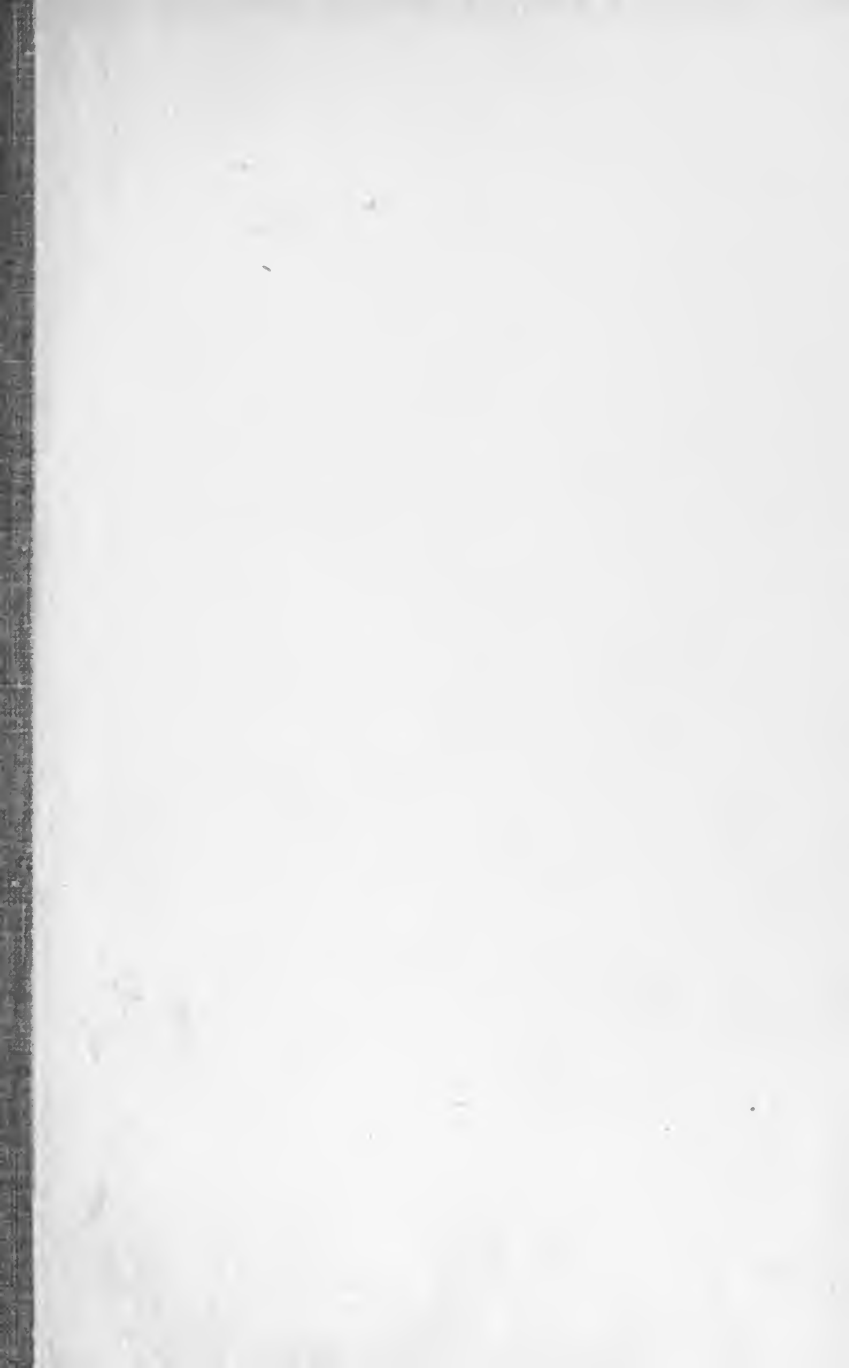


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# AUTHORS AND I

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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THE ENCHANTED STONE  
LIFE'S LITTLE THINGS  
LIFE'S LESSER MOODS  
ADVENTURES AMONG PICTURES  
DAYS WITH VELASQUEZ  
DAYS IN CORNWALL  
AUGUSTUS SAINT GAUDENS  
THE EDUCATION OF AN ARTIST  
THE DIARY OF A LOOKER-ON  
TURNER'S GOLDEN VISIONS  
REMBRANDT  
THE POST IMPRESSIONISTS  
BRABAZON: His Art and Life  
THE CONSOLATIONS OF A CRITIC  
THE SOLDIER BOY  
THE INVISIBLE GUIDE  
WHAT'S FREEDOM?  
THINGS SEEN IN AMERICA  
ART AND I  
ETC., ETC.



# AUTHORS AND I

BY C. LEWIS HIND

AUTHOR OF "ART AND I,"  
"THE POST IMPRESSIONISTS,"  
"AUGUSTUS SAINT GAUDENS," ETC.

NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY  
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## TO THE READER

Why this book was written will be found at the end. The authors are arranged alphabetically. So Henry Adams begins and William Butler Yeats completes the list. Then I come in.

C. L. H.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. <i>Henry Adams</i>	13
2. <i>Sherwood Anderson</i>	19
3. <i>Gabriele D'Annunzio</i>	24
4. <i>William Waldorf Astor</i>	30
— 5. <i>J. M. Barrie</i>	35
6. <i>Max Beerbohm</i>	39
7. <i>Hilaire Belloc</i>	45
8. <i>Arnold Bennett</i>	50
9. <i>G. K. Chesterton</i>	56
10. <i>Joseph Conrad</i>	61
11. <i>Kenyon Cox</i>	65
12. <i>Stephen Crane</i>	70
13. <i>William Henry Davies</i>	75
14. <i>Richard Harding Davis</i>	80
15. <i>John Drinkwater</i>	86
16. <i>Lord Dunsany</i>	91
17. <i>John Galsworthy</i>	95
18. <i>Edmund Gosse</i>	99
19. <i>Kenneth Grahame</i>	104
20. <i>The Grossmiths</i>	108
21. <i>Thomas Hardy</i>	114
22. <i>Bret Harte</i>	119
23. <i>John Hay</i>	124
24. <i>W. E. Henley</i>	130

	PAGE
25. "O. Henry"	136
26. Maurice Hewlett	142
27. John Oliver Hobbes	147
28. The Housmans	152
29. William Dean Howells	157
30. Henry James	161
31. Rudyard Kipling	166
32. Andrew Lang	171
33. William J. Locke	177
34. E. V. Lucas	182
35. Maurice Maeterlinck	189
36. Edwin Markham	195
37. John Masefield	201
38. George Meredith	206
39. Leonard Merrick	212
40. Alice Meynell	217
41. Stephen Phillips	223
✓42. George Moore	229
43. John Morley	234
44. Walter Pater	239
45. A. T. Quiller-Couch	246
✓46. Siegfried Sassoon	252
47. George Bernard Shaw	256
48. J. C. Snaith	262
49. Robert Louis Stevenson	267
50. Francis Thompson	273
51. Tolstoy	280
52. Hugh Walpole	283
53. Mrs. Humphry Ward	289
54. William Watson	294
55. H. G. Wells	300

## *Contents*

ix

PAGE

56. <i>Edith Wharton</i>	306
57. <i>Walt Whitman</i>	312
58. <i>W. B. Yeats</i>	318
59. <i>My First Book</i>	325
60. <i>My Latest Book: This One</i>	332





# AUTHORS AND I



## AUTHORS AND I

### 1. HENRY ADAMS

**D**ID I ever see Henry Adams? We may have met, for he was a cosmopolitan. London, Paris, Rome—and Chartres were as familiar to him as Boston. He may have been the man I saw at a London reception in intimate talk with John Hay, and I paused to watch the pair because here were two men engrossed in that rare thing—real conversation.

The legend of Henry Adams has long been familiar. At Chartres you can hardly fail to strike his initiate trail; in that grove at Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, where the Figure by Augustus Saint Gaudens sits in the aura of a silent question you are in the presence of this visionary man, for it was he who inspired the Figure. Yes, the legend of Henry Adams is insistent, but the man eludes. Those who were so fortunate as to be able to borrow a copy of the privately printed (1904) "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres: A Study of Thirteenth Century Unity" realised that here was an author who counted, an unprofessional writer, a questioner, a scholar with humour and tang, a quintessential Bos-

tonian, who made the world of thought his city, and who, strange to say, was born and bred in the same land that produced Mr. Woolworth of the 5 and 10 cent stores.

In 1906 a sequel to the "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres" was privately printed to the number of 100 copies under the title, "The Education of Henry Adams: A Study of Twentieth Century Multiplicity." In 1918 this book was given to the world under the title, "The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography."

He was the most modest of men, probably the most aggressively modest man of the century. His modesty was so modest that it blossomed into a rare flower of vanity, a vanity that a casuist would find it extremely difficult to diagnose or to condemn. Yet Henry Adams was modest, and self-depreciatory to a degree that almost amounts to genius. What then would have been his amazement if he could have known that in 1919 his "Education," which he never even regarded as a finished work, was, excluding novels, "a best seller." It appeared in every list in the Books in Demand at Public Libraries and it usually came first.

Henry Adams a popular author! What a chapter he could have added to his autobiography on this amazing piece of news! Yet there must be many people who have begun it and never found the end. I can count half a dozen acquaintances who have failed to reach the last chapter. They are not readers; they have not learnt how to read. He who perseveres and peruses the last three chapters must

at once read them again and again. The book is supposed to be a record of failure. But what is failure? If it be failure to leave to the world the Rock Creek Figure and this "Education" then the meaning of the word failure will have to be entirely changed.

I am amazed at his power of character drawing, not only of men but also of inanimate things (so we call them) as the magnet, the compass, the dynamo, and also at his eloquent analysis of "the convulsion of 310 when the Civitas Dei cut itself loose from the Civitas Romæ, and the Cross took the place of the legions."

How fresh is the account, how unjaded, of his first meeting with Swinburne.

It happened in the year 1862. Henry Adams, then private secretary to his father, who was Ambassador to Great Britain, was invited to a week-end bachelor gathering at Fryston, the Yorkshire place of Monckton Milnes, afterward Lord Houghton. One of the guests was a young man, "a tropical bird, high-crested, long-beaked, quick moving, with rapid utterance and screams of humour, quite unlike any English lark or nightingale." This was Algernon Charles Swinburne. In the course of the evening Milnes "thought it time to bring Swinburne out." And out he came, to such an extent that he held the company spellbound till far into the night. No one in my experience, says Adams, ever approached the rush of his talk—his incredible memory, his knowledge of literature, classic, mediæval and modern; "his faculty of reciting a play of Sophocles

or a play of Shakespeare, forward or backward from end to beginning; or Dante, or Villon or Victor Hugo." These men of the world knew not what to make of Swinburne's rhetorical recitation of his own unpublished ballads—"Faustine," "The Ballad of Burdens," which he declaimed as though they were books of the "Iliad."

Monckton Milnes, and Sterling of Keir, afterward Sir William Sterling-Maxwell, who was one of the party, regarded Swinburne as a prodigy and descanted on the wild Walpurgisnight of his talk. That night was Swinburne's dress rehearsal, a fore-taste of his uncanny power of intellectual performance. He was yet to prove himself. "Queen Mother and Rosamund" had been published, but "Poems and Ballads," which made him famous, was still in the press.

Years and years later when the poet was living with Theodore Watts-Dunton at The Pines, an ugly suburban villa at the foot of Putney Hill, we hero worshippers would linger on the hill to watch the fierce little poet taking his fierce morning constitutional up to Wimbledon Common. An invitation to a Saturday evening dinner at The Pines was not difficult to obtain. All one had to do was to be properly humble and appreciative to Theodore Watts-Dunton at one of the important private views of picturés which he rarely missed. Did Swinburne, I wonder, in after years remember the shy young American private secretary that wild Walpurgisnight at Fryston when he was snubbed by the flaming poet for admiring Alfred de Musset? An-

other member of that famous party was Laurence Oliphant, author of "Piccadilly," and a contributor "like all the young men about the Foreign Office" to "The Owl." Here is Adams on Oliphant: "He seemed exceptionally sane and peculiarly suited for country houses, where every man would enjoy his company, and every woman would adore him."

Later in life Kipling flashed across the path of Henry Adams, who in his declining years was still passionately seeking education and who saw no hope of ever earning a living. He did not seem to realise that he was earning it beautifully, and bountifully giving away to posterity all he earned. Thanks to the mediation of Henry James he met the author of "Barrack Room Ballads" on a voyage to America, and Kipling dashed over Henry Adams who "the more he was educated, the less he understood"—"his exuberant fountain of gaiety and wit—as though playing a garden hose on a thirsty and faded begonia."

Adams saw many people: he saw most people of importance: he saw Abraham Lincoln "at the melancholy function called an Inaugural Ball, . . . a long, awkward figure; a plain, ploughed face; a mind absent in part, and in part evidently worried by white kid gloves."

And Adams would sit in the grove at Rock Creek and listen to the comments of the visitors upon Augustus Saint Gaudens' Figure. None felt, he says, what would have been a nursery-instinct to a Hindu baby or a Japanese jinrickisha runner. He himself supposed its meaning to be the one common-

place about it—the oldest idea known to human thought. Yet he does not tell us what the meaning is. So the world will continue to guess. But he does say that the interest of the Figure is not in its meaning, but in the response of the observer.

If the American Academy of Letters crowned a book in the manner of the French Academy the choice would surely fall upon "The Education of Henry Adams." I would say that it is the outstanding American work of the Twentieth Century, the swan song of the failure of culture as an end, and not as a means. It is the most egoistic of books, and writing it in the third person does not in the least efface the ego which was Adams' aim. It is entirely self-centred and intellectually entirely delightful.

Only Bostonians can understand Bostonians, says Henry Adams. Well, he must be a dull foreigner who, after reading this rare Autobiography, fails to understand this rare Bostonian. If an author, however talented, never emerges from the thought of his own education, he is quite apt to find the world a place which "sensitive and timid natures regard with a shudder."

Henry Adams could appreciate exuberant buoyancies like the young Rudyard Kipling, but after the contact he would at once glide back into the easy grooves of his uneasy shell.



## 2. SHERWOOD ANDERSON

**I**N America Walt Whitman in verse and Winslow Homer in painting stand apart, above, fixed—two great forces. They are racial; they are America. The New England school, which included and includes so many fine writers, carried on and carries on, with variations, the English tradition.

The alphabetical progression, used in this book, makes Sherwood Anderson follow Henry Adams. That is curious and interesting. These two represent the two Americas—the static and the dynamic, the past and the future.

The twentieth century men, chiefly novelists and poets, who have surged up from the west and the middle west, are akin to Walt Whitman and Winslow Homer; but they are rougher, more amazed, more confused by the growth and spread of towns, and the boundless activities of the hustlers and the hustled. They are entirely racial, bred of the soil: their themes are the big rough men who are doing big rough things in big ways. Their material is so vast and complex that they have hardly yet had time to consider the niceness of style. They are hewers, grabbers: they rarely pick and choose: they have strength but little daintiness or delicacy. They are what they should be. They are pioneers. They

symbol the America that is to be. Figures like Anatole France and Matthew Arnold belong to another century, another world.

When I first read Sherwood Anderson's "Marching Men" I knew at once that he is a man to watch. There is something prophetic in his vision of the brotherhood and solidarity of man typified by the sound of feet, marching in step, rhythmically, with a purpose. Again and again in recent years when organisations have loomed up, seemingly resistless because of their solidarity, have I thought of his "Marching Men" and McGregor, the forceful, illiterate hero. I wish that Anderson could have kept this book by him for ten years; I wish that he had not followed the advice of friends and cut down the latter part before publication. It falls away toward the end; his grasp of the subject, so firm at the beginning, loosens. But it is a remarkable study of a personality emerging from crude conditions and raw men, envisaging how to herd and lead, and—well, read "Marching Men."

An Englishman could not have written "Windy McPherson's Son," his first book. It is pure American, middle-west American, this story of a news-boy who, with no help but his wits and grit, became a millionaire, and then finds that he is a man with a hunger for other things. Chicago, pushing ahead, Chicago in the making, splurges through this rough but reasoned story, this Odyssey of a westerner (so different from the method advocated by Dr. Samuel Smiles), to be followed by the discovery that there is something

better beyond the horizon. It was a Chicago critic, Floyd Dell, who read the manuscript and hailed its merits. He tried to find a publisher for it in New York, failed, sent it to London, where "Windy McPherson's Son" was promptly accepted by John Lane. He cabled to his firm in New York to sign a contract with Sherwood Anderson for three books.

The second was "Marching Men," the third was "Mid-American Chants." This is not his most popular book—a chant has small chance against a tale—but it may be his most significant, his most self-expressive book. It is in free verse: it is in the Whitman tradition: it could not be in anything else; and the Foreword explains just why it is so. Here is an extract:

"I do not believe that we people of mid-western America, immersed as we are in affairs, hurried and harried through life by the terrible engine—industrialism—have come to the time of song. . . . We do not sing, but mutter in the darkness. Our lips are cracked with dust and with the heat of furnaces. We but mutter and feel our way toward the promise of song. . . . In secret a million men and women are trying, as I have tried here, to express the hunger within. . . ."

And here is a scrap from the chant called

#### CHICAGO

"I am a child, a confused child in a confused world. There are no clothes made that fit me. The minds of men cannot clothe me. Great projects arise

within me. I have a brain and it is cunning and shrewd.

"I am a little thing, a tiny little thing on the vast prairies. I know nothing. My mouth is dirty. I cannot tell what I want. My feet are sunk in the black, swampy land, but I am a lover. I love life. In the end love shall save me."

His fourth book was "Winesburg, Ohio," a group of tales of Ohio small town life. "The Spoon River Anthology," by Edgar Lee Masters, dealt with the past. The tales in "Winesburg" deal with the present and the—future. These studies, direct, uncompromising, might stand for any small, growing industrial town in America. They are documents; a hundred years hence they will have a great historical value. They cry out against conditions: they seek escape, they move.

How did this middle westerner come to writing? He began late; he wrote as a relief, an escape from conditions. He was and is a business man who writes in trains, at night-time, anywhere, any time when he can find a spare hour. Like other western boys he has turned his hand to many things (see "Windy MacPherson's Son"), but his chief success is in the advertising world; his mind bustles. I am told that the "trade," when you ask about him, say: "Sherwood Anderson—oh, yes, he's bright, humming with ideas—makes stories too."

A remote ancestor was Major Anderson of Fort Sumter: a nearer ancestor was Governor of Ohio. Who can tell how the arts touched this family, and with such dissimilarity? Karl Anderson, the artist,

is his elder brother. Clyde, Ohio, is their home town. A third brother, Earl, might have been a painter had he cared; he is now in the United States Navy.

Sherwood was a forceful, pushful boy, "jobby and swatty," turning his hand to anything, making a living anyhow from selling the Cincinnati *Inquirer* to working on a farm; from a cold-storage job in Chicago to managing a baseball team. He enlisted for the Spanish-American War: he was one of those who policed Cuba. Then he went to Wittenberg College; he was a good debater, and leader of the college—always, you see, a go-ahead fellow; soon he drifted into advertising and—writing. At this moment he is in Alabama finishing a novel.

I saw him last in his brother's studio. The talk about art and life was fierce. Sherwood was restless because he wanted to read us a short story he had just finished. At a late hour we succumbed. It was a fine story and he read it wonderfully, hammering the points at us, standing. I reflected that the authors I know in Hampstead, Middlesex, never read their stories aloud. They endeavour to convey the idea (this is camouflage) that their stories are not worth reading and hardly worth writing. That is the way of authors in Hampstead, Middlesex. In Winesburg, Ohio, authors are different.

### 3. GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

SOON after the beginning of the present century I happened to be in Italy. Arriving at Venice I instructed a gondolier to convey me to the Hotel Danieli, which, as everybody knows, has an Anglo-Saxon savour. I was tired of macaroni and Italian newspapers: my system called for a chop and the *Times*.

I chose a secluded seat in the dining-room and was waiting patiently for my chop à la Edward VII when a party of Italians noisily entered and seated themselves at an adjoining table. They were talking all at once, and wildly, as they approached; and they continued to talk all at once, and wildly, as they tucked their napkins into the space between the neck and the collar; they talked on without cessation. Realising that my fancy for an evening of Anglo-Saxon savour would not be gratified, I amused myself by awaiting an answer to the sporting question —“How long can they keep it up?”

I am not so foolish as to approve or disapprove of Anglo-Saxon taciturnity, or to approve or disapprove of Italian vivacity. Each is indigenous, racial. But listening (I could not help overhearing; as one cannot avoid, on an August night, overhearing the crickets) to those voluble Italians I felt how much more intense a social pleasure the Latin derives from

life than the Anglo-Saxon. They talked as if talking mattered; they scattered ideas, they flashed comments, they behaved to each other as if each had something to contribute to art and life. Soon they were talking about the flowers that decorated their table. My meagre knowledge of Italian told me that, even if they had not handled the blossoms and expatiated upon their beauty. One of the party, dropping into English, spoke of "savage flowers." Not until the next morning did I realise that he meant wild flowers. Soon the conversation turned to poetry, and I caught the names Tasso and Carducci. When they spoke of Carducci all turned to a slight, short, animated bald-headed man who sat at the head of the table. Throughout the evening they had paid him especial deference, but with the name of Carducci he seemed suddenly to assume the rôle of a king, and he talked, oh, how he talked! I have never heard anything like it. I should not have thought that the human mentality could fashion thoughts so quickly, or that human lips could utter them so rapidly. It was wonderful, and it was like music—such cadences, such spasms of prose melody. The soup passed, the fish came, and still he talked. Once I thought that no utterance was so musically rapid as Sarah Bernhardt's. But he beat her. I forgot my chop, I forgot my *Times*, I beckoned the waiter, one of those polyglot people who speak no language, but something of every tongue.

"Who is he?" I whispered. "Do you know?" The waiter looked at me curiously, patronisingly—

as the Irish policeman looked when I asked him which was Boston Common and answered, "He with the bald head and the (his fingers pantomimed the upword turn of fierce moustachios)—he? That is d'Annunzio—the great Gabriele d'Annunzio."

Many years have passed since then, and during the period I have acquainted myself, indifferently well, with the novels, plays and poems of Gabriele d'Annunzio. Frankly, if I had consulted my own choice, I do not suppose that I should ever have opened a book by him. Amorists do not interest me, and although I fully admit the literary skill and subtlety of "Il Trionfo del Morte," of "Le Vergini delle Rocce," of "Il Piacere," which have all been translated into English, they do not please me; worse, they are unpleasant. To me they narrowed life, they exaggerated bits and left whole tracts much more interesting, untouched, unexplored. It was like being confined in a small, overheated room heavy with perfume. I remembered, when I returned "Il Trionfo del Morte" to the library, a copy of "Tom Jones" happened to be lying on the table. I turned the pages, inhaled drafts of wholesome air and swept out into tracts of broad humanity. I took the book to a chair, and at the end of an hour d'Annunzio, in spite of his amazing gifts of analysis and his power of word painting, was forgotten.

To follow a course of d'Annunzio with a course of George Eliot is to understand the difference between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon. I am not proud,



I hope that I do not consider myself better than anybody else, but, nevertheless—

I thank the goodness and the grace  
That on my birth has smiled  
And made me in this troubled place  
An Anglo-Saxon child.

Why, then, the reader may ask, trouble about d'Annunzio—why not spend your leisure time with George Eliot, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, and Kate Douglas Wiggin? The answer is that the true Bookman is international. He must know something about letters everywhere, and it would be mere stupidity to ignore one whose reputation as an artist is as great as his notoriety as a man. Of him a countrywoman has said: "For thirty years Europe has been aghast at d'Annunzio's escapades, which have served to make him the arch-type of the decadent superman of the 1890's." This may have served as a description of him before the war, but his daring and heroism as an airman revealed a new side in d'Annunzio. He, a man past middle age, rose to be one of the first airmen of the day, and, as if that were not enough, he astounded, and secretly, against their judgment, ingratiated the world with the wild adventure of—Fiume.

When that folly was at its height I picked from a friend's shelves his "La Figlia di Jorio," a pastoral thirteenth century tragedy which was issued in English in 1907, thinking that I would make one more brave attempt to be captured by Gabriele d'Annunzio. No. I went labouriously through it. I

yawned. And having finished it I turned for relief and reward to a re-reading of John Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln."

Next day a piece of good fortune befell me. I met an Italian-American, now an American citizen, who has been living in the United States for twenty years. I unburdened myself to him about Gabriele d'Annunzio; I explained to him how the pastoral tragedy "La Figlia de Jorio" had wearied me. He smiled, he brushed away my anxieties. "It's a sheer waste of time," he said, "to read d'Annunzio in English. His plots are nothing, his characterisations are on one string only. It is for his language we read him, his magical Italian, his cunning use of words, his mastery of rhythm, his gift of resuscitating old forms of verse and inventing new ones. Why in 'Fuoco' it is calculated that he has added a thousand words to the current Italian vocabulary. I read him with delight, as you read Swinburne, for the sound, not for the sense. He ought never to have been translated. You can't translate d'Annunzio. It's absurd. Apart altogether from his work as poet, playwright and novelist, there is the man himself. You can't place him; you can't describe him. He seems to be compounded of flame, of fire that nothing can quench. Why was the Italian Government lenient with him about the Fiume escapade? Because everybody in Italy knows how much the country owes to him. His fiery speeches, rhetoric you would call them, brought Italy into the war; his 'Laudi,' songs in praise of Italy, roused his countrymen to fervour; and what episode of the war was

more magnificent than his flight to Vienna? He was the leader of the escadrille; he hovered over the city; he swooped low and dropped his leaflets. He had written them himself in his impassioned prose. The leaflets said: 'We might have dropped bombs; we drop messages of warning, we airmen, we poets.' Oh, yes, I know all about him, his wildness, his waywardness, his wilfulness, but he is a great poet and a great man. Blame him as you wish, like or dislike him, but for pity's sake don't read him in English. And if ever you have the chance—just hear him talk."

Thinking it all over, I was fortunate in dropping in to dinner at the Hotel Danieli, Venice, one night at the beginning of the present century. In future, when anybody says to me—"Have you read Gabriele d'Annunzio's latest?" I shall reply—"No, but I have heard him talk."

#### 4. WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR

**I**N July, 1919, American newspapers proclaimed the following in bold headlines—"Viscount Astor Goes into Seclusion. Former American in Mystery House at Brighton, England, Bars All Callers." Then followed the article, "a good story," clever journalism, inaccurately accurate, and all that.

This fal-lal of news, flashed by cable, omnivorously read, merely meant that an elderly gentleman, bored by society, as are most of us, had taken a house at Brighton, one of the healthiest places in England, and was there engaged in—cultivating his garden.

That venerable phrase meant, in this case, pursuing literature. Others have done this without troubling the cable, or making any particular stir in the world; but William Waldorf Astor, a British peer, with the pleasant title of Viscount Astor of Hever Castle, had the misfortune to be one of the richest men in the world; so his harmless occupation of cultivating literature, with the ordinary safeguards, encouraged some lively journalist to flash the words "Mystery House" across the Atlantic. Also to inform Americans (it was naughty of William Waldorf to become a British citizen) that a formidable person, something between a gamekeeper and a family retainer, "parades before the 'Mystery

House,' to warn off callers." Surely, reader, that is what you and I would do if we could afford it. Boat owners at Coney Island and Yarmouth Sands also warn off callers but they can afford to issue their warning cheaply: they merely write on the inside of their boats when drawn up for hire—"Keep out! This means you!"

Viscount Astor of Hever was not gregarious. Few millionaires are. His public appearances were few after he became a British subject, and of the crowds who frequent the sea front at Brighton or the few who visit the purlieu of the Tudor village that he aimed to create around Hever Castle, probably not 5 per cent knew that the tall Solitary, engrossed in reflections, indifferent to passers-by, very lonely, was Lord Astor. And perhaps not 1 per cent knew that he was a man of letters—or would have been if he could.

Writing was always his hobby, and the hobby of a millionaire is a serious matter. When I, in an editorial capacity, knew him, now some years syne, I was aware that he always had some literary work on hand, usually stories, long and short. The life of today presumably did not interest him: in each of his literary efforts his mind rolled back a few hundred or a few thousand years, and he produced literature garbed in what was known in the nineties as Wardour Street English. Lest his fellow millionaires may think I am romancing, I beg to cull from "Who's Who" a list of William Waldorf's literary productions: "Valentino, a Story of Rome"; "Sorza, a Historical Romance of the Six-

teenth Century in Italy"; "Pharaoh's Daughter, and Other Stories."

Parts of the longer books I have read and some of the shorter stories, and I frankly admit that they did not carry me off my feet; but neither do the romances of William Morris. Lord Astor had not the antient knack of Maurice Hewlett, who defiantly refuses to allow us to be bored by the past. But Mr. Hewlett can also write vividly of the present. That, I imagine, was impossible to Lord Astor. His heart was in a leisurely world of long ago: his heart was in the Hever Castle recreated to look as it looked in Tudor times.

Yet it was ordained that this mediævalist who left America to be quiet (so they say) should have been the cause of one of the most revolutionary and exciting affairs in London journalism.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, still running, has a long, honourable and versatile career. It has been in many a skirmish, many a fight. In 1893 a bomb fell. The bomb was in the shape of a letter from the proprietor announcing that he had sold the *Gazette* and the *Budget*. The name of the buyer was not disclosed. For months he was the journalistic dark horse of the day; but it was whispered that he had unlimited wealth, that he was determined to make the *Gazette* and the *Budget* the most wonderful daily and weekly of the period, and that he was going to add to them a monthly—the *Pall Mall Magazine*.

Mystery enwrapped the enrolment of the staff. They were engaged by a handsome lawyer and a

handsomer financier; they were handsomely paid and told not to talk; but the principals were bidden to Carlton House Terrace, where a sedate butler conducted them into the presence of Henry Cockayne Cust, Member of Parliament, with a dashing maiden speech to his credit, heir to the Earldom of Brownlow, and one of the most talented and charming young men of the day. He announced himself as the new editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and he asked me if I would be editor of the *Pall Mall Budget*; he spoke of wonderful new offices, amazing new printing machines, a program to beat the band, and he let out that the dark horse was the Hon. William Waldorf Astor of America.

Those were days. Money was no object. The editors of the three publications could spend what they liked. They did. They reveled in the novelty of seeking the best and buying it. And periodically each of the editors paid a ceremonious visit to the proprietor. The invitation was issued by Mr. Astor's confidential solicitor, the day and hour named, and punctually the editor presented himself at the palatial and beautiful offices of the Astor estate, which had been erected upon the Thames Embankment, the choicest site, adjoining the Temple. With due ceremony, handed on from grave factotum to grave factotum, the editor was conducted into the Presence, to be commended or chided, and to receive instructions. One of the editors (I was he), alarmed at the gigantic nature of a journalistic scheme propounded by the proprie-

tor, blurted out: "But that will cost a vast deal of money, sir." There was a pause; then I was vouchsafed this answer, quite friendly, but scornful and final: "Pray, sir, who pays the bill?"

The publications had a brilliant life of a few years. Today only the *Pall Mall Gazette* remains, and it now belongs to another. If Lord Astor's books did not have the circulation of Nat Gould's, at least he had the satisfaction of knowing that he played a hand, dour, domineering, and unprecedented, in the journalism of the nineties.

Many books have since been published that had their origin in the *Gazette*, the *Budget*, and the *Magazine*—Stevenson, Kipling, Wells—and last year, so long after, there was issued from the press another—"Occasional Poems by Henry Cust, edition of 450 copies."

I think he was the first editor to publish a poem daily in his newspaper, and certainly he was the first editor, and perhaps the last, to show his readers that an editor's poems can be better than the others. They were unsigned. But we knew who wrote them—Harry Cust, editor and poet! *Viva adhuc et desiderio pulciora*—Living still and more beautiful because of our longing.



## 5. J. M. BARRIE

**H**E gives his address as Kirriemuir, Scotland, and his club as the Athenæum. That is like him—to say that he lives in the wee Scots village where he was born, which he has made famous; and to link with Kirriemuir membership of the most exclusive club in London. Everybody, of course, knows that he lives in the Adelphi Terrace overlooking the Thames, and that his real club is the nursery of any house.

I saw him first many years ago when he took the call, with his collaborator Marriot Watson, at the end of the performance of "Richard Savage," his solitary failure, and I believe the only time that he has bowed acknowledgments before the curtain. It was not a good play—there was little of the real Barrie in it, and little of the real Marriot Watson. I have forgotten all about "Richard Savage," but I remember the authors distinctly. Marriot Watson is an Australian, tall and burly, with a fuzzy-wuzzy shock of hair, who looks as if he could, like Milo the Cretonian, slay an ox with his fist and eat it at one meal: Barrie is a little man, shy-looking and dark, with black hair, a dome-like forehead, pale as ivory, and eyes that look as if they always want to escape from what he is doing. He reached to Marriot Watson's shoulder: they held hands and

tried to bow: they looked miserable; then the curtain mercifully released them.

Barrie as a man is elusive. You hardly know when he is in a room: you always knew when Richard Harding Davis was in a room. Once I met Barrie at a tea party. That amused me because he is not usually amenable to parlour festivities. For a short time he crept about the purlieus of the company; soon he seated himself on a stool behind the door waiting till somebody should open it; then he slipped out.

He probably enjoyed the affair because he has his own Lob-like thoughts. He is very observant, and examines himself as minutely and whimsically as he examines other people. Have you heard the story of the great literary dinner in London with Barrie in the chair, and the article upon it in the *National Observer* which chaffed Barrie as chairman, and made him look rather silly. The readers of the *National Observer* resented this descent to personalities, and protested that the article chaffing Barrie as chairman was in bad taste, and beneath the dignity of the *National Observer*. The editor received so many angry letters that he was obliged to publish a note saying that the article was written by Barrie himself.

He is like his own Lob in "Dear Brutus"; he loves to spring surprises on rather a dense world. He is the child—a silent, inward-laughing, restless child, learning his lessons in his own way—who will never grow up. There is nothing of Darwin or Spencer in him, nothing of Matthew Arnold or Dean Inge.

The pathos and humour of actual life suffice for him. His war contributions are things like "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," so touching and so moving; his sociological contributions are things like "The Admirable Crichton," which had such a searching moral because it was founded upon, not theories or books, but human nature.

I do not think that he has changed at all in the passage of years. Those early articles in the *St. James' Gazette* had all the Barrie pathos, fancy, and freakish humour. They were a clear stream of tender fancy running amid the muddy wordiness of journalism. Many of them were about—nothing. But it is his way to take a subject that no other author would consider worth troubling about, and make it memorable. What author would find himself able to write about his mother in the way that Barrie treated the little Scots lady in "Margaret Ogilvy"? And who else would have had confidence to write an important play on the subject of "Little Mary"?

The career of J. M. Barrie shows how useless schools of journalism or literature are to produce the real writing man or woman. What were Barrie's assets? An intense love for home, for the Scots folk with whom he grew up; for children; the power to express himself in straightforward, supple English—and, above all else, humour; something of Puck, something of Ariel, something of Charles Lamb and Tom Hood, mixed with Celtic wistfulness and wonder. Add to that sympathy, the observation of a cat watching a bird, with the power

to use everything he sees and feels as material for his craft, with not the slightest wish to be Guy de Maupassant or anybody else, and we begin to understand why the poor Scots boy has become Sir James Matthew Barrie, 1st Bt. cr. 1913. I wager that all this is nothing to him. In his heart he is still Jamie of Kirriemuir, N. B., always making mental notes, hurrying over high tea (scones and jam) so that he may dip his pen in a penny ink bottle, and chuckle over the writing of an Auld Licht Idyll, and, mind you, being a Scot, always with his eye on the goal.

Were he proud-minded, little Barrie might well succumb and feel proud, for a great fellow Scot, Robert Louis Stevenson, expressed himself about the author of "A Window in Thrums" in a way which—here it is. In a letter to J. M. Barrie from Vailima, dated December, 1892, R. L. S. says: "I am a capable artist; but it begins to look to me as if you were a man of genius. Take care of yourself for my sake."

It takes a big man to praise bigly.

## 6. MAX BEERBOHM

WHEN I turn to Max Beerbohm's name in "Who's Who," and read the brief, bald biography, I feel "at home," and also "not at home." I am at home when I read that he was educated at Charterhouse and Oxford: that in the nineties, when he was in the twenties, he issued "The Works of Max Beerbohm" (this was humour); a year or so afterward "More" (this also was humour), and a little later "Yet Again" (additional humor).

This serious fun was like Max, the Max we know, the aloof, silent Max, who was always in the social world and yet not of it; who never grinned through a horse collar, he couldn't, he wouldn't if he could; who smiled wearily at his own fun; who took incredible pains to be the most gentlemanly and the most elusive of humourists, descending from Charles Lamb and Thackeray; and he might almost call Andrew Lang uncle. He is our aristocrat of humour: he is the author of "The Happy Hypocrite" (oh, the delight with which I read it!), of "The Christmas Garland," and of "Zuleika Dobson."

Will he be angry if I, who am his devoted admirer, who peruse him with consistent pleasure; will he cavil if I say that "Zuleika Dobson" does not intrigue me? He himself knows better than anyone

else that, with the best intentions, one cannot ask a ladybird to become a bumblebee.

But I have not yet explained why, in reading Max Beerbohm's brief, bald biography, I find myself in parts of it "not at home." These are the passages: "—m. 1910 Florence Kahn, of Memphis, Tennessee. Address, Villino Chiaro, Rapallo, Italy." There is nothing wrong in this. I myself married a southerner, and I have lived for a time in Italy. But I do not feel at home with him when I visualise him rusticating in the vineyards of Rapallo and perhaps exchanging military witticisms with Capt. Gabriele d'Annunzio. For he was and is a London dandy of the choicest kind; the gentle eminence of St. James's Street, as Lord Beaconsfield called it, not entrancing Rapallo is his walk in life; he, above all others, understands the nice conduct of a clouded cane, the right shape and tilt of a silk hat, and the proper point where a frock coat (now unmodish) should artfully bulge in the bosom. It was he, too, who some years ago tried to make man ashamed of his sombre, faultless evening garb. What was the method, Beau Max? Really, I have forgotten. Was the exquisite coat purple or dark chocolate? The knee breeches I know were black, and I fancy there was a shimmer of moonlight in the hue of the silk stockings. Whatever it was, be sure there was nothing vulgar about the dress, for our author has the quietest of tastes in raiment as in writing. Only a very fastidious mind could wear a smile so bored yet so observant, a shoe so dainty, a buttonhole so chaste.

And yet all these things were, and are, really nothing to him—ephemera—amused attempts to decorate a rather drab and dull world. In reality, our friend, the last of the dandies, for now nobody outside these United States has any money left for clothes, is a very serious and hardworking artist. Have I not seen him in the act of composing one of those dramatic articles for the *Sunday Review*, so wise, so witty, that we were obliged to put down our six-pences for this weekly journal written by crusted Tories for crusted Tories, so long as he was on the staff. He would write, through spacious mornings, on cream laid paper, in large important calligraphy—and the erasures? Ah, the erasures! They were blacked out with an artistic blackness that a war-time censor might have envied. And why? Because the artistic heart of Max would not allow even the printer or the printer's reader to guess at the toil that went to a perfect paragraph.

If Max Beerbohm is a writer, what is Theodore Dreiser? I suppose the only answer is that there are many mansions in the city of writing, and that some are big, rambling and spready, and that others are small, neat and compact.

Read "That Young, Shy Clergyman," by Max Beerbohm. Not only has it humour: it also has the humourous outlook, sly yet virile. (Oh, but Mrs. Gaskell might have been Max's literary mother, and Cranford the place from which he escaped into the larger life of London, where he was tutored by, say, the young Disraeli).

How well I remember his nineties story called

"Enock Soames"—just nothing, just everything. "Enock Soames" was republished in that delightful book, "Seven Men." I had written about it in a "Literary Letter," and the next week was obliged to print the following—

"A correspondent who has been reading Max Beerbohm's 'Seven Men' complains that he has carefully counted the list and can only find six. Ha, ha! I expected that. The seventh man is, of course, Max Beerbohm himself. He is implicit on every page of this delightful book."

"A Christmas Garland," parodies the writers who interest him. He tells us in the preface, a characteristic preface (everything about Max is characteristic), how he came to write these parodies—so alarmingly good. In studying his contemporaries he was "learning rather what to avoid," and "the book itself may be taken as a sign that I think my own style is, at length, more or less formed." You observe the pose, as of a Titan relaxing over a cup of tea. Like Bernard Shaw, he is able, while taking himself conscientiously, seriously, to assume a play-hour manner. He seems indifferent, but inwardly he is tense and almost pushing. Christopher in "The Hand of Ethelberta" might have had Max Beerbohm in mind when he said to Ethelberta—"Make ambition your business and indifference your relaxation, and you will succeed."

He succeeds, but this elegant figure, when you meet him at parties or First Nights, never seems to be giving a thought to success. He seems to live for the humour of life. The effort tires him, but



he never quite gives up. All of his writings have humour, and it is humour of rather a rare kind. In a word, he is a cultured humourist. He can always amuse the stalls, never the gallery. Thackeray is on his shelves, but Dickens—I doubt it.

Dear me, here I have been extolling Max Beerbohm as a writer, and have not yet mentioned the fact that he—also draws. Without doubt he is the first of British caricaturists. In the six exhibitions of his drawings that have been held since 1901 I am sure that he has aroused more laughter than any two other caricaturists. His drawings are a little unkind, very caustic, uncannily penetrating, but oh, so witty! He is a man of affairs, a retiring publicist, as well as a very able draftsman.

Thirdly, he is a humourist in conversation. He it was who invented the story about—let me call him Sir Goahead Blank who, as everybody knows, set himself with the aid of his accomplished wife to climb to the pinnacle of London society. "Sometimes," said Max, "in the middle of the night I am aroused from my slumbers by a faint but persistent noise. I lean upon my elbow listening, then relieved I fall back upon my pillow murmuring to myself—'It is only Sir Goahead Blank, climbing—climbing—climbing.'"

He was the brother, or half-brother, I forget which, these things slip from the memory, of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree. A friend meeting him on the street one day said to him—"Well, Max, and what literary work have you in hand just now?"

To which Max replied—"I am meditating a series

of articles on the brothers of great men. I shall begin with Herbert."

Max Beerbohm is not a new humourist. He evaded the new humour which flickered in London in the nineties, and which, in its American patent, is flaming in the United States today. If I were a magazine editor I should ask Max to write an article on American humour from Artemus Ward to Don Marquis. Then I should retire to Tahiti for a year.

## 7. HILAIRE BELLOC

**I** PREFER Belloc's writings to Chesterton's. He is more disagreeable, but he is saner; he touches my imagination more readily, and he makes me laugh louder and oftener. I have just re-read Belloc's "The Path to Rome," and if you know of any modern book with greater gusto, ampler humour, and a more fervid love of places and characters, I beg you to give me its name. I do not care tuppence about the purpose of his tramp; but I do care immensely for it as a travel book, a wander document from the delightful preface called "Praise of This Book" to the final "Dithyrambic Epithalamium or Threnody" doggerel beginning—

In these boots, and with this staff  
Two hundred leaguers and a half  
Walked I, went I, paced, tripped I,  
Marched I, held I, skelped I, slipped I,  
Pushed I, panted, swung and dashed I,  
Picked I, forded, swam and splashed I,  
Strolled I, climbed I, crawled and scrambled,  
Dropped and dipped I, ranged and rambled. . . .

Is there anybody who has a finer and fuller love of Place? Some years ago there appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* several third-of-a-column essays by him on French places. The series was called "Little Towns": his pen gave personality to each of these

half-forgotten towns. I could walk through France seeking them, and when I find them they will be old friends.

He is a copious writer—very copious—and he writes as easily as he talks; so some of his travel books are less good than others. In a genial mood he might call them “hack work”; but even his potboilers are redeemed by the Bellocian gusto, his broad geographical outlook, his grasp of history, and his sense of form. “Hills and the Sea” was a spacious, breezy volume, and “The River of London” and “The Stane St.” seemed to treat of eternity, not of time.

