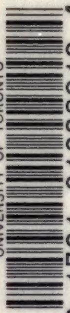

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 01328919 4

Geo Selwyn

GEORGE SELWYN AND HIS DOG "RÂTON"

FROM A PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

GEORGE SELWYN
AND THE WITS

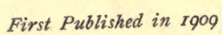
BY

S. PARNELL KERR

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

278925
13 . 10 . 32

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON



First Published in 1909

DA
512
S4K4

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO

E. E. O.

WHOM TO LOVE IS, IN VERY TRUTH,

A LIBERAL EDUCATION

PREFACE

THE preface to a study of George Selwyn could hardly do better than give briefly that strange Tale of Two Boxes which is the history of Selwyn's private papers.

When Selwyn died in 1791 he was the holder of the sinecure post of Surveyor-General of Crown Lands, Woods and Forests, to which he had been appointed in 1784. Though he had practically no duties to perform, he had an apartment reserved for him at the Office of Woods in Whitehall, and it was here that he stored his letters, private papers, account-books, and written memoranda of every kind. Selwyn was very anxious that his own letters to his friends should be destroyed as soon as read; but, fortunately for us, he was careful to keep the letters which he himself received, however unimportant or trivial they happened to be. At his death there were, then, at the Office of Woods, two large boxes of these private papers, which appear entirely to have been overlooked by Selwyn's executors, the fifth Earl of Carlisle and another. At all events, for half-a-century or so the boxes lay undisturbed and forgotten in a garret in Whitehall. They were then—that is to say, about 1840—discovered by a clerk in the Office of Woods, who communicated his discovery to that well-known and industrious chronicler of aristocratic small beer, Mr John Heneage Jesse. Mr Jesse recognised the value of the discovery, and, apparently without the sanction or knowledge of the representative of Selwyn's executors, began, in 1843-1844, to publish a selection from the papers under the general title of "George Selwyn and His Contemporaries, with Memoirs and Notes." He had published four volumes when the then Earl

of Carlisle intervened, and the publication was brought to an abrupt conclusion. But we can never be too thankful to Mr Jesse for his clandestine enterprise. The volumes are deeply interesting, and are indeed one of the most fascinating records of eighteenth-century life and manners which we possess. They are our principal authority upon the friendships of Selwyn, though, as they consist almost entirely of letters written to him, they throw little light upon the personality of George Selwyn himself. They have, of course, been largely used by me in the preparation of this book.

But the history of the boxes does not end at this point. After Mr Jesse's raid upon them they again disappeared, or were at least left undisturbed, and for another half century, in the Office of Woods and Forests. Various inquiries were made about them from time to time in the columns of *Notes and Queries*, and certain stray papers appear even to have been abstracted from them, and to have found their way into various hands. But it was not until 1900 that the authorities, upon the advice of the Solicitor to the Department, handed the boxes over to Mr R. du Cane, the surviving executor of William Frederick, seventh Earl of Carlisle, and Mr du Cane in turn handed them to the present Earl, in whose possession they now are. Unfortunately, Lord Carlisle, upon examining them, found a written request by George Selwyn to his executors, asking that the papers should immediately be destroyed upon his death. This request was not complied with, for the very good reason that the executors did not discover the papers. Further, it was disregarded by Mr Jesse, who not only read the letters, but published four volumes of them to the world. But naturally Lord Carlisle feels bound by what was evidently a strong desire on Selwyn's part, and it is not therefore probable that we shall have any more letters from this source. It is true that the reasons which obviously actuated Selwyn in this matter have not the same validity to-day. Letters which it would have been

disastrous to make public in 1791 could be made public now without annoyance to any living person, and with pleasure and profit to many. It is also true that Mr Jesse's action rendered Selwyn's wish practically of no effect. Nevertheless, the view which Lord Carlisle takes is a perfectly natural and proper one; and it is especially deserving of respect when one remembers that it is the view of the descendant and representative of George Selwyn's most intimate friend. In any case, I should like to say quite explicitly that no new material from the famous boxes has been available for the present work.

