compliment to his Zenophile, pointedly leaves it out.

> “Now bloom white violets, now the daffodils
> That love the rain, now lilies of the hills,”

he begins; and what lilies those could have been, unless they were lilies of the valley (which sounds absurd), I don’t know. But how could he talk about spring flowers in his country and leave anemones out? It is true, he was a Syrian; but politics don’t interest anemones. No one is to tell me that Asia Minor is without *Anemone fulgens*.

Fulgens is the typical Greek anemone, anyhow, as Coronaria always seems to me specifically Italian. It is a wonder of the woodlands—as of those between Olympia and Megalopolis, or of the yet denser brakes about Tatoi, where the late Constantine used to retire and meditate statecraft. Blanda, the starry purple

flower of eighteen points, is commoner in the open. Nothing more beautiful than the flush of these things under the light green veil of the early year can be imagined. The gardener in England who can compass anything like it is in a good way. Luckily it is easy, for these are kindly plants, seed freely, flower in their first year, and are not so affected by climate as to change their habits to suit our calendar. Do not grow them in woods if you want them early. Our woods, *in quella parte del giovinetto anno*, are both cold and wet. Put them in the open, in light soil sloping to the south, and you will have as many as you want. One thing I have noticed about them is that in England fulgens is constant to its colour, whereas in Greece there are albinos, pure white and very beautiful, with black stamens. The pairing of those with the staple has produced a pink fulgens of great attractions. I have imported it, but it has not spread, and the seed of it comes up scarlet. Blanda has no sports, and is so proliferous that if it is much grown in soils that suit it very probably it will become a naturalised British subject. Here it is a weed.

Our own pair of windflowers are not nearly so easy to deal with as those two Aegean tourists. Nemorosa will only grow happily in woods, and even there does not readily transplant. Pulsatilla is subject to winter rot, as anything which lies out at nights in a fur coat must expect to be; and it reacts immediately and adversely to a rich soil. Now nemorosa grows in the fields in Germany, even in water meadows; pulsatilla in Switzerland will stand any amount of snow. But the snow in Switzerland is as dry as salt, and no flower objects to a flood when it is beginning to grow. The enemy in England is wet at the slack time. The best way to treat pulsatilla is to grow it on

a steep slope, for that is how it grows itself.

Talking of nemorosa, there is a harebell blue variety of it which I have seen, but never had, and of course the yellow ranunculoides, to be met with in Switzerland, though it is not a widespread plant. I found a broad patch of it under some trees on the edge of Lake Lugano: a clear buttercup yellow, not a dirty white. I don't call it an exciting plant, all the same, and am perfectly happy without it, and to know it the only truly yellow anemone that exists.

No offence, I hope, to the great sulphur anemone of the Alps, a noble windflower indeed. I know few things more exhilarating than to round a bluff and find a host of it in stately dance. And I know few things less so than to try to dig it up. I have devoted some hours to the pursuit, notably after a night spent at Simplon Dorf. I rose early and toiled till breakfast. I had an inefficient trowel, bought in Florence, and an alpenstock, and with them excavated some two feet of Simplon. At that depth the root of the sulphur anemone was of the thickness of a reasonable rattlesnake, and ran like the *coda* of a sonata, strongly, and apparently for ever. Something had to give, and it was the anemone. I coiled up what I had, brought it back with me in a knapsack, and made a home for it among my poor rocks. Nothing to speak of happened for two years, except that it let me know that it lived. Then came a Spring and a miracle. The sulphur anemone burgeoned: that is the only word for what it did. Since then it has never failed, though more than once the rocks have been rent asunder. In what goes on underground this anemone is a tree.