Perhaps it is not wise to hear him lecture. His matter is solid, sententious, with sardonic and arrogant humorous asides, and his assurance is amazing. In manner he is rather like a bull in a meadow, and as he proceeds, ramping and tossing, although I appreciate his knowledge and power of expression, I feel that I like him less and less. There is too much of the schoolmaster in him, too much of the pope.

He is the kind of man who would not wait to be elected pope; he would take his seat, and then defend it without pity and without compromise. At the opening of the Great War he stepped upon the throne of authority, and the British public, being rather bewildered, hardly knowing where to look for a mentor, accepted Hilaire Belloc as military guide, philosopher, and friend. He issued his ukases in the pages of the weekly journal, *Land and Water*, and as at the very beginning, before any

news had come through, he announced that Germany would sweep through Belgium, we accepted him as One Who Knows. It was easy for him to play that rôle, as that has been the rôle he has always played, ever since he began to write and talk. He prophesied on the future of the war; he commented with an "I-told-you-so manner" on the past; he made his own plans and diagrams. For he is a draftsman, too, a kind of artist (see "The Path to Rome"), who, like lesser men, finds it difficult to make snow mountains sit back in their place in a picture. But the Great War proved too great for the prophets. They all tumbled down. Just when Hilaire Belloc tumbled I know not, for after some months I ceased to read his pontifical prognostications. His three or four books about the war—"The First Phase," "The Second Phase," and so on—have gone into the "not wanted" corner of my library.

Nevertheless Belloc makes a fine showing on my shelves. Whenever I open them I take delight in "Lambkin's Remains," "Mr. Burden," and "The Four Men." These are the works of a Man of Letters who is speaking for himself, not to a brief. His novels are dull. Most Men of Letters want to write fiction, most fail. The teller of tales needs a special kind of outfit. It is quite possible to know all about Romance, and yet not be able to write it. With his history books I am not enamoured. If ever I do want to know anything about "Robespierre," "Danton," "Mary Antoinette," which is not often, I go to a cyclopædia. But

his essays are very readable: they have more structure and less ornament than Mr. Chesterton's.

From 1906 to 1910 he was Member of Parliament, in the Liberal interest, for South Salford; but he was not a success. Members of Parliament, with all their faults, have views, and they object to being driven and herded except by their chiefs. Persuasion may mollify them, but not arrogance. I have not read his book, "The Party System," which he wrote in conjunction with Mr. Chesterton.

Hilaire Belloc was educated at the Oratory School, Edgbaston, and at Balliol College, Oxford, where he was the Brackenbury history scholar and first class in honour history schools. Between school and college he served as a driver in the eighth regiment of French artillery at Toul, Meurthe-et-Moselle. Thus early in life we find him eager in pursuit and in practice of his two chief subjects—the Mind of History and the Mind of Soldiering.

He enlisted in the French Army because he is of French extraction. His father was a French barrister; his mother, an Englishwoman, was descended from Dr. Joseph Priestley, discoverer of "dephlogisticated air" or oxygen. He was also minister of a congregation in Suffolk, and later a citizen of the French Republic. Mr. Belloc, in "Who's Who," is silent about Dr. Priestley. It is his sister, the novelist, who obliges with the information.

Like all well-brought-up Men of Letters, Mr. Hilaire Belloc is also a poet. At the age of 25 he published "Verses and Sonnets," and since then he has, intermittently, broken into verse. One of his

poems is famous and fine. It is in the "Anthologies," and it gives Sussex men an advantage over men of Kent and Surrey. They have no such song as Hilaire Belloc's song in praise of Sussex, of which I quote four of the ten stanzas:

When I am living in the Midlands  
That are sodden and unkind,  
I light my lamp in the evening:  
My work is left behind;  
And the great hills of the South Country  
Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country  
They stand along the sea;  
And it's there, walking in the high woods,  
That I could wish to be,  
And the men that were boys when I was a boy  
Walking along with me.

I will gather and carefully make my friends  
Of the men of the Sussex Weald.  
They watch the stars from silent folds,  
They stiffly plough the field.  
By them and the God of the South Country  
My poor soul shall be healed.

If I ever become a rich man,  
Or if ever I grow to be old,  
I will build a house with deep thatch  
To shelter me from the cold,  
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung  
And the story of Sussex be told.

History, Politics, Warmongering, Essay Writing,  
Controversy—what are they to a song?

## 8. ARNOLD BENNETT

**T**HAT dynamo, Enoch Arnold Bennett, began to function in 1867. He is now very famous and very rich. This is precisely what that dynamo, which has dropped the Enoch, and now calls itself Arnold Bennett, intended should happen. What he intends does happen. Odd, but provable.

I have known three or four great men in my time; all had, incidentally, moods, miseries, and weaknesses. E. A. B., for so, occasionally, he has called himself, is without moods, miseries, or weaknesses. He may have had them once, but being unprofitable for the life work he ordained for himself—to become rich and famous—he at once expelled them from his organisation.

Arnold Bennett is not only a dynamo; he is also the controller of the dynamo. I mean by this that his well-controlled will can order his well-controlled mentality to do exactly what the will dictates. Inspiration, ecstasy, loafing, and inviting the soul—what are such things to him? Nothing. Dynamos don't have ecstasies. Dynamos don't loaf.

He is the controller of the machine that converts mental energy into ten pound (\$50 or so) per thousand words energy. So good are these words, so efficient is the driving force of the dynamo, that one of the modest pleasures of my life is a new Mood,



a new Fantasia, a new Frolic, a new Play, a new Pocket Philosophy, or a new "Miscellaneous" by Arnold Bennett. I am never disappointed. The adventure is like buying goods at an old established, reliable London shop. Whatever you purchase—shirts, braces, or collars—you know that they will be of the best material and the best workmanship, honestly made, "all wool and a yard wide," without fripperies or fal-lals, and the buttons will never drop off. "But," the intelligent reader interjects, "Arnold Bennett, you know, wrote one novel of genius, 'The Old Wives' Tale,' perhaps two." True. He wrote a novel of genius, perhaps two, because the controlling will of this dynamo remarked: "The time has come to write a novel of genius. Begin tomorrow morning at 8.55. That will give you five minutes to wash out your ink bottle and fill it with the excellent anti-corrosive fluid you discovered yesterday."

But I am going too quickly. I am giving the present aspect of the Arnold Bennett edifice without reference to the architectonic intelligence that produced the edifice. It was my privilege, for a time, to watch the edifice rising, and it was as plain as an advertisement in a tram-car, even in those long past days, that the edifice would rise to stately proportions. That was inevitable, because Arnold Bennett was the architect, the builder, the contractor, and the edifice.

Toward the end of last century, I was editing *The Academy* and seeking daily for new writers with nimble pens. My tenure of the editorial chair

(it was the new swivel-kind, and considered rather chic in those days), began in 1896, the year in which Enoch Arnold Bennett succeeded to the editorship of *Woman*, a penny weekly.

Soon I subscribed to *Woman*, not because I was particularly interested in woman, but because this paper was edited with spirit, finesse, and male-sense, and because there was a column of Book Notes signed May, or Rosalind, or Sophy, or some such name, which was so good that I yearned to acquire the writer for the journal I was editing. In a month or two I discovered that May, or Rosalind, or Sophy was E. A. B. or Enoch Arnold Bennett. A little diplomacy, a little flattery and the dynamo presented itself at my office for a talk. Within a few minutes he had told me how my paper should be edited—categorically and vehemently. That was and is Arnold Bennett's way. I have no doubt that since he has become famous and has met many distinguished men he has told Mr. David Lloyd George how to run the British Empire, and Mr. Woodrow Wilson how to circumvent the Republicans, etc., etc. That is his way. His foible is omniscience. Who but Arnold Bennett could or would have found time amid the æsthetic attractions and financial allurements of novel writing and play-writing to instruct the proletariat in "Mental Efficiency" and "How to Live on 24 Hours a Day." That first interview with Arnold Bennett told me that, at any cost, I must persuade him to join our staff: the first article he wrote assured me that at any cost I must keep him there. He never wrote

a superfluous word, every sentence told; he had sound opinions upon everything; and his sledge-hammer manner of stating those opinions, what a relief it was after reading proofs of reviews and articles by the ordinary young man with the ordinary artistic temperament. I never altered a word in an Arnold Bennett proof. And there was rarely an erasure in his copy. His orderly mind said to his obedient hand: "Write my masterly and masterful thoughts in copperplate calligraphy, always with the same number of words upon a page, for though I suspect that I have the artistic temperament I am also a business man, and a man of affairs, and it is those qualities that will advance me quickly in the world."

As a writer of reviews and articles he was capable, conscientious and incredibly hard working. E. A. B. was determined to learn the business of writing thoroughly. He was not going to take any chances. I wonder if he remembers the labour he put into a review of a new translation of Balzac. The article in two parts was a miracle of research and wisdom. He knew it would pay him—wise youth. That labour taught him all he needed to know about the construction of the Balzac novel. He was the most valuable member of the staff. I knew it. He knew it. So I was not surprised when one day he demanded a 50 per cent increase of pay. Of course I meekly assented. I would have assented even if I had been forced to deduct the extra honorarium (that's what we called it: honorarium sounded better than pay) from my own salary. A good

editor knows when he has a good thing. Bennett has described this advance in his honorarium in the preface to "The Truth About an Author," a perfectly delightful and humorously cynical account of his own career which has a merit most autobiographies lack—it is true. Consequently many reviewers disliked it extremely. The passage runs: "I well remember the day when, by dint of amicable menaces, I got the rate raised in my favour from 10 to 15 shillings a column, with a minimum of two guineas an article for exposing the fatuity of popular idols."

He has become a popular idol himself and he has strenuously striven to keep the popular idol class select. In the words of the old song—"There's flies on me, there's flies on you, but there ain't no flies on Arnold." Between 1908 and 1911 under the pseudonym of "Jacob Tonson" in the *New Age* he revalued all the current popular and unpopular idols. Excellent reading were these corybantic essays: excellent reading they are today in the volume called "Books and Persons."

While he was writing them he was himself becoming daily more of a popular idol. Rather piquant, eh? But he was not in the least surprised by his popularity. His will had planned it, therefore the popularity followed.

One afternoon, just after the new century had turned, somewhat impressed by the immense amount of time and effort he was putting into reviews and other ephemera, I said to him, "What about your future? What are you going to do?"

Readily, always ready is E. A. B., he answered, "It's all arranged. I shall write two novels for fame, two for fun, two for money; plays I shall treat in the same way, and I shall live for a time in France and marry a French girl."

Which is precisely what he has done—and more, much more.

The problem now is—What next? Happy thought! Why should he not write another novel of genius? Meanwhile I sit down to re-read his frolic called "A Great Man." It is vastly entertaining; but there is more in it than mere fun. This frolic is a criticism of life. Perhaps there is more in it than Arnold Bennett thinks. Oh, no, that's impossible.

## 9. G. K. CHESTERTON

I HAVE busied myself with many of his many books, and I have wearied of his paradoxes and rhetorical gallivanting. I find the utmost difficulty in getting to the end of an article by him; but I persevere because if he annoys me seven times he stimulates me twice. That is about the proportion. My eyes rove down his columns for the flashes of insight. I read them twice and skip the rest. Yes, he does give us, in everything he writes, these flashes of insight. He cannot help them, they are himself, and apparently he does not know and does not care whether he produces flashes of insight or horse-collar jokes.

Editors regard him as a popular teacher and director, but is he? Those who read him do so for his Chestertonisms, for his fun, for his chunks of common sense, and they try to forgive him for his belief that if you say a good thing once, it becomes twice as good if you say it twice. But they do not read him for his message. What is his message? Does any reader get anything from his book on Divorce, except that in the recesses of his alert hide-and-seek brain he has beautiful mystical thoughts about marriage? Really I do not think it matters much what Mr. Chesterton's subject is. Stardust, Lobsters, Bric-à-brac, Ireland—the subject

is merely a peg to hang Chestertonian daydreams on. His method is simple. He might begin an essay thus: "You may think that in the jungle a tiger acts like a tiger. It does not: it acts like a geranium. The reasons are obvious. . . ."

He is a figure in the literary world in a wider sense than usual. Usually and rightly an author's personal appearance is regarded as something separate and apart from his writings, as sacred as his home life. But Mr. Chesterton's great bulk, massive face, and wild crop of untidy hair are as well known and popular as were Dr. Johnson's appearance and idiosyncrasies. Each is a legend. Chesterton himself is by no means shy on the subject. It is on record that, at a public dinner, a speaker said that Chesterton's chivalry is so splendid that he had been known to rise in a tramcar and offer his seat to three ladies. Mr. A. G. Gardiner, who tells this story, adds that Mr. Chesterton's laughter sounded high above all the rest. "You may laugh with him, and at him, and about him," adds Mr. Gardiner, "but there is one thing, and one only, about which he is serious, and that is his own seriousness."

It is this seriousness that the reader loves to track, to pick it from the bustling byways and the bursting fireworks of his prose; to track in the pages of "Heretics," "Dickens," "Browning," "Tremendous Trifles," "Alarms and Discussions," "A Short History of England," "The Crimes of England," "What's Wrong with the World." I admit that I would not do it for pleasure. A chapter in each book is about all I can assimilate. For, after all,

Chesterton has few surprises. He has a typical Protestant mind, yet he loves ritual, superstition, legends, saints, fairies, and he still believes, so he has told us, that the moon is made of green cheese; he is always for the under dog, the voiceless, and the lost cause; he is a Little Englander, an Englishman who resents Belfast and reacts rhythmically to Dublin.

I have often wondered how the rectory public that subscribes to *The Illustrated London News* likes the page he writes each week and if they approved of the change from the popular erudition of George Augustus Sala, and the cheerful humanity of James Payn. That page, "Our Note Book," was, for a time, handed over to Hilaire Belloc. Strange how these two literary men, these two mediævalists have run together through the present century. Mr. Bernard Shaw noted this and invented a two-faced capering and combative elephant, which he called the "Chester-Belloc."

Mr. Chesterton is the outstanding type of the literary journalist. It is as an essayist that he earns his living and wins his fame. I fancy that he would, if he could, be a maker of romances and draw as near to the success of Stevenson as the public would allow. He does not succeed. I can enjoy passages of "Manalive," "The Flying Inn," "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," and "The Man Who Was Thursday," but reading them through is an effort. They are shaped like romance; they ought to be riotously romantic and funny, but they are not. As



for the Father Brown detective stories, if I want to read such things I go to Sherlock Holmes.

If I were asked to select three of Chesterton's books for a public library, which could not afford the whole of his Brobdingnagian output, my choice would fall upon his "Browning," his "Dickens" and "Irish Impressions."

He has also published poems, sometimes humorous. Indeed, it was as a poet, the author of "The Wild Knight," that I first heard of him. He was a great figure in Fleet Street even in those days, and people would say: "Come, quickly, and you will see Gilbert Chesterton getting out of a cab." Oh, the stories! It is said that he was driving in Paris, and his companion, a novelist-publisher, remarked, "They all seem to know you." To which G. K. C. replied, "Yes, and if they don't they ask." And I remember one evening in London when, to everybody's delight (it is the way of erring human nature to jest at its benefactors) somebody read aloud G. K. C.'s verses on the Shakespeare Memorial Committee. It begins:

Lord Lilac thought it rather rotten  
That Shakespeare should be quite forgotten,  
And therefore got on a committee  
With several chaps out of the city,  
And Shorter and Sir Herbert Tree,  
Lord Rothschild and Lord Rosebery  
And F. C. G. and Comyns Carr,  
Two dukes and a dramatic star. . . .

But as a poet he can be very serious and very fine. It is quite likely that "The Wild Knight" and

"The Ballad of the White Horse" (a ballad that took the bit between its teeth and raced into a book), and his "Lepanto," a poem that has already drifted into the Anthologies, will be read when "Heretics" and "Tremendous Trifles" are forgotten. Somebody should always be standing by his side when he is writing essays, saying, "Gilbert be dull for a bit. Paradox should be a soufflé, not a joint."

## 10. JOSEPH CONRAD

**I**S it, can it be a quarter of a century ago since I sat one summer afternoon on the sands at Sandgate, Kent, with H. G. Wells and Joseph Conrad? Wells was our host. He was living then at the charming Voysey house he had built on the cliff perched between Folkestone and Hythe. I had come from London. Conrad had emerged from the inland farmhouse where he was then living, working at, I fancy, "The Nigger of the Narcissus," which was published in 1897. I remember H. G.'s quick, blue, watching, amused eyes, and intriguing manner with a touch of asperity; such a contrast to Conrad's virility and violence of utterance. I remember watching Conrad dig his hands fiercely into the loose sand, and say, "Ah, if only I could write zee English good, well. But you see, you will see!"

Joseph Conrad is eager and forthright, as prompt in speech as in action, which is what we might expect from a "Master in the Merchant Service" who has spent many years of his life at sea. His literary style is as broad, deep and full as a rolling Atlantic breaker. He handles our sonorous and plangent English with the ease that a captain handles a ship, and yet he is not an Englishman. He is of Polish parentage; he tells how, on long

voyages, he learnt the way to use words in the right way, in the great way, from studying the Bible and Shakespeare; and, as I have said, it was not so many years ago, that he told us how he almost despaired of ever mastering the English tongue. He did it. There is a foreign inflexion in his speech, never in his prose. Milton might have envied the colour of many of his words.

How well I remember the time when his short story, "Youth," first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, about 1901. I read it on a long train journey, and then re-read it, because I was still far from my destination. When I had finished it, I wrote: "Amazing! This may be the best short story of the decade; certainly it is the finest statement in literature of the romantic impact of the East upon the West."

You perceive that I read and re-read "Youth" on a train journey; that is, I gave it my mind and my undivided attention. Perhaps, if I were to read a long novel by Conrad in that way, say "Lord Jim" or "Typhoon," I should admire the innumerable pages as much as I admire slender "Youth"; but a busy man rarely has time to read long novels carefully. Who has? And yet I feel that I ought to read Conrad carefully, as he is a writer's writer, as Manet was a painter's painter, and my young literary friends call him Master. So, when *Land and Water* arrived in America with the first installment of "The Rescue," I said to myself: "Here is a chance to make up my mind about Joseph Conrad. I can read, and re-read this installment of

'The Rescue' in an hour—an hour of my mind and my undivided attention."

To produce such prose requires composure and concentration. And as for the architecture of the opening of this story, I find in it the same kind of method that Mr. Conrad employs in many other of his romances that I have read or skipped. He delights to take some vast, outlying immensity of ocean and sky with hints of land, where little cellular beings called men dwell. You must be patient while he is developing his immensity; then, you will view with relief the introduction, at first hardly more than ejaculations, of the little cellular beings called men into this expanse of immensity, but presently and gradually the man or men become characterised swiftly and neatly. Follows more immensity, and the little men in the vastness begin to assume shape, form and disposition, and so on, and so on, until man takes his place in the Conradian immensity.

\* \* \* \*

Since the above was written I have read in book form "The Rescue," which he began, worked on for a time, and then dropped twenty years ago. I feel about it as I felt about "The Arrow of Gold," and other of Conrad's novels. I am intensely interested in the art with which he drops Man into the Immensity of his landscape, but I am little interested in the story he tells. The opening of "The Rescue" thrilled me as before, but as the story progressed my interest flagged. The art of writing is stronger in Conrad than the art of story-telling.

So with the small book by him called "A Personal Record," telling how "Almayer's Folly" was written, so with the Prefaces to the new editions of his books. I begin with avidity, I seem ever on the threshold of learning something, and becoming a Conrad enthusiast; but the conversion never comes, and I turn with hope to the next Preface, or the next book.

The Conrad enthusiasts are so many that my defection may be overlooked. Once when I was asked which of his works leads me nearest to enthusiasm, I answered "The Nigger of the Narcissus" and the short story "Youth."

The Bible and Shakespeare may have moulded Conrad's style, as his years at sea gave him knowledge of the ways of the ocean, and the men who go down to it in great ships. Is it not wonderful that a Pole should be able thus to fuse manner and material and make romances in an alien tongue? This is a mystery of the craft—or of genius.

You cannot say that reading "The Tempest" gave Conrad his insight into the ways of seafarers; you cannot say that chancing upon a copy of Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls" put John Masefield in the way of writing "Salt Water Ballads" and "The Everlasting Mercy." Chaucer gave him the start, and then followed Shakespeare, Milton, Keats and Shelley. But these were but fuel. The fire was there. So with Conrad. The fire to write was smouldering within him in his Polish home, and the spark came, and the fuel came, as the wind comes, where it listeth.

## 11. KENYON COX

**S**HE had been reading Kenyon Cox's last article. It was on "German Painting." But I doubt if she reached the end of the essay, for the paper wherein it was published had fallen from her hands, and she was almost crying.

"Tut! Tut!" I said. "What is it?"

"Lots of things," she answered, "but chiefly memories. Oh, while people are hailing Kenyon Cox as a great mural painter, to me he was just—a poet."

She turned away. For some reason or another she was disturbed. So I talked.

"Kenyon Cox was a better writer than painter," I said. "He was an artist in words, if you like; he was never an artist in paint. His pictures are commonplace, formal; but, in his writings, he sometimes ascends to the threshold of the Initiates. It is given to few to excel in the two crafts of writing and painting."

"If William Hunt, author of 'Talks on Art,' had been able to paint as well as he wrote about painting, what a great artist he would have been. He it was who, when Oliver Wendell Holmes handed him a Chinese vase, asking if he would like to see it, answered: 'Like to see it? By Gosh, it's one of those dashed ultimate things!' There is more real

appreciation, my dear lady, in that slangy sentence of William Hunt's than in pages of tall writing. Kenyon Cox would have taken a chapter to say it, and please understand that he would have said it charmingly. Hunt was a torrent. Cox was a gliding stream."

Here I paused, because the lady was not listening. "How strange," she said, "and how enviable to be remembered by one little poem. It must be thirty years ago since I first read it. We were living by the sea, a lonely place in a remote part of Europe; and one day, oh, how well I remember it, dear B—— and C—— surprised us with a visit. They were on their honeymoon; they brought us all the news of America, and among other odds and ends a copy of the current *Century* magazine. In it was an essay by Kenyon Cox on 'Early Renaissance Sculpture,' and at the end of it was a poem. I was younger then, and it moved me in a way that few poems have ever moved me. It was inspired by the 'Femme Inconnue,' in the Louvre, and it began:

She lived in Florence centuries ago,  
That lady smiling there.  
What was her name or rank I do not know—  
I know that she was fair.

I have been trying to remember the rest of it, but I can only recall detached lines. Do find it for me. And the sad thing is that I have a copy of it somewhere, and I can't remember where it is hidden—a copy in Kenyon Cox's own handwriting. Oh, how kind he was! It happened like this: Dear



C—— was a friend of Cox's, and, when he returned to America, he told him of my love for the poem. And Kenyon Cox copied it out and sent it to me, but that wasn't all. He added a fourth stanza which the magazine, for some reason or other, did not print. Somebody told me that the Editor thought it was not quite proper. Entre nous, the poet, in that rejected stanza, presses a kiss upon the lips of stone."

The lady laughed through her tears. "I'll have a hunt for the poem tonight," she said, "but I am afraid that I have hidden it away somewhere so carefully that I shall never find it."

Obviously it was my pleasure to track the poem.

I told the girl librarian at one of the New York Branch Libraries about it, and she suggested that I should consult the *Century Magazine* index. That part of my mission failed. I became so interested in the writers of circa 1890 that the time passed without discovery of any reference to "She lived in Florence centuries ago." As for the index, well, you know what indexes are. I have never been able to discover anything I want in an index anywhere. The girl librarian handed me more copies of the *Century*, and offered to help me in the search. I declined graciously. I could not put her to the trouble; but I accepted from her a little lot of books by Kenyon Cox. On the way home, I made a mental note to write an essay, à la E. V. Lucas, inquiring why librarian girls are always kind, and telephone girls are always cross. Perhaps it is because one sees us and the other doesn't.

So behold me that afternoon, engaged on a task a Bookman loves, the task or the joy of dipping into an author with whom one is fairly familiar. I began to browse on Kenyon Cox's "Old Masters and New" and "Artist and Public"; I dipped here and there, feeling sure that I should find somewhere a clue to the lost poem.

There are no surprises in Kenyon Cox, and shall I add, no faults? He is a cultured and scholarly—conformist. Compared with Cox, John Ruskin was a Bernard Shaw, and William Hunt a Clemenceau. Kenyon Cox was always on the side of order and safety. Even his insight was safety first. The old is according to law, and consequently agreeable; the new is irregular, and consequently disagreeable. It might be said of Kenyon Cox in literature, as he says of his contemporaries in painting: "Our most original and most distinguished painters, those who give the tone to our exhibitions and the national accent to our school, are almost all engaged in trying to get back one or another of the qualities that marked the great art of the past."

The new art of the present he disliked extremely. Post-Impressionism was almost evil, Rodin's drawings were almost a disgrace; but I did not dwell on those essays. I turned to where he dallies lovingly with some phase of the great art of the past; there he is quite at home and a charming companion. And so I came at twilight, while the great city hummed below, and the young moon with one lone star peeped out above, to his essay on "Sculptors of the Early Italian Renaissance." If I had to choose

one essay by Kenyon Cox for an Anthology, this would be my choice. He loved the subject; his love passes on to us. I read pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 with growing delight and, when I turned to page 8—there, at the end, was the poem. My feelings can hardly have been excelled by Peary when he found the North Pole. There it was—and with the missing last stanza:

## THE "FEMME INCONNUE" OF THE LOUVRE

She lived in Florence centuries ago,  
That lady smiling there.  
What was her name or rank I do not know—  
I know that she was fair.

For some great man—his name, like hers, forgot  
And faded from men's sight—  
Loved her—he must have loved her—and has wrought  
This bust for our delight.

Whether he gained her love or had her scorn,  
Full happy was his fate.  
He saw her, heard her speak; he was not born  
Four hundred years too late.

The palace throngs in every room but this—  
Here I am left alone.  
Love, there is none to see—I press a kiss  
Upon thy lips of stone.

Surely, we may absolve that Editor of thirty years ago of prudery; surely he omitted the last stanza, because it is weak—an anti-climax. The poem ends at "Four hundred years too late."

## 12. STEPHEN CRANE

**T**O have written "The Red Badge of Courage" before he was 25; to have produced all of his work ere the age of 30—is wonderful.

Slender, quiet, and neat; unaffected, unromantic, and unobtrusive; always watchful yet always seeming weary and brooding, with the penetrating blue eyes of the visionary—so I saw, and remember Stephen Crane—vividly. That was in the summer of 1899.

We were thrown together under circumstances that have made a lasting impression upon me. He had rented Brede Place, in Sussex, and there Mr. and Mrs. Crane entertained in a way that was very original if seemingly rather extravagant.

Brede Place, I should explain, is one of the oldest manor-houses in Sussex, standing in a vast untidy park. At that time the owners had not lived there for some years; house and park had been neglected, and it would have cost a small fortune to give the place the patted and petted look of propriety in which Englishmen love to garb their estates. How old Brede Place is I know not, but I well remember a stand for falcons in the outer entrance hall, that has survived all changes! The house has grown; wings have been added; the floors are of different levels; you lose your way; you peer from the win-

dow embrasures to learn where you are, and seeing the thickness of the wall you wonder at the men of old time who built so perdurably.

In recent years Brede Place has been put in order; today you may see tennis played on the lawns, and hear Debussy in the parlours. But when Stephen Crane rented it all was delightfully muddled and mediæval. Why he took Brede Place I know not. He liked adventures and new experiences, and Brede Place, Sussex, was a change from Mulberry Street, Newark, New Jersey.

He found himself in a far-flung colony of writers. Crane was a fine horseman, and within riding, cycling or driving distance (motors were uncommon then) lived Henry James, H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Hueffer, and others. They were proud to have the author of "The Red Badge of Courage" among them, and he had lately achieved another brilliant success with "The Open Boat." That year I was spending my summer holiday at Winchelsea, and as I had been writing in *The Academy*, with admiration, of this young American who had captured literary England, it was natural that I should wish to see him. So one day in full summer, when the hops were head high, and all the country decked with bloom and greenery, I cycled over to Brede Place.

Stephen Crane was seated before a long, deal table facing the glorious view. He had been writing hard; the table was littered with papers, and he read aloud to me in his precise, remote voice what he had composed that afternoon. One passage has

remained with me—about a sailor in a cabin, and above his head swung a vast huddle of bananas. He seemed over-anxious about the right description of that huddle of bananas; and it seemed strange to find this fair, slight, sensitive youth sitting in the quiet of Brede Place writing about wild deeds in outlandish places.

Our next meeting was amazing. I received an invitation to spend three days in Brede Place; on the second day a play was to be performed at the school-room in Brede Village a mile away up the hill. This play we were informed, *sub rosa*, had been written by Henry James, H. G. Wells, A. E. W. Mason and other lights of literature.

Duly I arrived at Brede Place. Surely there has never been such a house party. The ancient house, in spite of its size, was taxed to the uttermost. There were six men in the vast, bare chamber where I slept, the six iron bedsteads, procured for the occasion, quite lost in the amplitude of the chamber. At the dance, which was held on the evening of our arrival, I was presented to bebies of beautiful American girls in beauteous frocks. I wondered where they came from. And all the time, yes, as far as I remember, all the time our host, the author of "The Red Badge of Courage," sat in a corner of the great fireplace in the hall, not unamused, but very silent. He seemed rather bewildered by what had happened to him.

Of the play I have no recollection. The performance has been driven from my mind by the memory of the agony of getting to Brede village. It was a

pouring wet night, with thunder and lightning. The omnibuses which transported us up the hill stuck in the miry roads. Again and again we had to alight and push, and each time we returned to our seats on the top (the American girls were inside) I remarked to my neighbour, H. G. Wells, that Brede village is not a suitable place for dramatic performances.

Many people reread "The Red Badge of Courage" during the Great War, and the strange thing is that this work of imagination seems more real than the actual accounts of the fighting in Flanders. Yet this is not strange. The imagination is able to give a verisimilitude to invented happenings that a report, however accurate, does not achieve. The artist selects. He treats only that which is necessary to produce his effects. Stephen Crane was an artist. He imagined what he himself, an inarticulate, bewildered unit in the Civil War, would think, feel, and do; he projected his imagination into the conflict, and the result was that astonishing work—"The Red Badge of Courage."

The Civil War stories in "The Little Regiment" volumes are as good as "The Red Badge," but the editor or publisher who asked him to write essays on "The Great Battles of the World" did not know his business. They are routine work. His imagination was not moved, as it was in "The Red Badge," and in "Maggie," the first book he wrote, which was published when he was 21.

It was natural that Crane should want to see actual warfare, and editors were eager to employ him. So

he saw the Græco-Turkish War, and the Spanish-American War, but nothing vital came from these experiences. His imagination worked better in a room than on a battlefield.

Yet one thing came out of his experiences of real warfare—one sentence. When he returned he said: "‘The Red Badge’ is all right."



### 13. WILLIAM HENRY DAVIES

**D**AVIES is a real poet, an authentic poet, a simple-minded poet in the noblest sense. As a man and as a poet he is the most innocent-minded of living writers. He sings because he has to sing, as a bird sings, without premeditation, unaware that people are listening, and indifferent if they are. He has had a remarkable life, very remarkable, but before discussing it I should like to copy out a piece by him called "Sheep."

#### SHEEP

When I was once in Baltimore,  
A man came up to me and cried,  
"Come, I have eighteen hundred sheep,  
And we will sail on Tuesday's tide.

"If you will sail with me, young man,  
I'll pay you fifty shillings down;  
These eighteen hundred sheep I take  
From Baltimore to Glasgow town."

He paid me fifty shillings down,  
I sailed with eighteen hundred sheep;  
We soon had cleared the harbour's mouth,  
We soon were in the salt sea deep.

The first night we were out at sea  
Those sheep were quiet in their mind;  
The second night they cried with fear—  
They smelt no pastures in the wind.

They sniffed, poor things, for their green fields,  
They cried so loud I could not sleep:  
For fifty thousand shillings down  
I would not sail again with sheep.

This poem is not a fancy. It happened. The poet heard the sheep crying on one of the many voyages he took when he was a cattleman helping to convey cargoes of cattle and sheep from America to England. It is all set down in that remarkable book by William Henry Davies, called "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp," wherein the Odyssey of his vagrancy in America and Canada, extending over many years, is told with the artlessness and simplicity that mark his poems. A Welshman, born in Monmouthshire, this natural truant, this wanderer without luggage, this pedlar, hawker, poet-tramp, stands out as an Original. Social conventions, the nice proprieties of civilised life, were no more to him than they are to a dog or a bird. He touched life through his passion for reading and roaming—that was all. Always he looked forward to the life of a student, but he delayed. Throughout his wanderings there were long periods when he never opened a book, when he was content just to drift from county to county, from state to state, and watch the world.

While still a youth his grandmother left him an annuity of ten shillings (about two and a half dollars) a week, which sum, to the unambitious serenity of his mind, seemed a competence, relieving him from the trouble of earning a living. He did not always draw the annuity; sometimes he would al-

low it to accumulate, so again and again when he returned to England from America he would find himself a capitalist.

He reduced life to its simplest elements. Such bogies as—the police, doss houses, jails, poorhouses, the companionship of thieves and wasters did not disturb him. Airily and companionably he mixed with them, but they did not change or affect Davies. He went to America because it was far away, large and potential; he stayed there several years, tramping and travelling long distances without a ticket, “working here and there as the inclination seized me, which, I must confess was not often.” Then he set out for the Klondyke, thinking that there “the rocks were of solid gold,” but meeting with disaster (he lost a foot in a railway accident) he returned to London and lived in Rowton House, a doss house in Newington Butts, where the charge is sixpence a night. At the end of two years he left Rowton House for less expensive quarters at The Farm House, Kennington, as he had handed over two of his ten shillings a week to a needy relative.

At this point Mr. George Bernard Shaw enters as the Good Fairy of the Davies history. In the year 1905 he received by post a volume of poems from a stranger. It was marked “Price half a crown” (60 cents), and was accompanied by a curt, civil letter, asking Mr. Shaw either to send half a crown or return the book. Mr. Shaw read the book, determined that Mr. Davies was “a real poet,” “a genuine innocent writing odds and ends of verse about odds and ends of things,” showing no sign that he

had ever read anything, "otherwise than as a child reads." Mr. Shaw bought several copies of the poems and sent them to literary friends. Then the reviews began, interviews followed, and this tramp, this pedlar, this griddler, this hobo, this cattleman, this poet, this child of innocence, awoke one morning in his doss house (he always tried for the bed next to wall, so that he would not have a sleeping tramp on each side) to find himself famous. He became a Man of Letters (the eight shilling a week still kept him, including postage and paper, and he wrote his *Life*—"The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp," to which George Bernard Shaw contributed a characteristic preface, telling, with amazement, the story of finding Davies through the post.

There is little about literature in the autobiography. Throughout the pages Davies is content just to live with the idea, perhaps lurking in his mind, of one day writing out the poems he was forever making. Not till his wandering years were over did he seriously "commence author." One day in Rowton House he sat down to write a tragedy in blank verse called "The Robber"; this was followed by a long poem wherein dumb nature meets to impeach man for his cruelty; then he wrote other things, including hundreds of short poems. No publisher would take them. He remained in obscurity, discouraged and unknown, adding to his income by hawking and peddling, until one day he had the happy idea of drawing a sum in advance on his annuity, printing his poems at his own cost, and offer-

ing the book, through the post, to eminent littérateurs, on sale or return.

Now he is arrived. He is a successful poet; he lives in the eminent respectability of Bloomsbury, and there, as it is a neighbourly section of the world, I may hope one day to meet him. There, too, another poet-tramp, an American, Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, will, I trust, present himself some day during his prolonged sojourn in London. I have just reread Lindsay's delightful tramp book, "Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty." It is so different from the book by Davies. Lindsay is self-conscious; he has a mission; his book is the work of a literary man, exuberant, gay, who sets out with the intention of writing a book about his tramp from Springfield, Illinois, to Kansas and back. Davies had no thought of writing a book. His "Super-Tramp" is written in the way that an unmoral, adventurous child might tell his mother how he spent a holiday. So his poems were written—just to tell himself simple and beautiful things about the world, about unhistoric, homely men, women and children, their sojourning, their struggles, their sorrow and their joy—

The strangest moment of my life  
Is when I think about the poor;  
When, like a spring that rain has fed,  
My pity rises more and more.

The flower that loves the warmth and light,  
Has all its mornings bathed in dew,  
My heart has moments wet with tears,  
My weakness is they are so few.

#### 14. RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

I MET him once. It was a strange encounter. He spoke but five words. They were self-revealing. From the way he spoke those five words I knew approximately the kind of man that Richard Harding Davis was.

The time was the month of January, 1900. Great Britain's trouble was then the Boer War, and the centre of the trouble was the siege of Ladysmith. Hemmed within the Natal village was General White with 10,000 troops and several war correspondents including young George W. Steevens of the *Daily Mail*, the best war correspondent of the day, perhaps the best in the annals. One Saturday morning of that bleak January the heliograph flashed the news from Ladysmith, and the cable flashed it to London, that George W. Steevens had passed away. He was my dear friend, so I took a train for Merton Abbey, Surrey, where in peace time I had spent happy days with Mr. and Mrs. Steevens.

Mrs. W. K. Clifford was with Mrs. Steevens. We did our best, and were beginning to calm and comfort her when Alfred Harmsworth was announced, plain Alfred Harmsworth, then, untitled, founder and proprietor of the *Daily Mail*. He was very fond of George, and he was deeply distressed at

what had happened, so distressed that I found the scene too painful to witness. I could do nothing. I was in the way, so I pushed open the French window and wandered into the garden. There was a long pond or lake in the grounds (Merton Abbey, associated with Nelson and Lady Hamilton, is now pulled down) and at the head of the water was an heroic statue. Posed in front of the statue I observed a handsome man standing in a handsome attitude.

Being a habitu  of the house, and knowing that Mrs. Steevens was particular about preserving the privacy of the historic grounds, I suppose that my eyebrows lifted ever so little, as if to say: "Pray, sir, what are you doing here?"

His voice rang out: "I am Richard Harding Davis."

The fine words admitted of no argument, no discussion. It was final. He meant it to be so. If I did not know who Richard Harding Davis was that was my fault, my loss. He was Richard Harding Davis, and the world, including myself, must know it.

I raised my hat and prepared to retire. There was nothing else to do. He raised his hat; we bowed again, both enjoying the exchange of courtesies. The only mistake I made was in not handing him my card. He would have appreciated that useless but proper addition to the ceremony. Later I learned that Mr. Alfred Harmsworth had invited Richard Harding Davis to accompany him in his motor car on the visit to Mrs. Steevens, so that

he might give him instructions at leisure. Mr. Alfred Harmsworth never wasted time. He had decided to ask Richard Harding Davis to take George's place as correspondent of the *Daily Mail* in South Africa. The rest is history. Davis saw the relief of Ladysmith, and presently joined the enemy "to watch," as he laconically expressed it, "the Boers fighting the same men I had just seen fighting them."

Richard Harding Davis was not a stylist, and he had little love or reverence for the tongue that Shakespeare spoke and Milton ennobled. He just used it as a vehicle for the expression of the interest that he, a Man of Action, took in life. He liked the kind of people and things that Kipling likes, but when a headstrong critic called him the American Kipling, and another said that his story called "Gallegher" is "as good as anything in Bret Harte," these gentlemen wrote nonsense. Kipling, like Davis, graduated from newspapers, but Kipling is a genius and nothing that Davis ever wrote approaches within sight of the wonder of Bret Harte's Californian tales.

But Richard Harding Davis was a very remarkable man, and few newspapers have ever had such a prize reporter and correspondent. One of the finest and most awesome stories written during the Great War was his account of the entry of the Germans into Brussels; and one of the best pieces of descriptive writing is his account of how he saved himself from being arrested by the Germans, and shot as a spy, through remembering, at the critical moment, that



he was wearing a hat marked with the name of a well-known New York hatter, thus proving his identity, saving his life, and giving him a typical Davis newspaper story.

His sense of the dramatic was vivid; he saw himself as a person in the drama; and when he met something interesting and dramatic he could make a vivid story out of it, understandable of all men, without circumlocution, and without art.

He was an ideal magazine writer, and he had the sense of personal honour, of doing one's job, of playing the game, of seeing a trouble through and emerging victorious, that made him popular with every kind of reader. How well I remember the emotion and joy with which I first read his story called "The Bar Sinister," telling how a street dog, a mongrel, proved to be a champion with a perfect pedigree. It is beautifully told. I have given away copies of "The Bar Sinister" merely to watch the reader's heightened colour and air of gratification as this fine story unfolds. And "Gallegher," telling how the printer's devil made good, came through, "beat the town," how gay and full of gusto it is. "Gallegher" was enormously popular. Dickens would have liked it. Henry James, too. Every condition of man and woman likes "Gallegher" and "The Bar Sinister."

He was as well known in London as in New York. Indeed, he was known throughout the world, and he took good care not to let the world forget him. No war was complete without Richard Harding Davis. Correctly dressed, according to martial cos-

tume (he was no blue-serge suit and umbrella war correspondent), he acted as war correspondent in the Turkish-Greek, Spanish-American, South African, Russian-Japanese wars, and he went twice to the Great War. Cuba, the Congo, Egypt, Greece, Central America—the efficient R. H. D. was everywhere, and always in the limelight.

His greatest limelight effect was the Jagers episode. It was a splendid piece of bold advertisement, mixed with the fun of doing it, so swift and successful that the advertisement was condoned. He asserted that he did not mean the public to know of the Jagers journey which carried the name of Richard Harding Davis to the ends of the earth. I am sure that he would have been annoyed if it had not become known. At that time the District Messenger Service was a new toy in London. If you wished to send a quick letter from Kensington to Kew, the post being too slow, all you had to do was to call up a District Boy Messenger, pay him and dispatch him on his errand. Jagers, aged 14, had been employed by Mr. Davis. He was a boy of the type of Gallagher, surprised at nothing, ready for anything. One day Richard Harding Davis, after debating with some friends at the Savoy Hotel whether anything would startle or deter Jagers from doing anything in the way of business, he casually gave Jagers a letter addressed to a lady in Chicago. Jagers went, delivered the letter and beat the post. Some months later Richard Harding Davis married the lady.

His interests were in the present, in people who are

doing adventurous, odd and amusing things. From the abundance his quick brain and moving eye selected the best magazine features, and he turned them into copy with confidence and brilliance, quite aware that Richard Harding Davis was doing it, and that in his opinion, what he did was the best of its kind.

On February 29, 1916, dire days for the Allies, he wrote to his brother—

The attack on Verdun makes me sick. I was there six weeks ago in one of the forts, but of course could not then nor can I now write of it. I don't believe the drive can get through for two reasons, and the unmilitary one is that I believe in a just God.

A brave man, a chivalrous man, an honest man, who never doubted how the Great War would end. He did not see the promised end, but he helped it on, "doing the best and finest work of his career in the cause of the Allies . . . fretful for the morning that he might again take up the fight." So writes his brother, who has written his *Life*.

## 15. JOHN DRINKWATER

I AM an old playgoer, but I cannot recall, in all the plays I have seen, a moment so tense with spiritual significance as the fall of the curtain at the close of the first scene on Lincoln kneeling in prayer against the parlour table. It is so simple, so perfectly simple, and inevitable. The pageant-play called "The Wayfarer," which, at great cost and with amazing scenic effects, sets out diligently to seek such moments, fails to find one. It needed a poet like Drinkwater to pierce through externals to reality, and it needed an actor like Frank McGlynn to be in the character, not outside, acting it.