The next authority upon which the biographer of George Selwyn depends is the series of letters addressed by Selwyn to the fifth Earl of Carlisle and his Countess, and discovered some years since at Castle Howard. These letters, over two hundred in number, were published in 1897 in the Appendix to the Fifteenth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, under the careful editorship of Mr R. E. G. Kirk, and were republished in 1899 in a volume entitled "George Selwyn: His Letters and His Life," edited by Mr E. S. Roscoe and Miss Helen Clergue. Selwyn was a copious, indefatigable, but entirely undistinguished letter-writer. He prided himself upon his simplicity and ease. Easy and simple he certainly was; but easy writing makes hard reading; and it would have been more pleasant for us if Selwyn had taken some little care with his epistolary style. He wrote in a language which was neither indifferent English nor indifferent French, but a mixture of both, with (after his stay in Milan) a few scraps of very bad Italian thrown in. As literature, therefore, the Carlisle correspondence is of no importance; but it is extremely interesting and valuable, not only as a running commentary upon the manners and morals of George Selwyn's period, but also as a source of information about the man himself. In Mr Jesse's volumes the personality of Selwyn eludes us. We read the letters addressed to him, but there are no replies. The

recipient does not appear on the scene at all, but stands like a shadow behind. In the Carlisle correspondence, however, Selwyn comes forward and, almost for the first time, speaks to us with his own voice. It is, one may remark, a different voice from that to which we had been accustomed in the letters of Horace Walpole.

When we have mentioned the volumes of Mr Jesse and the Carlisle correspondence, together with such well-known storehouses of Selwynian wit as Walpole's letters, we have practically exhausted the published sources of information about George Selwyn. To these I am now—by the kindness of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend, of Frognal—enabled to add a number of letters addressed by Selwyn to his niece Mary Townshend, and her brother Charles Townshend, mostly in the years 1778-1779, when Selwyn was abroad, in Italy and Paris. These letters are in some ways even more interesting and characteristic than the correspondence with Carlisle. They are written in a purer English style, and they give us a glimpse of the very pleasant relations which existed at that period between Selwyn and the members of his own family. Further, they fill a gap in the Carlisle correspondence, caused by the absence of Selwyn in Italy and of Carlisle in America. But again, the letters of George Selwyn are not, like the letters of Horace Walpole or William Cowper, sacrosanct, and I have not hesitated to cut them when it seemed to me desirable to do so.

My thanks are very specially due to the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend for permission to print the Townshend letters and to reproduce the Selwyn family portraits in his possession, and for other kindnesses received from him in the preparation of this book. I have also to thank the Rev. Canon Bazeley, D.D., Rector of Matson; the Earl of Carlisle; Colonel Curtis-Hayward, Quedgeley House; Major Selwyn-Payne, Badgeworth End; the Earl of Rosebery, Earl Carrington, Mr H. E. Du C. Morris, Major Wegg-Prosser, Mr T. E. Harvey, Irish Record Office, and the authors of the "History of

Chislehurst," for various services rendered. I should like also to mention the courtesy of the late Rev. T. Vere Bayne, Keeper of the Archives at Oxford, in permitting me to extract from the records of Convocation the account of Selwyn's escapade at that University.

S. PARNELL KERR

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	George Selwyn's England	1
II.	Birth and Parentage	11
III.	Eton and Oxford	23
IV.	Selwyn on the Town	48
V.	The First Selwyn Circle	70
VI.	Strawberry Hill	93
VII.	"Mr Selwyn the Wit"	108
VIII.	The Morbid Selwyn	122
IX.	Selwyn as M.P.	145
X.	Selwyn in Paris	179
XI.	"Mie Mie"	203
XII.	A Journey to Milan	217
XIII.	The Second Selwyn Circle	269
XIV.	Clubs and Gaming	291
XV.	Later Years	305
XVI.	George Selwyn and his Times	326
	Index	337

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

GEORGE SELWYN AND HIS DOG "RÂTON" . . *Frontispiece*

From a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the possession of the Earl of Rosebery.

FACING PAGE

THEODOSIA, WIFE OF GENERAL THOMAS FARRINGTON . . 12

From a painting in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

COLONEL JOHN SELWYN 14

From a painting in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

MRS JOHN SELWYN 16

From an engraving.

ALBINIA, SISTER OF GEORGE SELWYN AND WIFE OF THE HON. THOMAS TOWNSHEND 18

From a painting in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

MATSON HOUSE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY . . 20

From a painting in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

MATSON HOUSE TO-DAY 24

From a photograph.

GEORGE SELWYN AS A YOUNG MAN 34

From a painting in the possession of Colonel T. Curtis-Hayward, Quedgeley House.