I do not forget—am not likely to forget—Coronaria,

which in its (I must own) somewhat sophisticated form of *Anemone de Caen* is the glory of my blood and state in the little hanging garden I now possess. I own, it seems, the exact spot it likes. It is thoroughly at home, and proves it by flowering practically all the year round. In the dog-days, I don't say. But who cares what happens in August? Except for that waste month—the only one in the almanac with nothing distinctive to report—I believe I have hardly failed of a handful of coronaria. Since Christmas I have not failed of a bowlful, and at this time of writing it is out in a horde. Wonderful things they are: nine inches high, four inches across, with a palette ranging from white through the pinks to red and crimson, through the lilacs to violet and the purple of night. There are few better garden flowers. Untidy? Yes, they need care. Too free with their seed? They cannot be for me. I am open to the flattery of a flower's confidence as (still) to that of a woman's. Another thing to its credit is its attraction for bees, with the range of tint and tinge which that involves. Your whites will be flushed with auroral rose, or clouded with violet; you will have flecks and splashes of sudden colour, the basal ring of white, whence comes its cognomen, annulata, sometimes invaded. Even the black centre with its stamens is not constant: I have one with a pale green base and stamens of yellow. With these fine things fulgens goes usefully and happily. Coronaria has no such vermilion. A bank of the two together, growing in the sun, can be seen half a mile away, and won't look like scarlet geranium if there is a judicious admixture. To qualify that dreadful sophistication called "St. Brigid" I shall serve myself of W. S. Gilbert's useful locution. "Nobody," he said, "thinks more highly of So-and-so than I do; and *I* think he's a

little beast."

Apennina, I think, wants a mountain. I should like to try it in some favoured ghyll in Cumberland, and some day I will. I have it on a lawn, and have had it for many years. There is no less, but no more, than there ever was. It does not seed. The two colours, china-blue and white, are delicious in partnership, though the blue is not so good as that of blanda, and the white not quite so white as nemorosa's.

And what am I to say of hepaticas, and how *écraser* the botanists? Who am I to deny them with my reason—entirely satisfactory to myself—that the *feeling* of the two flowers is distinct and separable? What does an anemone imply? A spring woodland on a mountain slope. What an hepatica? A wet cleft in a rock, sodden last year's leaves, ragged moss, pockmarked crust of snow—and out of them a pale star raying gold from blue. The anemone is gregarious, the hepatica solitary; the anemone is a spring flower, the hepatica a winter flower. And lastly, as a gardener, I say, the anemone can be moved, and is often much the better of it; the hepatica should not be, and is always the worse. If you plant an hepatica root and leave it alone for fifty years, you will have something worth waiting for—a ring of it as big as a cartwheel. I have not done it—but it has been done for me.

TULIPS

One day short of St. Valentine's (when Nature still takes the liberties which men used to allow themselves) I am able to announce tulips in bud in the open border, which is as much of a record as my crocuses were on the 18th of January. I don't speak of a sheltered or fruitful valley by any means. What they may be doing with flowers at Wilton and Wilsford has no more relation to me than their goings-on at Torquay or Grange-over-Sands. Up this way, for reasons which it would be tedious to report, the spring comes slowly—as a rule. This year is like no other that I can remember, as no doubt the reckoning will be.

I know what tulip it is. There is only one which would be so heedlessly daring. It is that noble wild Tuscan flower which the people of the Mugello and thereabouts call *Occhio del Sole*, which has a sage green leaf, a long flower-stalk of maroon, and atop of that a great chalice of geranium red with yellow base and a black blotch in the midst. Looking into the depths from above there is the appearance of a lurid eye. But its real name is *Praecox*, and Parkinson says that it flowers in January. I don't believe him. I have had it for years, and never saw it before mid-March. Parkinson is vague about tulips, classing them mostly by colour and inordinate names of his own. You may have the Crimson Prince, or Bracklar; or the Brancion Prince; or a Duke, "that is more or less faire deep red, with greater or lesser yellow edges, and a great yellow bottome." Then there is a Testament Brancion, or a Brancion Duke; and lastly The King's Flower, "that is, a crimson or bloud red, streamed with a gold yellow"—which ought to look indifferent well at Buckingham Palace. *Praecox* used to grow freely in the hill country above Fiesole, always on cultivated ground; and I have found lots of it in the

poderi of Settignano, not so much as of the ordinary blood red, a smaller and meaner flower altogether; but enough to make a walk under the olives in very early Spring an enchantment. Ages ago Mrs. Ross sent me a hamper of them, which has lasted me ever since; for this tulip increases freely, and is invaluable as the first of its family.