There must be many dramatic authors who, in face of the success of "Abraham Lincoln: a Play," are saying to themselves, "Why did I not think of this as a subject, why did not I write a play on Abraham Lincoln, why should an Englishman do it? These be mysteries. Yet are they? Did not an Englishman, Lord Bryce, write "The American Commonwealth," which eminent Americans have called "the best treatise on American government?" Is it not because distance and aloofness from a subject give clearness and simplicity of vision? The man on a hilltop looking down upon a wood can write a better account of it than the man who is plodding

through the undergrowth. The walker sees the trees; the man on the hill sees the shape of the wood, and its bearing on the country. Some Americans who saw the play in London were angry because the local colour was sometimes wrong, because there were anachronisms, because the "hired girl" was called a servant-maid, because General Grant was made to say, "My word!" instead of "By gad, sir," and so on. As if such ephemera matter. The shape and bearing of the wood is not affected because two or three of the trees are misnamed. I am reminded of the British colonel who protested that he would never read another word of Kipling "because, By gad, sir, the fellow is all wrong about the number of buttons on the tunics of the Heavy Dragoons."

Why was John Drinkwater, an English poet, not very well known, able to do it, when there are so many able dramatists who should have been able to write a play around Lincoln? Is it because he is a poet and an idealist, who had a vision of Lincoln as God's man, and kept that vision clear and clean?

In part that answers the question, but it is not the whole answer. Let us look at John Drinkwater's past. He was born a poet, not by any means a great poet, but one whom the Muse had called, touched lightly, and to whom she had also given the philosophic, spiritual, humanist outlook, say of Matthew Arnold and William Watson. That, by itself, is not a very marketable equipment for life. Most poets of this kind earn a living in a govern-

ment office, the Board of Trade, or the British Museum, and compose poems in the luncheon hour, or during week-ends, adding to their income by writing for the *Spectator* and *The Nineteenth Century*.

This John Drinkwater did; I mean he wrote for high-class weeklies and magazines; but he has also moved across a much more substantial and fertile background—the Theatre. He may be said to have been called cradled in the Theatre. His father was manager to Granville Barker; and although the early years of his life were spent clerking in Assurance companies (safety first is the way of fathers all the world over), he eventually stepped into his rightful niche as Co-Founder of "The Pilgrim Players," and eventually as Producer, etc., to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. There he learnt practically and strenuously the business of writing, producing, and acting in plays. The poet in him had to face facts. Lucky poet!

One day he read Lord Charnwood's monograph on "Lincoln." He took fire, and wrote "Abraham Lincoln: a Play." He was ripe for it. The poet in him dreamed the dream of Lincoln, the playwright and the actor in him curbed and directed the poet. It was all so natural; the circumstances synchronised; and the world, tired of self-seekers, of politicians masquerading as statesmen, of man-made dogmas masquerading as Faith, hungering for just such a play, found it in "Abraham Lincoln."

He is a quiet poet. I can see why he could write the simple, unadorned dialogue of "Abraham Lin-

coln," a style that looks so easy, but is so hard. He is a contemplative poet who walks serene pastures; who makes poems on places and on cloistral thoughts. How do you like this, called "Reciprocity"?

I do not think that skies and meadows are  
Moral, or that the fixture of a star  
Comes of a quiet spirit, or that trees  
Have wisdom in their windless silences.  
Yet these are things invested in my mood  
With constancy, and peace, and fortitude,  
That in my troubled season I can cry  
Upon the wide composure of the sky,  
And envy fields, and wish that I might be  
As little daunted as a star or tree.

Oh yes, a calm poet, a studious poet, who entirely forgets when he is writing poetry that there are such people as actors, and such places as Broadway and Leicester Square. Here are four lines from "The Last Confessional":

For all the beauty that escaped  
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,  
For wonder that was slow to move,  
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

And here is a fragment from a longer poem called "To One I Love":

I am thirty-six years old,  
And folks are kindly to me,  
And there are no ghosts that should have reason to haunt  
me,  
And I have tempted no magical happenings

By forsaking the clear noons of thought  
For the wizardries that the credulous take  
To be golden roads to revelation.

Would you have thought that this kind of poet—  
reflective, gentle, companionable, trim—could write  
one of the most successful plays of the day, and  
himself, at one time or another, act all, or nearly  
all, the chief characters in the play?



## 16. LORD DUNSANY

**L**ORD DUNSANY, eighteenth Baron, created 1439, late captain in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, with seats at Dunsany Castle, County Meath, Ireland, and at Dunstall Priory, Kent, likes America.

And America likes him. The ovation he received, at his first lecture on "My Own Lands," was whole-hearted and excited. He might have been a conquering general, not a mere poet. Once only did he have bad moments.

It occurred in the reception room at the close of his lecture. This tall, athletic poet—he is over six feet high—was receiving the usual gushing congratulations from the usual bevy of women who delight to felicitate an attractive male lecturer, when the chorus of flattery was suddenly disturbed by two excited Irishwomen, who pushed themselves to the front and demanded to know why he had been civil to England, and why he had not mentioned the distresses of the distressful country. They did not frame their questions quite as politely, but that was what the questions signified. The author of "A Book of Wonder" and "A Dreamer's Tales" drooped with astonishment, drooped like an unwatered flower. When the questions were repeated louder and more violently he answered wearily: "I

am a poet, not a politician." With some difficulty the excited Irishwomen were persuaded to retire, and his admirers were restoring the poet's equanimity when another Irishwoman hurled herself into the fray, uttering cries of indignation at the absence of any reference to the woes of Ireland in the lecture. Again the distinguished Irishman said sadly but politely: "I am a poet, not a politician." Then an Englishman made a little ferocious speech which was applauded; the Irishwoman, amazed, withdrew, and presently Lord Dunsany was able to escape from his first experiences of the Irish in America.

I tell this story because of the aptness of his reply: "I am a poet, not a politician." That is the way he writes. He says what he has to say in the simplest language; he goes straight to his point as all do who, like him, have founded their literary style on the Bible. An inferior mind would have attempted to explain, to compromise, to placate the petty politicians. He contented himself with the direct and ample statement: "I am a poet."

Lord Dunsany likes America for the simple and human reason that his plays and books have been received with more favour in America than in England. Lord Dunsany speaks of the "black neglect" which has been his portion in England. To me this statement is an exaggeration. "The Gods of the Mountain" and "The Golden Doom" were beautifully staged at the Haymarket Theatre, London, when that playhouse was under the direction of a fellow poet—Herbert Trench. "King Argimenes" and "The Glittering Gate" were produced by the

Irish Players, and "The Lost Silk Hat" was given at Manchester. These performances may seem unimportant compared with all that Mr. Stuart Walker has done for the Dunsany plays at his Portmanteau Theatre; but they hardly merit the reproach of "black neglect." Moreover, the few and fit in London hailed his first book, "The Gods of Pegana," published in 1905, with acclamation—a new voice, a new vision. It may not have sold in thousands, but Lord Dunsany can hardly have expected "The Gods of Pegana"—which begins, "Before there stood gods upon Olympus, or even Allah was Allah, had wrought and rested Manayood-Sushai"—to have the sale of "Dere Mable." And I remember reading "A Dreamer's Tales" week by week in the *Saturday Review*. Some authors would call that delirious success.

I also remember a great gathering in London of the Poets Club, when Lord Dunsany was the guest of honour; when he received an ovation; when he made a speech that may be described as poetry and sense. That was before the war, in which he fought gallantly, and those who heard his first lecture in New York were glad to realise that the stress of war had stressed the poet in him even to finer issues. Often on his lips were the words inspiration and infinite: with waving arms he wrought out from himself the statement: "Anybody can give low ideals, that's why I give high ones"; and there was dejection in his cry: "I began late at 23—oh, late! Think what Keats had done then." The word poet is ever in his utterance. To him it is

the proudest title in the desire of man. But the pedantic reader must not expect to find the poems of Lord Dunsany in a book shop. If he has written poems he has not published them. Yet he is a poet because poetry is the heart, and warp and woof of all his work. It informs the whole structure as colour does a flower.

He has created a new mythology entirely his own, and he calls the places where his gods, kings, queens, and camel drivers dwell the Edge of the World or the Lands of Wonder. The period is Uncertain, or about the time of the decadence in Babylon, or the Sixth Dynasty, or today, or a long time ago, or any time. But his people all speak plain, simple, and beautiful English; his fancies are always founded on facts, and within each play and tale is an esoteric meaning, which often does not fully express itself until the very end—and then wonder, delight, and something to roll the mind on.

His tales and plays are tales and plays of wonder and faith. Seek and ye shall find.

“I am a poet, not a politician.”

It is poetry and faith, not politics and friction, that will help to rebuild a broken world.

## 17. JOHN GALSWORTHY

**W**HEN I close my eyes and recall John Galsworthy I see his—smile.

It is not an impulsive smile, not the smile that ripples over a face unbidden: it is the smile of one who seems to have set himself to smile, and would perhaps rather cry. For the world weighs heavily upon him—its problems, its injustice, the veil it puts before the face, thus hiding the Beauty that is lurking, waiting, eager to be seen and enjoyed. This sad knowledge must be kept private, except in books, plays and essays. So in public he—smiles.

I wonder if that smile means that he is aware that within him are two dark voices forever calling, one of abysmal cynicism, the other of soaring sentiment. Is the smile like the thick coat of paint with which a battleship hides its wounds?

In his latest books sentiment and cynicism mingle. "Tatterdemalion" is compact of the twain. They are mingled in the sad, short story called "Defeat," which he has converted into a play. The *Times* began its notice with "Beneath the surface we can see Mr. Galsworthy's obstinate faith and his passion for beauty." In the review of the book, published in the *Times*, a month before the play was produced, I find this passage—"Mr. Galsworthy is not afraid to be pitiful, to be a worshipper of beauty,

etc." You perceive what has happened? He is not now reviewed as a teller of tales, as a maker of drama, as an artist; he is reviewed as a man with a heart and a conscience. Can it be that the smile does not deceive anybody, that Mr. Galsworthy is now accepted as a propagandist of the right kind, the very right kind, but a propagandist? Can it be that he is now more interested in ideals than in characters, in exposing abuses, and all other kinds of foolishness than in artistry? Has the preacher overcome the artist? Yet still he smiles.

I have just read "Tatterdemalion" and "A Sheaf," and I can only say that had these two books been sent to me for review, and had the name of John Galsworthy been suppressed, I would have given them a few lines of pleasant and perfunctory praise, with a compliment to the author for his good intentions and graceful, rather oversensitized style. But John Galsworthy also is the author of "Justice."

There, that is my complaint, merely that the man who wrote such plays as "Justice," "The Silver Box," "The Fugitive" should be publishing such excellent but unimportant books as "A Sheaf," "Tatterdemalion," and "A Motley."

Well do I remember the afternoon I first saw "Justice," at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, in February, 1910. It was painful but enthralling. The play marches with the inevitableness of a Greek tragedy, but in "Justice" we are also given the modern view, and humanity and humour. I shall never forget that Third Scene of Act III—all stage directions, no dialogue—a triumph of dramatic

art. I left the theatre scalded with apprehension lest such prison experiences be true. Others felt as I did—statesmen and legal luminaries, for I am told that this play changed the law, or at any rate humanised punishment. "Justice" reads as well, perhaps better, than it acts. I went through it last night at a sitting, and was again profoundly moved. Equally vital is the impression made upon the reader by another of the Galsworthy plays—"The Fugitive." Here, too, the drama is unfolded with an art and an integrity that grips and saddens to the point of tears. I console myself with the reflection that Clare, had she been anybody else but Clare, might a dozen times have evaded her fate; but the dramatist had too sure a grip of his character. The cynic holds the man of sentiment well in hand, and Clare is pursued to the end by, what shall I say, by her better self? You see I do not complain of such books as "A Sheaf" and "Tatterdemalion." I only say that being by the author of "Justice" and "The Fugitive" they seem slight things. In "The Pigeon," which might be called "Charity," there are signs of weakening. The thesis is clear, but the working out is loose. It is not convincing, not inevitable. Did the smile begin then?

This weakening, this desire to teach, not to relate, this gradual descent to the propagandist, applies also to his novels. What could be better than "The Man of Property," published in 1906, that urbane criticism and implied appreciation of the old social order—the Haves—in old England, now disappear-

ing through the assaults of the taxgatherer, and the solidarity of the Have Nots. "The Country House" was excellent, too, but "The Patrician," and "The Dark Flower"—no!

He is a sensitive and rather a recluse, that is a recluse who likes to seek people himself, not to be sought. I doubt if he enjoyed his American tour of lecturing and reading from his works. I heard him lecture and read more than once, and had I been asked to introduce him to an audience (once I came very near doing so) I should have startled him and the audience by comparing him to Charles Dickens. They had this in common—the burning to right wrongs. That was the basic motive of Charles Dickens, that is the basic motive of John Galsworthy. It is explicit in Dickens; it is implicit in every play, novel, tale and sketch by Galsworthy. Each is at his best when the artist overrides the propagandist.

That is what I should have tried to convey to the audience had I been appointed to introduce John Galsworthy. Perhaps it is as well that I did not, because I should also have been tempted to explain his smile.



## 18. EDMUND GOSSE

I HAVE sometimes allowed myself, in Hans Andersen vein, to have been present at Edmund Gosse's cradle when the fairy godparents were circling about the promising infant.

The Fairy of the Future asks him what career he will choose. The sapient infant, with a baby twinkle in his brooding eyes, replies: "I should like to be a distinguished literary man with much commendation from the elect, and many friends, including troops of peers of the realm."

This is just the career that Edmund Gosse has had, and I am sure he has enjoyed it immensely. Numerous books, always of a high average, have proceeded from his eloquent and agreeable pen, including one great work, "Father and Son," which in 1913, six years after publication, was crowned by the French Academy. His friends have been legion, and he has written bright essays about all the important ones.

Of course Mr. Gosse knows many intellectual commoners, such as George Moore, Maurice Hewlett, and André Gide, but his chief friends are, I opine, people of title. This may be due to the fact that from 1904 to 1914 he was librarian of the House of Lords. His fairy godmother was very obliging.

And as if all this was not enough, the foremost British men of letters in September, 1918, united to honour Mr. Gosse. He was the recipient of a bust of himself, executed by Sir William Goscombe John, R. A., and an address signed on behalf of the most eminent, including Mr. Arthur Balfour and Lord Crewe.

"The genial companion of gayer hours" is one of the sentences. How true that is, for Mr. Gosse, who is witty and anecdotic over dining tables, as in relaxation hours at his various clubs, is one of the few literary men who can be human when delivering addresses on Eminent Ones at the Mansion House or at meetings of the British Academy of Letters. Some obtrusive people say that they enjoy his writings and occasional speeches because they occasionally betray a touch of malice. That, of course, is ungenerous. The *Times*, in its review of "Some Diversions of a Man of Letters," put it more kindly, with a reference, in passing, to the fact that a cat's claws owe something of their sharpness to the velvet in which they are for the most part encased. The explanation really is that Mr. Gosse's mentality is not dull. It is alert. While gazing admiringly at the sun through his large gold spectacles he is quite aware that there are spots upon the luminary. He sees the oddities as well as the effulgence, and he is as much interested in the oddities as in the effulgence. So we find acid asides in his writings on Tennyson, Ruskin, Swinburne, and lesser luminaries such as "Orion" Horne, and the authors of "Festus" and "John Inglesant"

that have a way of remaining in the mind longer than the eloquent passages. Sometimes, too, his talent for friendship and admiration leads him into statements that leave the ordinary man who has few friends, and fewer admirations, rather breathless. This, for example, on André Gide: "There is no other writer in Europe, at the present moment, whose development is watched with so eager an interest, by the most sensitive and intelligent judges as that of M. Gide."

Mr. Edmund Gosse's passion for letters is as consistent as it is passionate, and he is as eager today as when he first knew Tennyson, Swinburne, and Ibsen. What an array of books he can show, including a masterwork in autobiography, "Father and Son," and a masterwork in biography, "The Life and Letters of Dr. John Donne." He has also written a novel, a kind of novel, "The Secret of Narcisse." And he has the honour of having been the first to introduce Ibsen to the English public in an article in the *Spectator* on March 16, 1872. For he is a linguist, and it was as a linguist, I imagine, that he was most useful at the Board of Trade.

Truly he has been a hard worker, for this indefatigable man of letters, whose books fill shelves, has never depended entirely upon literature for a livelihood. He has always had pleasant posts, that with the passing of the years have, I suppose, grown more lucrative, and today when, like Charles Lamb, he is Retired Leisure, he draws, I hope, a pension, perhaps two. It must be wonderful, in the after-

noon of life, to sit in one's library, many of the books autograph copies from friends, and to allow the eyes to roam from one's own bust by an eminent Royal Academician, to an address of congratulation, from the best minds in England, signed by a member of the House of Peers.

Outwardly such a career for a man of letters looks very satisfactory, indeed splendid. How different from the lives of Edgar Allan Poe and Francis Thompson! But, perhaps reviewing it, Mr. Gosse may detect a drop of bitterness. He has never been greatly accepted of song. Many books of poetry stand to his credit, beginning with "On Viol and Flute" in 1873, and ending, for the present, with "Collected Poems" of 1911. But is he a poet? Is he the real thing? He is an accomplished writer of verse, but the real poet sings a different kind of song. I cull one at random, his "Whitethroat and Nightingale." It begins:

I heard the Whitethroat sing  
 Last eve at twilight when the wind was dead,  
 And her sleek bosom and her fair smooth head  
 Vibrated, ruffling, and her olive wing  
 Trembled.

Quite pretty, quite cultured, rather forced, rather literary, but not the real thing. But poetry was his first love, and may be his last. Mr. Gosse is quite frank about it. In 1867, at 18, he writes in the Introduction to the Swinburne Letters, "I was having a feverish and absurd existence, infatuated with poetry." He sent some verses to Swinburne,

and Swinburne, in Swinburnian prose, "turned them down." But who can check the desire to write verse? Mr. Gosse wrote more and more, and in 1890 Walter Pater reviewed "On Viol and Flute" in the *Guardian*. The notice is quite nice, but on the second page is a reference to "some of our best secondary poetry." With that word "secondary" Pater let the cat slip from the elusive Paterian bag. Later he calls Mr. Gosse a "Poetic Scholar," and pretends that the title is rarer than poet, which, as Euclid says, is absurd. And Pater quotes one of the poems called "Lying in the Grass," of which the first stanza runs:

I do not hunger for a well-stored mind,  
I only wish to live my life, and find  
My heart in unison with all mankind.

I should have said that aspiration is exactly unlike Mr. Gosse. But who knows the heart of the poet? Perhaps now that he is free from the Board of Trade and the House of Lords, he will tell us, ironically or elegiacally, how a Poetic Scholar feels in a turbulent world of which one of the few sanities seems to be the cultivation of Poetry.

## 19. KENNETH GRAHAME

IT was a mixed and versatile group of men that gathered around William Ernest Henley, in London, in the early nineties. Diverse in temperament and achievement, Henley was the cord that bound them together—he, and the fact that all were writing, more or less, for the *Scots Observer* and the *National Observer*.

Most of these men earned their living by their pens, but there were a few of the group to whom literature was a well-loved, but a leisure-hour, occupation. They held positions with regular salaries, and they wrote in the evening or on Sunday. I always fancied that I could distinguish those who had salaried positions; who were not obliged to live by their pens. They looked more comfortable; they ate their food in a more leisurely way; they were readier to praise than to blame, because literature was to them a delightful relaxation, not an arduous business.

Among these leisure-hour gentlemen of the pen was a tall, well-knit, blonde man, who moved slowly and with dignity, and who preserved, amid the violent discussions and altercations that enlivened the meetings of the group, a calm, comprehending demeanour accompanied by a ready smile that women would call "sweet."

And yet this blonde, temperate, kindly-looking man had also a startled air, such as a fawn might show who suddenly found himself on Boston Common, quite prepared to go through with the adventure, as a well-bred fawn should do under any circumstances, but unable to escape wholly from the memory of the glades and woods whence he had come. He seemed to be a man who had not yet become quite accustomed to the discovery that he was no longer a child, but grown-up and prosperous. Success did not atone for the loss of the child outlook. Every one of us has his adjective. His adjective was—startled.

There were so many men in this group, so many strangers were continually coming and going, that it was some time before I learnt who this blond gentleman of letters was. I addressed a question to my neighbour at one of the dinners. "Who is that man?" I asked. My neighbour replied, "Kenneth Grahame. He wrote that jolly thing about children called, 'The Olympians.' Henley thinks very highly of him. He's something in the Bank of England."

Time passed. We met several times. Probably we did not have much to say to one another, and curiously, one of our meetings, a chance encounter, when we did not exchange a word, made a vivid impression upon me. Readers of "Pagan Papers" know that one of the author's favourite spots is the Hurley backwater on the Thames, near "the great shadow of Streatley Hill," near where "Dorchester's stately roof broods over the quiet fields."

By that time I was a devoted admirer of Kenneth Grahame. I had read "Pagan Papers," "The Golden Age," and "Dream Days," and knew his standpoint and how charmingly he took it, not with the light-hearted genius of Stevenson, not with the playful erudition of the author of "Religio Medici" but hovering between them, with a gay twist here, and a classical tag there. How well, I reflected, he knows the heart and spirit of the child: how neatly and completely he analyses from the standpoint of the child-world the stupidity of the adult world, its interests in social trifles, and its concern for the formal, daily routine that the child knows is so unimportant compared with a discovered bird's nest, a castle in the clouds, or a new place where the river may be forded.

Well, on one of my holiday journeys to the Thames the train stopped, as usual, at a riverside junction, and on the platform, welcoming friends, was Kenneth Grahame, watchful, a little fussy, bothering about wraps and a carriage, ignoring two children who were of the party, but studiously polite to their parents.

I smiled, and continued to smile long after the train had left the station because I was recalling to mind the closing passage of "The Olympians."

That night I reread the lines. Do you remember them?

"Well! The Olympians are all past and gone. Somehow the sun does not seem to shine so brightly as it used; the trackless meadows of old time have shrunk and dwindled away to a few poor acres. A



saddening doubt, a dull suspicion creeps over me. *Et in Arcadia ego*,—I certainly did once inhabit Arcady. Can it be I, too, have become an Olympian?"

When I examine Kenneth Grahame's small sheaf of books I discover that almost all of them are amplifications of the idea expressed in "The Olympians"—that is, the importance of the child life and viewpoint, and the unimportance of the objects pursued by the elders or Olympians. For literary purposes it was perhaps fortunate that the elders in Kenneth Grahame's upbringing were uncles and aunts, not parents.

He has one other theme, that of escape: escape from prose to poetry; escape from the prose of Threadneedle Street, where the Bank of England is placed, and of which eventually he became secretary, to poetry of the trackless meadows—to Centaurs or trout, to Orion or gypsies, to a human uncle or an unsophisticated artist, to anything that had nothing to do with banking and prosperity. "The Wind in the Willows," published in 1908—what is it but the attempt of an Olympian to see the animal kingdom, through the eyes of a child, as an abode where things happen exactly as they do in the man world, where the rat, the otter, the badger, and the toad act as the man acts.

"The Golden Age" and "Dream Days" are his best works.

Just a few little books! A banker's escape from the prose and tedium of life. How easy it seems! How hard it is to do!

## 20. THE GROSSMITHS

**T**HERE were George Grossmith 1 and George Grossmith 2; there is George Grossmith 3; there was Weedon Grossmith; there is Laurence Grossmith.

This family of entertainers has held the stage for more than half a century. In the eighties George Grossmith 1, a ripe, smiling, humorous, shortish man, could hold an audience for two hours and more with recitals from the works of wise, witty, and tender eminent authors. I have sat entranced through an evening at the old Birkbeck Institution in Breems Buildings, Chancery Lane, London, listening to George Grossmith 1 recite Dickens. There was no band, no dancing, no songs, but it never occurred to us to be bored. His characterisation was neat and jolly. It remains.

Indeed today whenever I read a remark by Mr. Pickwick the words seem to be uttered by George Grossmith 1. His only other rival, that is the only other entertainer who drew capacity houses in the old Birkbeck Theatre, was Samuel Brandram. His line was Shakespeare: his triumph was to recite an entire play without a book or note. George Grossmith 1 was a jolly, rubicund man who chuckled. Samuel Brandram was an austere, well-groomed, aristocratic personage who modulated his

voice to the utterance of Juliet or Polonius as if he was rather conferring a favour on those characters. It was very wonderful. But Brandram never aroused the laughs that George Grossmith 1 did when he described how Mrs. Gamp "bore up," or when he impersonated Mr. Weller diagnosing the gout. "The gout, sir, is a complaint as arises from too much ease and comfort. If ever you're attacked with the gout, sir, just you marry a vidder as has got a good loud voice, with a decent notion of usin' it, and you'll never have the gout agin." George Grossmith 1 revelled in Mr. Weller and Mrs. Gamp. Brandram was always a little standoffish with Hamlet, with Juliet and the Nurse. I know now the secret of the allure of George Grossmith 1. He had humour.

Time passed: the old gentleman introduced his offspring to the world. One night he was billed for the first half of the performance only. When he had finished he advanced to the footlights and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to introduce you to my son, Mr. George Grossmith, Jr."

Tall, eager, alert, with quick, birdlike movements and a thin mobile face that never rested, George Grossmith 2 became, in a moment, the most popular of "drawing-room entertainers." He outran the massive geniality of Corney Grain. He was so much more modern; he set the pace which countless light vaudeville comedians have since followed. Perhaps he derived from the nimble mentality and nimble body of Arthur Roberts. Be that as it may,

he was an active humourist. Probably I have never laughed so much in my life as when George Grossmith 2 seized a chair and danced round the stage to the refrain of "You should see me dance the polka. You should see me cover the ground." It was the new humour—a facet of it. For the new humour with Jerome K. Jerome and Barry Pain and Zangwill and Chesterton was then beginning to captivate the town. It was time for George Grossmith 1 to retire. He knew it. That continent of humour called Charles Dickens was shrinking before the age of speed. Verbal quips and antics drove from the drawing-room stage the leisurely urbanities of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Weller.

George Grossmith 1, like the Phoenix, did his best to give the boy a send-off. Little did he think what a career was in store for George Grossmith 2: little did he think that his boy would emerge from a drawing-room entertainer into the chief actor at important London theatres for years and years, and that he would be the chief cementer in that amazing partnership between Gilbert and Sullivan. The parts he played fitted him exactly: they were not made for him, he created them. Who could sing a patter song like him?

His articulation, his precision of utterance, his finish, his air of neat finality, who has rivaled them? Much as I enjoy the Gilbert and Sullivan performances of today, there is a ghost, there are ghosts at the feasts, the ghosts of George Grossmith 2 and the others who, under the shaggy martinet eye of W. S. Gilbert, created the parts. George Gros-

smith 2 was one of my heroes, and once I drew very near to him. He lived at Camden Town. I farther on. One night I was travelling home by the last train when suddenly he sprang into the carriage at Farringdon Street. Yes, it was he, and he beguiled the sulphurous journey (it was before electrification) humming to himself the airs of a new Gilbert and Sullivan opera from a big score book. He ignored me utterly, but it was thrilling. When he alighted I sat in the seat that he had occupied and dreamed.

His father had humour; he had wit, and his son, George Grossmith 3, what of him? He has bodily agility, mental quickness, he dresses wonderfully, he capers and patters, but I am bored and pine for the humour of his grandfather, or the wit of his father. Perhaps he will develop: perhaps he has not yet had his chance. What chance has an actor who plays prominent parts in "Go Bang" and "The Gaiety Girl," and who is co-author of "The Spring Chicken"?

Weedom Grossmith had humour, the ripe humour of his father translated into modern terms. The plays and the theatres I have forgotten, but the parts that he played, how they lurk in memory. Explain Weedom Grossmith and you can explain humour. It bubbled up; it could not be suppressed; it was like the perennial fountain of Charles Lamb and Andrew Lang. I remember a whole scene, a dining-room, in which he played the part of a pleasant parvenu. It had just become "the thing" to locate your handkerchief in your sleeve, and

Weedon, throughout the scene in which he had little to say, was watching how the blades who were present did it, and furtively imitating them. It was by-play of the highest order, serious fun. Yes, he always seemed to be serious. George Gros-smith 3 is always aching to be funny. And Weedon looked serious; he would talk seriously about painting and collecting old furniture. But the twinkle was always lurking. It came into his eyes one morning on the parade at Westgate-on-Sea, when I charged him, in collusion with his brother George, with being the author of "The Diary of a Nobody," a work of delightful humour, which was appearing in the pages of *Punch*.

Alas poor Yorick! I have for these entertainers, who added to the gaiety of the world, something of the feeling that Francis Thompson had for the old cricketers who added to his infrequent joy. Do you know the poem?

#### AT LORD'S

It is little I repair to the matches of the Southron folk,  
 Though my own red roses there may blow;  
 It is little I repair to the matches of the Southron folk,  
 Though the red roses crest the caps, I know.  
 For the field is full of shades as I near the shadowy coast,  
 And a ghostly batsman plays to the bowling of a ghost,  
 And I look through my tears on a soundless-clapping host  
 As the run-stealers flicker to and fro,

To and fro:

O my Hornby and my Barlow long ago!

Vanished cricketers! Vanished entertainers! Run stealers! Laugh stealers! And strange to say

George Grossmith 1, he who loved Dickens, is not the palest. Of him it may be said, as the Master said of Mr. Jobling in "Martin Chuzzlewit"—"He was one of the most comfortable fellows you ever saw in your life." George 2 was not comfortable, neither was Weedon, neither is mercurial George 3. Has Laurence an inclination that way?

A great family, and still active.

## 21. THOMAS HARDY

USUALLY I travel with one of his books; it is well to pause in the hectic gabble-gobble of the week's reading and study a page by this master of sombre, closely-knit prose. You cannot skip Thomas Hardy: you must pause to visualise such a passage as "Marty heard the sparrows walking down their long holes in the thatch above her sloping ceiling to their exits at the eaves": you must pause to assimilate such a passage as—"A north wind was blowing—that not unacceptable compromise between the atmospheric cutlery of the eastern blast and the spongy gales of the west quarter." In a word, Thomas Hardy demands respect—deep respect and diligence—and unless you can give him that, in full measure, read somebody else.

He is not popular. He never was. Neither was George Meredith. The reason is that each is much more than a teller of tales: each is a profound critic of life, Hardy as a pessimist tinged with irony, Meredith as an optimist tingling with buoyancy. Each too is a poet.

These two writers are the two great figures of their time, stretching over into the twentieth century, who chose the novel as a vehicle for their criticism and observation of life. Hardy obsessed



by the Unfulfilled Intention, Meredith glorying in the Fulfilled Splendour. Study these two extremes, and you get the mean—which is life.

Once I found myself in Dorchester, and I thought, being younger then and bolder, that I would send a note to Thomas Hardy by messenger (we had been having, during the past year, an interesting correspondence) asking if he would allow me to be his companion on his afternoon walk. Rightly I thought that a tramp through Wessex with Thomas Hardy would be something to tell my grandchildren. He replied that he would be glad to see me at 3 p. m. On my way to Max Gate I called at a bookshop in Dorchester and inquired of an elderly, prim, and rather tart female if she had a copy of Hardy's "Jude the Obscure," which had lately been published, and which had been received by what is known in England as the "rectory public" somewhat superciliously. I think it shocked them. In response to my inquiry the prim female said that she had not a copy of "Jude the Obscure" in stock. "What!" I cried, "in his native Dorchester you have not a copy of the latest book by the greatest living English novelist." She eyed me with hauteur, and, tossing her head, said: "Perhaps we have not the same opinion of Mr. Hardy in Dorchester as you have elsewhere."

I withdrew. I was too amused to be angry. Indeed, so amused was I at this encounter with the "rectory public" that when I reached Max Gate I told the story to Mr. Hardy with glee. He did

not smile: perhaps he looked a little sadder than usual. For it is a sad, tired face, very gentle, with much sweetness, yet alert as a bird's. He did not suggest a walk: we sat for an hour in his rather dim study, the trees swaying outside, I prattling literary gossip, and trying, craftily, to make him talk of his work and himself. I began to succeed. He told me that he was firmly resolved to write no more novels ("Jude the Obscure," published in 1895, was the last, for "The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved," published in 1897, had been issued serially five years before). I believe that he was about to tell me why he had decided to write no more novels, when Mrs. Hardy entered the room. This was his former wife, niece of Archdeacon Gifford. Said Mrs. Hardy to me—"Oh, I want to show you my watercolours." And I, being weak, and courteous to the nieces of archdeacons, was wafted away. So my interview with Thomas Hardy ended. Later, when I was about to depart, he came into the hall and looked at me with sad sympathy. He accompanied me to the garden gate, and as I was in the midst of bidding him a respectful adieu he said in his gentle voice—"By the by, which shop is it where they are disinclined to stock my books?"

When in 1895 Thomas Hardy ceased to write novels he turned to his early love—verse, that strange, haunting, melancholy verse, rhythmic prose if you like, yet with a lilt and an undercurrent of forlorn melody that distinguishes it from all other forms of verse and prose.

They've a way of whispering to me—

Fellow-wight who yet abide—

In the muted measured note

Of a ripple under archways, or a lone cave's stillicide.

And he has produced "The Dynasts," that amazing epic-drama, in three parts, 1903, 1906, 1908, which Professor Quiller-Couch told his students at Cambridge is "the grandest poetic structure planned and raised in England in our time." And all through his long life he has pursued his favourite recreations of architecture and old church and dance music. He was trained as an architect, and careful readers of his books know how often architecture delightfully intrudes. It touches the pages of "The Woodlanders," which I am now re-reading for the third time, finding every page as absorbing as of old, and turning more than once to Marty's final cry of faithfulness—Marty who "looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of an abstract humanism." Yes, the final note of "The Woodlanders" is faithfulness. ". . . But no, no, my love, I can never forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things."

It bears, does this book, all the marks of a Definitive edition. Here is the map of the Wessex of the Novels, here are Shaston and Sherton Abbas, outlying over Blackmoor Vale; and here is the preface, signed T. H., with its reference to "the units of human society during their brief transit through this sorry world."

Now, I hear of another edition to be called the

"Mellstock." Yes, I shall have to buy it; but not for myself. Nothing would make me give up my marked and scored copies of the 1903 Wessex issue. What will I do with the "Mellstock" edition? Perhaps some day, in some little New England town, pretty as a poem, I shall find a library which has no Thomas Hardy on its shelves. How nice it would be to drop the "Mellstock" edition on the doorstep one night, so that the dwellers may learn what old England was, in the old days, old rural England, seen through the eyes of genius. And the New England lad or lass, living, perhaps, in a town with a good old Dorsetshire name, can say

William Dewy, Tranty Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at  
plough  
Robert's kin, and John's and Ned's,  
And the Squire, and Lady Susan murmur mildly to me  
now.

## 22. BRET HARTE

AT the beginning of the present century, in the spring of 1901 to be precise, a literary luncheon was given in London. It was quite interesting. There were present at least six important literary people, besides merchants and barristers. My kind, lion-hunting hostess had shown me the list beforehand, and I had noted with excitement, literary excitement, that among the lions was—Bret Harte.

During luncheon I studied the lions, and was able, by their names and manners, to identify five of them. But I could not place Bret Harte. Which was he? Finally I addressed a whispered inquiry to my neighbour. She nodded toward a well-groomed gentleman facing me across the table. "What," I exclaimed in breathless undertone—"that Bret Harte?"

Throughout the luncheon I had noticed him with some amusement merely because he was a dandy. I have no objections to dandies: I like looking at them; they have their place as objects of interest in the world, and the mind is interested in speculating on the influences or notions that induce a man to overdress. It is not easy, after the lapse of so many years, to explain why I thought this gentleman too adorned. Was it the glint of wax on the moustache,

or the hair too artfully curled, or the extra height of the collar, or the five buttons on the sleeve, or the tricky cut of the coat, that no tailor would make on his own initiative?

That Bret Harte? Yet, why not? Thirty years had passed since he left California. This prosperous, fêted, dapper, lionised gentleman had become a citizen of the old world: he had held important official positions—United States Consul at Crefeld, Germany, and later at Glasgow; now he was living at Camberley in Surrey, a highly respectable outer suburb of the metropolis, a place of trim lawns and retired leisure, where ascetic bankers and portly merchants dwell.

He gave a twirl to his moustache, sighed, and rearranged his cravat. "Never mind," I murmured to myself, but really to him, "never mind, you wrote 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' and 'Miggles,' and 'Tennessee's Partner,' and 'Plain Language from Truthful James,' and 'Dickens in Camp,' and 'The Society upon the Stanislaus.' You live now at Camberley, Surrey, but once you resided elsewhere:

I reside at Table Mountain, and my name is Truthful  
James;

I am not up to small deceit or any sinful games;  
And I'll tell in simple language what I know about the  
row

That broke up our society upon the Stanislaw.

While this attractive dandy fingered his ring and then glanced meditatively, and with approval, at his manicured finger nails, something like a tear

dimmed my eyes, for this Bret Harte was a master of pathos as well as of humour. While I watched him the years receded and there stole to memory his

## RELIEVING GUARD (1864)

Came the relief. "What sentry, ho!  
How passed the night through thy long waking?"  
"Cold, cheerless, dark—as may befit  
The hour before the dawn is breaking."

"No sight? no sound?" "No, nothing save  
The plover from the marshes calling,  
And in yon western sky, about  
An hour ago, a star was falling."

"A star? There's nothing strange in that."  
"No, nothing; but above the thicket,  
Somehow it seemed to me that God  
Somewhere had just relieved a picket."

I looked at him sitting there so complacently, so decorated, so content to be in a luxurious London house in the year 1901. I thought of him as our Bret Harte, the world's Bret Harte, in those wonder seventeen years in California between 1854 and 1871, when his genius flowered, apparently without effort, nourished by his fresh, uncultured environment.

Who can say that he has been enthralled by any writings of Bret Harte, written after he left California? I have read some of them. I have an indistinct memory of Spanish Mexican local colour, but these post-California things have left no impression upon me. Like the young Kipling in

India, he was great when he grew from the soil and with the soil, but when he fared forth and found culture—culture caught and desiccated the truant. Antæus, we are told, was invincible so long as he remained in contact with his mother earth. Bret Harte left California in 1871, his years being 32. His work was done, but nobody thought so.

His journey east has been described as a triumphal progress; he was the most popular of American authors, and England hailed him as "the long-looked for American laureate." He came east to affluence. The Heracles of success held him aloft, away from his Californian earth, and in 1878 he dropped into the nice little post of Consul at Crefeld, Germany.

I watched him tenderly at that luncheon party. One wing of his moustache had fallen somewhat out of curl: he gave it a brisk upward twist with his elegant white hand. That was the hand that had written of Miggles, and Stumpy, and Kentuck, and Mr. John Oakhurst, and Tennessee's Partner, and Brown of Calaveras, and of the Aged Stranger, and the Old Major, and Jim, and Flynn of Virginia, and that wonderful spelling bee at Angel's reported by Truthful James, and Her Letter, and His Answer, also reported by the Truthful One. Well, that suffices, that is enough for one man. I never addressed a remark to him at that luncheon party. I couldn't. Perhaps he had forgotten all about California. Perhaps not.

. . . . .



I have not forgotten, because I have just re-read all his Californian sketches, and all his poems, and I am amazed to find how little I had forgotten. I snivelled (such happy snivelling) as I always shall, when the Judge toasts Miggles, and when the Luck "rastled" with Kentuck's finger, and when Tennessee's partner "passing by" just looks in at the court, and, yes, when by the camp fire beneath the Sierras the boy reads "aloud the book wherein the Master had writ of 'Little Nell.'" It is easy, of course, for anybody to find fault—his treacly sentiment, his drawn-out pathos, his cheap moralising; yet if you admit all these blemishes, which I don't, how splendid, how unequalled he is. O rare young Francis Bret Harte of California!

I am glad that I was not forced to read Bret Harte at school, that I came to him by chance and with joy. With him as guide I entered a new world, which, after all these years, is still new.

## 23. JOHN HAY

**M**IDWAY through dinner, in the year 1898, at one of those cosmopolitan gatherings held at the Hotel Cecil by the American Society in London, I was told that John Hay was at the high table.

As soon as the speeches began I sidled round toward the high table to have a particular look at him. For John Hay as a man of letters interested me immensely. Incidentally, at that time, he was American Ambassador to the Court of St. James; but that might happen to anybody. What interested me was to see the author of two such disparate works as the rough "Jim Bludso," written as far back as 1870, and the exquisite speech he made in 1898 at the Omar Khayyám Club, which set all literary London talking. As for "Jim Bludso," everybody knows it, and most literary folk can quote—

He weren't no saint—but at jedgment  
I'd run my chance with Jim,  
'Longside of some pious gentlemen  
That wouldn't shook hands with him.  
He seen his duty, a dead sure thing—  
And went for it thar and then;  
And Christ ain't a-going to be too hard  
On a man that died for men.

"Jim Bludso" and "Little Breeches" are the best of Hay's "Pike County Ballads." "They rolled out spontaneously," says Mr. Thayer in his excellent "Life of John Hay," and they ran round the English-speaking world. Eager papers quoted them. John Hay, who by instinct and training was a modish classicist (he was a bosom friend of Henry Adams) was almost ashamed of the success of these rough ballads. Their popularity annoyed him, so much so that he flatly refused Stedman's invitation to include them in "An American Anthology." As a youth he desired to be a poet, a real poet, but his poetical verse (as Mayor Hylan might call it) is no better than the verse produced by thousands of young men of culture and breeding. Quite early he discovered that for him poetry was not a fame or a bread-winner. Perhaps that was why he dropped his second name of—Milton.

Two points of interest attach to "Jim Bludso." Bret Harte's "Plain Language from Truthful James" had been published a month before. Dialect was in the air. Bret Harte used a Chinaman, John Hay a Westerner. Possibly, probably, Hay had read the plain language of Truthful James. When J. Hay "dashed off" "Jim Bludso" in the train from Boston, it is said, the poem lacked the last two lines. Hay showed it to Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *Tribune*; he growled that it needed "some thought drawn from it that was vital and would live." So Hay sat down and dashed off "And Christ ain't going to be too hard On a man that died for men." John Hay was a ready man, as

ready with a Poem as with a Treaty, with a Witticism as with an Arbitration, or with an epigrammatic couplet such as—

There are three species of creatures who when they seem coming are going.

When they seem going they come: Diplomats, women, and crabs.

Knowing all this you may imagine that I crept with some stealthy fervour toward the high table to have a better look at John Hay. On the way I thought of his "Castilian Days." That is a delightful book. It was my companion on my first visit to Spain and of all the books I read on Spain that was the cheerfulest and the most intimate and informing. As I drew near the high table, bobbing behind an Hotel Cecil palm when a speaker paused in his oratory, suddenly, I remembered that John Hay had been for four years one of Abraham Lincoln's secretaries, beginning at the age of 23. He was a Lincoln man. He had been in daily, and often nightly converse, with the greatest American. Had John Hay done nothing else, that, by itself, would have been ample honour for one life. I tried to recall a passage from a letter he wrote to J. G. Nicolay, his fellow biographer of Lincoln. It was a passage setting a standard for their joint efforts. While I was trying to recall it I reached the end of the high table—and there was John Hay.

He looked a severe man, a thinker, a logician who would pursue a subject to its logical conclusion. It was an alert face, stern in repose, but when he spoke

it lightened like a gleam of sun through set, grey clouds. It was a tired, rather pugnacious face, the face of a man with whom it would not be easy or safe to trifle. Troops of friends he had, some very intimate, some of them great men, but it has been said that nobody ever slapped John Hay on the back. His mind was witty, not humorous. He could never, like Mark Twain, have explained at a fashionable London assembly that the reason he carried a cotton umbrella was because Englishmen would not consider it worth stealing. His wit was of a different kind, as when he wrote to Henry Adams: "I have spent the last cent I got for 'Democracy,' in minerals for Mrs. Hay." (It was an open secret that the novel "Democracy," published anonymously, was by Henry Adams.) Oh, and as I gazed at John Hay I remembered that another anonymous novel, "The Bread Winners," was written by this versatile man in the winter of 1882-83. It was the novel of the year, but Hay never acknowledged the authorship. Silent John Hay! As I gazed his face grew stern again. Was he bored? The speeches, I remember, were rather tedious. Something in his face seemed queerly familiar; then I remembered that when Zorn etched Hay's head it was said that he gave him "the badger-like appearance which the admirers of Zorn so greatly value."