GEORGE SELWYN 48

From a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

FACING PAGE

GEORGE SELWYN, GILLY WILLIAMS, AND DICK EDGECUMBE . 86

From an engraving of the "Conversation Piece" by Sir Joshua Reynolds formerly at Strawberry Hill.

GEORGE SELWYN 108

From the pastel by H. D. Hamilton in the possession of the Earl of Carlisle. By permission of Lord Carlisle and Mr Fisher Unwin.

GEORGE SELWYN 122

From the picture by J. Jackson, R.A., at Castle Howard. Original by Sir Joshua Reynolds. By permission of Major J. H. Selwyn-Payne.

DUCHESSE DE CHOISEUL AND MADAME DU DEFFAND . . 186

From an engraving.

"MIE MIE" 208

From the portrait by Romney.

MISS MARY TOWNSHEND 216

From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend.

GEORGE SELWYN AND FREDERICK, EARL OF CARLISLE . 270

From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds at Castle Howard. By permission of the Earl of Carlisle.

GEORGE SELWYN AND THE WITS

CHAPTER I

GEORGE SELWYN'S ENGLAND

IT is a common enough practice of biographers to allege that the birth of their subject was a quite extraordinary event, and marked either the beginning or the end of an era, or was otherwise of unique importance to mankind. No such allegation can be made in the case of George Selwyn. He made his entrance into the world at a comparatively inconspicuous date, which that event in itself has not lifted into prominence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that the year of his birth, 1719, was the year of Addison's death. Pope was then thirty-one, Richardson thirty, Swift fifty-two, and Congreve forty-nine; while Samuel Johnson was ten, Fielding twelve, Sterne six, and Thomas Gray three. All this information, however, would have seemed profoundly unnecessary to Selwyn, who cared nothing for literary men, and knew more about St James's than about Grub Street. His friends were not poets and men of letters; they were wits, men of fashion, court people, politicians, statesmen. We should therefore rather note (if we must put Selwyn in his chronological place) that in 1719 George I. had been on the throne for five years; his son, just over from Hanover, was enjoying life in his own peculiar way at his house in Leicester Fields; Sir Robert Walpole was First Minister of the Crown; Bolingbroke, aged forty-one, was an exile in France; Chesterfield, twenty-five, a rising hope of the extremely pliant Tories of the day; while Pitt and Henry Fox were schoolboys of eleven and fourteen respectively. The times in England were quiet. People had begun to live and breathe again after the great Whig revolution and the little

Tory rebellion; and the Georgian era, for good or for ill (or for not much of either), was well under way.

Let us admit at once that the birth of George Selwyn was the birth of a man who was not important enough to make any great impress upon his age. But don't let us dismiss him in a hurry because of this; he may be worth writing about and worth reading about nevertheless. We need not dwell on his achievements (such as they were) here; but even in an introductory chapter we may say two things about him. In the first place, born as he was in 1719, and dying in 1791, George Selwyn performed the feat of living practically through the eighteenth century. It was not a very difficult feat, to be sure; but the point is that he did it. Now the eighteenth century was not a static century. It moved; there were currents of life and of thought in it; idea gave way to idea and fashion to fashion just as they did in the nineteenth century, and just as they are doing in the twentieth. And in reading through the life of George Selwyn one catches in a most extraordinary way this elusive flavour of change. You begin with an almost legendary England: the England of George I. and George II.: the England of bag-wigs and Jacobites and German women at the Court; you pass on to a period when German women and Jacobites lose their importance: when England's navies sweep the seas, and England's armies win romantic empires all over the world, and lose them too; and you end amid the thunders of the French Revolution, proclaiming the coming of our modern time. And not only was Selwyn contemporary with these movements and events: he was, in a sense, a part of them, though not a great part. He lived behind the scenes, and talked familiarly with the principal actors. He knew them all: kings and princes and German women; statesmen, generals, admirals; belles and beaux, gossips and wits. Only a very stupid man (a Hanoverian duke, for example) could live through this time and enjoy these opportunities and remain uninteresting to posterity; and Selwyn was not that. But further, Selwyn harmonises well with the popular conception of the eighteenth century. One only refrains from calling him a characteristic figure because no man can properly be called characteristic of a century: that is too great a space of our mortal life to be reflected in any single person, however eminent.