The next to appear will be the little Persian *violacea*, with its crinkled wavy leaves flatlings, and the pointed bud, which gives a rose-coloured flower when open, slightly retroflexed, enough so, at least, to make it plain that the familiar ornament of Persian and Rhodian tiles was adapted from it. I always thought its name was *persica*; but Weathers, I see, makes that a bronze flower, and names *violacea* as the earliest of all the Persians, which mine certainly is. So that, as they say, is that. I find it happiest among rocks, as all bulbs, except lilies, are if they can get there. How else secure the baking in summer which is so necessary? A pretty thing it is, in short, charming to discover for yourself in a corner of a man's rock-garden, all the more so as you will make your discovery at a season when you least expect tulips; but there is nothing of a "sudden glory" to be had from it. Nobody could be knocked off his æsthetic perch by a Persian tulip, still less off his moral perch. I have known that done by one of the Caucasian tulips—it led to swift and stealthy work with a penknife at Kew. But that was a long time ago, and the delinquent can never do it again, for a final reason.

The loveliest tulip in the world—I speak only of natural flowers, not of nurserymen's monsters—is, in my opinion, the little *Bandiera di Toscana*, the sword-leaved, sanguine-edged thing with the narrow bud of

red and white, which opens in the sun to be a milky star. It is the loveliest, alike in colour and in habit, but one of the most fastidious. Short of lifting it, which the true gardener disdains to do, there is no certainty that it will spring up again when the time comes round. Your best chance is on rocks, I daresay; and I have succeeded with it in a border under a south wall with a pent of thatch over. It does not like frost, and abominates rain at the wrong time of year. It clings, in fact, to its Mediterranean habits, which some things contentedly lose—Iris *stylosa*, for instance, which flowers here better in November than it does in April. I have my *clusianas*—for that is their proper name—now in a terraced border, full south, under clumps of mossy saxifrage, and they do as well as can be expected. They return with the swallows, and open wide to the sun; but I am not going to pretend that they ramp. If I could afford it I would put them in a place where they could take their chance of the spade; for there is this to be said of all the Florentine tulips that, although they are not designedly lifted, they grow in a country where every square yard of ground is cultivated, and consequently are turned over by the plough of the spade every year—no doubt to their vast benefit. But you must not mind how many of them you slice, or bury upside down, or leave above ground at that work—and I *do* mind.

The truly marvellous *Greigi* is just showing itself: no increase there, I am sorry to say. Weathers says that it "reproduces itself freely." Not here, O Apollo. I cannot make any Caucasian tulips have families; they are resolute Malthusians; nevertheless, I shall have my few bubbles of scarlet as before, and before they have done with me they will be as large as claret-glasses, on short stems, which are the best kind of

claret-glasses. I could do with a hundred of them, but I don't know what to give them that I have not given. They grow on limestone at home, and I give them limestone. They are never disturbed in the Caucasus, and I never disturb them. It is my distance from the equator that beats me. So I must be content with my three or four—only I shan't boast of them to ladies from Aix-les-Bains. A tulip, by the way, which I covet, but have not so far been able to obtain, is called, I *think*, *saxatilis*. It has rather a sprawly growth, but several flowers on the stalk, and is sweetly scented. In colour it is faint and indeterminate; flushes of mauve, white and yellow. Several nurserymen offer me bulbs by that name, some have induced me to buy them; but it has never been the right thing. I may be wrong, or they may be: I must ask an expert. It may be priceless, in which case I shan't have it. I bought some Peruvian *pseudo-crocus* once, of a marvellous blue indeed—not a gentian, but a kingfisher blue—at seven and sixpence per bulb, and the mice, mistaking it for a real crocus, ate them all. "These are my crosses, Mr. Wesley." But, if we are talking about money, Mrs. Ross *gave* me a tulip once which was worth, so she told me, twenty pounds. Certainly it was very handsome, a tall Darwin of bronze feathered with gold: called *Buonarroti*. It was prolific, and in no short time filled the border in which it grew. If its sons had been worthy of their sire there might have been hundreds of pounds' worth of them, all growing naked in the open air. But I observed that they grew paler year by year; and when I returned to the garden after a five years' absence I could not believe that I had ever planted such a bilious tulip. My grand old *Occhi del Sole*, on the other hand, were as vivid as ever.