Later in the evening I drew closer to John Hay. It was in the prosaic and democratic cloakroom. I had made my way to the table, and was about to tender my ticket, when I noticed that the man

behind me was John Hay, patiently waiting, looking rather amused at being one of the howling proletariat. I vacated my place, and motioned him forward. He thanked me with a smile; today that smile is he. In a glimpse I saw the man, and understood the charm he had for those who knew him. That smile seemed to lubricate my memory, for, on the way home, the passage I had been trying to remember, the passage wherein he set the standard for writing the "Life of Lincoln," and gave his creed as an historian, came to me. I discovered afterwards that it is printed in a letter addressed to Nicolay, on Aug. 10, 1885:

"We must not write a stump speech in eight vols., 8vo. We will not fall in with the present tone of blubbering sentiment, of course. But we ought to write the history of those times like two everlasting angels who know everything, judge everything, tell the truth about everything, and don't care a twang of our harps about one side or the other. There will be one exception. We are Lincoln men all through. But in other little matters, let us look at men as insects, and not blame the black beetle because he is not a grasshopper."

John Hay and Henry Adams, so different yet so closely allied, one so effective, the other so ineffective, one seeing the world through a telescope, the other through a magnifying glass, to me stand out as the two finest American minds, short of genius, of their time. At Washington, Mr. Thayer tells us, they walked together every afternoon—"Hay with

one arm crooked behind his back—two small men, busily discussing great topics or . . .”

Every honour came to John Hay, every success, including a rich and charming wife, but all his honours, in these days of lesser men and lingering squabbles, fade before one honour that was supreme. For four years he walked and talked with, watched and listened to that Great Companion—Abraham Lincoln.

The knowledge that he was a Lincoln man gave to John Hay a wisdom passing the wisdom of statesmen and poets.

## 24. W. E. HENLEY

IT was in 1890 that I first met Henley in the *Art Journal* office. He had been appointed consulting editor of that venerable magazine.

How well I remember the day he attended his first Tuesday committee meeting. Imagine a Viking blown by storm into a Dorcas assembly, and you may visualise the advent of W. E. H. into the precise *Art Journal* parlour. He opened the gates of French art to me—Corot, Rousseau, Daumier: he opened the gates of literature, and I shall never again hear such talk as that I heard from men who gathered, Saturday evenings, in his house at Chiswick.\* He was always the chief. I hear now his laugh, his thunder, his softness, his savage truculence, his infinite gentleness, when he spoke of the child, that wonder child, Margaret Emma Henley, 1888-94, about whom he wrote two poems, one in 1891, the other in 1897, which now stands as the Epilogue to his "Poems"—"a little exquisite Ghost, Between us, smiling with the serenest eyes, Seen in this world." The book about this child was never written. He tried, but could not do it.

In after years I took Francis Thompson to call upon Henley when he was living in Muswell Hill. By that time Henley had "arrived." He was known to all literary England. Fame had accosted him and



tarried. He had expressed a wish to see Francis Thompson. This, to me, was tantamount to a Royal command, so I conveyed the younger poet to Muswell Hill, not without difficulty, and not without apprehension as we approached the house, for Francis Thompson had no sense of time. Our appointment was for three o'clock; it was five minutes past five when I rang the bell. All went well, however. Thompson idolised Henley, and quite naturally took a stool at his feet while Henley, a splendid leonine figure, hair and beard now white, lounged in a high chair. Each received from the other high compliments, and for a considerable space of time each compared the other, courteously and emphatically, to Virgil.

Francis Thompson, like many others, indeed all the young Intellectuals, had become Henleyites through his editorship of the *Scots Observer*, a sixpenny weekly, the title of which was afterward changed to the *National Observer*. Henley edited this fighting journal from 1889 to 1893. It was the best written paper of the day; it was anti-sentiment, anti-cant, anti-humbug; it was the antithesis to the eloquent and robustious sentimentality with which Clement Scot filled the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*; it was high Tory; it sided with the classes and scorned the masses; it was brilliant and witty and hard; it was written in the best English, and every article (except the signed ones) bore the impress of Henley's personality. He was the most conscientious of editors, and the most autocratic. Even when he returned an article it would come

back to the unfortunate author scored all over with Henley's corrections. But he forced his staff to do their best, and no young writing man of the period was content until he had an article accepted by Henley for the *National Observer*, and later for the *New Review*.

Kipling's "Barrack Room Ballads," Barrie's best early work, appeared in the *National Observer*, and Conrad's "Nigger of the Narcissus" in the *New Review*. Authors were pilloried, politicians were pounded, faddists were flaunted. It may be said that literary London was divided into those who hated and those who adored Henley. We who knew the gentle side of Henley's nature also knew that in his chief henchman, Charles Whibley, he had an adviser whose will to destroy the Clement Scott element in literature and journalism was stronger than Henley's; it was Whibley's pen and influence that gave to the *National Observer* its bias and its bludgeon. It was the most quoted journal of the time, but it did not sell. The great public was, and is still, faithful to Clementscottalism. Henley himself told me that the proprietor of the *National Observer* said to him: "I would keep the paper going if I could ever look forward to a paying circulation of 1000 copies a week."

But it was as a Poet that Henley wanted to be known, remembered. So I was glad, one day in 1920, when I saw in a bookseller's window in New York, the definitive edition of William Ernest Henley's "Poems." I bought it, I talked with the Bookseller, and said to myself. This is fame; this

would have pleased Henley; this would have brought a smile into his large, twinkling blue eyes. Henley was a human person, and to have known that he is remembered and honoured, 3000 miles off, years after he had passed away, would have consoled him for a lot of adversity and neglect. For this ardent bookseller knew all about Henley; knew that Rodin had addressed him as "Dear and great friend"; that in 1898 his "Essay on Burns" had been crowned by the "Academy"; that he had written a play, "Deacon Brodie" in collaboration with his friend, R. L. Stevenson; that he was part author of an amazing Slang Dictionary, and that he had edited the Tudor Translations and the Works of Byron.

Re-reading his "Poems" I am surprised to find how many numbers have become part of my poetical anthology.

Some of them Vernon Blackburn set to music. He would sing them to Henley—and to me. They sing still.

Perhaps these poems meant all the more to me because I loved, admired, and revered Henley. Yet my affection does not blind me to his demerits. He was a mighty huntsman with the pen, a trafficker in personal and arresting sentences, and when the inspiration was not entirely fresh and pure he would bend words to his service, force them into forcible collocations, so that in certain of his poems, and in some of his prose, the artifice outruns the art. I could never be enthusiastic over his "London Voluntaries" and "Arabian Nights

Entertainments." They seem to be saying, "We will be great poems."

He is never dull, never banal, never commonplace, but sometimes I am aware that Pegasus is being forced to a gallop. Like R. L. S. he was a stylist, but Henley lacked R. L. S.'s air of gay ease, also Stevenson's facility for popularity. Perhaps it is this that made Henley, in after years, jealous of his old friend, and vindictive to him. Still, although in "Views and Reviews" Henley skims the surface of his subjects overmuch, and sometimes hides his lack of spadework in the gusto and quips of his style, every page is readable, and the last essay on R. A. M. S. (Bob Stevenson, as he was called), Louis' brilliant cousin, is an essay to ponder and to treasure, to rejoice in, and to be very glad to have and to hold.

This volume of his "Poems" contains a reproduction of the bust Rodin made of his "dear and great friend." It is fine, manly, yet gentle, and the eyes have the half-closed, peering look, a forward glance, that Henley so often had in intense repose. But it cannot give the colour of the man, the tangle of red hair, the strong red beard, the fair complexion, the Viking look of him; and it cannot give his explosions of laughter, the quizzical look in his blue eyes, and the way he manœuvred his big maimed body, ever seeking a way to rest it, kneeling on a chair, with his hands clutching the rail, crouching this way and that way, and talking, always talking.

Henley was a great force, a noble influence. Time passes. Why is there no biography of him? Let me end with a snatch from one of his poems, persuasive, stronger than force:

My task accomplished and the long day done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet west.

In the eleventh line of the poem there is this—

The lark sings on.

## 25. "O. HENRY"

**W**ILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER chose the pen-name of O. Henry because he had an unflinching instinct in such matters. What an admirable pen-name O. Henry is! It is just right, but do not ask me to explain why. The titles he chose for his volumes of stories are also just right. He called his first book of Latin American tales "Cabbages and Kings." Perhaps not immediately but soon the reader realises how right it was to snatch a line from Lewis Carroll—

"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
"To talk of many things;  
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax,  
And cabbages and kings."

And "The Four Million" for his New York stories about the people, always the people. How pat in explanation is his introductory note—"Not very long ago some one invented the assertion that there were only Four Hundred people in New York City who were really worth noticing. But a wiser man has arisen—the census taker—and his larger estimate of human interest has been preferred in making out the field of these little stories of the 'Four Million.'"

When the new census is established perhaps his

publishers will change the title. It will not matter. O. Henry's men, women and observations do not change, whether their number grows more or less. They are changeless because they are drawn and shaped from life.

Who is this O. Henry? Why is he so amazingly popular? Why is he read with delight by the Four Hundred as well as by the Four Million? Why did a lively Englishman, Mr. S. P. B. Mais, when in 1917 he collected his studies in literature, call the volume "From Shakespeare to O. Henry." That, too, is an excellent title. Pedantic people purse their lips and shake their heads. But what is a title for? To describe a book, to arrest attention, to lodge the book in memory. Mr. Mais desired to relate his literary adventures from Shakespeare and the elder writers, through Samuel Butler, Thomas Hardy, Richard Middleton, John Masefield, Rupert Brooke, to the present, to such a vitality, so American, so racial, so untouched by schools, class rooms and textbooks as O. Henry. He was curious about O. Henry; he wondered why Professor Leacock in writing of this "mere story teller" should call his article "The Amazing Genius of O. Henry." He was eager to know why O. Henry should have been called by various admirers—"The American Kipling," "The American de Maupassant," "The American Gogol," "Our Fielding à la mode," "The Bret Harte of the City," "The Y. M. C. A. Boccaccio," "The Homer of the Tenderloin," "The Twentieth Century Haroun-Al-Raschid," "The Greatest Living Writer of the

Short Story." If he could have looked forward a year or so he would have been impressed to know that in 1918 the American Society of Arts and Sciences decided that their memorial to O. Henry should take the form of prizes awarded annually for the two best short stories written during the year.

So it fell out that "From Shakespeare to O. Henry" was the right title, as were "Cabbages and Kings," and "The Four Million."

Is all this praise of O. Henry justified? Is a slangy, boisterous writer of short stories worthy such high honour? I think so. Henry did what the young Kipling did some years before; what Giotto had done in art centuries before. It is the old story, often repeated; they went back to life. They spurned the literary and art convention; they looked at men and women about them with keen eyes and sympathetic hearts; they tell us about them in the language of our own day, laughing, crying, scolding, applauding as their theme urges them to laugh, cry, scorn or applaud. The young Kipling and O. Henry cared nothing about art for art's sake; they grabbed at life; they were watchers of life, mixers with life; the yarns they told were about life. But each offers something more than the mere yarn; each consciously or unconsciously exposes an esoteric as well as an exoteric meaning ("O. Henry gives you something to think about," said my Negro elevator boy), and as each writes about the Four Million, not the Four Hundred, each gets the approval of the Four Million.



I do not compare or contrast O. Henry with other masters of short stories. He is just himself; he goes his own rapid, riotous way, with everything shaped in his mind: he twists and turns in the narrative, he accumulates the characteristics of his characters; he peppers the page with argot, street humour, misquotations (intentional), tinges the narrative with pathos and pity, and then at the end starts the surprise—staggering, ironical, subtle—but always a surprise. It makes my elevator boy think; it makes me think.

I acknowledge myself an Ohenryite. A decade ago in London I was one of those who by chance read "The Trimmed Lamp" volume (it contains "Brickdust Row," "The Pendulum," and "The Buyer from Cactus City") and forthwith I went out and bought the other eleven O. Henry volumes. But I do not think O. Henry should be read in volume form. The stories were written for newspapers and magazines, and thus they should be enjoyed. In the volume form I am always conscious that there are other stories waiting for me. That makes me hasty; makes me skip. In a newspaper there is one story, no more. I read it once. I read it twice. Strange newspapers come into my house. They are the newspapers that have fallen into the delightful habit of republishing an O. Henry story each day. Yesterday I read "The Cop and the Anthem," the day before "The Assessor of Success," and I am looking forward to rereading "A Lickpenny Lover" and "The Social Triangle."

He wrote over 250 short stories, some of them less good than others. In the wildest or windiest, or most improbable, there are always flashes of insight. He wrote them at the rate of one a week; in some weeks he would turn out two, even three. A few were written in prison. Prof. Alphonso Smith of the University of Virginia, who has written the standard "Life of O. Henry," makes it quite clear that he was guiltless of the crime of misappropriating bank funds for which he was charged and sentenced. Money was not his weakness. A well-known publishing firm, which had refused his short stories when he was unknown, sent him a check for \$1,000 after he had become famous—for anything from his pen. He returned the check. He was a giver; he bestowed money as hastily as he made it.

In New York, as in North Carolina, where he was born, in New Orleans, in Texas, he mixed with the people. His material was always drawn from contact with characters—a look, a word and his imagination began to work. All sorts and conditions of men (except what the world calls gentlefolk) flash through his pages, and all sorts and conditions of women; but the nearest to his heart were the little shopgirls, pretty, poor, steering their fragile barques through the shoals of earning a living. Rightly was O. Henry called by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay "the little shopgirls' knight."

Through Galsworthy's "Justice" the law relating to solitary confinement was humanised. Many of O. Henry's stories, sociological documents, state

conditions as they are in terms of humour, pity, sympathy and irony. I hope lawmakers read them.

Regarding advice to literary aspirants O. Henry was quite himself. "There are two rules," he said. "The first rule is to write stories that please yourself. There is no second rule."

His *métier* was to produce short stories, and of course people tried to persuade him to write a long novel. Friends are always striving to make a creative artist do something against his instincts. At length O. Henry entertained the idea of a novel, and in 1909 or 1910 wrote a long letter on the novel he might write if— The letter was never finished. While he was writing it he was caught up in the greatest adventure of all.

The little shopgirls' knight!

Do you remember at the end of Meredith's "Rhoda Fleming" that last cry of Dahlia's—"Help poor girls."

O. Henry helped them.

## 26. MAURICE HEWLETT

THE Record Office, London, hides. You may walk up Chancery Lane and not notice it; but there it is, a little east of the Lane, near Fleet Street, a noble building, rather spick and span, a cheerful contrast to the musty, mouldering documents that lie within. When I think of the Record Office, which is not often, I think of Domesday Book, and Maurice Hewlett.

Domesday Book was completed in 1086: Maurice Hewlett was employed in the Record Office, as Keeper of Land Revenue Records and Enrollments, from 1896 to 1900. During those four years he must have pored over many time-stained parchments written in the centuries that have passed since William the Conqueror ordered the census or survey of England known as Domesday Book. In those four years he garnered from the original documents his love for the Past.

One would have thought that this dry-as-dust occupation would have stifled the poet in him. Far from it. "Pan and the Young Shepherd," published in 1898, has in it the steps of youth and the scents of spring. It is as fresh as a May morning. And if another of his poems, "The Song of the Plough," is more sedate (it was written eighteen years later), yet this, too, has the lilt and the eager

look. He, himself, has the look of a man who has thought hard and delved deep, who with the pen has trafficked with great men and great ladies, and who knows the Scandinavian and Icelandic Sagas as we know our daily newspapers. An intense man, thin, sturdy, and wiry; energetic; with a face finely trained and somewhat battered, eyes that watch, lips that utter quick, incisive comments. A fearless man! Perhaps that is well, as his wife was the first woman aviator, long before the war a builder of airplanes, and a daring and skillful flier.

I wonder if he is popular today. So bright and scholarly a writer, so full a mind, should have a large circle of readers. Perhaps his mannered style is against him (I like it) and his air of patronage (I like that, too). "Here am I," he seems to be saying. "I am one who knows. I write what I like. Take it or leave it."

What would have happened had not Maurice Hewlett spent four years in the Record Office, and had he not buried himself in the Sagas? Frankly, I find all Sagas a bore, and so do most reviewers of his latest book, "The Outlaw." It is the fifth volume of Mr. Hewlett's "Sagas Retold." I am unable to be interested in these huge, monosyllabic heroes, these grown-up dolls of Norway, who are always fighting about something that is not worth fighting about. I prefer Ibsen's people. To me Burgomaster Solness is much more interesting than Brazenhead the Great. I like his novels of modern life—"The Stooping Lady," "Open Country," "Rest Harrow," because I like a personal style and a

personal outlook and attack, even if the style has a twist of the archaic, a turn for inversion, and a brilliant determination to be unique. His modern novels were "out" when I examined the Hewlett shelf of my pet New York Branch Library, but there was a closely packed stack of the others.

"Maurice Hewlett doesn't seem to be very popular," I said to the librarian.

"No," she answered, "he's too fine."

"Fine" is an excellent word to describe this excellent writer, who may be also called precious, exclusive, and certainly "high-brow." To the real reader who appreciates style, and who knows that the style is the man, certain of his books are a delight. Rarely have I had a greater literary pleasure than in reading his "Earthwork Out of Tuscany," his first published work, "Little Novels of Italy," and "The Road in Tuscany." I know no one else who has Italy so fervidly and so delicately in his blood. "Little Novels of Italy" is a book that will live. The episodes have a charm, pathos, and a gaiety that I do not find in the episodes of his "New Canterbury Tales." His brain moved to Chaucer's England, but his heart speaks in Botticelli's Italy.

It was "The Forest Lovers" that made him famous, and showed the world that a new writer had arisen who counted. I have just reread that spirited romance, and find it as enthralling as of yore. On the second page he springs upon his high, literary horse, and announces, *urbi et orbi*, the Hewlettian viewpoint:

I rank myself with the historian in this business of tale-telling, and consider that my whole affair is to hunt the argument dispassionately. Your romancer must neither be a lover of his heroine nor (as the fashion now sets) of his chief rascal. He must affect a genial height, that of a jigger of strings; and his attitude should be that of the Pulpiteer: Heaven help you, gentlemen, but I know what is best for you! Leave everything to me.

There! That is Maurice Hewlett to the life.

He wove his three modern romances into a trilogy (trilogies are fashionable), and his best historical romances, although quite dissimilar in theme and period, are three—"The Forest Lovers," "Richard Yea-and-Nay," and "The Queen's Quair," which is dedicated to Andrew Lang "by his permission and with good reason." Lang, also, had given days and nights to the mystery of Mary Queen of Scots, she who, tossing high her young head, cried, "Let me alone to rule wild Scotland."

It is reported that a Scotsman after reading "The Queen's Quair" said, "And so is the whole lot of them."

King Richard Yea-and-Nay, whom we know as Richard of the Lion Heart, but here portrayed as "torn by two natures, cast in two moulds, sport of two fates," was a fine Hewlett subject. It is done in great sweeps, fierce and fine in places. I prefer "The Forest Lovers," but I like him best, I delight in him most, when Italy is his theme.

Yes! he is a fine writer, student, romancist, poet—a man who keeps his youth bravely. I had hoped to hear that he had been made Professor of Poetry

at Oxford University. He was in the running; but the post was given to another, a pity, I think, for Maurice Hewlett is a poet in his prose as well as in his verse, and he would have led the youth of Oxford into delightful, dainty, dashing, and daring poetical adventures.



## 27. JOHN OLIVER HOBBS

WHEN I asked the girl librarian (girl librarians, I observe, are always better dressed than men librarians) for a copy of the life of John Oliver Hobbes, she looked blank and doubtful. "Mrs. Craigie," I added—"Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie—you know, the famous novelist—American—who made her home in England."

The girl librarian glided to the card index bureau and hovered over Hobbes. "We have some of her books—'Robert Orange,' 'The School for Saints,' 'The Gods, Some Mortals and Lord Wickenham,' but no *Life*. I'm sorry."

I was sorry, too, and somewhat surprised. Born in Boston and taken to England by her parents at an early age, there becoming famous as novelist, playwright, essayist, and one of the wittiest and most accomplished women in London, surely her *Life* should be among the books in an important branch public library of New York. To me it did not matter, for I knew that clever, charming and witty lady well, and can write about her without opening a book.

About 1890, Mr. Fisher Unwin, eager to enliven publishing routine, determined to issue the Pseudonym Library. He had this literary adventure, in the way of publishers, whispered through the press,

and he placed the arrangements for the Pseudonym series in the hands of one of his clever readers (a "reader" is one who reads and reports upon manuscripts), Mr. Edward Garnett. This able literary critic, whose wife is the translator of Turgueneff, has a keen sense for the new note, and new talent. So when among the many manuscripts sent in, he one day picked from the pile and tasted "Some Emotions and a Moral," by John Oliver Hobbes, he knew at once he had found the book that, in every way, was suitable to inaugurate the Pseudonym Library. Mr. Garnett has since told me that he was first attracted by the handwriting. It was very small, very neat, very firm (those were the days before typewritten manuscript) original and confident, as if saying, "I am in a different class from ordinary writers"; and it was written in violet ink upon thick cream-laid paper. Pearl Craigie was a wise as well as a witty woman. She made plans. She left nothing to chance.

"Some Emotions and a Moral" had an instant success. It was short; it could be read at a sitting; the story was rapid and amusing; cynical yet kindly; well expressed; and obviously, John Oliver Hobbes, whoever he was, could write, was a scholar, and a linguist, and had a quick eye for the fancies and foibles of London society. This first book was as unlike George Eliot's first book as any book could be. The only resemblance between them was that each author had chosen a male pseudonym, and each had immediate success. George Eliot was a recluse, John Oliver Hobbes was a mondaine: George Eliot

never thought that she was a mondaine; John Oliver Hobbes sometimes thought that she was a recluse.

"Some Emotions and a Moral" was not a great book, but it was vastly entertaining. It cheered people: it made the idle rich feel that they were intellectual and rather uncommon; it made the busy intellectuals feel that, with luck, life might become more engaging than books.

Easily I fell a victim to the swift charm of "Some Emotions and a Moral" (I have quite forgotten now what it was all about); I provided elderly ladies with copies, and they asked me to dinner in requital for the pleasure the book had given them. One day I said to myself, "I must know this John Oliver Hobbes." So I addressed a letter to him care of his publishers, expressing my admiration, and saying how much I should enjoy meeting John Oliver Hobbes. The reply, to my astonishment, came from Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie, then 24 years of age: the letter was sent from her father's home in Lancaster Gate. He was John Morgan Richards, a leader of "The American Society" in London, one of the finest types of American gentlemen I have met, and a man of ideas and action who revolutionised the art, or business, or eyesore, whichever you like to call it, of advertising in England. His wife, Laura Richards, was a woman of genius who expressed herself amazingly—not in book or pictures, in everyday life.

It was to her father's house that I was invited to tea by Pearl Craigie. She had been married at 19;

it was an unhappy marriage. After much study and preparation she had launched her first book, and found herself famous in society and in literary circles. Our friendship began that day and continued. She had, I think, as quick and lively a mind as any woman I have ever met. She sparkled in conversation; her brown, lustrous eyes would dance with merriment when she had said something or seen something that roused her irony, her compassion or her ire. Her father's house became a centre of literary and social hospitality: at luncheon and dinner parties, with covers often laid for twenty, you met all kinds of eminent people, and you met them again at his country place, first Norris Castle, and later Steephill Castle in the Isle of Wight. The centre of every function was this brilliant young American woman, whom her father idolised, and whose quick mind and historical knowledge worked in public affairs as eagerly as in literature. It was an open secret that her counsels were sought by more than one eminent statesman. She was also intimately interested in religion, philosophy, and music. The literary world was astonished one day to find in the *Sunday Sun* a whole page review by John Oliver Hobbes of Arthur Balfour's "Foundations of Religious Belief." As to music I remember one evening in her drawing-room the conversation turned upon the acting of prima donnas. Mrs. Craigie was amusing on the subject, and finally she took the centre of the room and regaled us with a series of parodies of great singers who attempt to act in opera. She continued for

an hour singing and acting, familiar with the music, familiar with the ways of prima donnas. It will be observed that I have wandered from John Oliver Hobbes as writer to Mrs. Craigie as woman in the limelight. She filled each rôle with spirit and success; but as writer she never reached the first rank. I think she realised this. She had almost every gift except the supreme gift of genius. She was not a George Eliot, and she lacked the human sympathy of Mrs. Humphry Ward. Brilliant, metallic, artificially elegant and smart are the words that rise to my lips when I re-read the novels and plays of John Oliver Hobbes. Her brilliant mind wrote because writing was the career that she had chosen, and in which she meant to succeed.

The real expression of her talent was "Some Emotions and a Moral" and the small books in the same genre that followed it—"The Sinner's Comedy," "A Study in Temptations," and so forth. Her longer books, the large canvasses, such as "The School for Saints," and "The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham," although done with great care and art, and packed with good things, somehow always fell short of the best, as did her plays. She never wrote a slovenly page; she put her best into everything—and yet, and yet!

She was the best dressed woman in London, and at a dinner party with a congenial companion, she was unparalleled. The dialogue in her books was quick and epigrammatic: her talk was better.

## 28. THE HOUSMANS

**T**HERE are two Housmans as you know: there is Alfred Edward, and there is Laurence.

Perhaps you have heard Laurence lecture in an American city: you may have heard Alfred Edward lecture at University College, London, or at Cambridge; but that is not likely, as his subject is Latin, and much as you may enjoy the tongue that Virgil spake, it is improbable that you would choose to spend an afternoon listening to a Professor of Latin. Yet your curiosity to see the author of "A Shropshire Lad" may have been so great that you were willing to smuggle yourself as a student into a Cambridge or London classroom to listen to a lecture on Latin.

A. E. Housman is a one-book man. Laurence Housman has written many volumes.

When I call A. E. Housman a one-book man I am thinking of him as the author of "A Shropshire Lad"; for though they may be tremendously important, neither I nor you, reader, is habitually interested in his other productions, say, "Manilius," Book I, edited 1903; Book II, 1912; Book III, 1916; and "Juvenal," edited 1905.

But everybody who cares anything for poetry is interested in "A Shropshire Lad." This little volume of 96 pages was published in 1896, and, if

the author of it cares about fame, he has the satisfaction or amusement of knowing that this little volume has made him famous. A score of times during the twenty-four years that have elapsed since it was first published, I have met men and women who knew it, who could quote from it, and who always expressed surprise that the author had written no other books. (They don't call his Latin editions—books.)

It has been my habit to explain to some would-be Housmanites that A. E.'s attitude toward literature is consistent, understandable, and admirable. The making of the poems in "A Shropshire Lad" filled his life, and occupied his thought until he was well on in the thirties, and an equal period may elapse before he is ready to publish a second volume. His well-balanced mind, caustic and cynical wit, and classical training, urge withdrawal from the literary arena until he is quite convinced that his second book is as austere and fundamentally himself as his first effort. This eminent Cambridge don, Professor of Latin and Fellow of Trinity, lives in a hesitant environment, and for better or worse lacks the "go-in-and-win-my-boy" confidence of a Richard Harding Davis.

Laurence Housman has a great admiration for his elder brother, and during his recent visit to America allowed himself to be interviewed by a representative of the *Evening Post* on the Housman family in general, and on A. E. in particular. I am afraid that the headlines of the interview, running right across the page, rather startled A. E. in

"the scholastic seclusion of Cambridge." I copy them out.

"The Famous 'Shropshire Lad' and His Brother.

"Years Ago A. E. Housman Created a Master-piece.

"Since Then He Has Been Silent.

"Now Laurence Housman Tells Us About Him.

"And of His Own Adventures Among American Poets."

I can imagine A. E. saying when he reads these headlines—"So that is the way they do it in America. How curious!"

The interview is excellent and informative. We are told that it was dislike of anti-climax that prevented A. E. from publishing more poems after "A Shropshire Lad." It was "too successful." He was besieged with offers for his next book (publishers are awful). To the most importunate of them his answer was: "This volume was thirty-five years in the making; I shall write the next just as slowly." And he allowed himself to give the following definition of the writing of verse: "Poetry is something that gives one a strange sensation in the back of the neck, or down the spine, or a funny feeling in the pit of the stomach."

He is a strange figure, we are further informed, retired largely into himself. In the last two decades he has written from 400 to 500 lines of poetry, every line chiselled and polished, but up to the present only one of these poems has appeared in print.

So his admirers must for the present content them-



selves with re-reading "A Shropshire Lad." I have just done so. For the past week I have carried the little volume about in my pocket, dipping into it all times, re-reading it until I know almost by heart many of the grim, sad, ironical, cynical, tender, clear-cut little poems. It is the most unaffected of books. It is absolutely without pose or artifice, yet you feel that it has been wrought upon until simplicity can be no longer simplified. The attitude of this Shropshire lad is akin to that of Thomas Hardy in many of his poems. They might be brothers in spirit. If A. E. is directer than T. H. he is quite as morose. The burden of the world is lyrically heavy on each. A. E. can never enjoy the present moment because he is always looking before and after.

When this Shropshire lad (you get to know him very well through these poems) went to London his thoughts in the train were all of the past, never the future. He always uses the right word, the neat word; and the thought is always clear and candid, but never joyful.

Laurence Housman is more a man of the world. He is keener in getting wrongs righted than in the accuracy of Latin texts; in the equalisation of the franchise than emendations of Juvenal. His interests are many—playwriting, fiction, art, craftsmanship, poetry, woodcuts, fairy tales. He has published many books, and I suppose that the most popular, the most successful was "An Englishwoman's Love Letters," issued anonymously in 1900. This sensitive and sentimental book led the

critics a pretty dance. For weeks guesses at the authorship were made in the literary journals, and all sorts of people had to deny that they had written "An Englishwoman's Love Letters." Then one day a student of modern belles lettres brought into the *Academy* office an article proving, through citations from other books by Laurence Housman, that he was the author of the confessions of this love-hipped Englishwoman. That ended the quest, Laurence now acknowledges the authorship of this pretty book. He did not conceal that he was the author of "Rue."

Very many people in England and America are grateful to him for that delightful play "Prunella, or Love in a Dutch Garden." I cherish a moving memory of his "Bethlehem: A Nativity Play," and I have just read his "King John of Jingalo." About this I feel, as I feel about other of his books, and about his poetry and illustrations. It is on the threshold of being a fine book but it does not quite succeed in being one. As to "The Sheepfold" a curious experiment in biography, it would have been better if fiercely pruned to half the length. It is in him, I believe, to write a great book.

Meanwhile he has done a service to letters by reminding a busy world of A. E. and incidentally of himself.

Laurence has strong views about American Freedom, and American Poetry, and is fearless and polite in expressing them.

## 29. WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

**M**Y early reading of Howells (it began quarter of a century ago) had a curious effect. I imagined that all American men and women had the subtlety of insight, the delicacy of perception, and the beautiful manners of the ladies and gentlemen in the novels of Mr. Howells. I held that idea until my first visit to the United States, and really it persists a little still. I am always expecting to meet a Kitty Ellison or a Lydia Blood, and young men whose one desire in life is to be gentle and sympathetic to young ladies. And when I was told that Mr. Howells was raised in Hamilton, Butler County, Ohio, that as a boy he set type in a remote newspaper office, and worked his way up through rough-and-tumble journalism, I pictured him—supposing Ohio to be in the wild—I pictured him as a sort of Buffalo Bill, a lion among ladies, with a big, soft heart, a sombrero hat, and an amazing power of divining the antecedental episodes of a proposal. Years afterward, when I met him in New York, I found him, well, you know—a quiet, kindly, and observant gentleman, sanely and sweetly interested in the respectable side of life, and I wanted to say to him, “Dear Mr. Howells, do you really think that people have the

abnormal intuitions that you ascribe to them in your books?"

I have just, after a quarter of a century, re-read "A Chance Acquaintance" and "The Lady of the Aroostook." I went through them with immense, quiet pleasure and immense astonishment—pleasure in the rippling gaiety of the stories; astonishment at their finished art and understanding. The characterisation is as direct as a primitive picture; the humour is as fresh as a drawing by George du Maurier. I prefer him to Henry James, I prefer him to Anthony Trollope. His girls are adorable, his middle-aged ladies are witty, his middle-aged men accept their destiny cheerfully, and, oh! what a relief it is to read a mild teacup Howells novel, after the tempest flagons of modern fiction.

I freely admit that the Howells young men are unlike the doughboys who marched down Fifth Avenue behind General Pershing. Mr. Howells' young men would never sing, "The Gang's All Here." One of them, a man of fashion, a clubman, calls another clubman in friendly conversation "a goose," and this is how Staniford explains himself to Dunham in "The Lady of the Aroostook": "I can't turn my mind to any one thing—I'm too universally gifted. I paint a little, I model a little, I play a very little indeed; I can write a book notice. The ladies praise my art, etc." Perhaps young Americans did talk like that in the heyday of Victoria. Readily I accept it from the author who once wrote: "Oh, human life, how

I have loved you! and would I could express all I see in your poor foolish face."

But I owe William Dean Howells a further debt. He has given flesh and blood, and dear human frailties to the Brahmins of Boston. Under his pen they become human beings, not mere Proper Names in the Century Dictionary: mere catalogues of perfected deeds. When I pick up his "Literary Friends and Acquaintances," published in 1901, I see and listen to Emerson, Lowell, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Holmes, Longfellow, Whittier, Mrs. Stowe, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Bayard Taylor, Motley, Parkman, Norton, Higginson, Dana, and Channing. I hear Emerson say that John Brown had made the gallows glorious like the cross; that Hawthorne's "Marble Faun," is "a mush," and that Poe was "the jingle man." Howells at 23 won the affection of Hawthorne thus: the author of the "Marble Faun" had been saying that Thoreau prided himself on coming nearer the heart of a pine tree than any other human being. To which young Howells replied, "I would rather come near the heart of a man." I hear Holmes say, "Hawthorne is like a dim room with a little taper of personality burning on the corner of the mantel," and I seem to be present at that dinner party when "Holmes sparkled and Lowell glowed, and Agassiz beamed" and Howells listened. I hear Lowell saying to him, "Sweat the Heine out of you," and I see the card of introduction to Emerson that Hawthorne handed to Howells. On it he had written, "I find this young man worthy."

Well, it is a great life if you don't weaken. William Dean Howells of Ohio, Boston, and the world never weakened. He passed on in harness, watching with shrewd, glimmering eyes the America of his day passing away.

### 30. HENRY JAMES

I WAS never a Henry James man. Admiration —yes: perhaps even reverence; but, to be frank, for years I have not had the patience to read him. The day is short, and to peruse a Henry James novel properly would take the leisure hours of a week. Would it be worth while? What has happened when his long, involved tale is told? Am I any the wiser or better? Have I been amused or edified? Has anything been added to my life? In reading a novel, say, like Hergesheimer's "Java Head," I get something—a place, an epoch, the customs of a time, but most of Henry James' novels give me only an aroma of genteel society, of people who have analysed their feelings to such an extent that they have no feelings left, and a style sometimes exquisite, always sensitive, but so involved and long-drawn-out that at the end of a chapter I say to myself, "Why am I reading this? Why, why, why?"

Of course, there are stories by him that set his fame and can never be forgotten. I am their great admirer. There was "Daisy Miller" and "Roderick Hudson" and "Washington Square" and "The Portrait of a Lady" and essays on certain artists with whom he was in sympathy, and everything he wrote about Venice. Sometimes I think

that the most beautiful work he did was about Venice—sad, meditative essays, wistful and wantonly wayward, but so beautiful.

Henry James was never a popular author. No book of his reached the best selling list, but he always had his few and extremely ardent admirers. Henry Harland was one of them. It was at his flat in Cromwell Road in the nineties that I first met Henry James. Even then he was a lion, an acquiescent Old Master among the living. He paced the room, ponderously complacent, with his air of determined hesitation, and the young writers gathered there gave him homage and waited for his words. It was the thing to do. It was always the thing to do. I can never remember the time when Henry James was not a Feature and a Figure in London life. He stood apart. He was Henry James, and whether you read him or not there he was—Henry James.

This lover of England and English ways found the exact spot in the world that suited him, that might have been made for him. It was Lamb House, a Georgian dwelling, at the top of one of the twisty streets of Rye in Sussex, perched above the marshes and the sea, a jewel set in the plain, as Coventry Patmore called it, with its sister town, ancient Winchelsea, also on its hill three miles away. He would receive chance guests with a courtesy and kindness that erred only on the side of a massive cordiality that made many of his guests speechless. They did not know where to look, or what to do, when he was seeking the right word in a sentence



from which you had long given up all hope that he would ever recover the verb.

At Lamb House he suffered me gladly on several occasions. Year after year it was my custom to spend a portion of the summer at Winchelsea, and what was pleasanter than to cycle over to Rye with a few friends, and call upon Henry James. The telephone had not penetrated to Winchelsea, and I cannot imagine Henry James using it, although he did essay, with gravity and dignity, to ride the bicycle. His partiality for it was brief.

Our visits were prefaced by a polite letter, and a politer answer. The ritual of the adventure was always exact. Each episode, each afternoon was the same. I see again the stocky, impressive figure, with large head and the observant eyes, advancing with outstretched hand into the cool hall, from the garden study, a book under his arm, usually French. This would be followed by a stroll round the trim lawn, a disquisition, uneasily accurate, on the flowers and the views, followed by a set tea at a table perfectly arranged. Our host, if the company was sympathetic, would talk slowly, laboriously, delicately, with swift, ponderable efforts of humour, embracing all in the conversation, and startling the timid when he directed toward them a question or a comment. Sometimes there was a pause in the conversation. When this happened the pause could be felt. On such occasions I would try to save the situation. Once, during a pause longer than usual, in despair, I praised the canary. For some seconds

Henry James gave the bird his undivided attention, then he said—"Yes, yes, and the little creature sings his songs of gratitude and admiration with-er—the slightest modicum of encouragement from-er—me."

If I say more about Henry James as a Man than as a Writer it is because he impressed me more as a Man than as a Writer.

The Man grew greater as he grew older. I saw him several times in the early months of the war, and whenever I saw him I thought of those three pregnant words of Shakespeare's: "Ripeness is all." Ripe was the word for him, but the cataclysm of the war and all it meant made him unutterably sad, not uselessly sad, far from it, for he was ceaselessly at work for humanity. He went no more to Rye: he spent his spare time visiting wounded soldiers, talking to them, comforting them. What Tommy thought of Henry James and of his talk will never be known, but Tommy knew well that this big, distressed man, this Great-heart, felt for him and loved him, even if "the old buffer" was unable to express himself in Tommy's language. This all happened in those days, those dire days when England, his beloved England, had her back to the wall. Then it was that he became a British subject. It was, as he said, the least that he could do. Then it was that he produced a phrase of five words that are perhaps to Englishmen the best known and the most cherished among the millions of words that he wrote. He referred to the English as "that decent and dauntless race,"

and Englishmen who have never read one of his books, and never will, are proud and glad.

On Lamb House, Rye, a tablet has been placed bearing these words: "Henry James lived here 1898-1916."

It will be a place of pilgrimage.

What would he have said if he could have known that, of all his books, his "Letters" is the most popular?

### 31. RUDYARD KIPLING

**I**N 1889 we in London who were living by literary journalism, began to talk with awe and wonder about a new Anglo-Indian author called Rudyard Kipling, whom his intimates addressed as Ruddy.

My friend Vernon Blackburn got to know him and to idolise him; and it was through Vernon that I began to hear wonder talk about Rudyard Kipling. He was not a society man, or a frequenter of clubs: he was a worker, an investigator of London humanity, like O. Henry in New York, a prowler about the streets who would copy the names of striking thoroughfares in his note book, and talk to anybody who was engaged on an interesting job. He was an old young man, who checked and chided Vernon's youthfulness. Sometimes Vernon would be admitted into the Kipling workshop. He told me how the author of "Barrack Room Ballads" would rush to the window when a soldier passed down the street; how he would compose stanzas at white heat, one after the other, and rush upstairs each time to read the new effort to his parents; and how once when he was declaiming "The Blind Bug" to Vernon, and had reached the line "He flipped the blind bug into the dark" he suited the action to the word so vehemently that the blood spurted.

We bought, not without difficulty, and read and re-read those collections of stories, in blue paper covers, with the imprint of an Indian publisher—"Soldiers Three," "In Black and White," "Under the Deodars" and all the other wonders of prose and verse. For a poet, too, a writer of swinging, haunting verses, who used slang without fear and without reproach, was this young Anglo-Indian who took young literary England by storm.

The dons of Oxford and Cambridge were rather shy of Kipling, but the undergraduates opened their Norfolk jackets to him, and by 1890, when he published "Life's Handicap," and in 1891, "The Light That Failed," he had won his way almost into the ranks of the "best sellers." "Barrack Room Ballads" was not published till 1892, and by that time even the Quarterly Reviewers were almost ready to accept his violent wayfaring with the tongue that Shakespeare spake. Of course when "Kim" was published Kipling became a classic.

W. E. Henley had prepared the way for the introduction of "Barrack Room Ballads" into the fortresses of classicism by publishing them week by week in the *Scots Observer*. Henley, being joint author with Farmer of "The Slang Dictionary," was of course vastly interested in Kiplingese. Reading the proofs in the office of the *Scots Observer* in Westminster, he would roar with laughter and hammer the table with blows of delight. One of the ballads especially pleased him. Turning to me he said: "Will you take this

telegram when you go?" He handed it to me. It contained three words: "God bless you!"

Parties and functions are not for Kipling. He is no hermit, but his friends have to be of his own choosing. I heard about the oyster supper parties he gave when he was living in one of the dim little streets by the Thames near Charing Cross, and once I was taken by Vernon Blackburn to see him in the house that his father had rented in the Earl's Court Road. It was a Saturday afternoon: he was at work before a roll-top desk, and carved upon it (he did it with his penknife) were the words, "Oft was I weary when I toiled at thee." He read us the poem he was then writing. No, he did not write it out: his mouth was his pen. That has always been his way, to compose a poem in his head, to get it right and taut, and when it is all done to copy it out on paper in his clear, small handwriting. He read fiercely.

The next time I saw Rudyard Kipling was under rather shameful circumstances for which I was not responsible. I was staying at Rottingdean, a seaside place in Sussex, and, having an idle hour, succumbed to the blandishments of a char-à-banc conductor to see the sights of the neighbourhood. We were driven past the village green and pond, past the Burne-Jones dwelling to a white house in a garden surrounded by a high wall. "Sight No. 1," shouted the conductor. "This is the house of the celebrated author, Rudyard Kipling." The conductor craned his neck, rose on his toes, and said, in an excited voice, "If you will stand up, ladies and

gentlemen, you will see the celebrated author in a garden hat, just entering his porch." Can you wonder that soon afterward Mr. Kipling moved from Rottingdean and settled in a delightful old house near Burwash, in Sussex, where there are no char-à-bancs and no tourists.

Once more I saw him—a chance encounter. I was cycling from Rottingdean to London, and in a puncture interval at a wayside blacksmith's encountered him in a mess of grease and rags assisting in taking a motorcycle to pieces. That was the mechanical Kipling, the author of the difficult-to-read mechanical, technical stories.

There was nothing technical, just sheer inspiration, in the article that appeared in the *London Spectator* describing how Shakespeare, strolling one afternoon into the pit of the Bankside Theatre, fell into conversation with some sailors, plaited hair and rings in their ears, and obtained from them the seafaring knowledge that he used in "The Tempest." The article was unsigned. We wondered who the author might be; we sought in vain. Years later an American publisher issued this article as a pamphlet-de-luxe. It was signed Rudyard Kipling.