But Selwyn at least fits the popular conception of his period. What is that conception? Surely it is that of a picturesque and leisured time; a time of fine ladies and gentlemen; of hoops, powder, and patches; of knee-breeches, ruffles, and swords; of stately minuets and slow, elegant, quadrilles; of masks, dominos, link-boys, sedan-chairs; of coffee-houses, cocoa-houses, Vauxhalls, Ranelaghs, Marylebones. This is not quite a true conception of England in the eighteenth century; it involves the static fallacy. But it is a true enough conception of a certain stratum of English life as it existed during a great portion of that century: the stratum to which George Selwyn belonged. For eighteenth-century England was not homogeneous, just as twentieth-century England is not homogeneous. There was not one England then; there were three Englands. And it is the first England with which we are chiefly concerned in this book.

That we may rightly call George Selwyn's England. In it he lived and moved for the seventy odd years of his life, nor ever thought much about or cared much for the two Englands outside his own. Selwyn's England was, of course, the England of the King, the Court, and the governing classes. It was in reality a very thin veneer upon the fabric of the life of the country. A modern writer has spoken of the British empire in India as "an empire in the air." He conceives the British government there as a delicate gossamer spread out over the bubbling cauldron of native life, insubstantial, incredibly fragile. Something like this was Selwyn's England in the eighteenth century. It was an "empire in the air," the rule of a few families, who shuffled the cards of place and power among themselves now and then, and who were very indignant if any person of plebeian birth proposed to take a hand in the game. In this empire the King was the chief figure. Next in importance was (sometimes) the Queen, and (sometimes) the King's favourite mistress. Then came the court people, lords and ladies in waiting, and their hangers-on: in this circle the Selwyns moved. Then the ministers of state, who governed the country by governing the King, and who governed the King by making themselves agreeable to his mistress or his wife. Add the ordinary English patricians who dozed in the House of Lords, and had the House of Commons in their

pockets, and who sent their younger sons to fight for England by land and sea; a sprinkling of wits, beaux, men of fashion, who might or might not be of good family; and you have Selwyn's England complete. It hardly included the country squires: those barbarians belonged to the second England—Fielding's. And it certainly did not include merchants and tradesmen and shopkeepers, who must distribute themselves as best they can between the second England and the third—Wesley's England.

Selwyn's England found its diarist in Horace Walpole; and he who would know thoroughly that England, its content, its human boundaries, its inhabitants and their customs, manners and morals, must steep himself in Horace Walpole's letters. Those letters are almost as the sands of the sea. There are now over four thousand of them published, and he would be a bold man who would affirm that the end is yet; so that to read them requires a certain amount of courage and physical strength. But until you have read them (most of us have pretended to do so) you can hardly be said to know Selwyn's England. Indeed, Walpole is very nearly a nuisance to the student of the eighteenth century. He must for ever be quoting him, or referring to his pages for the anecdote of Lord A. or the Duke of B., or for the rights of that amusing story about Lady C. and the footman. He cannot help it. Nowhere else is this personal gossip chronicled with such method and fulness; obscure indeed is the patrician who evades Walpole's pen. And if any grave person think personal gossip trivial, and beneath the dignity of the historian or the serious student of life, he must turn away his eyes from Walpole: the letters are not for him. He must read the sound and sober pages of Adam Smith, Mr Gibbon, or Mr Hume. But for us who delight in this unworthy chronicling of the trivial, Walpole is the man. Nor should we grumble that he is so pervasive. Surely never was the history of sixty years written in so cheerful, so amusing, so gossipy a manner as in the Letters of Horace Walpole. "Fiddles sing all through them," says Thackeray; "wax lights, fine dresses, fine jokes, fine plate, fine equipages, glitter and sparkle there; never was such a brilliant, jiggling, smirking Vanity Fair as that through which he leads us." Yes, and Thackeray has given us here the synonym for Selwyn's England. It was the Vanity Fair of

the eighteenth century. George Selwyn was a well-known figure in the Fair for many a year; kept his footing there with the best of them; ate, drank, and made merry with his friends in all its most noted booths; and was quite the "weary King Ecclesiast" before he had done with it. He wandered about the Fair from morning till night, a recognised wearer of the motley; by profession (other people's profession) a wit, exchanging jests for dinners; going home to his booth at night—as it is understood most jesters do—in an extremely mournful and melancholy frame of mind. Horace Walpole had a pretty little booth in the Fair named Strawberry. He sat in it of an afternoon writing letters, in which he would put all the latest news of the Fair. Sometimes he overheard a jest of Selwyn's—it floated through the window—and down it would go in the letter. But for this we might easily have overlooked the fact that Vanity Fair had a jester whose name was George Selwyn.