I have never possessed the so-called native English tulip, whose botanical name is *silvestris*; but I have seen it. I know where it grows, and blows, and could take you to the place—only I shall not. My father found it by chance, and brought a flower of it home in high feather. He found it, truly enough, in a wood, so its name describes its habits. Now, I inquire, is it an indigenous plant? It is what I doubt. If it is, it must have existed from all time; the Iberians must have grown it on their lenches, or found it lower down, in the jungle. Yet it is unknown to the poets; and the word "tulip," remark, is a Turkish word disguised. Parkinson knows nothing of *Tulipa silvestris*. Far more probably it came from the South, in the maw of some straying bird—perhaps a hoopoo, or the hold of an adventuring ship. That was how we became possessed of the wild peony which is, or was, to be found on an island in the Severn Sea. Who is to say how that happened? Perhaps Spanish sailors had a peony growing in the after-cabin to Our Lady of Seven Dolours, and were shipwrecked with her and it on the strand of Lundy. How did two ilexes come to be growing out of the Guinigi tower at Lucca? How did a fig-tree find itself in the middle arch of the bridge at Cordova? There are more ways of accounting for a wild tulip in Kent than by imagining that God Almighty bade it grow there.

I have left myself no room in which to treat of nurserymen's tulips, and the less the pity in that they can talk of them so eloquently themselves. There is a Dutch grower who simply wallows in adjectives about them every year. He photographs his children, smiling like anything, up to the neck in tulips; he poses with his arms full of them before his wife, like an Angel of the Annunciation. As for his words, they

come bubbling from him as they used from Mr. Swinburne when he saw a baby. It is true that, like the talk about them, they get taller every year. They are less flowers than portents, and the only thing to do with them is to treat them as so much colour, turning your garden for the time being into a Regent Street shop-window. Brown wallflower and *La Rêve* look well, so do yellow wallflower and *Othello*. Last year I tried *Clara Butt* and *Cheiranthus allionii*, and had a show like Mr. Granville Barker's *Twelfth Night*. Rose pink and orange is not everybody's mixture.

The finest unrehearsed effect I ever had with cottage tulips was when we had a heavy fall of snow one 30th of April, and I went out and saw the great red heads swimming in the flood like strong men. They were up to the neck, and seemed to enjoy it. But they died of the effort; for at night it froze.

SUMMER

If, like me, you are more interested in seeing things happen than in seeing them when they have happened, you will not be such an advocate of Summer as of other, any other, seasons. For Summer is the one time of year when practically nothing happens outdoors. From about the middle of May—I speak of the south parts—to the middle of September Nature sits with her hands in her lap and a pleasantly tired face. There, my children, she says, I have done my job. I hope you like it. Most of us, I

own, do like it very much, and signify the same in the usual manner by vigorous ball-exercise and liquid refreshment, much of it of an explosive and delusive kind. When the Summer is over, somewhere round about Michaelmas day, Nature rolls up her sleeves and begins again. Properly speaking, there are only two seasons—Spring and Summer. The people therefore who, like me, prefer the Spring to the Summer, have more time in which to exhibit or dissemble their love—and a good deal of it, I confess, uncommonly beastly in the matter of weather.