And there was nothing technical about the speech he made at a Royal Academy banquet, one of his rare appearances in public, wherein he gave an account of the first artist, he who took a charred stick from the fire and made a sketch on a rock of his companions bringing home a deer. "How

did it go?" I asked a Royal Academician. "Great!" he answered. "Great! We were spellbound."

It is a chastened Kipling that holds our attention in "The Years Between," but there is much of the old fire and lilt, and more of the fine preacher quality he showed in "Recessional." Who can wonder?

In this volume he returns to the theme which he worked so beautifully in that "Tempest" article in the *Spectator*. For in "The Craftsman," a poem of seven stanzas, the old magic, he tells how Shakespeare garnered the material for his craft—

How, while he hid from Sir Thomas's keepers,  
Crouched in a ditch and drenched by the midnight  
Dews, he had listened to gipsy Juliet

Rail at the dawning.

How on a Sabbath, hushed and compassionate—  
She being known since her birth to the townfolk—  
Stratford dredged and delivered from Avon

Dripping Ophelia.

Book after book by him appears. They may vary in interest: they may be different, as "Stalky" is different from "Recessional"; but in each and all there is the magic that starts somewhere, if not everywhere, in everything signed Rudyard Kipling.



### 32. ANDREW LANG

ABOUT the autumn of 1888, two young men with literary ambitions (my friend W. Pett Ridge was one, I was the other) put their excited heads together, and determined to publish a book. The volume was not to their own honour and glory; it was homage to Andrew Lang, to his honour and glory. The "Languid Lang," who had a consistent sense of humour, may have smiled his weary smile at the notion. I know not, I was much too far advanced in awe and admiration of him to inquire if he considered our action funny. Enthusiasm begat the book, the enthusiasm of youth for a Master of their trade who had succeeded so wonderfully in doing, in the *Daily News*, what we were trying falteringly and poorly to do—to write. Those were the days when the *Daily News* was the most literary of the London journals. It had upon its staff a small constellation of literary stars, including Richard Whiteing, author of "No. 5 John St.,"; but the brightest star was Andrew Lang, humourist and scholar, humanist and poet. He did not sign his editorials, or leaders as they are called in England: their place on the editorial page was third or fourth, following the nuisance of the political, economical, or sociological leaders. He always wrote on literature or some-

thing allied; but whether on books, folklore or people, on fishing, fal-fals or cricket, his leader was always graceful, amusing, and clear as a dewdrop: scholarly—but the learning was worn lighter than a flower; allusive—he seemed to know all poetry, ancient and modern, all characters in fiction, and all about fairies and heroes, and folklore, and ballads. Above all, his leaders had humour that bubbled up and overflowed from every subject he played with. These leaders appeared three or four times a week, and I confess that my first employment each morning was to search for the Lang leader, to read it carefully and with delight in the train going down to the city, to cut it out, and later to discuss it with Pett Ridge, who was even more of a Lang enthusiast than I.

One day we had the daring notion of collecting the Lang leaders, retrieving them from the files of the *Daily News* and of writing to Mr. Lang and suggesting that they should be published under the title "Lost Leaders." Our hero agreed, languidly, without enthusiasm. It was one of the parlour poses of this tall, silent aristocrat of letters, with the aquiline features and the wavy locks parted in the middle, carefully cut; with the air of a sensitive child tossed into a chilly and clamorous world, that nothing was worth while, that everything was rather a bore. If he approved of our enthusiasm he certainly never showed it.

The book duly appeared under the title "Lost Leaders," 1889, one of the long list of his books. What an array! There were at least sixty begin-

ning with "Ballads and Lyrics of Old France" in 1872, passing through "Ballads in Blue China," 1880, "Custom and Myth," 1884, the yearly Fairy Books, Blue, Green, and Yellow, the translations of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," Scottish History, down to "The World's Desire" in collaboration with Rider Haggard, another novel in conjunction with A. E. W. Mason, interspersed with heavier volumes such as the "Life of John Gibson Lockhart," and "The Making of Religion." Add to these more books of verse and jeux d'esprit such as "Pictures at Play," a funny running comment on the Royal Academy exhibition which he rattled off through a few May afternoons with W. E. Henley.

All these by no means represent his production; he was forever writing articles and causeries, and there were the lectures he gave periodically at St. Andrew's University and elsewhere. He spoke his lectures in an Oxford drawl, and always seemed a little surprised when he made his audience laugh.

A great worker: yet when you saw him dreaming through long summer afternoons at Lord's cricket ground, or doing bad rounds on the golf links, you would think that he was a man of leisure instead of the hardest working literary journalist of his day. That he was, but he also accomplished his work with almost incredible ease, always pretending that he knew very little, and that what he did know was hardly worth expressing. He never

relaxed either this amusing affection or his industry.

I am told that he was beloved by his intimates, but to the casual person, eager to admire him in drawing room or club, he was distant and unresponsive. I think he was a disappointed man. He raised high hopes at Balliol College, Oxford, whither he went from St. Andrew's, which perhaps were never fulfilled. Jowett predicted that he would be a great poet, and it is said that he hoped his poem, "Helen of Troy," published in 1882, would "set the Thames on fire." It did not.

But the poet in him never ceased. He produced verses with the ease that he produced his leaders and literary articles. It was said he could write an article so quickly that if he began it standing he would finish it before he gave himself the trouble of sitting down.

Mr. Edmund Gosse, who in his "Portraits and Sketches" has written the best memory of "Dear Andrew with the brindled hair," as R. L. Stevenson addressed him in a poem, gives us an example of his quickness. One day Gosse showed him Emerson's famous epigram called "Brahma." Lang, who detested Emerson (I don't know why) read it with "a snort of derision," and immediately improvised this parody:

If the wild bowler think he bowls,  
Or if the batsman thinks he's bowled,  
They know not, poor misguided souls,  
They, too, shall perish unconsolated.

I am the batsman and the bat,  
I am the bowler and the ball,  
The umpire, the pavilion cat,  
The roller, pitch, and stumps and all.

This, as Mr. Gosse justly remarks, would make a pavilion cat laugh.

Having made up his mind that he was not to be a great poet, Lang allowed his muse to be merry, sad, or musical, according to his mood. His muse just picks up her skirts and trips on.

There's a joy without canker or cark,  
There's a pleasure eternally new,  
'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark  
Of china that's ancient and blue.

He can laugh whimsically at himself as in the lines he addressed to Doris:

Doris, I, as you may know,  
Am myself a Man of Letters,  
But my learnèd volumes go  
To the top shelf like my betters,  
High—so high that Doris could  
Scarce get at them if she would

Doris, there be books of mine,  
That I gave you, wrote your name in.  
Tooled and gilded, fair and fine:  
Don't you ever peep the same in?  
Yes, I see you've kept them—but  
Doris, they are "quite uncut."

His fancy played: it played, and yet was serious, with everything from Folklore to Fishing, from Custom and Myth to Cricket and Meters, from Ariadne to annual art exhibitions. One of his

funniest smaller books was "How to Fail in Literature." He told the beginner exactly how to do it.

His memory was amazing. Not even Lamb excels him in the number of his allusions. Some he worked over hard. He was particularly fond of "wet, bird haunted English lawns," and of

Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,  
Love gives itself, but is not bought.

He was Victorian in his love for Morris' "Earthly Paradise" and Rossetti's "Poems," but his chief devotion was for Matthew Arnold. There was something of that aloof Olympian in Andrew Lang: each was an aristocrat of letters; Lang's temperament was sympathetic to the undercurrent of sad wistfulness that runs through Matthew Arnold's poems.

One of his books that will surely live is the version in English of the "Odyssey" he made with Professor Butcher. Not long ago I read a fine essay by a soldier inspired by "a mildewed Butcher and Lang," which had been read and re-read by exiles, tense with waiting, in a Red Cross hut at Brest.

### 33. WILLIAM J. LOCKE

**I**N the late nineties I began to know a tall, graceful, well-dressed youth, who was then Secretary of the Royal Institute of British Architects. It was in the Bodley Head Parlour, in 1897, that we first met. This fair young man of distinguished appearance wore his clothes with such an air that I was inclined to cultivate him. He was W. J. Locke; he had just published "Derelicts," and I had not read it. Such things happen. Later we met at teas and evening parties, and I remember thinking how fortunate the Institute was in having a secretary (most secretaries are so stuffy) who was a man of the world with charm, tact, and a capacity for listening as well as for talking. He held that position from 1897 to 1907, cultivating literature in his leisure hours, wooing the muse so assiduously that within this period he published ten novels. His first book, "At the Gate of Samaria," goes back to 1895. In 1906, "The Beloved Vagabond" was issued. With this book he stepped into the Locke easy stride, or perhaps I should say the Locke gay amble, an amble that his readers find so pleasant that he has become one of the most popular and well-liked novelists of the day. So successful was "The Beloved Vagabond"

that within a year of its publication he took his silk hat for the last time from its peg in the office of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and became William John Locke, novelist, one of the few graduates (Mathematical Tripos 1884) of St. John's College, Cambridge, proposing to live entirely by the pen.

I count myself a Locke man. If I can't borrow a new novel by him, I buy it. I do so because I know that I shall have entertainment, that I shall mix with people of breeding whether they be low born or high born, people with ideas and ideals, who behave themselves, and who take it for granted that there is something more in life than getting and spending. He is not insular. His writings, like those of Henry Harland, have the Gallic touch and esprit. He is a man of feeling, his books are debonair, and if he deals sometimes with sad things, he does so with an air, showing us that, as in life, they pass; and that good may issue from them. He does not soar to heights or plunge to depths; he is a cheerful writer, who pursues the *mot juste* with a lilt, and who delights to turn a phrase happily. Briefly, his novels cheer me, and he has introduced me to a lot of agreeable, lovable, and fantastic people. I do not pretend to remember them all, but pleasant hours troop back when I look through the amusing list of his books that his publishers (or he) designed for the "By the Same Author" page in "The Red Planet." Here it is:



IDOLS  
JAFFERY  
VIVIETTE  
SEPTIMUS  
DERELICTS  
STELLA MARIS  
THE USURPER  
WHERE LOVE IS  
THE WHITE DOVE  
SIMON THE JESTER  
A STUDY IN SHADOWS  
A CHRISTMAS MYSTERY  
THE WONDERFUL YEAR  
THE FORTUNATE YOUTH  
THE BELOVED VAGABOND  
AT THE GATE OF SAMARIA  
THE GLORY OF CLEMENTINA  
THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE  
THE DEMAGOGUE AND LADY PHAYRE  
JOYOUS ADVENTURES OF ARISTIDE PUJOL

If I were Mr. Locke I would want to keep the neat pattern of this design. It will be easy to find titles longer than "Joyous Adventures of Aristide Pujol"; it will not be so easy to find titles shorter than "Idols." . . . I have been thinking hard, and suggest—"Them," "You," "Oh," "I."

Reading one of Locke's novel's, "The House of Baltasar" in a train and enjoying it, I was annoyed by the efforts of a Stranger in the adjoining chair (he was reading Snaith's "The Undeclared") to draw me into a conversation on the relative merits of Locke and Snaith. He was also interested in and troubled about William de Morgan. I snubbed him, I wanted to read; but he would not

be suppressed. Presently he asked me where I would place Locke and Snaith in regard to what he called "the big men." He was so persistent and so pleasant that I finally closed "The House of Baltasar" (it wasn't Locke's fault), and answered him something in this wise—

"If we agree, and I suppose we do, that the greatest modern English-writing novelists are Dickens, Thackeray, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Meredith, and Thomas Hardy, then we have a clearly defined first class. That being so, I should place Joseph Conrad in the running as a candidate for the lower ranks of the first class, not there yet, but promising. Kipling is also a candidate. He may yet write another "Kim." Midway in the second class, perhaps two-thirds down, I should place Locke and Snaith, and, some distance below, William de Morgan. I place Conrad high because he is a master of style, perhaps, after Thomas Hardy, the best writer of English now living. I place William de Morgan low because he has no style at all. He was a voluminous and volatile letter writer. Locke is a gay and sensitive stylist; Snaith is impersonal, clear, and forcible."

"What I want in my fiction reading," said the Stranger, "is the story; I don't bother about style. William de Morgan can tell a story fine. He's a bit long-winded, but he gets there. Did you ever see William de Morgan?"

"I saw him once," I answered. "It was in the second year of the war. I had gone into an iron-

monger's shop in Chelsea to buy a penknife. While waiting I could not help being interested in a venerable but rather draggled Early Victorian—so he looked—who was having an animated discussion with the proprietor of the shop. The assistant informed me that the old gentleman was often there, that he had invented a device for locating submarines, and that the friendly ironmonger was helping him with the model. Bits of metal were scattered over the counter.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"He's rather a famous old bird," answered the assistant. "A lot of eminent men live in Chelsea."

"Indeed, what's his name?"

"He's Mr. William de Morgan the potter. He writes books, too, I'm told."

"That's a good one, Doctor," said the Stranger.

### 34. E. V. LUCAS

**Y**OU owe me, my dear Lucas, a cab fare. When we meet in London after your journey through India, Japan and America, I will claim it.

As you are, besides being the most successful literary man of the day (I don't count such folk as popular novelists and playwrights), a person with a nice sense of honour, I am sure you will indorse my claim to that cab fare.

Here are the facts: When I suddenly decided (was it because John Galsworthy dedicated "A Motley" to you, and "Tatterdemalion" to Mrs. Lucas?) to write about you, naturally I called at my favourite branch Public Library.

"Have you any books by E. V. Lucas?" I asked. In a few minutes there stood upon the table a pile of nineteen volumes—all for me. I hailed a cab. There was no other way.

On consideration I do not think that I will charge you for the cab fare because of the pleasure I enjoyed in going through nineteen books by you. Most of them were familiar to me, and many a time I laid down a volume, and recalled the days when it was written—back, back to our first meeting. That must have been in the early nineties, soon after you had settled in London to enroll yourself as a student at University College, Gower Street. You

were always a writer, always making mental notes, always observing, and even in those days you held your pen askew, your half pen, for you always broke the holder in two and threw away the upper half, between your first and second fingers; and you wrote, oh so quickly, with the lines running up the page, not along it, in little words minute and so difficult to read. I believe you still dislike the typewriter, almost as much as you detest the motor car.

Even in those days your humour, always a little sardonic, a little atrabilious, began to spurt forth, and it found a pertinent and impertinent outvent in the "By the Way" column of the dear old pinky *Globe* newspaper, the cradle of so many writers (including myself) who "commenced author" by writing "Turnovers" (so-called because they turned over the page) at a guinea a time. I believe you were actually on the staff of the *Globe* and when you find how popular in America the Funny Column is, it may amuse you to write an essay claiming that the "By the Way" column of the *Globe*, a hundred and more years old, was the parent of these wise, witty, tender and caustic Columns.

Those days and these! You have indeed made good. You began in the most modest way; you tiptoed into the sea of literature, making no splash, hardly a ripple, on a Brighton paper, was it not? Something under a quarter of a century passes and here is Mr. Edmund Gosse after reading your happy book "The Phantom Journal" asserting that

you are "more proficient in the pure art of the essayist than anyone since R. L. Stevenson." And here is Mr. Clement K. Shorter saying that you have had "the most entrancing career as a man of letters of any living writer in England." You are the only writer of my acquaintance who runs into new editions so quickly that I become quite giddy. Reviewers love you and say no end of things about your charm and humour. Everybody seems to read you from Mr. Edmund Gosse to your seaside landlady, and everybody likes you and says, "What a nice man he must be! I should like to meet him." I smile at that because I know how retiring you are: by that I mean that you prefer to choose your friends, not be chosen; that you are splendid on a country walk, and delightful at a remote cricket match, but that in a club lounge or at the high table of a public dinner a curled-up hedgehog, compared with you, is a hail-fellow-well-met.

How many books have you published? I give it up. But I know that very soon the interesting list, that authors sneak into the page "facing title" which is called "Books by the Same Author," will have to run over to a second page. Has this ever happened before? I doubt it. But at least I can attempt to group your books. Your first was a book of Poems ("that nobody knows anything about"): your second was "Bernard Barton and His Friends" published in 1893. There are the Essays, such as "Comedy and Character" and "Fire-side and Sunshine"; the Wanderer books, such as

"A Wanderer in London"; the Lucasian novels (not really novels) such as "Over Bemerton's" and "Landmarks"; the Poetry, Prose, and "Letter" anthologies, such as "The Open Road," "Some Friends of Mine" and "The Gentlest Art"; the Books for Children, such as "Anne's Terrible Good Nature" and "The Slow Coach"; the Humorous Books, such as "Wisdom While You Wait." And there is "The Life of Charles Lamb."

Besides all this you are a busy literary journalist writing regularly for the London *Times* Literary Supplement and other journals; you are Assistant Editor of *Punch*, very useful, and often rather bored at the Wednesday dinner when the Cartoon is discussed; and you are a publisher's reader, and I believe a partner in the firm of Methuen & Co.

You must have, I think, what the world calls a good business head. You told me once that you have never sold a book outright, that you always retain a royalty. With such ever-selling anthologies as "The Open Road" and "The Friendly Town" and the "Wanderer" books this foresight must be agreeably rewarded. You make friends of the right kind; your mind is so compact and inquisitive, your opinions so reasonable, your judgment so sound and independent of ulterior motives, your outlook so humorous and unbiased by convention, your silences so eloquent, your conversation so alert and to the point, when it does break out, that you make friends in all worlds—the literary and the sporting; in art circles and in those devoted to billiards, conjuring vaudeville and sport. Your clubs are

The Athenæum, the Burlington Fine Arts, and the National Sporting Club. Indeed, it may be said of you that nothing human is alien to your sympathy—but the diverse humanity you seek must have character and comedy and play the game, whether it be annotating Lamb, planting bulbs, singing a comic song, or capping quotations. You are sympathetic, but you are also always an observer, never an actor, and an observer with an inward and not always a gracious smile.

It will be observed that I consider you a wise youth: You had a four-square literary foundation. As a young man you set yourself the gigantic task of writing the "Life of Charles Lamb" in two thick volumes, and editing his works. You did it supremely well, and the years of research you gave to it furnished you with an erudite and canny knowledge of the literature of the period, and opened the way to many of your later books. On Charles Lamb's shoulders you climbed up from the horde of writers, carrying Elia with you, loving him, and learning much from him. It was easy because as humourists and observers you are much akin, and it is the humourist and the observer that the world loves in you and Elia, whom you rightly call "the most lovable figure in English literature." You understand Lamb beautifully. In the famous interview between Charles Lamb and Carlyle when Elia pulled the Sage's leg, so quietly but so naughtily, your comment is: "The history of misunderstanding has few things better than this. I like to think of the poor broken-down Cockney sizing up



his visitor in a twinkling and deciding to give him exactly what he merited."

You have also, my dear Lucas, done a thing which many essay writers and versifiers would like to do, but they shrink from the attempt through lack of encouragement, aplomb, and a publisher. You have compiled an anthology from your own Prose, Verse, Letters, and Child Things under the title of "A Little of Everything." It is excellent reading. My favourite is the essay called "A Philosopher That Failed"—Oliver Edwards, the solicitor, who is famous, for ever and ever, because he once said to Dr. Johnson: "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried, too, in my time, to be a philosopher, but I don't know how; cheerfulness was always breaking in."

Of your fugitive poems I like best that called "The Cricket Ball Sings," but perhaps that would not be fully appreciated in this land of Baseball. Here is a stanza:

Give me the fieldsman whose eyes never stray from me,  
Eager to clutch me, a roebuck in pace:  
Perish the unalert, perish the "buttery,"  
Perish the laggard I strip in the race.  
Grand is the ecstasy, soaring triumphantly,  
Holding the gaze of the meadows is grand,  
Grandest of all to the heart of the ball  
Is the finishing grip of the honest brown hand.

In an essay, a delightful reminder of Elia, called "My Cousin the Bookbinder"—that dear man, that unforgotten Bookbinder, speaking of Charles

Lamb, says, “. . . this little one who calls himself Elia is all for quietness and not being seen, and having his own thoughts and his own jokes. . . .”  
Really, that is not at all a bad description of you.

### 35. MAURICE MAETERLINCK

**H**AD Maeterlinck not come to America it would have been simple to write about him, to recall, with gratitude, his literary advent in London, and my joy. Those were white days, the days when I first saw "Pelléas and Mélisande" and "The Intruder"; when I first read "The Treasure of the Humble" and "The Life of the Bee." He, himself, has not changed. Of that I had testimony at his second lecture in Carnegie Hall. He is still the quiet, aloof, self-contained man, a sage in dress clothes, watching the audience, a little surprised, a little anxious, as a thoroughbred racehorse looks when examining the crowd about him.

The Vortex called. Maurice Maeterlinck has been in the Vortex. The Apostle of Silence came to America to deliver a message, and lo! the Apostle of Silence found himself in a Hubbub.

No doubt, by this time, Maurice Polydore Marie Bernard Maeterlinck has learned that America is more eager to see him, and to note how he delivers his message, than to be informed of the content of the message. That is the way of audiences, and that being so I hardly see why audiences should object to the delivery of his lectures in French, which was the basis of his dispute with Mr. Pond of the Pond Lyceum Bureau. (I hope it has

been settled.) It is a rare treat to hear such French; it was painful to listen to the Sage trying to express himself in phonetic English. It was a failure, but he emerged from it beautifully. Actors of wide experience might envy his poise and self-command. Never before has there been such an acute example of the precept about a good man struggling against adversity. Gratefully upon his ears must have fallen the voice of a lady crying from the audience, "Say it in French, sir."

Perhaps when Maeterlinck has thought it all over, and has returned to the Villa les Abeilles, Avenue des Baumettes, Nice, he will write a new essay and call it "Manhattan, or, How I Was Drawn into the Vortex." And perhaps of all the strange experiences he underwent in the New World the strangest was the interview with a group of New York newspapermen. It may not have been strange to him, for his meditations carry him into strange vagaries of thought; but it was strange to them for New York newspapermen have been schooled to regard Maeterlinck the Mystic as a Figure of Mystery, and here was this vigorous transcendentalist, clad in a woolen lounge suit, with carpet slippers upon his feet, saying, "I love the boxing. I have boxed with Kid McCoy. He is not only a boxer, but a philosopher, too." The reporters also realised that the Sage knows what Carpentier weighs. "I have boxed with him three or four times," he said proudly. The present writer was not at the interview, but there it is all set down in cold print. I am glad I was not there. It is so much more interest-

ing to imagine it; but it is rather difficult. I can imagine Mr. Henry Ford as an Interior Decorator with a leaning toward salmon-pink. I can even imagine Mr. William Randolph Hearst as an English Gentleman with a leaning toward chivalry, but only with a great effort can I imagine the author of "Wisdom and Destiny" and "The Intruder" as a boxer nimble on his pins, and quick on the uptake. Here is the account—"The poet threw forward his body, doubled his fists and danced about Mr. Russell for several seconds. Despite his great size and portly build the Belgian's footwork was swift, . . . his toes tapped lightly on one of Mr. Anderson's valuable bear rugs, nearly upsetting a vase of lilies. 'I love the boxing,' cried the Sage, 'I have boxed with Kid McCoy.' And Kid McCoy in turn has told the world this: 'I had the pleasure of boxing with a poet some time ago. His name is Maeterlinck. He's a good boxer and a mighty good sport. You know I didn't think much of poetry until recently.'" All things work together for good. Perhaps now that Kid McCoy has come into contact with poetry he will introduce it into the boxing arena. I hope I have got the gentleman's name right. One is apt to make mistakes in nomenclature with new reputations.

So disturbing was the passage of Maeterlinck across the Manhattan firmament that I find it difficult to recapture the equable state of mind that the name of Maeterlinck evoked in me ere he sailed up New York bay with his young wife to attend the first performance of "The Blue Bird" as an opera. All

this is too near and restless. I must go back to days long before "The Betrothal" and "The Blue Bird," back, back to the first performances of his plays at the Court Theatre in Sloane Square—that home of lost and won theatrical causes. I see again in memory Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Mr. Martin Harvey in "Pelléas and Mélisande"; I see play after play, so still, so moving, and it is strange now to think that we thought then that these plays, passing behind gauzes, lifting the veil, so still, so moving, were to be the prefaces to the drama of the future. Perhaps they will yet.

Then came "The Treasure of the Humble" with the shock of a witty and cynical Introduction by A. B. Walkley. But he did one good service. He asked point-blank—"Has M. Maeterlinck anything to say?"

Of course he has. It may not be new because nothing is new, but this Belgian Master has gathered up and written down in beautiful French the interior teaching and wisdom of mankind from Plotinus to Emerson, whispering the while to an obturate world, "What we know is not interesting.

The mystery of life is what makes life interesting." We of the Anglo-Saxon world have taken to him more freely than the Latin or the Flem, and we have had the immense advantage of two sympathetic and understanding translators—Alfred Sutro and Teixeira de Mattos. One of them, Alfred Sutro, is a dramatist, and perhaps he is still asking himself if a Maeterlinckian theatre is not

still possible, "a static theatre, a theatre of mood not of movement, a theatre where nothing material happens and where everything immaterial is felt."

Literary success came to Maeterlinck early—perhaps too early. Popular success envelops him in 1920—perhaps too popular. With me he is a master of the Past. He calls from the Past. Some years ago when he began to write for the *Daily Mail* I felt that he was slipping out from his Platonic cave, and when I read his latest book, "Mountain Paths," I had a feeling that the Maeterlinck of "The Treasure of the Humble" had gone to other adventures. He has not gone over to Kid McCoy, but he now treats subjects about which there is really nothing to be said because we know everything about them—or nothing.

The Belgian Sage's platform manner is admirable. He looked at his second lecture just as the author of "The Treasure of the Humble" and "Wisdom and Destiny" should look. Nothing, I am sure, would ruffle him, nothing disturb him. He has poise. He delivered his message neither quietly nor riotously; he just delivered it.

Do not ask me what it was about.

I have no knowledge of Odic Effluvia, of the Major and Minor Memory, and I have little aptitude for investigations into the communal life of Insects.

Such matters do not trouble me. But they seemed to disturb a young American, a stranger, who sat by my side. Halfway through the lecture he leaned toward me and said—"This is deep stuff."

When it was all over and Maeterlinck had taken his triple call, the young American remarked, "He takes you along a strange road, and a pretty steep one."

"Yes," I answered. "But why travel out of the way? If you want to go to Philadelphia why not go straight there? Why go via the Rocky Mountains, California, the South Pole and Florida?"

The young American looked at me curiously. "There's something in that," he said.



## 36. EDWIN MARKHAM

YOU are invited," said the invitation, "to participate with the Joint Committee of Literary Arts in a dinner in honour of Edwin Markham in recognition of his genius as a poet and his worth as a man."

That seemed all right. So I acquired a ticket and noted the date of the dinner. In the interval I tried to recall what I knew about Edwin Markham and his very popular poem, "The Man with the Hoe." It was published nearly twenty years ago; it was suggested by Millet's painting; and it had the distinction of being the most quoted poem of the day. Innumerable newspapers published it; innumerable sermons were preached upon it; innumerable editorials were written on the questions with which the poem concludes—

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
How will the future reckon with this Man?  
How answer his brute question in that hour  
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?

Strange to say the future reckoned with this Man by begging All Men to take up the hoe and help to feed the world.<sup>3</sup> Neither Mr. Markham, nor anybody else, could foresee that with the pressure of the submarine menace in 1916 the Man with the

Hoe would become a very important, a very necessary and much-admired person. In England everybody in their leisure hours wielded a hoe. It was unpatriotic not to do so. The present writer, clad in a costume as like to the garments worn by Millet's peasant as his scanty wardrobe permitted, hoed himself into a state that bordered upon ecstasy. He was doing his bit, not doing it surpassingly well, but he was helping to feed his native land; he was the new Man with the Hoe. And he murmured to himself the cheerful reply made twenty years ago by John Vance Cheney to Edwin Markham's sad "Man with the Hoe":

Strength shall he have, the toiler, strength and grace,  
So fitted to his place.  
Tall as his toil. Nor does he toil unblest,  
Labor he has, and rest.

I did not trouble to acquire the three editions of "The Man with the Hoe and Other Poems" at \$2, at \$1 and at 50 cents, because I was confident that the poem would be recited at the dinner; but I did reflect on popularity, and the extravagance of some literary judgments. I remembered a story, current at the time, that a well-known man had offered \$5,000 to anybody who could produce a finer poem than "The Man with the Hoe," and in the advertisement pages of "The Shoes of Happiness and Other Poems," by Edward Markham, I read a series of "critical opinions." Well, not being a poet, I am not in the least envious, but I looked forward to the dinner with redoubled interest, eager

to see if such extravagant praise had had any effect on the venerable poet. Here are a few of the "critical opinions."

\* "The greatest poet of the century," Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

"The Whole Yosemite—the thunder, the might, the majesty," Joaquin Miller.

\* "The Man with the Hoe," will be the battle cry of the next thousand years," Jay William Hudson.

\* "A poem by Markham is a national event," Robert Underwood Johnson.

"Excepting always my dear Whitcomb Riley, Edwin Markham is the first of the Americans," William Dean Howells.

Can you wonder that my pulse beat high as the day of the dinner approached? Even though I do not write poetry, a Bookman's pride extends to all members of his craft, from the paternal poet to the pointed paragraphist, and I longed to see the man who wrote a poem that "will be the battle cry of the next thousand years." My hoe now stands in the umbrella stand in the little hall of my native home, from the oriel window of which may be seen the croquet lawn converted into a potato patch where

Bound by the weight of centuries I leant  
Upon my hoe and gazed upon the ground,  
The emptiness of ages in my face,  
And on my back the burden of the world.

(The opening of "The Man with the Hoe" slightly altered.)

Five hundred or so attended the dinner—mostly poets. It was heartening to see the guest of the evening greeted by his admirers, a kindly, wise, distinguished-looking man, in appearance something between Robert Browning and Walt Whitman. Of course there was more extravagance of praise. There always is on such occasions. The name of Shakespeare was used freely, but distinguished poets are accustomed to such flatteries, and they can do nothing but sit still and smile while they listen to the flattery. It was near midnight before the poet rose to reply and then something happened that endeared the author of "The Man with the Hoe" to me. In his speech, after a proper period of seriousness—greatest moment of my life, never to be forgotten, and so on—he side-tracked into reminiscences of delightful humour. A humorous poet! I could hardly believe my ears! He gave us a gay and sly account of his early years in Oregon and California, farming, blacksmithing, herding cattle and sheep, and so on, to newspaper writing, Christian sociology and poetry. The room rippled with laughter, and although midnight had struck we were quite willing that he should continue his autobiography to the present day, for a serious poet with an aura of humour is an infrequent experience.

The next day I went to a club which has an excellent library and asked the librarian for Edwin Markham's poems. He looked blankly at me. The club did not possess a copy. "Such is fame," I murmured. "Is it some particular poem you want?" asked the librarian. "Yes, 'The Man with

the Hoe.'” He retired, and presently returned staggering under the load of the largest book of poetry I have ever seen. It is called “The Home Book of Verse”; it contains 3,742 pages, which is necessary, as it enshrines poems from Spenser to the present day. When I have asked a carpenter if my bookshelves will stand the strain I shall certainly acquire this volume. It contains hidden in its 3,742 pages “The Man with the Hoe” and Cheney’s “Reply,” and Markham’s “Lincoln,” and “Auld Lang Syne,” by Robert Burns, which I read that afternoon for the first time, although I have pretended to sing it on hundreds of occasions, and a little thing by Walt Whitman beginning “At the last, tenderly,” and ending “Strong is your hold, O love!” that has been singing itself to me ever since.

That rich afternoon of poetry (it was Sunday and the library was empty) drinking from so many fountains placed Edwin Markham for me. He is a noble, dignified and beautiful singer of noble, dignified and beautiful themes, but he lacks magic. He could not have written

that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

He is an author rather than a bard. You remember Macaulay’s distinction between the two. But when I reached home that evening I read Markham’s “Birthday Greeting to John Burroughs” and felt

very grateful to him; and still more grateful when  
I read a quatrain which he calls

## OUTWITTED

He drew a circle that shut me out—  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in.

There are folk who would rather have written  
that than most things.

### 37. JOHN MASEFIELD

**O**F all Englishmen now writing, John Masefield answers readiest to the fine old term—Man of Letters. He has turned his deft hand to everything, and he has succeeded in everything. Poet, playwright, essayist, teller of tales, war historian, he has tried them all, and he is now in the happy position of knowing that his latest work is his best. There can be no doubt about that. "Reynard the Fox" is a book that will live, a narrative poem that delights the great public as well as readers of poetry.

In 1896, John Masefield was working as a hand in a carpet factory in Yonkers. The wonder of poetry came upon him with a rush. Poetry was not dribbled out of him as to most, at school and college, dribbled out in set tasks, the splendour slowly evaporating in the drudgery of the lesson. It came to him suddenly, on great wings, one Sunday afternoon when he first lighted upon Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls." It was a new life, the real life. The gates were opened. He rushed in and met Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats. This love of great literature has never left him. Readers of his "Gallipoli" will remember that he prefaces the sections of this admirable narrative with extracts from "The Song of Roland."

If I linger over John Masefield's early years in New York it is because he himself has touched them vividly, in his collection of tales and studies called "A Tarpaulin Muster." He gives in "A Raines Law Arrest" a realistic description of what he saw in the humble position he filled in the bar of a downtown establishment; in "On the Palisades" he describes in a few bold strokes the features of the Palisades, and he also shows, to New York and to the world, his method as a writer. His teacher is life. Great poets and prosemen showed him the way of beauty and strangeness, how to handle and shape his material, but he finds his material in life. Thus the fabric of this sketch "On the Palisades" is woven out of what a ferryman told him. Like Kipling, he has the gift of talking with strangers, gleaning stories from them: he remembers the saliciencies. And he has the power of writing simple, straightforward English, in which every word tells. Here are two specimens:

If you take a boat and row across to the Palisades their beauty makes you shiver.

It is like being in the wilds, in one of the desolate places, to lie there in a boat watching the eagles.

His name first became a reality to me in rather a curious way. I was calling upon Sir Douglas Straight, who was then editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. It was noon; and while I was waiting (editors are always doing something else) an office boy brought me a copy of the paper just off the



press. Instinctively I turned to the editorial page, and then to the poem, which Harry Cust, a former editor, had introduced daily into the Occasional Notes. Years before John Morley had originated the term, but the printers always called them Oc. Notes. I read the poem there printed with immense interest. In it was the tang of the sea and it moved to a measure like a rolling billow. When Sir Douglas Straight at last came quickly into the room with a greeting I interrupted him with the words: "Who wrote this fine poem? Who wrote it?" He did not know. He sent to inquire. The answer came back—John Masefield. "A new man," said Sir Douglas. This poem has since been published in "Salt Water Ballads."

A year or so after this I met John Masefield at a luncheon party in London. A quiet man, a modest young man, virile and keen, and observant in the almost shy, almost furtive way of H. G. Wells. I do not remember anything he said. Probably I did not pay much attention to him, for I had no idea that he would do the fine things that he has since done.

Austen Harrison, the editor of the *English Review*, played a noble part in making the poetry of John Masefield popular. In October, 1911, he published "The Everlasting Mercy" in his review. That needed courage, for the poem is quite 13,000 words in length and it filled a large portion of the magazine. Such courage had its reward. The number was sold out, John Masefield, as poet, was made, and the literary world recognised that one

editor at least regarded poetry as a feature, not as a "fit par." This admirable experiment was repeated. "The Daffodil Fields," and I think "The Widow in the Bye Street," were also published in the *English Review*. After "Reynard the Fox" I place "Dauber."

Like Conrad, he has been a sailor, but the sea, and those that go down to it in ships, does not dominate him. Yet the sea had a great share in his intellectual and emotional make-up. Here is a passage from his sketch called "The Cape Horn Calm":

Ah, what profound thoughts I thought; what mute, but Miltonic, poetry I made in that dim half-deck, by the smoky bogey, in the night, in the stillness, among the many waters.

As a playwright he has not yet had a great success. "The Campden Wonder" and "Nan" were outstanding plays, and were admired by the few. His greatest theatrical success is, I suppose, "The Faithful," which was played in New York by the Drama League. It was a moving piece, beautifully produced, but as it was founded on an ages-old Japanese legend, the author became so involved in the point of view of Japan that I should never have guessed, had not the program said so, that "The Faithful" was by the author of "The Widow in the Bye Street."

His war books are excellent, straightforward statements, well-shaped, and written in the sound, balanced prose that comes to poets. He might have

written "The Old Front Line" as a narrative poem, but "Gallipoli" could only have been done in prose. The intricacies of that magnificent failure are set forth so lucidly that it becomes one of the classics of the war. John Masefield is the penman who tells the tale. The theme being so colossal, he himself is the narrator—no more.

With "Reynard the Fox" he reaches the height of his achievement. I have read it four times and each time I have kindled. It goes on my bookshelf against Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." It sings the England we all love, the wholesome out-of-doors England, the types, the cries, the sights, the sounds. It gallops into our hearts, and it is John Masefield's best poem, because he loved the doing of it—every line.

Everything he wrote before was a preparation for this English poem, this saga of English fields and English folk, the rush from hill to hill, the cry of the hounds, the thunder of the horses, the shouts of the huntsmen, and at night the home-coming.

### 38. GEORGE MEREDITH

COE was Meredith's valet and gardener—everything to him for thirty years. One day he recalled to Mr. Waldo, over the hedge of the Box Hill Cottage, the visit of an American publisher to George Meredith.

"We want your books," said the American; "we want to circulate them in cheap covers and make them known among the crowd."

"That," remarked Coe, "seemed to please the master."

Yesterday I journeyed by trolley car from the village where I am staying to the nearest town—a pleasant, unaggressive Connecticut town—to do my week's marketing. I purchased bread, butter, a bag of onions, and a can of tomato soup, had them packed in a strong parcel and then entered the Public Library.

"Have you any of George Meredith's works?" I asked.

The librarian led me to a shelf and handed me "Richard Feverel" and "Rhoda Fleming," in the 1889 author's edition, and "Diana of the Crossways" in the 1907 pocket edition.

"May I take them all home?"

"Certainly," said the librarian. "We like to circulate good books."

"Then there is not much call for George Meredith?" I ventured.

"No."

She examined the date cards of the three volumes. "None of them has been out since 1917," she murmured, a little sadly, I thought.

"Have you his poems?" I asked. She shook her head; her curls looked dolorous. "We ought to have George Meredith's poems," she said.

I saluted her and stepped outside, opening "Richard Feverel" at the chapter, an old favourite, called "The Blossoming Season": my eyes fell upon this passage: "Culture is halfway to Heaven"; and below was this from "The Pilgrim's Script"—"Who rises from Prayer a better man, his prayer is answered."

The arrival of the trolley car interrupted my reading, but seated in the corner I plunged into the first meeting between Richard and Lucy, perhaps the most beautiful analysis of dawning love between two young, high-spirited and charming creatures in the English language. I had just reached: "Tomorrow this place will have a memory—the river and the meadow, and the white falling weir," when the trolley car stopped. It was the end of the journey. I bundled out, and remembered, suddenly, that I had left my parcel of marketing in the Public Library. It looked as if I would have a skimpy supper. But that is another story. At any rate, I had Meredith with me.

On the way home up Ferry Lane I asked myself if it was not quite natural that the patrons of that

rather remote Connecticut township should disregard Meredith. He is so essentially English; he is dyed in the aristocratic viewpoint and he loves the iridescent stain. What could a Connecticut farmer make of Sir Willoughby Pattern's leg, or of Diana and Redworth, or Lady Blandish, or the Wise Youth, all so English, so very English? In truth the brilliant restlessness, the bird's flight quickness of George Meredith' mind, the alert synopated dialogue is too fatiguing for many Englishmen. And although English women are fond of saying that he is the only author who understands women, it was Marie Corelli's books they bought wholesale. But those who really call themselves Meredithians are his wholly and absolutely. They accept him in his entirety, and they will not hear a word against "Lord Ormont and His Aminta," "The Amazing Marriage," or even those bewildering odes celebrating French history—"The Revolution," "Napoleon," "France, 1870," and "Alsace-Lorraine." In these odes, I admit, I stuck. Frankly, it did not seem to me worth while to unravel their meaning, and I remember one distracted night when I had tortured myself over "the incandescent Corsican," turning for relief to the last page of "Rhoda Fleming," to the poignant simplicity of Dahlia's ultimate cry—"Help poor girls."

It was the ardent Meredithians who resented the master's corrections in the novels for the uniform edition issued nearly twenty years ago. The changes hurt. Disciples did not want a word altered, and

when Meredith's friends wrote articles in the literary papers urging that the changes were unimportant, the stalwarts retorted with parallel columns giving the old text and the new, showing that the exacting Master had cut and slashed at will.

Slowly, very slowly his novels brought him fame; the Meredithian beverage was much too heady for the Victorian public, nurtured on the spiritual everydayness of George Eliot, and the cathedral town proprieties of Anthony Trollope.

Many of the novels were written by Meredith, writing-board on knee, in the chalet that he had built on an eminence in his garden at Box Hill. Behind the chalet a path led through a wood where he would walk and compose. When the fit was on, Coe had to carry the dinner back to the kitchen and wait patiently till the winged words were written down.

One summer evening I was invited with a friend to dine at Box Hill. We arrived near sundown; Meredith was in the chalet, still at work; we waited. Presently he emerged, clad in white, with a big white sombrero hat upon his head. He did not see us, but he saw the sun, a round red ball. Off swept his hat; he made a deep obeisance. In looks he was quite unlike the typical Englishman, regular aquiline features, white hair and beard that curled (Senator Lodge might be his half-brother), and eyes that twinkled and flashed.

The dinner grieved me. Meredith was in his liveliest Robin Goodfellow mood, mischief and humour dominated him, and his butt was a young

man, a relative. This sententious youth made a sententious remark with the soup. It was about the vintage of the wine we were drinking. Like a sword, the Master's irony leapt forth, and whatever turn the conversation took he brought it back to the discomfiture of the sententious youth. His mental agility was wonderful, but (I thought) unkind.

A few years later I saw him again at a Private View in charge of a lady popular in London society; his face wore a continuous smile; the attention he received evidently pleased, perhaps amused him.

My last view of him was sitting in the Bath Chair, drawn by a pony, or pushed by a friend, in which, when he could no longer walk, he used to make little excursions over the hills around his house, ever talking, ever smiling.

His mind, in those latter days, was alert and vigorous as ever; his sympathy with youth and the coming generation never flagged. "I suppose," he said to a friend, "I should regard myself as getting old—I am 74. But I do not feel to be growing old, either in heart or mind. I still look on life with a young man's eye." That was so; and he had written in "Love in the Valley" a poem which stands with Spenser's "Epithalamion" and Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese" as one of the three finest love poems in the language. It is the essence of lyric love, half angel and half bird, and it is compact of young-eyed Meredith—he who wrote of Richard and Lucy. Once I knew "Love in the



Valley" by heart. It sings still. Bits come back to me as I write.

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,  
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,  
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,  
More love should I have, and much less care. . . .  
Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,  
Swift as the swallow along the river's light . . .  
Lovely are the curves of the white owl sleeping  
Wavy in the dusk lit by one lone star. . . .  
Happy happy time, when the white star hovers  
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew . . .  
Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,  
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please . . .  
Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,  
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.  
Parted is the window; she sleeps! the starry jasmine  
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.

And so on, and so on—Meredith's spring song, the song of one who remained perennially young.

George Meredith's poems are the light, Thomas Hardy's the shadow. Each has enriched our literature; each, with great art, has communicated to us the progress of his wayfaring. Hardy leaning to Acquiescence in the Inevitable, Meredith, like Stevenson, to the Undiminished gladness, the Undecaying glory, the Undeparted dream. When things looked blackest Hardy bows his head; when things seem to be at their worst, Meredith, like Foch, attacks, and, lo! the light.

Yes, when I read that great utterance by Foch, I think of Meredith: "Mon centre cède, ma droite recule, situation excellente, j'attaque."