At the other end of the scale from Selwyn's England was an England of a very different kind. It was a great, barbaric, uncivilised England; a drinking, swearing, cock-fighting, lecherous, England; full of lusty and turbulent life, of a horrible coarseness and brutality. I have called this Fielding's England; but you will find it also in the pictures of Hogarth and in the novels of Smollett. Fielding, however, was its true historian; he alone painted it with that large and firm touch which ensures immortality. And Fielding had the right temperament for the work. He treats of a life of almost incredible coarseness, and there are therefore coarse pages in his novels; but there are no foul pages in them; his books are clean and moral in the best sense. Fielding was a great man—that is to say, his nature was large and generous. He accepted the brutality of contemporary life because it was there; but he did not brood over it. His humour was Shakespearian; he laughed out loudly at a joke—at any incongruity—and had done with it. He did not linger over it, and smack his lips, and leer, like Sterne. If then you would know Darkest England in the eighteenth century, you must read his novels. You must accompany Tom Jones on his journey from Somerset to London, by way of Gloucester, Upton, Worcester, Coventry and Barnet. You must stop at the inns with him (or, if you are a lady, with Sophia), and listen to the talk of landlords and ostlers, tramps, gipsies, highwaymen, squires,

apothecaries and schoolmasters. Or it would do equally well to accompany Mr Joseph Andrews and Mr Abraham Adams in their wanderings between London and Booby Hall, when you will learn something of the curious customs of rural England in those days, of how magistrates administered justice for example, and country parsons religion. One has said that Selwyn's England was a very different kind from Fielding's. But was it so different? Savages inhabited both countries, only that in one the savages had a thin veneer of civilisation, and in the other they had not even that. There were civilised men in both countries too; but they were in a minority. I think that Charles Townshend (of Selwyn's England) was a civilised man, and I am sure Parson Adams (of Fielding's England) was a civilised man also. But in both the imperfectly civilised enjoyed themselves after their fashion. In Selwyn's England they ate and drank and played cards and intrigued; in Fielding's England they also ate and drank; their amusements were dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and bull-baiting; and they had a free way with women. The boundaries between these two Englands were not rigidly fixed. Thus when Selwyn went down to Gloucester, and entertained the mayor and burgesses to dinner, or sat as justice on the local bench, he had a peep at Fielding's England. And there were less reputable journeys from one to the other. Lord Coke and Richard Rigby, for example, would dine together at White's Club in St James's Street, two well-known inhabitants of Selwyn's country. They would then hurry off to a cock-match in some low part of the town, returning perhaps with pockets full of ready money, or with empty pockets, as the case might be. Hogarth saw them (or their like) at the cock-match, and painted them: a terrible picture, that of Hogarth's. But on these men the veneer was very thin.

The third England was between Selwyn's and Fielding's, neither aristocratic nor vulgar: a middle-class England we should call it, only that "middle-class" is a nineteenth-century term, which came in with the coming of industrialism. But you must conceive it peopled by merchants, shopkeepers, clerks, superior artisans, farmers. And we name it by the name of the great man who knew it best, because he explored it thoroughly, and who spoke to it in a language it could under-