The people who like everything are the people to envy. Children, for example, love the Winter just as much as the Summer. They whistle as they jump their feet, or flack their arms across their bodies; and whistling is one of the sure signs of contented youth. I remember that we used to think it rare sport to find the sponge a solid globe of ice, or to be able to get off cleaning our teeth on the ground that the tooth water was frozen in the bottle. I don't believe I ever had cold feet in bed, and am sure that if I did I had something much more exciting to think about. There might be skating to-morrow, or we could finish the snow-man, or go tobogganning with the tea-tray; or it was Christmas; or we were going to the pantomime. All seasons were alike to us; each had its delights. That of Summer, undoubtedly, was going to the seaside. We always had a month of that, and then a month in some country place or other which my father did not know. That was done for his sake, because the seaside bored him so much that even his children noticed it. It was nothing to us, of course, as we lived in the country, and did not, as he did, poor man, spend most days of the year in London; but equally of course we weren't *bored*. I never heard of a child being bored, and can imagine few things

more tragic in a small way. No: it was always interesting to live in someone else's house, learn something of their ways, chance upon a family photograph, or a discarded toy, or a dog's grave in the shrubbery; or to read their books and guess what bits they had liked—any little things like that. And, of course, it was comfortable to know that one's father wasn't always smothering a gape, or trying to escape from nigger-minstrels. As for the sea—a very different thing from the seaside—I don't believe he ever looked at it. I am certain that I never saw him on the sands. The sands are no place for you unless you had rather be barefoot than not. Now, it is a fact that I never saw my father's feet.

At the same time, I don't know where else one could be in August, except at the seaside. Really, there is very little to say for the country in that month. The trees are as near black as makes no matter, the hills are dust-colour, the rivers are running dry. True, the harvest is going on; but the harvest is not what it used to be. You had, indeed, "a field full of folk" (in old Langland's words) in former days. All hands were at it, and the women following the men, building the hiles, as we call them; and the children beside them, twisting up the straw ties as fast as they could twist. And then the bread and cheese and cider—or it might be home-brewed beer—in the shade! But bless me—last year I saw the harvesting of a hundred acre field—our fields run very big down here; and the whole thing was being done by one man on a machine! The Solitary Reaper, forsooth! The man was reaper, tyer and binder all in one; you never saw so desolate a spectacle. So the harvest is not what it was. It may have attractions for the farmer, but for nobody else that I can think of. Go north for your

Summer and you may do better. August is wet, generally, in Scotland, but when you are in Scotland you won't mind rain, or had better not. You can catch trout in the rain in Scotland, and with a fly too: that is the extraordinary part of it. And the Scottish summer twilights are things to remember. They are overdone in Norway, where they go on all night; where the sun may go behind the hill for five minutes and begin the day before you have thought of going to bed. You can't keep that up—but it is exciting enough at first. The great charm of the Norwegian Summer to me is that it includes what we call Spring. The other season in that country is Winter, which begins in September and ends with May. Then, immediately, Summer begins: the grass grows and is ready for the scythe, the cherries flower and get ripe and are eaten—all at once. You get those amazing contrasts there which you only have in mountainous countries; which I remember most vividly crossing the Cevennes from Le Puy to Alais. On the watershed I was picking daffodils, only just ready to be picked; in the valley of the Ardeche they were making hay, and roses were dusty in the hedges. I slid from March into June—in twenty minutes. You will not be so piqued in England; yet if your taste lies in the way of strawberries for instance, you can do pretty work even in England. You can begin in Cornwall, or Scilly, and have your first dish in early May, or late April, with clotted cream, of course. Then you can eat your way through the western shires to Hampshire, and make yourself very ill somewhere about Fareham, in June. When you are able to stand the journey, you can go on to the Fens and find them ready for you in early July. In August you will find them at their best in Cumberland, and in October, weather permitting,

you will have them on your table in Scotland. After that, if you are alive, and really care for strawberries, you must leave this kingdom, and perhaps go to California. I don't know.