### 39. LEONARD MERRICK

WHO are those two men?" I asked, indicating two figures on the outskirts of the lawn.

My host replied—"One is George Gissing, the other is Leonard Merrick."

With the grey life and novels of Gissing I was fairly familiar, and a great admirer of his few, scholarly, intensive travel books. Of the work of Leonard Merrick I knew nothing save that his novels usually dealt with actors, literature and journalism, that he had been on the provincial stage, and that he was hardly more successful as a novelist than as an actor.

I began to perceive, as years passed, that he had strong backers. He is one of those modern, unobtrusive, uncompetitive sensitive men of letters whom fellow craftsmen delight to praise. One day George R. Sims astonished me by becoming dithyrambic about Leonard Merrick. He praised his novels; he blamed the public for not appreciating this unemotional, unsentimental craftsman; he explained to me the Merrick method of fiction. "Perhaps he's a novelists' novelist," I murmured. In the light of future events, which I am about to relate, I am rather proud of that intuition.

Some day I meant to read a Merrick novel. It was Mr. W. D. Howells who put the idea into my

head. His appreciation of "The Actor Manager" was so hearty and acute that I felt the time was drawing near when I must spend six shillings on a Merrick novel. Mr. Howells had written: "I can recall no English novel in which the study of temperament and character is carried farther or deeper, allowing for what the people are, than in "The Actor Manager."

But this was not all. The Merrick star was ascending. Writers began to vie with each other in their eagerness to praise Merrick. Grave Professor Tyrrell wrote in *The Speaker*: "A lady whom I know said to me, 'Mr. Merrick seemed so near to me as I read "The Man Who Understood Women" that it embarrassed me to remember I was in a dressing gown and my hair was down.'" And Sir J. M. Barrie wrote this: "There is no doubt in my mind that 'Conrad in Quest of His Youth' is the best sentimental journey that has been written in this country since the publication of the other one. . . . I know scarcely a novel by any living Englishman except a score or so of Mr. Hardy's that I would rather have written."

All this was extremely interesting. I wondered how Mr. Merrick took it. And I had not yet read one of his novels. I was so interested in watching the accumulations of praise from fellow writers that it seemed supererogatory to read a Merrick.

I began to make inquiries. I was told that "he writes very little, that he finds it difficult to get started, and to keep going, and that a few thousand words a week are a large output for him."

I also learned that in London (this was some years before the war) his books were quietly successful, that Barrie's enthusiasm had sent the booksellers' orders up, and that he was a very good Tauchnitz seller. But his admirers were not content. They hustled. Every writer seemed bent on booming Merrick. It was a curious literary phenomenon.

When the novelists of eminence began to show signs of exhaustion through their effort of praising Leonard Merrick, the publishers began. Mr. Mitchell Kennerley was the pioneer in America. Described by a fellow publisher as one of Leonard Merrick's most generous patrons and best friends, he began to issue his novels in 1910. They were successful; about 10,000 copies of each sold; there the sale paused as Merrick was caviare to the large public. He almost ceased to write; this novelists' novelist, who had always taken a back seat, seemed to be seeking for a still more retiring position in the upper gallery.

Suddenly another firm of publishers dragged him out into the centre of the orchestra stalls, and started the band playing a triumphal march. Nobody can stop a publisher when he is determined to push a timid author into the blaze of publicity. The firm in question was Messrs, Hodder & Stoughton of London, an astute firm who took quick advantage of the extraordinary enthusiasm shown by contemporary writers to keep Mr. Merrick in the orchestra stalls with the band at full blast. It was decided to issue a uniform edition of his

novels, and to preface each volume with an introduction by literary and admiring contemporaries. They hastened to the adventure. They fell over each other, to quote Sir James Barrie's words, "in their desire to join in the honour of writing the prefaces." Such a confraternity of praise from fellow writers has never happened before in the history of literature. The writers who fell over each other in their eagerness to write prefaces were: W. D. Howells, Sir James Barrie, H. G. Wells, Maurice Hewlett, W. J. Locke, G. K. Chesterton, Sir W. Robertson Nichol, Sir Arthur Pinero, J. K. Prothero, Neil Munro, Granville Barker, and Nell Lyons.

So everybody was able to buy any or all of the novels of Leonard Merrick each with a preface, personal and particularly eulogistic, by a famous author. And of course America was not going to allow England to beat her in forcing this fortunate novelist to remain in the best seat in the orchestra stalls. Mr. Mitchell Kennerley sold his plates and rights to E. P. Dutton & Co., and that firm issued a limited, uniform edition of the Merrick novels, each with a preface by a famous author.

In the many books Mr. Leonard Merrick has written about authors, successful and unsuccessful, he has never imagined for a hero such an extraordinary compliment as has been paid to him. Had the idea entered his head he would have dismissed it as incredible.

It might almost have seemed incredible to me had I not the ocular demonstration of the twelve volumes

of the English edition standing in a pile on my writing table. I have read all the prefaces, such capering, delightful Merrick idolatry, and I have read six of the volumes. It was no hard task; each story was a grave pleasure. Leonard Merrick is an artist, not a great artist like Turgénev, not a master of insight like Meredith. He works in the temperate zone; he is never wrong but he never soars. His subtlety is equable; his finesse is exquisite, but I find it difficult to remember the plots and characters of the six Merricks I have just read. I shall give myself a holiday. I shall postpone reading the other six till next week.

. . . . .

Later. I have read them—with grave pleasure, and grave interest. To “merrick” is to write as Leonard Merrick writes.

#### 40. ALICE MEYNELL

**T**HERE were two girls who had an admirable education. Those who know these ladies will not accuse me of exaggeration. Their father gave them this education, mainly in Italy. His name was T. J. Thompson. The girls were called Elizabeth and Alice. Each has become famous; one as artist, the other as poet and essayist. Elizabeth (Lady Butler) is the painter of "The Roll Call," "Quatre Bras," "Inkermann," "Tent-Pegging in India," "Missed."

Alice (Mrs. Wilfrid Meynell) published her first volume of poems, "Preludes" while she was still a girl; "Preludes" was republished with some changes and additions in 1893; her latest volumes are "A Father of Women, and Other Poems," and a volume of essays called "Hearts of Controversy," both issued in 1917.

It is not easy to write dispassionately of the Meynell household, one of the few homes in London where poetry and thought have been highly and consistently honoured, and mingled with ever-ready hospitality and encouragement. So many Americans, so many English can testify to this. Francis Thompson (he was not a relation) found in this family the inspiration of many of his poems; Mr. and Mrs. Meynell were his counsellors, and the custodians of his

welfare during an unbroken intimacy of nineteen years; the dedication of his Poems is to Wilfrid and Alice Meynell. Had it not been for them he would have sunk under the burden of an existence which he was unable to confront alone. Poets and writers of high purpose came, and come, to this household, by instinct of a right of way to the things that matter. Many of these visitors, who soon became friends, have dangled the children on their knees, and have watched Viola Meynell take her place, so early, as one of the new novelists who count; have acknowledged that her brother, Everard, has written one of the best biographies of the decade in "The Life of Francis Thompson"; and have laughed secretly and happily, knowing that the author of "Aunt Sarah and the War," published anonymously, in the first year of the war, which leaped quickly into the 100,000 circulation, was the father, Wilfrid Meynell.

And while the family were, in various ways, producing and encouraging literature and art, the mother, the usually silent but exquisitely sympathetic hostess, Alice Meynell, was adding year by year, so slowly, so fastidiously to her slender sheaf of poems and essays; and slowly, quite slowly her fame—it seems absurd to call so quiet, cloistral and gradual a recognition fame—was spreading among those who value distinction, restraint, packed thought, insight, and delicacy of observation. But the other day I found in an American magazine two pages by her called "Superfluous Kings," the title taken from Shakespeare's "Superfluous Kings for Messengers."



I read no more that day. I did not want to distract myself from those brief pages.

Alice Meynell is not an easy writer to read, and she does not find composition easy. She works very slowly with pencil and pad in the morning hours. Words and sentences are a sacred rite to her. She broods until her thought shapes itself, and she does not allow the high and intricate altitude of her art to be scaled easily by the reader. He must rise to her austere level. The reward is great, but the casual reader must be prepared to give himself, and to consider and reconsider such sentences as:

In Spain was the Point first put upon Honour.

Not excepting the falling stars—for they are far less sudden—there is nothing in nature that so outstrips our unready eyes as the familiar rain.

Tribulation, Immortality, the Multitude: what remedy of composure do these words bring for their own great disquiet.

To mount a hill is to lift with you something lighter and brighter than yourself or than any meaner burden.

These are but four extracts taken at random; they are given to show that this writer, so chary in production, so reluctant to publish, gives to the reader something that makes him reconsider and revalue his thought from her enwrapped thought.

Her first volume of twenty essays "The Rhythm of Life," containing "Decivilised," "Composure," "The Lesson of Landscape," was published in 1893. In literary circles it had immediate recognition and success. Coventry Patmore published a eulogistic article in the *Fortnightly Review*, which

began, "I am about to direct attention to one of the very rarest products of nature and grace—a woman of genius." The poet of "The Unknown Eros" continued to be a most devoted admirer of her gifts, and before long George Meredith also enrolled himself among her intellectual admirers. He was able to read Mrs. Meynell week by week, for she was one of the six women-writers engaged by the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Harry Cust, to contribute to "The Wares of Autolycus" column. There, for two or three years, she wrote a weekly essay, and George Meredith rarely missed sending a letter, with flowers grown in his garden, at Box Hill, of enthusiastic appreciation. The essayist had come into her kingdom and her chief courtiers, George Meredith and Coventry Patmore, were the chief lights of the literary world. In the same year, 1893, her "Poems" were published, uniform with "The Rhythm of Life." I do not suppose that two volumes, such slender volumes, have ever been received with equal favour and gratitude by the few and fit. In America, too, she had her great admirers, and her brief lecture tour is remembered as something separate and apart from other lectures.

Although "Preludes" of 1875 had long been out of print copies of it were treasured. William Sharp in "The Sonnets of the Century" had said:

In its class I know no nobler or more beautiful sonnet than "Renouncement"; and I have so considered ever since the day I first heard it, when Rossetti (who knew it

by heart), repeating it to me, added that it was one of the three finest sonnets ever written by women.

Ruskin, too, said great things about the poems in "Preludes":

The last verse of that perfectly heavenly "Letter from a Girl to Her Own Old Age," the whole of "San Lorenzo's Mother," and the end of the sonnet, "To a Daisy," are the finest things I have yet seen or felt in modern verse.

"Renouncement" is in the "Anthologies"; but since there may be some to whom it is unfamiliar, I give myself the pleasure of copying it:

#### RENOUNCEMENT

I must not think of thee; and, tired yet strong,  
I shun the love that lurks in all delight—  
The love of thee—and in the blue heaven's height,  
And in the dearest passage of a song.  
Oh, just beyond the sweetest thoughts that throng  
This breast, the thought of thee waits hidden yet bright;  
But it must never, never come in sight;  
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.  
But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,  
When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,  
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,  
Must doff my will as raiment laid away,—  
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep  
I run, I run, I am gather'd to thy heart.

So you learn, reader, that in the household where this poet and essayist presides, the arts are treasured, reticence encouraged, and rejection favoured. But there is laughter too and delight in life, for Mrs. Meynell has humour which ripples forth when the

burden of the world compassion she carries presses less heavily on her.

The charm of her tall, light figure is preserved in a drawing by Sargent; and perhaps she never said anything more characteristic than this of her Father—"He had an exquisite style from which to refrain."

## 41. STEPHEN PHILLIPS

A NEW YORK church announced for Sunday evening—a Community service.

Curious, like the Athenians, for the new thing, I attended. The service was a succession of surprises, but the chief surprise and the chief interest was when the curate, instead of reading the lesson from the Bible, informed the congregation that he had selected for their edification "Marpessa" by Stephen Phillips. He did not read it very well; and sometimes he paused to draw attention to a passage of "surpassing beauty." He dwelt, I remember, with immense approval on the opening line—"Wounded with beauty in the summer night."

Sitting there and listening, I said to myself, "This is surely a very unusual proceeding, this reading a long poem to a very attentive congregation in an Episcopal church in the Empire City; and after a while I found some solace in recalling that Stephen Phillips was a son of the Rev. Stephen Phillips, D.D., Precentor of Peterborough Cathedral.

The Community service proceeded, and as much of it had little to do with religion, yet quite proper, and of a character to which I would not hesitate to invite the strictest of my relations, I fell to thinking of Stephen Phillips, and going over in memory our meetings. Perhaps the cadences of "Marpessa"

moved me to tranquil and sweet remembrances, for Phillips had the secret of beauty, and of brief pathos; of careful beauty such as:

And live in simple music, country songs,  
And mournful ballads by the winter fire.

I saw him first in a London drawing room in the early nineties. He had not then made his great success; he had not then achieved what might have seemed to be impossible; he had not then persuaded London managers, astute men like Sir Herbert Tree and Sir George Alexander, that there was a public, a paying public, a packed, cheering public for the poetic drama.

His great year was 1900. On October 31 "Herod" was produced at Her Majesties Theatre with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (he never took the worst part) as Herod. It was a wonderful occasion. Poets were jubilant, and they whispered one to another between the acts that Sir George Alexander (he was untitled then like Tree, and, like Tree, never out of the movement) had commissioned and accepted for production "Paola and Francesca" by Stephen Phillips. Those were great days. The first night of "Herod" was an event. Between the acts an eminent poet said to me: "What price 'Charley's Aunt' now?" And we all went home mouthing as much as we could remember of—

I dreamed last night of a dome of beaten gold  
To be a counter-glory to the sun.

And we whispered:

To me it seems that they who grasp the world,  
The kingdom and the power and the glory,  
Must pay with deepest misery of spirit,  
Atoning unto God for a brief brightness.

Great days! When I reached home, I remember that I dug out from the cupboard under the stairs my own poetic tragedy called "The Unpardonable Sin," and began to polish it.

But memory is travelling as fast as that champion horse, Man o' War. I must draw rein. I was saying that I first met Stephen Phillips in a London drawing-room in the early nineties. He was already a poet, known to the inner circle, but not yet famous. I think he had recently published the lovely "Lyrics" and "The Apparition," than which I doubt if he ever wrote anything finer:

She had forgotten nothing, yet  
Older she seemed, and still:  
All quietly she took my kiss,  
Even as a mother will.

And before these, some years before, in 1890, he was one of the four friends who published at Oxford a slender, brown paper-covered pamphlet of poetry called "Primavera." The other friends were Laurence Binyon, his cousin; Manmohan Ghose, and A. S. Cripps.

But I am still in that London drawing-room. He came in; he stalked to a corner and stood there very erect, rather severe, without any intention of making himself agreeable, as writers of prose try

to do. A minor poet who happened to be sitting by my side nudged me and whispered—"Stephen Phillips." I examined him. He was a fine figure, but a singularly stiff one; and his clear, cold blue eyes did not invite one to slap him on the back and say: "Well, and how are things going?" He had regular features, a strong chin, and a chiselled nose. I was still looking at him and saying over to myself:

And all the blue of thee will go to the sky,  
And all thy laughter to the river's run;  
But yet . . .

Thy tumbling hair will in the West be seen,  
And all thy trembling bosom in the dawn;  
But yet . . .

I was murmuring these lines to myself when the minor poet who was sitting next to me, looking straight at Stephen Phillips, said—"Did you ever see anything so exactly like a Roman emperor on a coin?"

We met several times after that but he never relaxed his unbending attitude. It may have been merely shyness. One heard of him from time to time, and gleaned particulars of his life—how he had been an actor with Frank Benson's company, and an army coach; how he had a passion for cricket, and how in the end, after his great success, he settled down at Ashford in Middlesex, to live by his pen, by poetry, and the poetic drama, and to suffer money and other troubles. He was not a good manager of his own affairs, better than Fran-



cis Thompson, but worse than the humblest commuter. But he must have had moments of ecstasy when he sat down to read the press notices that are printed at the end of most of his books. Again and again it was said that nothing like his work had been seen since Browning and Tennyson. And he had the memory, too, of the success he won in 1897 when his "Poems" were "crowned" by the *Academy* and he received as a prize 100 guineas, which went much farther in those days.

But it is a sorry business for a poet to be obliged to live by his verse. In 1915 Martin Harvey produced his "Armageddon" at the New Theatre, London. No, the *Academy* would not have crowned that. But there was something of the old chaste fire, tranquil beauty and sensitive interpretation in "Panama and Other Poems" published in 1915.

When he passed away, four and a half years ago, his fellow poets wrote beautiful things about him, for everyone was touched at remembering this most successful and most unfortunate poet who used our sweet and flexible English tongue with a distinction of simplicity, a sense of gliding beauty, and a nice taste in words that is not given to many. And but the other day, his brother, Harold D. Phillips, who is organist at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, published in the *New York Evening Post* an article of memories of the poet. It is very well written, but rather severe, very severe, and, unlike most articles, it makes me long for more.

But this is mere curiosity. His poetry is with us, and for me there is now the memory of hearing

"Marpessa" read in a church in place of the Lesson which almost makes me smile; and when I come to think of it I did see Stephen Phillips smile once. It was when I told him the story of "Herod," Beerbohm Tree and the Head Carpenter at Her Majesties Theatre.

Two days before the performance Tree called a rehearsal of the scenery of "Herod" without actors, without speech. Beerbohm Tree and the Head Carpenter sat in the dress circle and watched the magnificent scenery pass across the stage from the first scene to the last. They sat in silence. There was no hitch. Just before the end Beerbohm Tree turned to the Head Carpenter and said—"Well, Johnson, what do you think of the scenery, now?" To which the Head Carpenter replied—"Governor, it'll take mighty fine words to carry it."

Adieu happy, unhappy poet. You are not forgotten.

## 42. GEORGE MOORE

**G**EORGE MOORE never says anything for effect: he conceals nothing: when he has a thought or an impression he utters it as if nobody else had ever had a thought or an impression before. Nothing exists anywhere until it has busied itself in his consciousness. All the world may use a telephone, but until our author has brought his mind to bear upon the telephone it does not exist for him. But having once become conscious of the telephone, having reflected upon it by his fireside in Ebury Street, London, he can say something interesting and original about the telephone, because it is his mind and nobody else's that is working upon the subject of the telephone. He thinks out things, in the detached, unmoral, unafraid, confined, yet free George Moore way, and laboriously narrates with the pen the processes of his thought.

Whatever George Moore is writing about—women and men in the form of fiction, art, confessions, memoirs, Ireland, drama, impressions, opinions, his friends, himself—his procedure is the same. He unwinds and rewinds his views and reflections; he keeps nothing back; he does not seem to make any distinction between good and bad taste, between propriety and impropriety; his aim is merely to

wind upon the spool the yarn of his thought which represents the subject uppermost in his mind at the moment. One has only to reflect upon three of his latest books—"Hail and Farewell," "The Brook Kerith," and "A Story Teller's Holiday" which was "privately printed for subscribers only," to realise the detachment of his literary adventures. and that to him nothing happens in the world unless it has happened in his intellectual and æsthetic experience. He is the most subjective of writers and he is also old-fashioned, for does he not insist that all his books are written not for the public but "for men and women of letters?"

Of course what he is really interested in is self-expression; he is interested in his own thoughts and memories. Whenever I think of George Moore I see him in an armchair by his fireside in Ebury Street, stroking his cat, and through a long evening allowing his extraordinary able mind to reflect on the past, and also encouraging it to open avenues into the future. He reads very little, but what he reads he absorbs and thinks about. I remember calling upon him one morning when he was living in a spacious flat in Victoria Street, Westminster. I remarked on the absence of books and asked him how he spent the day. He looked at me, reflecting on my question, and then said: "Oh, I write till it is time to go out to dinner. Writing bores me less than anything else."

The hard-worked word naïve is insistent in a consideration of George Moore. The burr of the world has not affected his childlike vision. Even unpleas-

ant subjects he treats with the candour of a child. He is always making literary discoveries—such extremes as Virgil and Trollope, but when he discovers them they become not only new to him but also new to us. When he was preparing to write "The Brook Kerith" he discovered the beauty of the Bible, and so deep and fresh was his admiration that he made the Bible a subject of discussion and wonder among his friends. You cannot resist a talker who has enthusiasm without rhetoric, understanding without confusion, opinions that are never didactic, and who is always inquiring. One day he will discover the primrose by the river's brim. Then prepare to be charmed. In one of his books he speaks of the humility of a lane's end. He would brood for an hour on that humility, and talk about it for a week.

He never seeks for a style. The epigram does not attract him. He is content just to tell the tale of his mental and imaginative adventures. He loves his thoughts. They never bore him.

He is an Irishman. It is difficult for a Saxon to analyse the entity called George Moore. I have always known him as a writer merely, as he would like to be known, and I remember my astonishment one night when he had invited me to dine with him at an exclusive London club frequented by landlords, county gentry and the like. My astonishment was due to the discovery that in this exclusive club he was not known as the author of "Esther Walters," "Evelyn Inness" and "Modern Painting," but as Moore of Moore Hall, Ballyglass, County

Mayo. Readers of his latest books will recall that Moore Hall is today something of a white elephant to George Moore of Ebury Street and author of "The Untilled Field."

Many, many years ago, at the beginning of his career, he studied painting in Paris, and mixed with Manet, Zola and others of that great group. History is silent as to the kind of pictures that George Moore painted, but history is eloquent on the fact that his "Modern Painting" is one of the best books on painting ever published in the English tongue. We find in it the same childlike sincerity, integrity and awakening interest in art that we find in his novels and essays. Being an Irishman he is of course against the government in art, and of course he is limited, but his attraction is that he is candid in telling us where his interest ceases. He does not pretend to a culture that he does not feel, a fault which most of us try to enjoy. This frankness runs into his conversation. I met him last at a private view in London of an exhibition packed with exciting pictures by ultra modern masters. He was standing in the middle of the gallery looking as forlorn as Little Bo Peep when she had lost all her sheep. I said, "Fine show this?" He answered wearily, but with conviction—"My dear friend, painting ended with Manet. There has been nothing since."

It is said that now he amuses himself urging his friends to subscribe for his books "privately printed," because, "you know, they always go up in value." That is so. One of the enigmas of the auction

room is that George Moore's works fetch a higher price than the works of any living author. At a recent sale in New York "Pagan Poems," published in 1881, brought \$540, "Confessions of a Young Man," \$52, and "A Story Teller's Holiday" more than four times the price it was issued at in 1918.

He has been painted by William Orpen and Walter Sickert, and caricatured by Max Beerbohm. In each case the artist enjoyed himself immensely. Also the public.

### 43. JOHN MORLEY

A CERTAIN son, desirous of entering journalism, instanced John Morley as a light of the profession, and recalled to his father that the author of "On Compromise" had been editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Fortnightly Review*. The father was impressed, but being a careful man, he purchased "Recollections," by John Viscount Morley, O. M., Hon. Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and after reading it urged his son to enter politics, and to use journalism as an aid.

In John Morley's "Recollections" there is but a meagre page and a half of reference to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which he controlled from 1880 to 1883, with a complimentary aside to the redoubtable W. T. Stead, who was his assistant on the paper. And there is not much more about the *Fortnightly Review*, which he edited from 1867 to 1882, succeeding George Henry Lewes, "that wonder of versatile talents." No, although journalists and literary men may continue to claim John Morley as one of themselves, his attitude toward us is haughty.

Statesmanship has been his career, literature a refuge, journalism an episode. As a man of letters he is world famous, but although he had regrets upon leaving literature, the lure of the writer in



him had no chance against the lure of the statesman. Still he could write on the morrow of his elevation to the House of Lords—"My inclination, almost to the last, was to bolt from public life altogether, for I have a decent library of books still unread, and in my brain a page or two still unwritten."

He reappeared among his journalistic acquaintances when he attended the banquet in honour of Frederick Greenwood, originator and first editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whose foresight induced the government of Lord Beaconsfield to acquire the Suez Canal shares.

I was close to John Morley the night of the Greenwood dinner and watched him closely, for he was a man who not only had made a great figure in the world, but whom everybody trusted and liked—even the Irish. A man absolutely without affectation, susceptible yet impervious; in the arena, yet not of it; with a mobile face, strong features, a face too lively to be ascetic, too reflective to be clubable. He is not an orator but his words carry absolute conviction. You perceive, while he is talking, that he is speaking logic. Of him A. G. Gardiner said: "In the deep-set, contemplative eyes and indeterminate chin you see the man who inspires others to lofty purpose, rather than the man of action."

At a certain luncheon at Lord Haldane's some years later he sat next to the German Emperor, with Lord Kitchener on the other side. The faces of these three would have made a curious composite photograph. Morley, the man of reflection, Kitchener, the man of action, and the head of the Central

Empire without any centre. That was the occasion when the Kaiser told Lord Morley that he admired a certain book by Bishop Boyd Carpenter so much that he had it translated into German, and that he often read pieces aloud to his ladies while they sat stitching and knitting. What, I wonder, did "Plain John"—his own phrase, see p. 252, Vol. II of "Recollections"—think of the Kaiser's admiration for Bishop Boyd Carpenter?

John Morley was given another title, on another occasion, which has remained with him. In the days of the *Scots Observer* I called upon the editor, W. E. Henley, on a press night. I asked him if it was a good issue. He chuckled, took a proof from the table, and pointing to the title said—"That alone is worth the money." It was an article on John Morley, headed "Honest John."

Recently I related this story to an American, of some importance in the financial world, who sat near me at a public dinner. "'Honest John' is good," he said. Then the American proceeded to talk about Roosevelt, and I, my head full of John Morley, said to him, "Do you think sir, that John Morley was ironical when, in his 'Recollections,' he wrote that the two things which seemed to him the most extraordinary in America were Niagara Falls and President Roosevelt?" The American answered, "Sure."

Later in the evening we met in the queue before the cloak room. As it is always more interesting to talk of first-rate things than of second-rate things, I said, as he handed his check to the attendant—

"So you are a student of John Morley!" He paused; he forgot his hat and coat; he murmured—"Years ago the direction of my thought, and consequently of my actions, was settled by reading 'Compromise'; yes, that is so, and you may add to that remarkable book 'Voltaire' and 'Diderot,' and the 'Encyclopædist.' " We bade each other good-bye. At the door we met again. There was a twinkle in his eye as he said to me—"Don't you think Morley had 'Compromise' in his mind when he wrote the 'Life of Gladstone'?" Then he shook his head, cried, "Ah! ah!" and assisted his wife into the limousine.

I submit that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of men and women who look upon "Compromise" as a turning point in their lives. I have just been re-reading it in the perfect Eversley series. Well, I'm older now, and know more about the real things, but how fine it is, how fine after the "futile impatience" (Morley's phrase) of Carlyle.

"Honest John" tells in his "Recollections" the story of his elevation to the House of Lords. He asked for it, asked Prime Minister Asquith to make him a lord, and perhaps "Honest John" was the only man in England who could have asked for such a thing, and known that his motive would not be misunderstood. It was merely because "I shall do my work all the better for the comparative leisure of the other place." Writing on April 20, 1918, he remarks: "There's as much vanity in 'Plain John' as in John Viscount."

His "Recollections" is a book to read and to keep.

I know no volume so full of communing with the best thought and the highest culture. He knew and knows everybody worth knowing from Mill to Tennyson, from Meredith to Arthur Balfour. He has held high offices—twice Chief Secretary for Ireland, Secretary of State for India, Lord President of the Council. He was Lord President of the Council when war was declared in 1914. On that day he dropped back into private life. So did another John—John Burns. When years hence, the memoirs of that day in August, 1914, are written some will read the account of the conversation when "Honest John" handed his resignation to his old friend, Prime Minister Asquith.

There is but one reference to the war in his "Recollections," which were published in 1917. It is the opening sentence of the Introduction—"The war and our action in it led to my retirement from public office."

The rest is silence.

And there is one sentence in "On Compromise" which the author chose as the motto of the book, and which—who will disagree—is the invisible motto engraved on John Morley's escutcheon. He dug it from the writings of Archbishop Whately—"It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place."

#### 44. WALTER PATER

**D**ID I ever see Walter Pater? Last week I should have said no. Today after reading the Pater section in George Moore's "Avowals," I am inclined to answer yes.

It was at a London dinner party, an unconvivial gathering, one of those solemn functions where you feel that the hostess is not entertaining for pleasure: she is paying social debts, and flattering her husband's business friends.

A gentleman sat opposite me whom I could not catalogue. He seemed to be at the dinner and yet not of it: his massive and immobile exterior appeared to be acting properly and formally, according to the laws of good society; but it looked as if his actions were governed by marionette strings, while his real self was inactive and unmoved by his surroundings. This also was the method of Henry James, polite to punctilio, but giving very little of himself when he was cajoled into society to which he did not react. Indeed this stranger was not unlike Henry James. They were both examples of the "joli laid," of the ugliness that is not ugly, because behind it is mind and esprit. Henry James in those days wore a beard: the stranger at the dining table had decorated himself with a heavy moustache, and perhaps he was, if possible, still

more magisterially shy than James. Each I am sure called his neighbour Madam, and the manner of each would be correct and quite courteously distant whether she was a frisky ingénue or a stern dowager. That was years ago. I thought no more of the remote, massive and kindly stranger with the heavy moustache until I read George Moore's "Avowals," which contains a chapter or two on Walter Pater, written with art and candour. Only George Moore can write thus naïvely and discursively. He draws a picture of Pater when the author of "Imaginary Portraits" was living in London and attending just such dinner parties as that at which I had been present; and the picture is so clear that I said to myself—the remote, massive, kindly stranger was certainly Walter Pater. The author of "Marius the Epicurean" never used slang, but slang is expressive. I will employ it. Pater was present at those forlorn dinner parties because he was eager to "play the game," to "do his bit." He had not only a beautiful but also a conscientious nature, and Moore suggests that when Pater came to live in London he decided that to avoid society would neither be decorous nor seemly. "He wanted to live, to join up, to walk in step," so he solemnly accepted these invitations to boring dinners, talked platitudes to ingénues and dowagers, lawyers and stockbrokers, and all the while he was far away; the real Pater was elsewhere "burning with a hard gem-like flame," in that twilight land of the Pagan-Christian world through which Marius glided; or in Greece, or with the young Botticelli,

or with Watteau, or in Oxford. Of course he returned to Oxford, to the city of lost causes and dreaming spires; of course he returned to his dreams, after this attempt to "play the game" in London. Oxford was his real home.

It was from Brasenose College, Oxford, that he wrote a letter to "my dear audacious Moore" about the "Confessions" (not Augustine's), and Moore, who at one time idolised Pater, prints in his "Avowals" a story about Pater's literary origins, and about his style, "that style unlike all other styles," which, whether it be fiction or fact, is delightful.

Someone had given to George Moore a copy of Goethe's "Italian Journey," which he had looked into and wearied of, finding it pompous and empty. He was about to throw the book aside when his eyes alighted on a chapter called "S. Philip Neri." He read a little, read more, read on with avidity; then he allowed the volume to drop upon his knee and meditated. George Moore is always most Mooreish when meditating in Ebury Street with his cat on his knee. His next book should be called "Meditations."

He had a vision. He saw Pater alone in a library: he saw him standing on the fifth step of the ladder taking a book from the shelf: he saw him turn the leaves indifferently, then suddenly fix his mind acutely upon Goethe's study of S. Philip Neri. Immediately he knew the thoughts that were flocking through Pater's mind: they were these—Shall I write an article on Goethe's style with special

reference to S. Philip Neri, or shall I say nothing about it? Pater decided against writing about S. Philip Neri. He replaced the book, descended cautiously from the ladder and looked anxiously around. Then he removed the ladder to another part of the library.

There the vision ended, and George Moore said to himself, "I have come upon Pater's origins, but if I make it known to the world it will be said that I have robbed Pater of part of his glory." Hardly, George! But you have caused a run on Goethe's "Italian Journey." I have ordered a copy from the little bookseller round the corner.

All the week I have been going about with a copy of "Marius the Epicurean" in my jacket pocket. I have been reading it in tram-cars and in subways, on the elevated and in elevators, in tea rooms, and while waiting for election returns. I had read it before, years ago, in the sumptuous edition of Pater's works which I purchased feeling that no page could be too noble, no margins too ample, for his exquisite prose. But that edition is in England. So I borrowed Marius in a crowded page, and a cloth binding. Nothing, neither binding nor locality, can lessen its remote and wistful beauty. Someone has said that what distinguishes fine from other literature is that the former suggests a withdrawal from the common life. That is why "Marius" is fine, and why Pater's literary life was fine. They were withdrawals from the common life. In the wonderful second chapter of "Marius" called "White-Nights" there is a passage that ex-



plains this withdrawal gently and beautifully. It is his mother who is speaking to Marius. "A white bird, she told him once, looking at him gravely, a bird which he must carry in his bosom across a crowded public place—his own soul was like that! would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, unruffled and unsoiled?"

We all know so much about the Renaissance, and the great figures who moved through it (indeed we are all a little tired of the Renaissance), that we are apt to forget the dark time before we were awakened to the Renaissance, to forget that it was Walter Pater's delicate and sensitive artistic and literary antennæ that made the persons and products of the Renaissance living and lovely. The present bustling generation can hardly realise what the books of Pater meant to the youth of Oxford and Cambridge, of Harvard and Yale. Greece and Italy, under the spell of his interior imagination, became spiritual actualities: he opened the doors to comradeship in beauty. He understood what was significant and vital, and he could explain. No book that has ever been written about Watteau can approach in insight and charm his "Imaginary Portrait" of Watteau.

To produce his finest work Pater had to make a withdrawal from the common life, to remove himself from the Present to the Past. I have added his "Essays from the Guardian," and his "Sketches and Reviews" to my Pater shelf, as I have added George Moore's dinner story to my Pater bibliomania. I place these two Pater volumes in the

dinner-table category. He wrote the essays, contained in them, dear man, just to keep in touch with modern life: he reviewed the books of his friends—Moore, Symons, Gosse, Wilde—and he wrote on Flaubert and Robert Elsmere; but all in his dinner-table, polite manner. There is no withdrawal in them. These essays, produced when Pater was trying to “do his bit” in modern literary life, are not the real Pater. You must seek him in his earlier exclusive and seclusive books: yes, and also in the famous passage on Mona Lisa.

I cling to that and always shall. I go farther and say that Pater’s prose is better than Leonardo’s painting.

Pater wrote with difficulty in the leisure of ample mornings; he corrected and re-corrected through quiet afternoons with imperturbable assiduity, and in the evenings, like Marius, he absorbed nourishment from other minds. He has said in “The Renaissance” that the tendency of all the arts is to aspire to the condition of music. His jewelled, consciously wrought, and beautiful prose certainly has that tendency. But his gift to the world is something more. It lies in his withdrawal, in his communication of something beyond and above the insistent Present, something hidden yet revealed to initiates. Like his own Marius he seems to be carrying secretly a white bird in his bosom, always with him, always unruffled and unsoiled, across the public places.

So much is this sense of withdrawal needed that, if I had my way, I would make every Mayor and

Governor, before he is allowed to take office, whether Democrat or Republican, sign a paper, saying that he had read recently every word of "Marius the Epicurean."

. . . . .

A white bird, a bird which he must carry in his bosom. . . .

#### 45. A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

I PERMIT myself to think of him as "Q." So he signed in *The Speaker* during the early nineties. This signature appeared, week by week, at the foot of an essay story—racy, humorous, pointed, brief. I thought them fine at the time: these swift studies in characterisation seemed to promise that one day "Q" would become a foremost novelist, a sort of second Robert Louis Stevenson.

He did not. He tarries. As a novelist he has not conquered. Others have passed him, and I fancy that, since "True Tilda" issued about ten years ago, he has gradually eased away from the fiction market. Many novels stand to his name. I remember reading, with rather an effort, "The Splendid Spur," "Hetty Wesley," and "Shining Ferry," and I studied with much care his conclusion of "St. Ives," which Stevenson left unfinished. It was a deft piece of work, the mechanics faultless, but it was not Stevenson. He is not a great romancer: he lacks Stevenson's lilt and background; and his child-like joy is metallic: it does not ooze out in the way of his master. As a romancer I submit "Q" has not found his centre.

Is he a poet, is poetry his true centre? I think not. He has written some charming and pretty

poetry, he has made some neat and witty parodies (some think that they are better than Owen Seaman's), but his heartiest admirers would not label him a great poet.

Let us look at the man himself and see if we can discover what is "Q's" line in literature. He is a stay-at-home. For a few years he tried London, but in 1891 he returned to Cornwall where he has lived ever since. The first book he published after his return to Cornwall was "I Saw Three Ships."

Ships he can see from his windows at the Haven, Fowey, Cornwall, adventuring out from Plymouth, or Plymouth bound. Ships are his companions; he is a great yachtsman, and his club is the Royal Fowey Yacht Club. Are we then to suppose that his centre is yachting? Hardly. Yachting is his recreation.

When I made a walking tour through Cornwall and reached Fowey early on a spring evening my first employment, after a bite of supper, was to call upon "Q." We sat in his library and I wondered mildly at the number of books owned by this tall, slight, blonde, athletic-looking writer who, in spite of his tan breeziness, and Yo, Heave Ho air, spoke like a scholar. Fleet Street has left little impression upon him. Oxford has. Scholarship might have tamed and tied him, as it tames and ties so many; his learned honours are numerous: M.A. Oxford, M.A. Cambridge, Litt.D. Bristol, but like G. W. Stevens academic honours have been powerless to stultify the essential "Q." He is of the Stevenson school—gay, original, with flashes of

insight, wearing his learning lightly and bending it to bright use in the give and take of the day's work. While we sat talking in his library above the Cornish sea, hearing his rapid comments on books and thought, I said to myself: "You are a born writer, and you could write decently and daringly on anything; you could turn out a lyric or an epic, a paragraph or a novel of a couple of hundred thousand words, but at heart you are a creative critic, a stimulating guide and brotherly friend to all who would shape their thought and lives from a study of the best literature. Yes, you are a creative critic. That is your literary centre." If anyone wants to be convinced of this let him read Quiller-Couch's "On the Art of Writing" and particularly "Studies in Literature."

Since 1918 when it was published by the Cambridge University Press, "Studies in Literature" has been my chief bedside book. Dip into it where I will, a page here, a page there, I always find it tonic. Some of the essays were delivered to his class at Cambridge. Fortunate undergraduates! Your fathers, by Cam and Isis, heard Ruskin and Matthew Arnold: you have heard one who is worthy, as lecturer, to rank with them. Who that heard it can forget his indignation that anybody should call a "sloppy sentence good enough"; and who, having heard it, can forget his illustration and comment: "I desire that among us we make it impossible to do again what our Admiralty did with the battle of Jutland, to win a victory at sea and lose it in a despatch."

And the Rhymer, the budding Cambridge poet, hearing the following—would he not hurry home, with quick feet, to re-fashion his verses?

Gentlemen—as your noun is but a name and your adjective but an adjunct to a name, while along your verb runs the nerve of life; so, if you would write melodiously, throughout vowels must the melody run.

And this about those pedagogues who classify poets into the Classic and the Romantic School—is it not final?

“The play’s the thing.” “Hamlet,” “Lycidas,” or “The Cenci” is the thing. Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley did not write “classicism” or “romanticism.” They wrote “Hamlet,” “Lycidas,” “The Cenci.”

And would not this burst of praise, no qualifications here, send a literary undergraduate, with eager eyes and rising pulse, to “the great Donne, the real Donne”—

. . . his Sermons, which contain (as I hold) the most magnificent prose ever uttered from an English pulpit, if not the most magnificent prose ever spoken in our tongue.

This appears in the essay on “Some Seventeenth Century Poets.” The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts, and I can well imagine an undergraduate who heard this lecture never losing, throughout his life time, the memory of how Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne, Crashaw, and others swung our noble tongue, soaring as they shaped it. It is like drinking from a deep well.

And if the reader, having read some of "Q's" novels, and knowing how alert and lively is his fancy, desires something more than creative criticism of the best of the past, let him absorb the essay called "The Commerce of Thought," wherein "Q" lets his imagination play over the old trade routes.

You will see, as this little planet revolves back out of the shadow of night to meet the day, little threads pushing out over its black spaces—dotted ships on wide seas, crawling trains of emigrant waggons, pioneers, tribes on the trek, olive-gatherers, desert caravans, dahabeeyahs pushing up the Nile . . . the trade routes.

So he worms into this fascinating subject till he comes to his main thesis—the wanderings, alightings, and fertilising of man's thought.

As my eyes roam these pages they fall upon a footnote—just a footnote, and you know what footnotes usually are. What do you think of this footnote? Does it not set the imagination stirring?

It is observable how many of the great books of the world—the "Odyssey," the "Æneid," "The Canterbury Tales," "Don Quixote," "The Pilgrim's Progress," "Gil Blas," "Pickwick," and "The Cloister and the Hearth"—are books of wayfaring.

I repeat: it is in creative criticism that "Q" has found his centre. Let others busy themselves with the novel. It is his destiny to deal creatively with the higher branch, with poetry, and the literature that is safe beyond the phases and fashions of our day. He makes us long to read the best; he makes



us lament that we pretend we have no time for that great adventure.

Undergraduates and graduates owe him another debt. He gave us the "Oxford Book of English Verse." My copy is falling to pieces through much reading. It was bought in 1901: it is scrawled with markings and comments. Among them are these: that the anonymous poem "Non Nobis" is by Harry Cust, and the last poem in the book, "Dominus Illuminatio Mea," is by R. D. Blackmore, author of "Lorna Doone." It was found among his papers.

He, like "Q," was an open air man, and when I think of Quiller-Couch and Blackmore I see the Doone Valley, and the Haven of Fowey.

## 46. SIEGFRIED SASSOON

**T**HIS soldier-poet is a bad lecturer; but it is the kind of badness that delights an American audience accustomed to a standardised efficiency in lecturing. He is shy on the platform; he does not know how to stand properly; he mixes up his points; and when he reads his poems, he reads to himself, not to the man at the top of the top gallery. Yet he "puts it over" because he is sincere, because he has something to say, and because he laughs at himself. So his audience is tense for half the time, and for the other half is rippling with laughter. A lady sitting next to me during one of his lectures on war poetry whispered: "I shall never again say that Englishmen have not a sense of humour." To which I replied: "Why did you ever say it?" Siegfried Sassoon, being young, is not enthusiastic about the elder, contemporary British poets; but he has one great admiration—Thomas Hardy. I suspect that as a poet he ranks Hardy higher than anybody in the world. His admirations among the younger poets include Rupert Brooke, Julian Grenfell, and Charles Sawley. His high appreciation of the ironists and satirists includes Richard Aldington, Herbert Reed, J. C. Squire, and Oswald Sitwell. Then being obliged to speak about himself, he did so briefly with a blush and a pro-

test. Seated at the table he read some of his nice nature poems, and some of his bitter, disillusioned war poems.

Had there been no war Siegfried Sassoon might have remained just what he was before the war—a minor poet, in love with life, fond of music, keen about hunting and tennis. There are many such in England. This tall, alert young man, of Anglo-Jewish stock, his mother a sister of the capable sculptor, Hamo Thornycroft, educated at Marlborough and Oxford, wrote his youthful poems, like so many others; but being rather modest he printed them for private circulation only. You may guess what they were like by their titles: "Twelve Sonnets," "Melodies," "An Ode for Music," "Hyacinth," "Apollo in Doelyrium." Masefield's success influenced him. His poem "The Old Huntsman" has something of Masefield and something more. Protest is its note. The yeast of protest against comfortable conventions was already beginning to work in this athletic, life-loving youth.

Then the war broke out, and Siegfried Sassoon, like other young men of spirit, rushed to the colours, knowing that this was a war for righteousness and freedom, and that it had to be fought out to the bitter end. The war changed him. Like the others he went gaily, his head high; and we who stayed at home prayed that it would be the last war, the war that would end war; and we wondered, with nice anxiety, what would be the effect of the horror and brutality of war upon the artist-soldier, upon poets, painters, and musicians.