stand: John Wesley. Wesley's England was an inarticulate England: it never got itself expressed in literature, except in John Wesley's own journal, which indeed is literature, if anything be. But it was a very real England for all that. The curious thing is that it is so persistently overlooked by those who write upon the eighteenth century: you would imagine that it had no existence. Yet George Selwyn was born only sixty years after the close of a Puritan revolution which was strong enough to cut off a king's head and to pull down the Throne itself. What happened to these Puritans and their children? They were silenced at the Restoration; but they were not destroyed. They still peopled the quiet hills and dales and country towns of England, and kept their terrible silence till John Wesley mounted his horse, and rode out among them, and gave them a new speech. And Wesley spoke not alone to the Puritan; he made converts from Fielding's England; and even had his trophies in Selwyn's England in an occasional Countess of Huntingdon. If you want a delicately painted picture of family life in, or on the borders of, Wesley's England you will find it in the pages of "The Virginians," where Thackeray gives us, in the Lamberts, a specimen of the best kind of eighteenth-century Puritan family (and gives us also in the Lambert girls two of the most charming heroines in English fiction. But this by the way). Stout old Martin Lambert, who wore "a plain fustian coat, and a waistcoat without a particle of lace," was born of a good Puritan stock. Did he not keep "breastplates and black morions" of Oliver's troopers in his hall? "'They fought against your grandfathers and King Charles, Mr Warrington,' said Harry's host. 'We don't hide that. They rode to join the Prince of Orange at Exeter. We were Whigs, young gentleman, and something more. . . . We were all more or less partial to short hair and long sermons. . . .'" But times were changing. The Lamberts were "very good churchmen now . . . our women are all for the Church, and carry me with 'em. Every woman is a Tory at heart." Indeed, there was not much in Puritanism, eighteenth-century or other, to attract a woman. But it is in Wesley's journal that you will find the only complete account of the England which was his. "If you don't know it," said Edward Fitzgerald, "do know it. It is curious to think of this diary running coevally with

Walpole's letters—diary—the two men born and dying, too, within a few miles of one another, and with such different lives to record. And it is remarkable to read pure, unaffected, undying English, while Addison and Johnson were tainted with a style which all the world imitated." That is not the last word on the matter of style ; there is more to be said ; but nobody can deny the excellence and strength of Wesley's. Let us not, however, read the journals only for the style : let us read them to make the acquaintance of an England which you will never find in Walpole's letters. You may not like this England ; but it is an extraordinarily interesting country ; and the figure of Wesley bestrides it like a Colossus.

Fitzgerald has mentioned Walpole : that elegant diarist once heard Wesley speak at Bath. Did Wesley and George Selwyn ever meet? We do not know. But Wesley often took the road to the west, by Oxford, Worcester and Gloucester ; that was Selwyn's frequent road also ; and it is just possible these two men passed each other upon the way. Their meeting would have been a subject for Stevenson's pen ; or Mr Quiller-Couch could describe it for us, with an almost equal skill. Selwyn rolls up in his pair-horse coach to the inn at Upton-on-Severn, tired with his long journey from Oxford. Just as he reaches the door a solitary horseman passes him, riding slowly towards Worcester : an oldish man, with a fresh-coloured face and grey hair down to his shoulders. The two men regard each other firmly as they pass ; but neither speaks. As Selwyn descends from his chariot he inquires casually from his valet who the riding parson was : and somebody in the crowd says "Mr Wesley." "Indeed ! And is that Mr Wesley ?" says Selwyn, slowly. "He is better mounted than ever his Master was." The Wit hurries in to supper, for he means to sleep at his house at Gloucester that night ; the Preacher rides on alone under the cold stars.

The more one reads of the eighteenth century, the more convinced one is that it is uncommonly like the nineteenth century, and so much as we have seen of the twentieth century also. Men and manners change, and still remain the same. We need not trouble ourselves with the speculation as to whether we are or are not more civilised than our ancestors of that time

were. Superficially we are certainly better than they: we wash ourselves a little more; we use French phrases to describe certain people and things that had honest Saxon names then; we don't go to see criminals hanged (but we ask the sheriff to do so). The only safe generalisation we can make on this point of comparison is that there is probably a greater *diffusion* of happiness in England now than there was in Georgian times. More people in proportion to the population are happy now than were then, so far as material things make for happiness: that is to say, more people have plenty to eat and drink, fine clothes to wear, and good houses to live in, than when George II. or his grandson was king. Perhaps also we are a little more merciful than our ancestors were in those days, when they hanged women and children for theft. But, apart from these variations, our modern life is in its essentials not very different from the life George Selwyn knew. If Selwyn could revisit London to-day he would not feel entirely a stranger. Chesterfield Street, Cleveland Square, St James's Street, White's and Brooks's, would give him a friendly welcome; and the people who inhabit those leisured places would speak his own language. Indeed, nothing strikes one more in reading the letters of Selwyn's period than the fact that their writers talked, and thought, and wrote, very much as we do. "My dear Mother," says Lord Edward Fitzgerald, writing from Quebec in 1789, "I fear we are all beasts, and love ourselves best. Don't trouble yourself about me ever, for heat and cold equally agree with me. I beg your pardon for saying so much about myself. Well, God bless you all, men, women, and children."[1] So might a son write to his mother now, if he had a nature as large and a soul as generous as Lord Edward's. And here is a young lady of the same period writing to her friend, who happened to be Mary Townshend, George Selwyn's niece.[2] We don't know this young lady's name, as, following the pernicious fashion of the time, she omits to sign her letter.