The Summer will give you better berries than the strawberry, in my opinion. It will give you the *wild* strawberry, which, if you can find somebody to pick them for you, and then eat them with sugar and white wine, is a dish for Olympians, ambrosial food. Then there is the bilberry, which wants cream and a great deal of tooth-brush afterwards, and the blaeberry, which grows in Cumberland above the 2,000 foot mark, just where the Stagshorn moss begins; and the wild raspberry which here is found on the tops of the hills, and in Scotland at the bottoms. I declare the wild raspberry to be one of the most delicious fruits God Almighty ever made. In Norway you will have the cranberry and the saeter-berry; but in Norway you will want nothing so long as there are cherries. I know Kent very well—but its cherries are not so good as those of Norway.

I had no intention, when I began, to talk about eating all the time. It is a bad sign when one begins that, though as a matter of fact we do think a great deal of our food in the country—because we are hungry, and it is so awfully good; and (as I daresay the Londoner thinks) because we have nothing else to think about. That is a mistake, and the Summer is the time to correct it, by spending it in the country and trying to understand us. Let me be bold enough to suggest to the Londoner who takes the prime of Summer to learn the ways of the country in it, that he would prove a more teachable disciple if he did not bring his own ways with him. He is rather apt to do that. He expects, for example, his golf, and always

has his toys with him for the purpose. Well, he should not. Golf is a suburban game, handy for the townsman in his off hours. Country people don't play golf. They have too much to do. The charabanc is another town-institution, to be used like a stagecoach. Nothing of the country can be learned by streaming over moor and mountain in one of them. The Oreads hide from them; Pan and old Sylvanus treat them as natural process, scourges to be endured, like snowstorms or foot-and-mouth disease. The country is veiled from charabancs, partly in dust, partly in disgust. For we don't understand hunting in gangs. The herd-instinct which such things involve and imply is not a country instinct. We are self-sufficient here, still, in spite of all invitation, individuals.

THE LINGERING OF THE LIGHT

With the West wind blowing down the valley, wet and warm from the Atlantic, men go home leisurely from their work in the fields, happy in the last of the light, and enjoying, though they never say so, the delicate melancholy of the hour. It is a gift you make no account of when the East wind brings it you, for that Scythian scourge withers what it touches, and under its whip the light itself seems like a husk about the day. Old people tell us that it brings the blight, whatever they mean by that. It brought locusts into Egypt once, and brings influenza into England. Perhaps they put the two together. It brings sick

thinking too, a cold which has the property of drying up the springs of the blood. There's no escape from it. The air seems thinner that comes from the East; brickwork will not keep it out, nor glazed windows. One fancies in the black mood of it that the "channering worm" at his work in the churchyard must feel it, and dive deeper into the mould.

But now one can enjoy the sweet grave evening and turn the mind hopefully to the prime of the year that is coming. The blackbird whistles for it in the leafless elm; a belated white hen on the hillside, very much at her ease, is still heeling up the turf and inspecting the result. A cottage wife, having her fire alight and kettle on the boil, stands for a moment at her open door. To mate the gentle influence of the evening she has made herself trim in clean white blouse and blue skirt, and looks what she was intended to be, a pretty young woman with a pride in herself. A friend, going home, stops her perambulator for a minute to exchange sentiments about the nights "drawing out." Almost as she speaks this one draws in—for at this time of year twilight is a thing of moments. It will be dark before she is home. No matter: the wind is warm and balmy; she can take her ease, and her baby be none the worse. This is the weather that opens the human buds as well as the snowdrops, and gems the gardens with aconites, and the hearths with sprawling children. We do not heed Dr. Inge down here.