As everyone knows, one of the minor effects of the war was to open the verse and poetry floodgates. Every newspaper, every magazine, published war poems by stay-at-homes and soldiers. Soon Siegfried Sassoon's poems began to appear in such journals as the *Cambridge Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Statesman*. He had seen war, and he was in no mood to temporise with it, or to gloss its beastliness.

His poems shocked many people: they horrified those who clung to the idea that there might be something of splendour and purification in modern warfare. There were poets who sang that side of it; but to Sassoon the rivulets of gallantry and sacrifice were swept out of sight by the torrents of horror, misery, and brutality. Those who read his poems said to themselves, with all the emphasis of which they were capable: "This vile thing called war shall never happen again."

His published works are three: "Counter-Attack," "The Old Huntsman," and "The Picture Show." One does not read them for pleasure: one reads as a warning, as a poetical uncovering of a horrible evil that must be exorcised from man's consciousness. His poems are statements red from the conflict, and so vivid are they that the pleasanter pieces in these volumes seem discoloured by the smoke and flame of outrageous war. Rough, rude, and slangy are many of the poems, for Sassoon is a realist and fighting men are fighting men. But he can be calm and cool when he likes, as in

A MYSTIC AS SOLDIER

I lived my days apart,  
Dreaming fair songs of God,  
By the glory in my heart  
Covered and crowned and shod.

Now God is in the strife,  
And I must seek Him there,  
Where death outnumbered life,  
And fury smites the air.

I walk the secret way  
With anger in my brain,  
O music, through my clay,  
When will you sound again?

This poet soldier who has raised his voice so poignantly and angrily against war, who cries again and again, "War doesn't ennoble: it degrades," saw four and a half years of fighting in France and Palestine. The Military Cross is his. In America he lectured and read his poems, insisting upon the criminality of even speaking of a future war. "It never must happen again." That is the cry of a poet who knows what war is.

## 47. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

**T**O me a new volume of "Plays with Prefaces," by George Bernard Shaw, is an—event. In him I find those high forms of pleasure—mental stimulus, inward laughter, and the truth, the truth as he sees it, unvarnished and undecorated. What matter if I do not agree with him? It is G. B. S. I am reading, not myself.

How barren the modern stage would be without Ibsen and Shaw! Actors, the right kind, idolise Ibsen and Shaw. Their characters being real, saying real things, act themselves. Shaw's plays, to his own astonishment, and to everybody else's, have become popular.

In the second year of the war two plays were being performed in the Pier theatres of a south coast watering place. One was a revue—the usual inane vulgarity. I attended the performance. The house was half empty, and the audience tepid and inattentive. I left before the end, while a boisterous chorus was singing a boisterous song. The next night I attended the performance at the other Pier theatre. It was "Man and Superman," by George Bernard Shaw. The house was packed, every point was taken; throughout there was laughter, applause, and the tensivity of attention that informs an audience with purpose and power. "Give the public

good stuff," said I to my companion, "and they will react to it."

G. B. S. has tried everything except sport (he gives his *Recreation* as "everything except sport") and succeeded in everything. When, in 1898, he penned his journalistic Valedictory in the pages of the *Saturday Review* he could look back upon ten years of continuous weekly criticism of the arts of music and the drama, and still more years of Fabian Society work, public speaking and pamphleteering. And before that there were the novels, "The Irrational Knot," "Love Among the Artists," "Cashel Byron's Profession," and "An Unsocial Socialist."

After ten years of criticism of the arts "Shaw gave up exhausted," says Mr. Achibald Henderson in his *Life of G. Bernard Shaw*, perhaps the best *Life* of a living man that has ever been written. Of course G. B. S. had a hand in it. Frankly, openly, quizzically he gives personal attention to all matters of personal publicity. But Shaw never "gave up exhausted." This non-meat-eater, non-smoker, whose beverage is water, was never exhausted. Neither his mind nor his body ever rest. That Valedictory simply meant that he was about to turn from serious criticism to serious creation. He had done what he meant to do—he had forced upon the world "that most successful of all his fictions—G. B. S." We, in London, who had followed him, who had heard him speak at Fabian meetings, who had shouted to the Pan-like, mustardy-grey figure to get upon his legs, who could quote passages from "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" and "The perfect

Wagnerite"; we who knew of the basal seriousness that underlay his levity were delighted with the following passage from the Valedictory in the *Saturday*, but I wondered then, and I wonder still, how the readers of that last stronghold of High British Toryism took it.

"For ten years past, with an unprecedented pertinacity I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power on earth will ever change it. I may dodder and dote. I may pot-boil and platitudinise; I may become the butt and chopping-block of all the bright, original spirits of the rising generation; but my reputation shall not suffer; it is built up fast and solid, like Shakespeare's, on an impregnable basis of dogmatic reiteration."

For years he had been regarded by one section of the public as a prophet, by the other as a buffoon. It was the stupidity of the latter section that designated him a buffoon. Anybody with any kind of instinct knew that under his raillery, levity, and determination to build up the G. B. S. legend was grim seriousness and implacable integrity. Why, he himself gave himself away again and again. "Waggery as a medium is invaluable," he once explained. "My method, you will have noticed, is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest." After years of thought about G. B. S., that learned critic and former Oxford Don, Mr. W. L. Court-



ney, remarked: "The annoying part of Mr. G. Bernard Shaw's career is that he is more often right than wrong—right in substance, though often wrong in manner, saying true things with the most ludicrous air in the world, as if he were merely enjoying himself at our expense."

Which he was, and is.

As a journalist he was delightful. He made writing about music human; he pointed the way to the knowledge that organists are real people who live in houses, and often have wives and children. He was Corno di Bassetto of the *Star*, that pioneer rocket of the new journalism, set flying by T. P. O'Connor, who when he engaged G. B. S. to do the music, whispered to him, "Say what you like, but don't tell us anything about Bach in B minor." And C. di B. said just what he liked, and people who had never read a word about music read the *Star* columns regularly, and spoke ecstatically about Shaw's cleverness in concealing his ignorance. The joke was that Shaw knew as much, perhaps more, about music than anybody in London. He himself described Corno di Bassetto's column as "a mixture of triviality, vulgarity, farce and tomfoolery with genuine criticism."

His vogue, his great popularity, was due to the fact that he was always amusing. Make people laugh intellectually, and they will forgive you anything. He would instill humour into the driest, abstrusest subject. One Sunday afternoon in December, passing St. James' Hall in Piccadilly, I noticed that at 4 p. m. G. Bernard Shaw was announced to speak

on "Education," admission one shilling. I became one of the crowded audience, and listened for an hour and a half, without effort, without my thought once wandering, and with many explosions of laughter. He told us merely about his own education, and drew a moral, and the moral was that his education began when he left school. When it was over I happened to meet him outside on the way home, and said: "Shaw, it cost me a bob, but it was worth it."

He smiled; he had a ready smile.

I can see him now walking rapidly about the platform, the tall, lanky, springing figure, the mustardy-grey suit that he always wore, the wide, heavy, health-boots, the scraggly reddish-brown beard and hair (now turning white), the high brow and the clear, grey-blue eyes that can be amused, alert, penetrating, but never angry. He always looked the same (I believe since he married he does sometimes wear a dress suit), walking furiously in the street, or coming to a public dinner where he had been announced to speak, ridiculously late, slipping in with the sweets so as to avoid the odour, to him horrible, of the joint course.

He has a ready smile. He suffers fools gladly because, I suppose, nothing human is alien to his sympathy. Once the ready smile, once only in all my knowledge of him, did not lighten his pallor. It was at an exhibition of caricatures by Max Beerbohm; one of them showed a cartoon of G. B. S. standing on his head on the largest rug in a drawing room, his long legs nearly touching the ceiling.

Underneath was this: "When I left London two years ago the dear man was standing on his head. On my return I find him in the same position." I drew Mr. Shaw's attention to this with the words, "Look! Max has got you this time." G. B. S. examined the cartoon carefully and passed on without smiling.

Those who want George Bernard Shaw only in serious mood can find plenty of solid seriousness in his writings. "The Showing-Up of Blanco Posnet" was banned by the censor because it deals with realities. The censor felt that even at the cost of looking foolish, he must protect those who cling to unrealities. *Au fond* it is a very serious play. "There's no good and bad," says Posnet, "but by Jiminy, gents, there's a rotten game, and there's a great game. I played the rotten game; but the great game was played; and now I'm for the great game every time. Amen."

And what do you think of this, the real Shaw: "We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than we have to consume wealth without producing it."

And of this, also the real Shaw, in a letter he wrote to Tolstoy: "I think the root reason why we do not do as our fathers advise us to do is that we none of us want to be like our fathers, the intention of the Universe being that we should be like God."

P. S. As to Mr. Shaw's opinions about the late Great War—oh, perhaps I should have explained earlier that he is an Irishman.

#### 48. J. C. SNAITH

**I**T is possible for an author's books to be well known, and he himself quite unknown. This, undoubtedly, is the right way for an author to conduct himself. Often, ultimately, this way pays better than the way of publicity.

I know nothing about John Collis Snaith outside his books. Do you? I am a little curious. He does not help my curiosity. In "Who's Who," the biographies of which are written by the subjects themselves, there is a list of a dozen of his works. Printed before that list is his biography in three words—"Writer of fiction." At the end of the list is his address, "Care of John Murray." This is biography Bovrilised; this is a shining example of the modesty of authorship.

Readers of books are the best advertisers of books. They talk; they carry the good tidings of a good book. Fourteen years ago a certain painter, to whom a book is usually a bore, began to bewilder his friends with praise of Snaith's "Broke of Coven-den." So insistent was his commendation, in the fishing village frequented by painters where he lived, that a dozen people acquired "Broke of Coven-den." I was among the twelve, and was delighted with the spirit and wisdom of the tale.

Three years ago a daughter of my acquaintance

gave, as a Christmas present to a mother of my affection, a copy of "The Sailor" by Snaith. "Why did you choose that?" I asked. "Because," answered the daughter, "I like it better than any other book." I borrowed "The Sailor" from the mother and was much interested and entertained. John Collis Snaith continued to remain, so far as I was concerned, in complete retirement. His books circulated, he hid. In the summer of 1919 everyone who skimmed the book columns of the newspapers was aware that a new war novel by J. C. Snaith called "The Undefeated" (in America) was receiving a "good press." Every reviewer was pleased. Some were enthusiastic. Not one had anything unkind to say, a sign that it was a real book, striking a human note.

I have a friend who does not read much; he has not the time; but he buys the notable books of the day, and arranges them upon his shelves, purposing to read them during his vacation which, of course, he never does. From his shelves on Independence Day I withdrew "The Undefeated," and, it being a holiday, carried it home and began to read. I perused half of it without stirring, oblivious to time, so that I was surprised when, at half past 6 appeared the companion who had arranged to accompany me to the Victory Celebration in the Stadium of the College of the City of New York. "What," I cried, "is it half past 6 already?"

A summer night, a daffodil sky, and nearly 20,000 people in that vast Stadium! I sat on one of the topmost stone benches upon which the sun had been

blazing all day, and in my hand was "The Undeclared," for there would be a long tram-ride home. The book allied itself to the Victory Celebration in the Stadium. Each was an expression of the undefeated; each was an aspect of victory, the one a whirlwind of rejoicing, the other a still small voice of thankfulness. When a company of marines marched into the arena, and the audience shouted, and the boy scouts saluted, and the nurses waved handkerchiefs, I rejoiced with them, for is there anywhere a finer sight than marines in their light yellowy marching kit? They moved like one man; their faces were indistinguishable as they marched to the wailing pride of Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever." As I watched them, symbols of the Victory of Right, I clutched the book closer, and thought of a character in its pages, one Private, afterward Corp. William Hollis, who passed from defeat to victory, who came through the war—undefeated.

Thus literature may be allied to life. The Pageant and the Book were one, working toward one end. There was time to reflect, for the proceedings included speeches. In the book there is a speech that is the right kind of speech, but the addresses at the Victory Pageant were the wrong kind. Eminent gentlemen declaimed the obvious. I know it was the obvious because the speeches were reported at length in the next day's papers, and I am sure that there was not one person in that vast audience who heard one word. The 20,000 fanned themselves and cheered; they cheered vociferously,

wildly, because they wanted the speeches to end and Tschaikowsky's "1812" overture to begin. But the eminent speakers thought it was their oratory that was being cheered. So they spread themselves, amplified their periods, whereupon the audience cheered louder than ever. It was almost amusing. And while the torrent of words rushed forth in dumb show I read the speech that the Mayor of Blackhampton makes on page 282 of "The Unde-  
feated." It was a great occasion. Usually he was a facile speaker, but for a special reason his powers threatened to desert him now. He recovered himself, and at last slowly and grimly the great voice boomed out, "Ladies and gentlemen, there are those who think they can down the Anglo-Saxon race, but"—slight pause—"they don't know what they are un-der-ta-kin——"

Through the long tram-ride home I read "The Unde-  
feated," hanging to a strap, startled by the explosion of fireworks, disquieted by the size and threat of the mobs that thronged the streets; but "The Unde-  
feated" kept me cool and content. Such is the power of literature. That night, the hottest night of the year, unwilling to sleep, I finished "The Unde-  
feated."

Then, the time being 2 a. m., I reflected on the potency of the modern novel. When it is a mere story—it is a mere story; but a novel like "The Unde-  
feated" carries much more than the brisk and entertaining tale. It takes the place of the exhortation, the sermon, not explicitly but implicitly. This story, true to life, and quite credible, tells the effect

of the stress of war upon a group of quite ordinary people. Some come through it purified and strengthened, others remain as they are. It is just life, and the difference between a novel of this kind and the sermon is this: The sermon teaches through dialectic, the novel teaches through characterisation. Good characterisation always convinces. The characters in "The Undefeated" act and evolve because they belong to life; they are selected from life and organised into a pattern which becomes a work of art.

In fiction the episode is easy to state, the coherent whole is hard to relate. There are some novelists who, starting from the episode of Liz and Polly, could build it into a coherent whole, a work of art. Do you know the episode?

It happened in London during an air raid. Polly was conductor of a motor-bus which had just emerged from the zone upon which the bombs were falling. As the bus rushed out of the area another bus approached going toward the danger zone, and in the conductor Polly recognised a friend. The busses flashed past each other; she shouted: "Stick it, Liz," and Liz shouted back, "You bet!"

Problem: To create the lives of Liz and Polly from their action and those few quick words. I think the "Stick it, Liz" episode should come at the end of the volume.

Polly and Liz and the Mayor of Blackhampton are among the Undefeated. It is they, the Undefeated, who move and make the world.



#### 49. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I HAD clean forgotten that R. L. S. ever lived at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks. It was brought to my knowledge in a direct and pictorial way.

Here I am at Lake Placid, and here lives T. M. Longteeth who has published a book on the Adirondacks, and who knows the district as R. L. S. knew Edinburgh. One day he invited me to climb Mt. Cobble. It is not a mountain at all; it is a prodigious hill, and half an hour's rough scramble takes you to the summit. But what a view—the range of mountains, the wilderness of forest, the innumerable lakes! He pointed out to me Whiteface Mountain, the Indian Pass, John Brown's farm, and then he said, "There's Saranac Lake."

I looked an interrogation.

"Where Robert Louis Stevenson lived during the winter of 1887-88, and where he wrote the *Scribner* essays, and part of "The Master of Ballantrae." The house he occupied is now the Stevenson Memorial. You should see it."

Dimly I began to remember; and how from Saranac Lake R. L. S. and his household travelled to San Francisco, and thence to the South Seas on the schooner yacht *Casco*; and the end of those adventures was his Samoan home, world-wide fame, exile,

and the bestowal upon him by the natives of Samoa of the title of Tusitala—Teller of Tales.

It was exciting and stimulating to be on the Stevenson trail once again, for he was master among the young writers of my youth, and, yes, to open a book by him today is to recapture the old thrill. He is the writer's writer; his words don't walk, they dance into their right places; he surprises, soothes, and elates. He is the real man of letters. Everything he handled he adorned, and he touched every room in the house of letters. But do the young men and young women of today know him and read him? I wonder.

They know all about him at Saranac Lake. That was a pleasant surprise. Four Saranac folk, a man, a woman, and two boys, of whom in turn I asked the way, knew of Stevenson and knew the Stevenson house. It stands just without the growing town, that has spread over-much since Stevenson lived there, on a little hill beyond the traffic. Half way up the hill, I made another inquiry of a gardener. "Oh, yes, it's just up there—you go along Stevenson Lane to that white frame house with the veranda. You can almost read the sign from here—there it is, 'The Stevenson Memorial.'" Truly, it was strange and gratifying to find this wandering Scot, our R. L. S., so far from home, a mere bird of passage in this neighbourhood, known so well to-day at Saranac Lake.

This is owing to the Stevenson Society at Saranac Lake, that evolved from the Stevenson Memorial Committee. This society, with a membership of

200, was able in October, 1916, to dedicate as a public memorial the rooms Stevenson occupied in the Baker Cottage in 1887-88, and to fill them with memorials of R. L. S. It is a simple and affecting shrine, done well, done with fervour and affection. You climb the grass garden and reach the veranda where, as he has told us, R. L. S. walked for inspiration; you pause before a bronze tablet, nearly three feet high, imbedded in the wall, and there is R. L. S. himself in bronze by Gutzon Borglum, clad—well, R. L. S. was always an idealist in dress—and here he wears a big fur coat and a tight-fitting cap. He is very erect; he is walking on these very boards. There can be doubt about that, for engraved on the side of the figure is this inscription: "I was walking in the veranda of a small cottage outside the hamlet of Saranac. It was winter, the night was very dark, the air clear and cold, and sweet with the purity of forests. For the making of a story here were fine conditions. 'Come,' said I to my engine, 'let us make a tale.'"

Then he went inside and the tale he began to make was "The Master of Ballantrae."

Soon I went inside and stood silently in the smaller room, and looked from it to the larger room, each crowded with Stevensoniana. In a corner was the desk, plain wood with a glazed bookcase above, containing first editions, etc. At this desk he wrote "A Christmas Sermon," "The Lantern-Bearers," "Pulvis et Umbra," part of "The Master of Ballantrae," and "The Wrong Box," in conjunction with Lloyd Osbourne. In cases and upon the walls are

objects, photographs, drawings, that cry in every fold and line the name of Stevenson—his velvet coat, his red sash, Siron's Inn at Barbizon, Skerryvore at Bournemouth, wood blocks by him, his skull cap, the last pen he used, much bitten at the butt-end—over half a hundred records of this beloved writer, who paused here, and pressed the Adirondacks. With care, with love, his imprint has been preserved.

His presence became insistent. I walked the veranda, a trifle ashamed to think how in the rush of life and letters, the many claims and the many distractions, the presence of R. L. S. had faded almost to a wraith. How vigorous and persuasive his influence was in the late eighties and nineties, among young men of letters! We all tried to write like R. L. S.—so foolish an emprise. We tried to be fantastic, and romantic, and to use tickling and caressing words—so absurd, because we were not Stevensons. We decided that beside "Travels with a Donkey" and "An Inland Voyage," all travel books were banal, and we asserted that after "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," all textbooks on psychology were immature and tedious. O youth, so generous and unreflecting! But we did not see R. L. S.—the gay, the buoyant, the prankish. Before 1887 he had left London, never to return. He was already becoming a tradition, a legend, his wild talk at the Savile Club, his visits to Sidney Colvin, his sudden appearances in Soho and elsewhere. He but passed through London as he passed through Saranac; he was always a wanderer.

Vicariously we knew him. When Henley published his "Book of Verses," there he was cut with cunning words into a cameo—"Thin-legged, slight unspeakably, a hint of Ariel, a touch of Puck, with something of the Shorter Catechist."

How great was our delight when Andrew Lang and Stevenson began hurling poems at one another—"Dear Andrew with the brindled hair," to which Lang replied with a poem beginning, "Dear Louis of the awful cheek." Charles Baxter, too, became known to us. To him Henley dedicated his "Old Friends" poem—"We have been good friends, you and Lewis (Henley always spelt him Lewis) and I. How good it sounds—you and Lewis and I." And Henley hoped that in these three—"you and Lewis and I," was something of the gallant dream that old Dumas, the great, the humane, the seven and seventy times to be forgiven, dreamed as a blessing to the race—the immortal Musketeers. Lewis, as Henley sang, became the world's. Years later Henley had an unkind moment about Lewis—but that is another story.

I never pass the British Museum and look up at the stone house where the keeper of the Prints lives without thinking of R. L. S. For that was the official residence of Sidney Colvin, his austere and lifelong friend. To him Vailima letters were addressed; he was closer than anybody to R. L. S. and in all the letters he never once addressed Mr. Colvin by his Christian name.

No writer ever had such a faithful friend and admirer, or so competent a biographer. How neatly,

in this passage, S. C. places R. L. S.: "To attain the mastery of an elastic and harmonious English prose, in which trite and inanimate elements should have no place, and which should be supple to all uses and alive in all its joints and members, was an aim which he pursued with ungrudging, even with heroic, toil."

And R. L. S. himself! Here is the real man—the innermost of him. In a letter to Henley he is trying to keep up his spirits with brave phrases:

"Sursum Corda:

"Heave ahead.

"Here's luck.

"Art and Blue Heaven.

"April and God's Larks.

"Green reeds and the sky-scattering river.

"A stately music.

"Enter God!

"Ay, but you know, until a man can write that 'Enter God' he has made no art! None!"

The light begins to fade. I must leave the veranda, sweet with the purity of forests, where R. L. S. walked and said to his engine, "Come let us make a tale." When I told this to a practical American boy he answered, "But why does he say engine? That's silly."

Yes, Stevenson was a writer's writer. We read him for the vivid phrase, the radiant thought; for the unexpected word which so often happens to be the right one.

## 50. FRANCIS THOMPSON

**A**ND while I loitered I saw a small, green volume, and on the back of it were the words, "Modern Library, Complete Poems: Francis Thompson."

It was a happy encounter, because I was going on a Hudson River steamer to Poughkeepsie. Why to Poughkeepsie? Because that thriving educational riverside town is mentioned, with respect, in that minor classic, "Washington Square," by Henry James. I had meant to reread "Washington Square" on the voyage. Francis Thompson took the place of "Washington Square."

All my Francis Thompson books are 3000 miles away, and as he was pre-war, and pre-vers libre, he should have seemed remote and old-fashioned. It was not so. A river trip is the place for poetry, and as we swept up the lordly Hudson, Francis seemed to be speaking to me in his involved splendid language, so rich, so obscure, so simple when his emotion raced over his obsolescent Latinities, and drove him into the simplicity of "Love and the Child," "Dream Tryst," and that haunting poem which he calls "The Kingdom of God," with the motto, "In No Strange Land." This poem refers to the Thames; here was I on the Hudson. Can you wonder that I turned first to—

O world invisible, we view thee,  
 O world intangible, we touch thee,  
 O world unknowable, we know thee,  
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
 The eagle plunge to find the air—  
 That we ask of the stars in motion  
 If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
 And our benumbed conceiving soars!—  
 The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
 Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—  
 Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
 Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss  
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder,  
 Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
 Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;  
 And lo, Christ walking on the water  
 Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

Occasionally, very occasionally, he played with his Muse, but for the most part he was her devoted, prone yet proud servant. Coventry Patmore was his master. Intellectually and emotionally he was a deeply religious man and absolutely sincere according to his light and training. He kept a commonplace book; he bought these books at a cheap stationer's for a penny apiece; in them the whole of



his poetry was written, in upright, even calligraphy, a boyish handwriting, with hardly an alteration. He wrote much in bed through long mornings that sometimes extended through the afternoon. And he would write through the evenings, often with lead pencil, pacing up and down his dingy, disorderly bed-sitting room. His penny notebooks were tossed into a drawer where he kept his scant, his very scant wardrobe, and in one of these commonplace books he wrote this sentence which explains Francis Thompson: "To be the poet of the return to nature is much, but I would rather be the poet of the return to God." That was the life and purpose of this unworldly man, who lived in a world of his own with which he was well content. Comfort, cleanliness, order, provision for the future did not interest him. His life was lived in his dreams. There was little shock when he came out of them into the world because he ignored the world.

People who had read his poems were disturbed when Francis Thompson was pointed out to them. "*That* Francis Thompson!" they would say, gazing mournfully at the shabby, strange, emaciated figure, darting rather than walking through London streets, in mud-spattered, ancient clothes, with the fish basket in which he kept his review books slung over his shoulder, unconscious of rain or mire, oblivious to the jibes of street Arabs—for his thoughts were elsewhere; he was seeing the world invisible, touching the world intangible, his eyes were shining on the traffic of Jacob's Ladder pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.

It was unnecessary to pity him. He had the life he wanted. He was content to be relieved of the problem of paying his way. For a long time, when I was editing the *Academy*, I sent weekly to his landlady a modest check for his lodging and intermittent board, and doled him out a crown or a half crown when he troubled to call for the money. It was unwise to give him more. When he brought in to the *Academy* office the "Ode on Cecil Rhodes" many hours late ("I thought today was Wednesday" was his expected and accepted excuse), written on scraps of paper, he was handed three shillings, which won the retort, "Thank you. I shall certainly give myself a good dinner." These doles were not charity. Far from it. They were payment for magnificent literary work. He would write interminable letters, interspersed with chaotic figures, trying to prove that there should be a balance of eighteen pence in his favour. Although indifferent to promises and the fulfillment of engagements, he never swerved from rectitude in his intellectual performances. Whether he was writing on Cæsar or on Shelley, he always gave of his best, but his habit of bringing in his article the day after the paper was published disturbed his editors. They never got used to it. This literary journalism he practised in his latter years when his muse had ceased to come at call. From first to last his "Father, Brother, Friend" was Wilfrid Meynell (see the poem to W. M.). He raised him from the gutter whither Francis had gone from choice—to be free. For nineteen years he kept him, not easily, from a return to the

gutter—and freedom. No poet ever had such a friend; no poet ever had such a home as the home of the Meynell family. Certes, he was a difficult guest. He would arrive for dinner thinking it was luncheon, and come prepared to dine at bedtime. He rarely sat down; he would pace the room for two or three hours, following his own train of thought, and interjecting into the general conversation a passage explanatory of the point his thought had reached. Often it was about an overcoat that someone had stolen from him years before. He rarely talked poetry, but he would talk cricket with vigour and animation. Suddenly he would disappear without a good-night.

He adored the children of the household. Many of the poems in this volume are inspired by and addressed to them. The second son, Everard Meynell, has written his life, a remarkable biography, a rare combination of insight and narrative. The father, Wilfrid Meynell, made the poet's acquaintance through Francis Thompson's "Essay on Shelley," one of the finest pieces of prose in the language. It was sent to him as editor of *Merry England* after it had been refused by the *Dublin Review*; the author gave an address at Charing Cross post office, but it was long before he could be found, as he was holding horses' heads in the Strand. Twenty years later this "Essay on Shelley" was published—with acclamation—in the *Dublin Review*. Francis Thompson had arrived, and Wilfrid Meynell set himself to arrange a definite edition of the poems.

So on the way to Poughkeepsie I went sadly and gladly through the poems. I could remember the advent and environment of many of them. Perhaps the Middle West is not yet quite ready for Francis Thompson. Such words as corrival, chiton, levin, enhavocked, assuaries, are not easily digested; neither are such stanzas as:

The abhorred spring of Dis,  
With seething presciences  
Affirm  
The preparate worm,

nor

Wise-Unto-Hell Ecclesiast  
Who siev'dst life to the gritted last!

But everyone can understand

On Ararat there grew a vine;  
When Asia from her bathing rose,

and

Look for me in the nurseries of Heaven

and

Where is the land of Luthany,  
Where is the tract of Elenore?  
I am bound therefor.

On the way to Poughkeepsie I chose a secluded spot to leeward and read aloud, three times over, to the bright air and the brighter waters that wonderful poem, "The Hound of Heaven." That is the way to begin your study of Francis Thompson. Read this amazing poem aloud, again and again, ab-

sorb the splendour of it, and gradually the meaning will come to you. Then you will find that Master Eckhart said it all in seventeen words, "He who will escape Him only runs to his bosom, for all corners are open to him."

So we came to Poughkeepsie on Hudson, but I was thinking of Charing Cross on Thames, and of those who find the many-splendoured thing. Francis Thompson did not have to find it, because he always had it, in spite of "the bur o' the world."

## 51. TOLSTOY

I WAS reading in a club when I heard a man say, "I'm going to write a play round Tolstoy." The name of Tolstoy aroused so many memories that I dropped the book and mused on a scroll of history. On one side of the scroll was the patriarchal, bearded figure of Tolstoy—for we who were brought up on Carlyle, Emerson, and Tolstoy always regarded him as venerable and bearded; on the other side of the scroll is—present Russia. How does this great man stand today in Russia? How do the Bolsheviki regard Tolstoy? You may read in the "Reminiscences" of his son how Tolstoy was visited from time to time by certain "dark people," unkempt and unwashed, with whom he always argued warmly; you may read of certain nihilists who often appeared at Yásnaya Polyàna, "and under my father's influence gave up terrorism altogether"; you may read that, during the siege of Sebastopol, Tolstoy proposed to the allies to avoid bloodshed by deciding the dispute with a game of chess. And you may have heard of the noble letter that Tolstoy wrote to the Tzar of Russia on the massacre of the Jews at Kishinev, which was a plea for paternal authority against state authority—paternal authority to which, in Tolstoy's words, men submit voluntarily, as the members of a family submit to

the senior members. The original draft of this letter from Tolstoy to the Tzar came, in the whirligig of time, to New York and was sold by auction. I saw it, and handled it.

Examining the thin, unemotional calligraphy of this letter, I recalled the accounts of the proof reading of "Anna Karenina," which Tolstoy described as "my tedious, vulgar 'Anna Karenina'"; how he would interwrite into the long galley proofs to such an extent that poor Countess Tolstoy had to sit up all night to copy the whole thing out afresh; how, in the morning, the new manuscript would be neatly piled up on the table in her fine, clear handwriting; how "my father would carry the sheets off to his study to have just one last look," and by evening it would be just as bad again; "the whole thing had been rewritten and messed up once more." It was Jane Walsh Carlyle, was it not, who said to a girl friend: "My dear, never marry a man of genius?" And it was the son, Count Ilya Tolstoy, who said: "Papa was the cleverest man in the world. He always knew everything. There was no being naughty with him."

Then I took from the shelves Aylmer Maude's "Life of Tolstoy" and, turning to the Chronology, read some of the entries:

1878 Writing "Confession."

1881 Letter to Tzar.

1883 Writing "What Do I Believe?"

1885 Becomes a Vegetarian.

1885 Renounces Hunting and Tobacco.

1889 Finishes "The Kreutzer Sonata."

1891 Renounces Copyrights and Divides Property Among His Family.

1893 Finishes "The Kingdom of God Is Within You."

1898 Finishes "What Is Art?"

1901 Excommunication.

1902 Finishes "What Is Religion?"

1903 Letter to Tzar.

1906 Seizure by Police of Many of Tolstoy's Works.

1908 Jubilee in Honour of Tolstoy's Eightieth Birthday.

Soon afterward followed his departure into the wilderness which has puzzled so many, but which Tolstoy, being Tolstoy and nobody else, was precisely what might have been presaged of him. Then I read the chapter about his difference, or quarrel, with Turgenev. Strange! And so there came into the ken of memory the little group of Russian intellectuals, with Tolstoy at their head, who, we used to think, represented Russia. To us, they stood for Russia. Now we know, alas, that these intellectuals represented no more than 1 per cent. Perhaps not even that.

\* \* \* \*

I wonder what the man<sup>v</sup> will make of a play with Tolstoy as a subject. Is he not too great, too elusive, too spiritual?



## 52. HUGH WALPOLE

WHEN I heard that Hugh Walpole was about to make his last public appearance in New York as a Lecturer before returning Home, I said, to myself, "You must be there!"

Why?

I am not an ardent admirer of Mr. Walpole's books. Perhaps they are not quite adult enough for me. Even "The Dark Forest," much liked, all about Russia and the war, failed to hold my attention. Halfway through I got lost, as most people do, who adventure actually, or imaginatively, into Russia; and I know not how "The Dark Forest" ends. Moreover, I do not like diaries or letters in novels. Their intrusion assumes that the author is not facing the music squarely; he is putting up another fellow to speak for him.

Why, then, was I so eager to attend his last lecture?

You will remember how tired the Athenians became of hearing Aristides called—The Just. I think the reason that I wanted to see Mr. Walpole upon the lecture platform was, not because I was tired of hearing him called Charming, but because I wanted to discover how it is done, how one gets the reputation for being—Charming. He had been lecturing up and down America for months; advertisements

of his eleven books, in heavy type, with half a dozen lines of praise about each (don't be silly; I am not jealous) were displayed in the daily newspapers; the chroniclers always wrote delightful things about his lectures, and at every dinner party I attend some nice young thing inevitably asks, "Oh, do tell me about Mr. Hugh Walpole." Then I begin: "His father is a bishop, he loves Cornwall, he is a bachelor, he writes——" Even the young lions of the Chicago *Daily News* fell to his charm. They like his "English accent"; they have determined that he is "an English writer who is at the same time a gentleman," and they admit that he shows "no air of condescension." In brief, he is a success in America, a great success, as man, lecturer, and writer; and as it is one of my gay duties to chronicle the success, or non-success, of English, Scottish, Irish, Canadian and Welsh lecturers, and writers in America I said to myself, firmly, when I saw his lecture announced, "You must be there."

It so happened that on the day of the lecture a Westerner, who is also a writer, was lunching with me. This Westerner is a one hundred per cent American (I have never heard of a one hundred per cent Englishman). His attitude toward the New England authors, and to their English forbears, past and present, is one of genial patronage; but his crust of patronage is not able to conceal his intense curiosity about the younger English writers. His questions were as many and as bewildering as the questions on "The Readers Guide" page of the *New York Evening Post*. Suddenly I asked him

if he would like to accompany me to Hugh Walpole's lecture on "Creating a Novel." He accepted with ardour.

Hugh Walpole was introduced by Owen Johnson. That was clever. They are a neat contrast. Mr. Walpole is a blond, with a fair complexion and a dimple. Mr. Johnson is a brunette, with a dark complexion, and the look of a man who has written "The Woman Gives." Mr. Johnson is also the son of an Ambassador, which is piquant in these days when the younger novelists rather overwhelm their parents. In his introductory remarks Mr. Johnson ingeniously let the audience (it was large, and mainly ladies) understand that the author of "Fortitude," "The Secret City," and "The Green Mirror" is rather nicer than other novelist-lecturers of the English invasion.

The Westerner and I sat in the second row of the stalls. He leaned forward on the back of the chair in front; not once did he take his eyes off the lecturer. I could see that he was impressed by something, but whether it was the manner or the matter of the author of "The Prelude to Aventure," I could not determine.

Of one thing I am sure: Mr. Walpole is a charming lecturer. He knows just what to do, when to be softly serious, when to tell an amusing story, and when to smile mildly at himself and his enthusiasms. He was severe on the family genius, and told the delighted audience how he himself had been checked and subdued in his young days. "And here I am now," he might have added, "lec-

turing to a large and fashionable New York audience, with eleven books to my credit, and the wide, delightful world still before me." I turned to look at Mr. Owen Johnson, who had seated himself behind us in the third row. I tried to see if he was smiling, but the light was too dim.

Mr. Walpole's manner is as charming as his matter. He has the buoyancy, enthusiasm, and candour of Mr. Alfred Noyes. He and Mr. Noyes talk directly to the audience; they admit them to their confidence. They might be twin brothers. Mr. Walpole does not use notes. Ease and frankness are his adjectives, and confidence. He is not in the least aggressive; he just speaks on as if lecturing were a pleasant duty like tipping the club servants handsomely at Christmas, or playing for the game's sake, not for personal prowess, in a football match. His division of the modern novel into four classes, with appropriate comments, was neat and entertaining—(1) the novel of Style (Stevenson, etc.); (2) the novel of Ideas (selling a birthright for "a pot of message"); (3) the novel of Adventure and Incident (Dumas was idolised); (4) the novel of Character and Psychology (he pretended to tell us how he does it). The ladies laughed and applauded, but Mr. Owen Johnson, the Westerner, and I know too much. We were glum. The peroration was about Russia. He was there during the first year of the war with the Russian Red Cross, and returned later as a King's Messenger. With Russia came the serious note—the great simplicity of the Moujik, the pity of it all. Then a pause, a

repetition of Tolstoy's pet idea that the world will never become better until the individual improves; and then,—click, the end. Loud applause. A recall. It was all beautifully done—a finished performance.

The Westerner was silent as we walked away. Presently he said: "I didn't get much from the lecture itself. What fascinates me is his ease, his assurance, the idea that he is acceptable, that he can't go wrong. I suppose it's the tradition that envelops him. He walks in a protecting background. I seem to be striding along all alone in a raw light."

"Don't worry," I said. "Each has his own, and each must grow up in it and use it. You have the prairie and the pioneers behind you. He is descended from Horace Walpole and Sir Robert Walpole; his father is the Bishop of Edinburgh; he was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and his recreation is music. The Mississippi is your alma mater, and your recreation is travelling, without luggage, in wild places. Don't worry."

Later I called at a branch public library, and asked for any of Hugh Walpole's books. They were all out. So, being a Person of Decision, I entered a shop and bought his first "The Wooden Horse," and his latest, "Jeremy."

"The Wooden Horse" did not interest me very much. But "Jeremy"! I delighted in it. I delight in it. It is the best book about a boy that I have ever read, not only Jeremy himself, but his environment, his people, his home life. It is told

to ripples of humour; the characterisation is neat. The people are beautifully observed. Yes, a very charming book. His best book by a long way. In future, when I am asked what I know about Hugh Walpole, I shall answer: "He wrote 'Jeremy.'"

### 53. MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

**B**EING an Arnold in England is, I suppose, something like being a Lodge in America.

Born into the Arnold family, granddaughter of the famous Dr. Arnold of Rugby, known to every reader of "Tom Brown's Schooldays"; niece of Matthew Arnold; married to a Fellow and Tutor of Brasenose College, Oxford, Mrs. Humphry Ward lived in an atmosphere of culture, and in an environment of intellect, breeding, and high purposes that the ordinary person reads about, but seldom experiences.

She knew everybody of importance—Scholars and Statesmen, Dukes and Débutantes, Ambassadors and Artists, Bishops, Poets, Novelists, Historians, and Politicians.

From the best society in Oxford she passed to the best society in London when her husband, T. Humphry Ward, was appointed art critic of the *Times* and leader writer.

Culture, breeding, and well-being mark her books, and was one reason for their immense popularity: it also marks her *Literary Recollections* wherein we move through a society in which high thinking, and meeting eminent people, is the routine of each day. Think of calling Matthew Arnold uncle; think of choosing nine books for Lord Acton's bed-

side when he visited the Wards at Stocks, their country house; think of hearing Mr. Gladstone say in private conversation—"There are still two things left for me to do. One is to carry Home Rule; the other is to prove the intimate connection between the Hebrew and Olympian revelations"; think of being in a railway carriage with Mr. Arthur Balfour while he was reading Green's "Prolegomena to Ethics."

To the large world Mrs. Humphry Ward was known as a most readable and most helpful novelist, with a fascinating power of depicting girls. Her young men, usually rising personages of good family and good looks, are not as convincing to males as are her young women. Mr. W. L. George in his division of British novelists into the neo-Victorian, the Edwardian, and the neo-Georgian groups does not mention Mrs. Ward. Personally, I prefer her books to those of Mr. W. L. George. Nothing Mr. George has written has affected me like "Helbeck of Bannisdale" and "Eleanor." I do not pretend to have read all Mrs. Ward's novels, for she was rather prolific, and her books do not permit themselves to be skipped; but all that I am acquainted with are on the side of right living, right thinking, and aspiration, and I find them a deal more consolatory and stimulating than many of the works by members of the neo-Victorian, the Edwardian, and the neo-Georgian schools. I imagine that Mrs. Ward would have been quite pleased and proud simply to be called a Victorian novelist, that is, one who is concerned with world



movements rather than with local movements. Mr. W. L. George announces his recreation (see "Who's Who") as "Self-Advertisement." Mrs. Ward's recreation was (I knew her)—Doing Good with an Air (the Arnold Air).

It is many years since I read "Robert Elsmere," which was published in 1888, but I well remember the discussion it aroused and its popularity which was greater, I believe, in America than in England. More than 500,000 copies were sold in the United States. It was selling well before Mr. Gladstone's famous review in the *Nineteenth Century*, but it was that review that hastened the pace and made "Robert Elsmere" the best seller of the day. It was begun in 1885, the writing of it took nearly three years, and when it was finished in March, 1887, writes Mrs. Ward, "I came out from my tiny writing room, shaken with tears, and wondering, as I sat alone on the floor, by the fire, in the front room, what life would be like, now that the book was done."

That was quite the right way to behave in Victorian times, and the right answer to the tears was, of course, to write more novels. This the author proceeded to do, and to remove in time from Russell Square to Grosvenor Place, facing the gardens of Buckingham Palace, and from Haslemere, which was becoming quite suburban, to Stocks, a beautiful little estate near Tring in Hertfordshire.

"Robert Elsmere," which Oliver Wendell Holmes said was "the most effective and popular novel we have had since 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" was not

Mrs. Ward's first book. It was preceded by "Milly and Olly," 1881, a story for children that "wrote itself," a translation of Amiel's "Journal," 1885, and "Miss Bretherton," 1886. Before that there was hard intellectual preparation for her chosen career of letters with a leaning toward exegesis, not as arduous and thorough a preparation as that of George Eliot, but a preparation, in each case, for a life of plain living and high thinking, and in each case the writing of fiction sprang uneasily but inevitably from severer studies. To each fiction eventually revealed itself as the right method of self-expression.

Among the future novelist's intellectual preparations were several articles on early Spanish Kings and Bishops, and on the origins of modern Spain; a pamphlet on "Unbelief and Sin"; magazine papers, articles for the *Times*, and the translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime*; then "Miss Bretherton," suggested by the brilliant success in 1883 of Mary Anderson, and so to "Robert Elsmere."

Her philanthropic efforts alone would be sufficient for most lives. She created, and was the guiding power of the Passmore Edwards Settlement: she founded the Invalid Children's School; she made time to help in any movement for the Public Welfare.

A full life, a life crowded with effort and interest, a life that any woman of intellect and vision would delight to live. And in it three unique episodes. She called the magnificent Matthew Arnold—Uncle

Matt, she was reviewed by Gladstone, and she sat in the City of London as a Woman Magistrate.

Happily she saw the end of the Great War, in which and for which she worked so splendidly with pen and tongue. The name of Arnold, through her, has gained fresh lustre.

## 54. WILLIAM WATSON

I HAVE known many poets. They are a touchy lot, and to remain on friendly terms it is necessary to control one's conduct carefully. I seem to remember two or three occasions when high and hasty words swept between Sir William Watson and myself. (He was created a knight in 1917. Richly he deserved it, and I must proffer him his title once; but he is, and always will be to me plain William Watson, Yorkshireman and Poet.)

What were our spasmodic quarrels about? Questions of the day—the Boer War, vivisection, and so on. He feels things deeply, has strong views; but he is also magnanimous and quick to forgive and to forget. Once I remember he abruptly left a dinner table because I had rattled out something obnoxious to him (he is a strong anti-vivisectionist). He strode from the room erect and stiff, and I played with my food, sorry and angry, trying to look unconcerned. In three minutes he returned, still erect and stiff, but with his strong, mobile face (full eyes and square jaw) suffused with a companionable smile—"Such old friends," he said, in his quick, sententious way, "must not quarrel over an opinion," and his hand shot out.

Magnanimous, courteous, touchy, forgiving, with a vast capacity for indignation and scorn, the foe of

slippery thinking, and slipshod writing, something of a lonely figure, belonging to no clique or school, communing, I am sure, in his long, lonely walks through the Yorkshire dales, with the writers with whom he is most in sympathy—say Samuel Johnson, John Milton, and Wordsworth—such is William Watson.