Here's the end of January, and the winter, by our calendar, over in three weeks' time. Since that calendar was written up we have invented a new winter. It is more difficult to get through April with safety, at least to garden buds, than any January we have known for forty years; but as far as we are

concerned ourselves we can stand anything in April, with May to follow; whereas January can still intimidate, and a cold spell then will cause twice the sickness of the Spring-winter. January is to April as Till to Tweed:

> "Till said to Tweed,
> 'Though ye rin wi' speed,
> An' I rin slaw,
> Where ye drown ae mon
> I drown twa."

If you look at the graves in a country churchyard, of the two outside generations, that is, of old people and young children, nearly all will have found their "bane" in December and January.

With us in the West, the thing which kills the plants in our gardens also kills the villagers, very old or very young: excessive wet, namely, followed by hard frost or murderous wind. The other day we had a day of warm drenches, drifting sheets of rain, a whole day of them, the wind in the West. About midnight, the weathercock chopped round to meet a whirl-blast from the East: the sky cleared, and it froze like mad. I went round my borders in the morning, quaking at the heart. The garden was like a battle-field. Nothing can cope with that. The babies get pneumonia, the veterans bronchitis, the sexton is busy; every day you hear the passing bell. Yet whether it is because we observe punctually the Laws of Being, or (as the Dean will have it) in spite of it, the facts are that the supply of babies never fails, and that we live to a great age. The oldest gardener I know—I shouldn't wonder if he were the oldest gardener in the world—lives in this village. Eighty-nine.

> "I know a girl—she's eighty-five"—

That was Lord Houghton's way of beginning a poem on Mrs. Grote. My gardener beats her by four years. To and fro, four times a day, he walks his half-mile—to work and back. I saw him the other day half-way up a cherry-tree, sawing off a dead branch. Mrs. Grote again:

> "She lived to the age of a hundred and ten,
> And died of a fall from a cherry-tree then."

To look at his sapless limbs, you might think he could saw off one of them and take no hurt. But not at all. Life is high in him still. His eye is bright, his step is brisk. We have many octagenarians, but I believe he is the patriarch of our village. Mr. Frederic Harrison, in Bath, beats him by a year.

We are stoics, without knowing what that means down here. Whatever our years tell us we make no account of them, or of ailments, or physical discomfort; and as for Death, the Antick, however close he stand to us—the Grizzly One, we call him—we take no notice of him, so long as we can move about. The end is not long in coming when a man must keep the house, or his bed. Then, so sure as fate, he will stiffen at the joints and come out no more to enjoy the lingering of the light. The chalk, which he has been inhaling and absorbing all his life, will harden in him, and, he will tell you, "time's up." Want of imagination, that fine indifference to fate, perhaps—but I don't know. I have never been able to deny imagination to our country folk. The faculty takes various forms, and is not to be refused to a man because it finds a harsh vent and issues

contorted. I prefer to put it that tradition, which is our religion, has put obedience to the Laws of Life above everything else. One of those laws says, Work. And work we do, until we drop. There is a noble creature lying now, I fear, under a stroke which will prevent her doing another hand's turn of work. Her children are all about her bed; I saw one of them this morning before she went there. She confessed, with tears, the anguish it would be to see her mother lying idle. Sixty-three, she was, and had never been a day without work in her children's recollection. She had never been in bed after six in the morning, never stayed at home or abed except, of course, for child-bed. She had had eight children, brought up six of them to marry and prosper in the world. And now she lies stricken, and they, those prosperous young women, all about her bed. How well Shakespeare knew that world:

> "Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
> Nor the stormy winter's rages;
> Thou thy earthly course hast run,
> Home hast gone, and ta'en thy wages."

Nothing for tears, or knocking of the breast. The words ring as solemnly as the bell. I cannot conceive of earthly thing more beautiful than such faithful, patient, diligent, ordered lives, rounded off by such mute and uncomplaining death-bed scenes. The fact that so they have been lived, so rounded off, for two thousand years makes them sacred, for me. How often has the good soul whose end I am awaiting now stood at her cottage door to mark the lingering of the light? May her passing be as gentle as this day's has been!



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