If poetry were the natural vehicle of expression for mankind, and if newspapers were written in verse, William Watson would be the first editorial writer in the land. He watches events with eagle eye, bruised heart, and impassioned pen. He might have been Poet Laureate years ago if—if—he were a courtier. That is just what he is not. Righteous anger inspires his sonnets. We may agree or disagree with his belligerent literary activities, always expressed in polished classical language; we may have sympathy or antipathy for the folk or cause he chastises or cherishes, but we never doubt his integrity. He sets himself to write in verse, for verse is his natural expression, and in my opinion it is, alas, when he is in his leading article mood that his poetry is the least attractive. He delights to honour his friends in verse. Sometimes, as in the case of the address to Richard Holt Hutton, the result is memorable:

And not uncrowned with honors ran  
My days, and not without a boast shall end!  
For I was Shakespeare's countryman  
And were not thou my friend?

In some there is something pedestrian as in the beginning of the poem to H. D. Traill:

Traill, 'tis a twelve months' space and more  
 Since feet of mine have sought your door. . . .

Yet how apt he is. Here is the second stanza of his poem to Austin Dobson:

Of wilder birth this muse of mine,  
 Hill-cradled, and baptised with brine;  
 And 'tis for her a sweet despair  
 To watch that courtly step and air!

And how apt are his epigrams. There are pages of them, each has its point, twist and lilt, and, when necessary, its lordly procession of words as in "After Reading Tamburlaine the Great":

Your Marlowe's page I close, my Shakespeare's ope;  
 How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—  
 The continuity, the long slow slope  
 And vast curves of the gradual violin!

But his full flight is in the odes and elegies. What magnificent rhetoric there is in the "Hymn to the Sea." How full and rolling it is! I have read it aloud to two or three people. Not one of them has been able to catch at any definite meaning, and yet I have left them murmuring such sonorous lines as:

Now while the vernal impulsion makes lyrical all that  
 hath language,  
 While, through the veins of the Earth, riots the ichor of  
 spring. . . .

His tribute to Wordsworth, perhaps the most esteemed of his poems, draws nearer to the average heart. What could be truer or finer than the following stanzas—essential William Watson:

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine;  
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view,  
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine;  
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends  
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,  
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?  
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,  
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,  
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,  
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

It will be observed that he is a reflective poet; that he fashions his numbers with extreme care; that he is dignified, and a studious walker in the older ways; that he has no patience with free verse, and no love for the free and easy jolt of, say, Kipling's "Barrack Room Ballads," and a horror at the liberties certain American writers (including, I am sure, baseball reporters, and the artists of the comic pages) take with the English tongue.

He is ever loyal to Johnson and Milton: his latest poem, "The Super-human Antagonists," six hundred lines of rhymed decasyllabic verse, is, as the *Times* says, "rhetorical with a rhetoric that he seems to have learned very thoroughly from all the great poetic rhetoricians of the past." His rhetoric is intentional. Happy accidents, gushes of emotion, the things that dazzle and move us in Browning are not for him. He weighs his theme, shapes it, polishes it, and conducts it through courses of sonorous rhetoric of which he is proud, and which

is the chief asset of his expression. He has written an essay in which he pauses "to rescue this word rhetoric from the evil habit into which it has latterly fallen by no innate fault of its own. . . . The simple truth is that there is a tinsel rhetoric and there is a golden rhetoric."

William Watson's rhetoric is golden. He knows it. We know it. The point is not arguable. It is settled. His poetry and prose show it.

His prose!

All good poets write good prose, all except Swinburne. Cast over in your mind a few modern names—Matthew Arnold, Francis Thompson, W. B. Yeats, Lawrence Binyon, Henry Newbolt, Arthur Symons, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne.

William Watson's admirable prose, balanced, sweeping, rhythmic, would, cut cunningly into unequal lengths, make excellent Free Verse. I hope no one will do it. The sonnet of indignation the poet would compose would be terrible. Let his small book of prose called "Pencraft" remain as it is, a perfect example of the welding of matter and manner, a definite statement by a trained writer of the aims and ideals of his craft, the apologia of one who stands almost alone, rooted in older conditions, obedient but not subservient to the masters of a former day, and receiving with distrust, and scorn, so courteous that none can take offence, the wild and whirring prose experiments of the present day. Were I asked to suggest a textbook of literature for high schools, or even for colleges, I would unhesitatingly recommend "Pencraft." There is no better



introduction to the continuity, the austerity and the majesty of Letters.

One does not associate William Watson with humour. Sarcasm, yes; irony, yes; disdain, yes; the look and the cut of contempt, yes (see "The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue"); but until I read his imaginary interview with Dr. Johnson, printed in his book of essays called "Excursions in Criticisms," with the amiable sub-title, "Being Some Prose Recreations of a Rhymer," I did not realise that he possessed a recondite humour not unworthy of the learned Doctor himself. This interview is entirely delightful and entirely wise. Dr. Johnson on Rossetti is what my American friends would call "a scream"; and as for Dr. Johnson on Matthew Arnold what could be better than this?—"I lament that there is much in his verse that is alien to my apprehension—much that reflects, apparently, a mental world of which I have no private report."

But Sir William Watson is a poet. Perhaps he will not thank me for extolling him as a proseman, so I will end with the opening stanza of his poem called "The Unknown God," which has been beating in my heart ever since I first read it years ago—

When, overarched by gorgeous night,  
I wave my trivial self away;  
When all I was to all men's sight  
Shares the erasure of the day;  
Then do I cast my cumbering load,  
Then do I gain a sense of God.

## 55. H. G. WELLS

**D**EAR H. G.! Although I have known him since 1894 I have never heard his intimates call him anything but H. G. Even his wife addresses him so.

Dear H. G.! I made his acquaintance oddly. Harry Cust, Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, when he was not involved in a crisis would encourage me to be amusing. One day I said to him, "I want a new friend, please." A few hours later an office boy came to my room (I was then Editor of the *Pall Mall Budget* and said, "Mr. Cust's compliments and 'eve got a new friend for yer, sir." I hastened to Mr. Cust's apartment (it was more than a room) and there, a little figure, hunched up on a magnificent Maple couch was H. G. Wells. He smiled. I smiled. His overcoat was not Poole's, but his face was like an electrified note of interrogation, questioning and absorbing everything. He was then writing Wellsian articles for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and there was in them that which prompted me one day to suggest that he should write stories for the *Pall Mall Budget*. He was game; he was always game; and those amazing tales "the jolly art of making something very bright and moving," to quote his own words (we called them "Single Sitting Stories") came

into the office at the rate of two a week, in copper-plate handwriting with the regularity of a pendulum. So H. G. began his career as a writer of fiction. I touched the button only, or as he neatly puts it in the introduction to "The Country of the Blind": "Mr. Lewis Hind's (it's the first time he ever addressed me as Mr.) indicating finger had shown me an amusing possibility of the mind."

His unresting, exploring mind, so curious and combative, is very orderly. So are his habits—meticulously so. His imaginative schemes, like his house-keeping books, are tabulated and arranged with the precision of an accountant. He once showed me a fixture of pigeonholes in his study: he indicated the contents of three of these pigeonholes: they contained the manuscripts of his next three books, neatly typewritten by Mrs. Wells, each labelled with the year in which it was to appear. H. G. discarded the literary agent some time ago: he is his own agent, and a good one, surely. Portions, if not all of the text of "Mr. Britling," "Joan and Peter," and "The Undying Fire," appeared serially in high-class weekly publications in England and America, the editors of which would be aghast at the mere suggestion of publishing an ordinary novel.

H. G. Wells is a complex man of letters, with a strong natural scientific and socialistic bias. He is a fine teller of tales—imaginative, inventive, sociological, humorous, appalling, technical; he is also an educationist and an inquirer into what people call the mystery of things. The war turned his agile mind, and burdened heart, into a consideration of

the Whence, the Why, and the Whither! He is pursuing the quest with characteristic pertinacity, and possibly after many years of heroic intellectual strenuousness he may reach the point which he might easily have reached at his mother's knee.

I sent "Mr. Britling Sees It Through" to a major in the British Army. He read it in the intervals of hard fighting, and he wrote me fourteen pages about "Mr. Britling." They were highly complimentary, with one exception. Mr. Britling, you will remember, comes to the conclusion at the end of the book that we must carry on and "do our best." The major, who is a spiritual man, resented this, and urged, at some length and with rare eloquence, that we must do more than "our best": we must do "God's best." I sent this lay sermon to H. G. Wells. He replied by quoting the title of his next two books, not then published, "God the Invisible King," and "The Soul of a Bishop." The Major, I believe, has read them; but he has not yet informed me that he is satisfied.

I, who have followed his imaginative and intellectual career from the beginning, who have known him, and had long walks and talks with him, find no confusion, only development, in the record of his agile mind expressed in his books. He is a seeker. His thought is always on the wing: it does not rest. Most minds, as the years go by, recline into apathy and resent change and the new thing. The mind of H. G. Wells is always alert, more so today than ever. There is much of Mr. Britling in him, but he is tougher than Mr. B., and he has

learnt to drive a motor car better. Mr. Britling is a portion of himself, and the externals of that moving record of the hideous impact of the war on a sensitive nature are drawn, in large measure, from the happy life he leads at Dunmow in Essex. Visitors ask themselves when he does his work, for he always seems to have time for pianola playing, for games with his children, such wonderful games, for dancing in the barn, for hockey on Sunday afternoon and for talks that explore and leap and run. At stated times of the day he disappears. Then, I suppose, he does his work, but, however intense his absorption in it may be, he casts care away when he rejoins his guests. Those eyes, grey-blue and watchful, small and searching, miss nothing, and he does not husband his thoughts, for they are so many, and they strike out, quick and illuminating, on the anvil of any topic that is started.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Budget* gave him his start: W. E. Henley published "The Time Machine" in the *New Review*; and the *Saturday Review* and *Nature* were only too glad to print his critical and technical articles. He had studied at the Royal College of Science, and was by this time a B.Sc. Not a bad beginning for a youth who had no advantages. His father was a professional cricketer, and this world-famous man still keeps, framed in the place of honour in his study, a cricket card showing the prowess of Papa Wells with the cricket ball.

The days of the *Saturday Review* and *Nature* articles passed. H. G. was now merging into a

novelist. "The Wonderful Visit," "The Island of Dr. Moreau" and "The Wheels of Chance" followed. The rest you know.

His eager mind is now deep in the problems of reconstruction, self-determination, the rights and the wrongs of small nations and so on. But his imagination still plays. He is no pedant. He has vision. He may like the following story, not as imaginary as it may seem:

An Irish American and an English Englishman were talking. Said the Irish American, "I suppose if the League of Nations had been properly drawn the English would restore Gibraltar to Spain."

The English Englishman looked glum. Suddenly his face lightened. "Why not? And of course, America would give back New York to the English."

It was the Irish American's turn to look glum. Then he smiled and said—"And the English would restore New York to the Dutch, and the Dutch would give it back to the Indians."

"Surely," said the English Englishman, "but that wouldn't be the end. There were aboriginal inhabitants; there must have been in remote antiquity a first aboriginal, the very first man to walk Manhattan. Suppose, by some miracle, his descendants could be traced, even that would not end our altruistic inquiry. This first man would be a mere dot in the wonder of earth and sky, of rivers that race to the sea, of springtime, of the sun and the night sky. It would be only logical to restore these wonders to their original owner."

"Yes?" said the Irish American.

"New York," murmured the English Englishman, "would have to be restored to God. Which is precisely what the faithful want to do."

To look through a list of the books by H. G. Wells is to be filled with amazement and pride. To each his choice: to one "Kips," to another, "Tony Bungay," to another "Mr. Britling Sees It Through." I cannot make any choice, but as I sit here I recall with profound admiration Section 15, of Chapter XIII, of "Joan and Peter," where the wounded Flying Man seeks, and finds the Lord God.

How sane is this Flying Man's delirium!

How inexhaustible is the mind of H. G.!

He has travelled far. On the last page of "Joan and Peter" there is this—

There was a light upon his life, and the truth was that he could not discover the source of the light nor define its nature; there was a presence in the world about him that made all life worth while, and yet it was nameless and incomprehensible. It was the essence beyond reality; it was the heart of all things. . . .

Yes, he has travelled far. He is still travelling.

And perhaps, with his "Outline of History," he has inaugurated a real system of education.

## 56. EDITH WHARTON

I WONDER what Mrs. Wharton thinks of O. Henry; and if there are still people in England who picture America from the people and scenes in Mrs. Wharton's books.

When I first read "The Greater Inclination," I unconsciously accepted the stage direction of a Newport drawing-room in "The Twilight of the Gods," as characteristic of America and the way they go on there. Here it is:

"A Newport drawing-room. Tapestries, flowers, bric-à-brac. Through the windows, a geranium-edged lawn, the cliffs and the sea. Isabel Warland sits reading. Lucius Warland enters in flannels and a yachting cap."

Also I pictured New York as the scene of the Gildermere ball in "A Cup of Cold Water," at the close of which, you remember, Woburn is disturbed because the drowsy footman handed him "a ready-made overcoat with an imitation astrachan collar in place of his own unimpeachable Poole garment."

Similarly in an earlier decade "nice" America, and that was the only America that it was my duty to know anything about, was enshrined within the covers of W. D. Howells' charming novels. As for Washington I accepted with pleasure the present-



ment by Mrs. Burnett in "Through One Administration." Novels of manners and of place have much to answer for. When I visit Kentucky I am sure that I shall not have the vivid impressions of the Blue Grass State that I derive from James Lane Allen and John Fox, Jr.

"Are you an admirer of Mrs. Wharton?" I asked an Intelligent Woman.

"Admirer? I was brought up on her. In my first season I was always watching for the exquisite, social calamities that she describes. It's my opinion they don't really happen. Life isn't nearly as subtle as novelists pretend."

"Which is your favourite among her stories?"

She picked a cherry from the bowl and reflected while she nibbled it. "It's odd," she said, "but I can't remember any of her books, neither the plots nor the characters—oh, yes, there was Lily Bart in 'The House of Mirth.' I was terribly sorry for Lily. There are lots of Lilys about. Only a woman could have drawn her."

"How about 'Ethan Frome'?" I asked.

She shook her curls. "One can't read everything. But I liked 'Summer.' If you want me to say something definite about Mrs. Wharton I shouldn't wonder if she wasn't better when she is dealing with people a bit lower socially than the Newport and Long Island lot."

"Did you ever meet her?"

"Once, at a luncheon party. Henry James was there, I remember, and my neighbour, a young diplomat, bored me with explaining just how far

Edith Wharton derived from Henry James. In my opinion she beats him: she has more red blood. The diplomat said one clever thing—it wasn't original, I think he fathered it on Henry James—that Mrs. Wharton showed 'the masculine conclusion tending to crown the feminine observation.'"

"What is Mrs. Wharton like?"

"Oh, that luncheon party was a long time ago, but I remember I decided that she was just like what I expected she would be—brown hair, exquisitely dressed, a finished manner, and an air, oh, you know the kind of air that glides about European letters and art, and looks startled when anyone mentions America."

I knew what this dear lady meant, for I had just been trying to read Edith Wharton's "Italian Backgrounds," and found progression through the pages difficult. It is the kind of culture, excessive culture, that drives me to O. Henry or at any rate to Kipling. On the first page I found this: "To pass from the region of the obviously picturesque—the country contrived, it would seem, for the delectation of the *cœur à poésie facile*—to that sophisticated landscape where, etc., etc."

I prefer a deeper bite in travel literature, more directness and surprises, such as we find in Borrow, Stevenson, Kipling, Belloc, and Gissing. But it would be unfair to judge Edith Wharton by such culture books as this, or "Italian Villas" or "The Decoration of Houses," or her slim volume of varnished verse.

Think you we slept within the Delphic bower,  
What time our victim sought Apollo's grace?  
Nay, drawn into ourselves, in that deep place  
Where good and evil meet, we bode our hour.

Travels—in Italy or France—evoke her preciosity: she cannot help being a stylist when writing of buildings or nature: it is a human problem that brings out the distinction of this subtle writer. During a score of years or so I can look back on a dozen short stories by Edith Wharton that have given me immense intellectual and æsthetic pleasure. And as for her long novels, those who have not read “The House of Mirth,” “The Fruit of the Tree,” and “The Reef” have a great pleasure in store; but the reader must make up his mind to be entertained by “ladies and gentlemen,” not by “men and women.” As Mr. Francis Hackett observes, Mrs. Wharton’s characters are not the kind of people with whom you share crackerjack in a day coach. And yet I should not be surprised if her best work was not “Ethan Frome,” a New England story dealing with lowly people, folk who never have a servant to wait upon them and who always get their own morning tea. “Ethan Frome” has an intensity, a pathos, and sympathy, frigid if you will, but sustained and penetrating. With the breaking out of war, Edith Wharton threw herself into war work, and as the struggle continued she wrote little sad stories about soldiers. One was called “The Marne”; and she also produced an amusing and suggestive little book called “French Ways and Their Meaning.” These did

not rouse me to enthusiasm; in the press of other avocations, the work of Edith Wharton had slipped out of my consideration.

Suddenly it was recalled to me—violently. I opened a paper one day and read that E. V. Lucas had expressed to an interviewer in San Francisco his astonishment and annoyance that he could not buy Edith Wharton's books in the West. "She is your greatest woman writer," he said, "and it seems extraordinary to me that I could find none of her books on sale in the West."

This interested me, as when I left London in 1917, Lucas, for a year and more, had been reading and praising O. Henry, and it seemed odd that a man should be able to enjoy, with enthusiasm, such disparate temperaments as Edith Wharton and O. Henry—Newport and Broadway.

Having decided to write on Edith Wharton, and having only one of her books, "The Reef," I went to a branch public library and borrowed seventeen; also three volumes containing essays on her work by Hackett, Underwood, and Follett.

Then I invited Lucas to luncheon and waved his attention to the couch on which reposed seventeen books by Edith Wharton and three about her.

Lucas is not a talkative man; he looked them over, smiled his grim smile and said, "You take your work seriously."

"So do you," I answered.

"I want to read 'Ethan Frome,'" he muttered, as if somebody had been hindering him from doing so.

I offered it to him. He shook his head. "I want it on board ship. There's no time to read anything in America."

"Tell me," I said, "how can you who adore O. Henry also adore Edith Wharton? She deals mainly with the smart life which you always try to avoid, and succeed in avoiding."

"I like her irony," he mumbled.

When he had gone it struck me that he might have said: "You adore Memlinc and Matisse, why shouldn't I adore Edith Wharton and O. Henry?" If he had been a girl, I suppose that I should have taken a copy of "Ethan Frome" to the steamer.

## 57. WALT WHITMAN

**T**HE centenary of the birth of Walt Whitman on May 31, 1919, turned thought to him who cried, "The Modern Man I Sing."

For a week I was dipping, diving, and plunging into the 430 pages of "Leaves of Grass," that ocean of rushing, soaring observations announcing the awakening spirit of America, proclaiming her first great poet, soil of her soil, strong as a mountain, sure of his mission, sure of himself, sure of the reproductive power of the rough songs he sang, their tumultuous beauty, their rugged eloquence, with scraps of tenderness lighting catalogues of words, himself the centre of all, yet conscious all the while of something within himself untouched.

. . . Before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet untouched, untold,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory  
signs and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I  
have written.

To us in London in the late eighties there were three Americans who aroused our awakening literary minds to enthusiasm—Poe, Bret Harte, and Walt Whitman. (Emerson came later and stayed longest.) Poe opened to us the macabre in prose, and in poetry the art and craft of melody. Bret

Harte revealed to us a new corner of life, picturesque, riotous, pathetic, amusing, but it was only a part of the whole. Walt Whitman showed us the whole, expounded that vast, voracious America 3,000 miles away. Here was a new poet, a new way of song, a new country, a new man speaking to each one of us.

My songs cease, I abandon them,  
From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally  
solely to you,  
Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this touches a man.

We read "Salut au Monde" (—"What do you hear, Walt Whitman," he asks, "what do you see, Walt Whitman?"). We realised that he had thrown rhyme and scansion to the winds; that his Pegasus took the bit between her teeth and did what she willed; that form and tradition were meaningless terms to him. What did it matter? He sang of a new land, in a new way. He sang the love of comrades, one brotherhood throughout the wide world.

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination  
around the whole earth,  
I have looked for equals and lovers and found them  
ready for me in all lands,  
I think some divine rapport has equalised me with them.

We read "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"; we read the Lincoln poems; we read the "Song of the Open Road." With the generosity of youth we acclaimed Walt Whitman everywhere, "O America,

because you build for manhood I build for you." Has it not been said of him that he gave America to the world? We made Free Verse after his manner; Free Verse with its "long, undulant swell and fall," its unmetrical rhythmic cadences; we learned of his greetings, "Howdy," and "So long"; of his broad-brimmed hat, his blue flannel shirt, his homespun trousers tucked into knee-high boots; we learned of his services in the war as nurse and comforter to soldiers, and how he had said that those four years, 1861 to 1865, made it possible for him to write "Leaves of Grass."

Not youth pertains to me  
 Not delicatessen—I cannot beguile the time with talk;  
 Awkward in the parlour, neither a dancer nor elegant,  
 In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still—for  
     learning inures not to me;  
 Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet, there are two or  
     three things inure to me,  
 I have nourished the wounded, and sooth'd many a dying  
     soldier,  
 And at intervals, waiting, or in the midst of camp,  
 Composed these songs.

This buccaneer of song became a part of us. We hailed him as America's great poet. And while his fame broadened in England we learned with surprise that America was not taking kindly to her lusty son. Even Emerson, almost enthuasiatic at first, tempered his admiration. The elder poets, the elder critics, and the cultured public did not take easily to Walt. He was too Waltish: his methods were too un-European, and as for his subjects, why they were everyday affairs. And his



frankness and roughness! Longfellow and Tennyson were poets, "Excelsior" and "Enoch Arden" were poetry, but this amazing and uncouth, voluble savage, what was he?

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer  
grass.

Clear the way there, Jonathan!  
I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes  
will play Yankee Doodle.

Poetry? No sir! We in America know what poets are. William Cullen Bryant is a poet.

Thirty years have passed, and during the centenary week America was engaged in a literary drive in honour of Walt Whitman. A school of poets has arisen who call him Master. Walt Whitman has come into his kingdom. I pick up Louis Untermeyer's "The New Era in American Poetry," and read that Walt Whitman is the great precipitant and liberator of emotions that have been too long stifled, and that for the first time (owing to Whitman's pioneer work) a great part of American letters is actually American. Whitman set the American poet free.

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts;  
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas'  
and Odysseus' wanderings.

Placard, "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your  
snowy Parnassus . . .

For now a better, fresher, busier sphere; a wider untried  
domain awaits and demands you.

But my joy in this new fierce freedom does not mean any lessening of my joy, in the milder freedom of the past. I am not a Futurist, I am a citizen of the dear old world, so proud of it, so grateful to it, that I can quite easily smile at Mr. Van Wyck Brooks' gibe at the New England group—"our Poets' were commonly six in number, kindly, grey-bearded, or otherwise grizzled old men. One recalls a prevailing six, with variations. Sometimes a venerable historian was included, a novelist or so, and even Bayard Taylor. Nothing could make one feel so like a prodigal son as to look at that picture."

Emerson illuminates, Whittier and Longfellow soothe and charm, but Walt Whitman startles. You hear the ring of his axe on the tree: you realise that the good grey poet is a fighter; you hear him cry to the New England group:

What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore,  
     leave my works,  
 And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and  
     with piano tunes,  
 For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

But we do understand him. Even

Silent and amazed even when a little boy,  
 I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God  
     in his statements,  
 As contending against some being or influence.

Also

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little  
     that is Good steadily hastening toward immortality  
 And the vast that is called Evil I saw hastening to merge  
     itself and become lost and dead.

And if with memories of "I Stood Tiptoe upon a Little Hill" or "Tears, Idle Tears," or "Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make" in your head, you declare that Walt Whitman is not a poet, please call him a Prophet or better still a Man. Then read "Good-bye, my Fancy!" and be very glad for Walt.

Good-bye, my Fancy!  
Farewell, dear mate, dear Love!

. . . . .

If we go anywhere we'll go together (yes, we'll remain one),  
Maybe we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,  
Maybe it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs (who knows?)  
Maybe it is you the mortal knot really undoing, turning—  
so now finally  
Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy!

In England as well as in America the thoughts of many on May 31, 1919, dwelt on Walt Whitman, who sang of Freedom in a New World, and found his subjects around him, what eyes saw, what heart felt, what head reasoned. He sang of things here, not there. He was himself.

And, as a last word, Emerson looms up. What a man he was! Re-read his "American Scholar" and remember that this American literary Declaration of Independence was delivered in 1838, seventeen years before the issue of "Leaves of Grass." Walt must have read it, and Walt alone knows how much he got from that wonder-man and poet-sage—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

## 58. W. B. YEATS

**P**OETS do not always look like poets. William Butler Yeats does. He also acts like a poet, that is, like a real poet, which he is. New acquaintances think he poses. That is not my opinion. A poseur is sometimes caught unaware. You never catch the author of "The Wanderings of Oisín," 1889 (his first), and "The Wild Swans at Coole," 1919 (one of his latest), unaware. He looks like an apostle of the Celtic glamour compromising with civilisation; he appears to be dwelling in the Celtic twilight; to me it has always seemed that his residence in London is temporary, that he has in his pocket a return ticket to Innisfree.

He is no hermit. I have met him half a hundred times, and on each occasion I have been quite aware of the implicit understanding between us that he knows he is a poet, and he knows that I am an ordinary person. He does not complain. I do not complain. These are facts. He always looks exactly the same: he always wears a blue serge suit, with a flowing black tie, and he always, at stated intervals, tosses his long, straight hair away from his eyes. And he always, when I address him, looks surprised and remote; he frames his answer carefully, and speaks as if he were addressing somebody who is not I, but might be. I like looking at him.

He is that rare combination—a good poet, a good prose writer, and good to look upon. That is, if you like looking at poets. Sometimes I think that I have not been talking to him at all, that while I have been drawing him out, he has been drawing in, drawing away invisibly to some forlorn Celtic cabin, there to increase the sea with his tears, and the wandering wind with his sighs. Maybe I want to talk to him about cricket, or national extravagance, or the difference between J. M. Synge and George R. Sims. It is little good. He affects to listen but he is really in the land east of the sun and west of the moon where the Irish poetess lived who wrote:

The kine of my father they are straying from their keep-  
ing,

The young goat's at mischief, yet nothing can I do,  
For all through the night I heard the Banshee keening,  
O youth of my loving, and is it well with you?

Yet with it all W. B. Yeats is practical. He has the wisdom of the mystic.

I met him first at a small dinner party. He sat sideways. That is all I remember of the occasion. I recall nothing of his talk. I remember only the attitude of his body, legs crossed, parallel to the table, and his right shoulder in the place of honour. Nobody seemed to mind or to think it strange. I had a kind of idea that he wanted to show that, although he had left Ireland, he was not at home with the Saxon. I rather liked him for it.

Really, I do not think he is aware that he sometimes acts in an un-British way. Once at a public dinner

he delivered an impassioned speech. No Englishman ever delivers an impassioned speech: it is bad form. But that was not all. As he spoke he roamed up and down the room like a wild animal in a cage. When he finished he was far from his seat. I am sure he was more surprised than anybody else.

On another occasion, after a literary gathering, he invited a poet and myself to return to his rooms and hear his newest poem. At that time he was living in a gaunt house off the Euston Road, the kind of house that E. A. Poe might have chosen as the scene of a story. Yeats' rooms were up several flights, and it pleased me to find that they were Spartan in their bareness. Perhaps now that Ireland is prosperous he may have become luxurious. I hope not. In the centre of the room was a long deal table littered with manuscripts and books. Before this table he knelt, and by the light of a guttering candle he read, or rather intoned "The Countess Kathleen" (I think that was the work). Did he read it all? Probably. He read on and on, and believe me his tumbled hair and pale face illumined by the guttering candle made an effect that newspaper writers call Rembrandtish. He was indifferent to us: he did not see that the other poet had fallen fast asleep. Time sped; he read on, until somewhere in the small hours I caught my courage, roused the other poet from his slumbers, and said, "Awfully sorry, but we must be going." Our host, I remember, did carry the candle to the top of the stairs to light us down. Then he returned to his poem, for as we

creaked down to the street door I heard him declaiming fine verse to our empty chairs. "Yeats is a good poet," said my companion, permitting a yawn, "but he has no sense of time."

His poems sing. They are dream poems, melancholy, mournful. Many of them have that exquisite simplicity which Anatole France calls the highest form of literary art, thus:

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true;  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face.

His prose has also the beauty of simplicity. His thought may be wilful, his unceasing lament that the world should be what it is may become tedious; his suggestion that the interests of mankind are unimportant compared with the yearning dreams of the Irish peasant may arouse ire, but nothing can hurt the grave and simple beauty of his style. It flows on, welling up from hidden waters.

When I read Yeats' "Ideas of Good and Evil," I wonder if it is really the same language as that used by the young gentlemen who write the stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*. And when I dip into Yeats' edition of William Blake, I wonder if Blake and Yeats and Kipling and O. Henry come from the same stock. It is curious to turn from a reading of "Barrack Room Ballads" to this impersonal, poetic aristocrat of letters, this seer of the twilight, this "singer of pearl pale fingers and dove-grey sea-boards."

Yet one of his poems has had almost as great a success as Russell's "Cheer, Boys, Cheer." Such things do happen. The poem is "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." No living poet has had such unasked, unsought praise for one poem as William Butler Yeats had from Robert Louis Stevenson. Note that the letter is addressed to "Dear Sir," an infrequent custom with Stevenson. It shows how strong must have been his impulse to write to a stranger:

"To W. B. Yeats,

"Vailima, Samoa, April 14, 1894.

"Dear Sir: Long since when I was a boy I remember the emotions with which I repeated Swinburne's poems and ballads. Some ten years ago, a similar spell was cast upon me by Meredith's 'Love in a Valley'; the stanzas beginning, 'When her mother tends her' haunted me, and I remember waking with them all the echoes about Heyères. It may interest you to hear that I have a third time fallen in slavery: this is to your poem called 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree.' It is so quaint and airy, simple, artful, and eloquent to the heart—but I seek words in vain. Enough that 'always, night and day, I hear lake water lapping with low sounds on the shore,' and am, yours gratefully,

"ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON."

Now I am going to give myself the pleasure of copying out "The Lake Isle of Innisfree":

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;



Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey  
bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes drop-  
ping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the  
cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow  
And evening full of the linnets' wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

In his latest book of poems, "The Wild Swans at  
Coole," the Celtic sadness of Mr. Yeats becomes so  
shadowy sad that his readers can almost believe that  
his muse will drop into silence, that his wild swans  
of verse have made their last flight. Perhaps the  
theatre is wooing him from the harp. Certainly the  
theatre stimulates him. At the performances of the  
Irish plays at the Court Theatre he was quite ani-  
mated, and on one of these occasions he addressed  
me, to my astonishment, with marked friendliness,  
as if I were an Irish playwright or poet.

I am told that he is still meditating a theatrical  
penetration of America. Mr. Belasco need not be  
anxious. The Yeats theatre has no scenery—only  
a back cloth and a silken curtain. There is no  
making up: the actors and actresses wear masks.  
And there is no stage. The performances will take  
place in drawing-rooms. A hostess telephones, and  
the company arrives. They will present the drama

of intimacy: they will convey fine verse, and plots sad and moving, humorous and pathetic. I hope they will perform Yeats' own poetic dramas, and Synge, and Lady Gregory, and the others who stress the Celtic wistfulness and humour. I look forward, with eager anticipation, to the Yeats drawing-room drama, and I am sure that I shall not fall asleep as I did at "Mecca."

## 59. MY FIRST BOOK

**T**IDYING up, sorting old papers, emptying drawers, preparing for the new year, I came upon some reviews of My First Book. I sighed, and smiled. When published it seemed so important: now—well, at any rate, it taught me something and it astonished my mother. "What," she cried, "the little boy whose hair I used to smooth—an author!"

Do you remember that Jerome K. Jerome, when editing *To Day*, persuaded a group of authors each to write an article called "My First Book"? I believe every writer of eminence, whom he approached, allowed himself to be caught in the Jerome net. Who can resist writing about "My First Book"?

I am doing it. I am looking at My First Book, set forth, title and date, in perdurable print in "Who's Who." It was called "The Enchanted Stone." No, I am not giving it publicity. It cannot be advertised. It has been **REMAINDERED**.

I wonder if the general public knows the meaning of the word "remaindered" in publishing circles. It signifies that the book has been discarded, given up as a bad job. Suppose the edition is 1,000 copies, that 150 sell in the first six months, and that a year later the 200 mark has not been passed. The

publisher, if he be hard-hearted and business-like, will "remainder" the 800 remaining copies to an agent for a few pennies a copy. The agent will ship them to Australia, to South Africa, to the Treaty ports, to Brooklyn, to New Jersey, to any place that is eager for wholesome literature at an absurd price. There they are tumbled into bargain boxes. It is a fine way for an author to become known throughout the English-speaking world: it may bring tardy fame, but it is not a good way of earning a living. Not long ago I bought a copy of *My First Book* from a ten-cent box in lower New York. It was promptly borrowed by a rich friend. And about the same time a stranger wrote to me from New Zealand (evidently he had been browsing in the "tuppenny box") asking if I really meant what I said on page something or other. He forgot to inclose the postage for a reply. "Remainder" authors have their troubles, but they do not have to worry over income tax forms.

When I dream about *My First Book*, and realise that even now it is still being read somewhere in the wide world (it has yet to descend into the five-cent box), I do wish that I had made it better. But could I? I think not. I did it as well as ever I could. It cannot have been shockingly bad because in 1901 a German wrote to me from Bonn asking if he might translate it into German, and desiring the names of any other books I had written. The Germans are a strange people. I did not correspond with the Bonn enthusiast but his 1901 inquiry about "any other books" prompts me to say to myself,

here and now, from the wisdom altitude of the year 1920—"Why did you write this book—this First Book?"

To all such questions Dr. Johnson has given the model answer. "Sheer ignorance, madam," he replied, when a lady asked him why, in his Dictionary, he had ascribed the pastern to the wrong part of the horse. "Why did I write and publish that First Book? Sheer vanity, reader."

At the time I pretended that I was expressing myself, and incidentally adding to the world's interest, pleasure, and uplift. It was really business push. I had chosen the career of writing, I had prepared for it, I must deliver the goods, I must publish a book. Everybody was doing it, that is, everybody I admired. Kipling and Stevenson were startling the town; Barrie had worked his way to London and was becoming a marked man; H. G. Wells was showing his mettle in "The Time Machine"; F. Anstey was selling by the thousand, Hugh Conway by the hundred thousand; editors were competing for "Anthony Hope," "John Oliver Hobbes," and W. W. Jacobs; and Hall Caine was dating his letters from a castle in the Isle of Man.

My admirations, you perceive, were all in the imaginative zone. I felt no call toward anything else, and having informed my parents a few years before that I was about to commence author, it never occurred to me that my imagination could fail when I bade it start imagining. It did not fail me. It was willing to invent at breakneck speed. On the quality of the invention I am mute.

So having determined to write a Romance, yes, a Romance, I began to note down all the romantic and adventurous things that had happened to me in thought and in deed; and as I tabulated scene after scene, and episode after episode, a kind of story gradually evolved; and labelled abstractions and oddities, which I called characters, began to clamour for names which I proceeded to pick from the Post Office Directory.

Now, of course, I see that my method was all wrong from the very beginning. The characters should come first, and their development should determine events. This I could not do. I was not interested in men and woman: I was interested in ideas, not, alas, as they might affect the world, but as they did affect me. This is a sad confession, but I was rather young, and so self-confident that nothing could deter me from trying to write just the kind of Romance that I wanted to write.

What was it about? I will not trouble you with the plot. I will only say that I had been reading with absorbing interest Max Müller's "Six Systems of Indian Philosophy"; that I was interested in astronomy and metallurgy; that I had actually imagined some of the properties of radium before that odd metal had been discovered; that I had dabbled in Cornish Methodism, in Stone Circles, and in the effects of light at certain recorded instants of the world's history. I was also acquainted with Wilkie Collins' "Moonstone," and was familiar with certain phases of journalistic life in London. The hero of my Romance was a

young newspaper man. He alone could weld the disparate elements of the plot together. He did it with charm, and with an ease that now amazes and amuses me. I was careful to make him my opposite in every particular: he may stand as an example of, at that time, the kind of person I should like to have been.

With incredible labour, writing and re-writing, deleting and destroying, pruning, and adding, I completed this farrago of romanticism in a year. It began artfully, brusquely, thus—"As a reporter I was conscientious." I make one claim for the story. There was not a superfluous word in it, and when the editor of "The Yellow Book, published a chapter, complete in itself, as a short story," I felt that my face was set toward Olympus.

I have read somewhere that authors occasionally have difficulty in finding a publisher for a first book. I had none. Here is the unvarnished tale. I belonged to a literary and arts club where publishers and authors, painters and patrons, tried to treat each other as human beings. One evening I enticed a nice publisher into a corner, and gave him an animated description of my Romance. He tried not to be interested: in the small hours he succumbed, and said, "Send it along. I'll see what I can do." His reader reported favourably, and when we next met he made a proposition, which I declined.

Just think of it. I declined an offer from an eminent publisher to publish *My First Book*.

The reason was that, in the interim, something quite extraordinary had happened. I had shown a dupli-

cate typewritten copy of the Romance to a friend, W. Earl Hodgson, who was also a publishers' reader. He took it home with him, and the very next morning sent me, by special messenger, a letter which made me feel that I was actually on the slopes of Olympus. He was enthusiastic about "The Enchanted Stone"; he was proud to have "discovered" me, and he begged me to call, that very afternoon, upon Messrs. A. and C. Black, the famous publishers. "I read for them," he added, "and they are grateful to me for introducing you to them."

Messrs. A. and C. Black could not have treated the author of "Waverley" more pleasantly. They offered me quite a handsome sum on account of royalties, and sent the manuscript to be printed at once. For four or five years the notion that I was a catch lingered with that admirable firm. Whenever I called with the MSS. of a new book under my arm the senior Partner smiled a welcome, and the junior Partner sent immediately for the binder so that I might choose the cover decorations.

My First Book was beautifully reviewed. Two morning paper gave it "Published today" column notices; three weekly papers were more than kind; and the provincial press were most gratifying. One journal said that Stevenson would have to look to his laurels, another remarked that I should "go far."

But the hard world did not show the least desire to read "The Enchanted Stone." It fell quite flat. Nobody wanted it. Occasionally some nice man or



woman would tell me at evening parties how much they had enjoyed reading it, but when I addressed questions to them I found that they had not perused it carefully. For two years Messrs. A. and C. Black sent me regularly a carefully audited statement of copies "sold," and copies "on hand." In time they tired of doing that. The figures in the "copies on hand" and "copies sold" columns never changed.

Then came the Remainder Man. I shall never write another Romance.

But it is pleasant to think that, perhaps, at this very moment, in some remote district of the world, the horny hand of toil is picking it out of the Penny Box, and saying, "Ullo! This looks a bit of all right."

## 60. MY LATEST BOOK: THIS ONE

**T**HERE are authors who write books because, so they say, they must write or perish. I am not of that kind. Before I was fifty years of age writing was a task. There were so many more enjoyable ways of living than sitting at a desk. Talking, as a means of self-expression, was easier and pleasanter. Before fifty the only kind of writing I enjoyed doing was the little "Things Seen" which I turned out with ease, and which, I suspect, was the complete expression of what talent I possessed. Some other authors are like this, but all do not confess to it. Most writers, like myself, are born into the world equipped with a nice little pot of fresh butter. We use it up lavishly in the hot years of youth; but there is always a little left, and we spend the remainder of our lives spreading the butter thinner and thinner.

After I had passed the adorable age of fifty I made the discovery that I was beginning to enjoy writing. It became less of a task. I had discovered the proper pen, the proper kind of paper, and the proper way of sitting at a table, sideways, with the right arm resting on a big, blue blotting pad (blue is the proper colour), and the light falling over the left shoulder, so that one can look out of the window at the birds, and the sky, between the

paragraphs. Also after fifty, I began to be more interested in shaping an article, and in saying things, not because they were the things I ought to say, but because they were the things I wanted to say at the moment. They might be foolish, they might be wise, but they were mine. In a word I lost the menace of fear. I began to enjoy being obliged to finish a literary job by a certain date; and I discovered that whereas before fifty my articles or essays were always short, just long enough to convince an editor that I was treating him squarely, after fifty I fell into the way of writing more than was needed. Perhaps my thoughts came quicker; perhaps I was less tempted to be out and about in the adventurous world, more inclined to sit at a desk: perhaps I began to realise that spiritual adventures are quite as enjoyable as material ones.

Neither before fifty nor since have I wanted to startle or astound the world with a momentous book. That is not in my line. But since fifty I have entirely enjoyed doing my bit in a modest corner of the writing world, and have been vastly amused, as I have already said, to find that I was acquiring the habit of exceeding my space. This vice, or this virtue, whichever you like to call it, was the cause of the present book—"Authors and I."

It happened in this way.

In the early spring of 1917 Mr. John Lane asked me to write a brief introduction to a new illustrated edition of "Christ in Hades" by Stephen Phillips, the reason of the offer being that in 1898,

when I was Editor of the *Academy*, we had "crowned" his "Poems" containing "Christ in Hades" and awarded Stephen Phillips one hundred guineas. So I was supposed to know something about him.

That was a pleasant literary enterprise, and I set about it eagerly. Soon I found that my post-fifty habit of writing more than I need had become chronic and vehement, and that the brief Introduction was shaping into the skeleton of a literary history of the nineties so far as that history concerned myself. I am no British Museum student: nothing has happened unless it has happened to me.

When I found that my brief Introduction was getting out of hand I explained the situation to Mr. John Lane. He replied: "Go ahead!" I went ahead, with the result that, when the book was published, amused flaneurs remarked that the Introduction was sixty pages and the Poem twenty-five.

Any School of Journalism would tell a pupil that to write sixty pages when ten only are required is bad business. So it is. But sometimes generosity has a way of winning hands down over business principles. Here follows an example.

When I came to America in 1917, Mr. Frederick Dixon, Editor of the *Christian Science Monitor* spoke to me appreciatively of that Introduction. Indeed, he said that he had enjoyed it immensely, and that, like Oliver, he wanted more. Being an Editor he could command more. We

talked, and there and then it was arranged that I should contribute to the *Christian Science Monitor* a weekly article under the heading "A Bookman's Memories." The series began with general recollections of the writers who flourished in the nineties (many are still flourishing), but soon the articles fell to considering particular authors: hence the title now chosen "Authors and I," which happens to be the best descriptive title I can invent, as "Art and I" was the obvious title of another book which has evolved from the columns of the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the sympathy of its Editor. The I, if it looks like an attitude, is also apt. The two books are, for better or worse, just my reactions to certain authors, and to certain phases of art.

I do not suppose that "Authors and I" could have been written week by week, without missing one Tuesday from March 12, 1919, to the present moment, had it not been for the admirable Public Library system of America. Three thousand miles away from my own books, I found, first at Westport, Connecticut, and then at the 58th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, that when I needed books I had only to explain my wants to the young lady in charge to have all the works of the author, chosen for the week, placed at my disposal. Sometimes in 58th Street it must have looked as if I was about to open a second hand book shop. How delightful it was, by my own radiator, to linger evening after evening over an author, and to be at him again long before the morning paper

arrived. This was my harvest. I gathered it in joyfully, without labour, for the seeds had been sown in the seven arduous years during which it was my privilege to be Editor of the *Academy*. So this book came into being: so the various writers with whom I lived, in spirit, week by week, composed themselves into this, my latest book—"Authors and I."

Those chosen are my own choice, and the musings are merely mine. It was Dryden who said "An author has the choice of his own thoughts."

NEW YORK, AUTUMN, 1920.

THE END











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