"I am ashamed to sit down and write to you" (she says) "in answer to the very agreeable letter I found here at my return, only to tell you that I have not time to answer it; but really the last two or three days one is in town, one is so eternally

[1] Letters of Lady Sarah Bunbury.

[2] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

plagued with hideous tradesmen and the urgent mental employment of packing up, that one has not a moment's time to recollect one's thoughts or make them fit to appear before a rational being. You must therefore excuse my telling you in the most prosing manner, that we propose setting out to-morrow morning, and hope to arrive at my uncle Powlett's in the evening. . . . I hope you won't forget your promise, but will let me have the two essays you mention. They will be of singular use in Hampshire, for I should be very glad to persuade myself whilst I am there, that I am as happy as I could be at Frognal, that all places are equally agreeable, all people equally indifferent to me. However I must study your essays a good deal before I can arrive at this state of happiness. . . . It is quite a serious thing that I was so happy as to see the dear captain in the Park the other night, and had a gracious bow from him. My dear, I could talk to you this hour, but must leave you to pay a stupid bill, it is a strange thing people will plague one with such things. Nanny desires her kind love to you; make both our compliments to all friends and folks. I hope you won't be obliged to shew this letter, it is not nonsensical at all to be sure, nor am I, yours, ma chère Marie, no, not at all to be sure."

This fresh young voice from Selwyn's England comes across the centuries to us with a curiously familiar accent. Tradesmen even in those days insisted upon being paid sometimes; fascinating captains walked in the Park, and bowed graciously to smiling maidens in carriages; people confessed to being happier in some places than in others. Let us not think of the eighteenth century as a time immensely remote, or of George Selwyn's England as a country utterly vanished and forgotten. It is not so. You may walk into that country to-morrow if you like, and cross its borders five minutes after leaving Piccadilly Circus. But you will not meet a George Selwyn there, or a Charles James Fox. If you would, I should be charmed to be of your company.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN—generally called George Selwyn—was born on the 11th of August 1719, the second son of Colonel John Selwyn by his wife Mary, daughter of General Thomas Farrington. George was baptised at Chislehurst on the 25th of the same month: so the register tells us. We now know also that he was born in the same parish; for, writing to his niece, Mary Townshend, about four years before he died, Selwyn said: "I am glad to hear you talk of Chiselhurst. I may perhaps once more sleep in the room where I was born. I have a sort of penchant to Chiselhurst, as ordinary minds have *aux clochers de leur Paroisse*."[1] "The room where I was born" was in a fine old Jacobean house, long since demolished, called "Farrington's" by the learned authors of the "History of Chislehurst." It was the home of his mother's relatives. His father, Colonel Selwyn, had a country-seat at Matson in the county of Gloucester, and a town house in Cleveland Court, St James's.

Matson, indeed, and not Chislehurst, was George Selwyn's real "paroisse." The Selwyns were a Gloucestershire family, usually said to have been descended from an old Sussex stock of the same name. But more recent researches seem to show that there was no connection between the Gloucestershire Selwins—this was the early spelling—and those of Sussex. Certainly there were Selwins in the western counties in very early times (one was probably Abbot of Malmesbury), even in the times when surnames were not, or were only names of description. However that may be, the first Selwin who emerges into prominence is Jasper, a member of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The records of the Inn show that Jasper Selwin was admitted on 19th November 1583. He is described as "of County Gloucester; was of Clement's Inn two years and more." Jasper was called to the

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

Bar in 1591, was elected a Bencher of the Inn in 1609, and was Treasurer in 1619-1620. In 1624 Mr ex-Treasurer Selwin got into trouble with the Masters of the Bench. He had let his chambers in the Inn to one Mr Thomas Hughes for £40, "during the naturall life of the said Mr Sellwyn (*sic*) . . . wch sale is very much disliked by the Masters of the Bench . . . and therefore it is ordered that the said chamber shall be forthwith seised or forfeited, and to be sold, and that the said Mr Sellwyn be here at the third Counsell next term to answer his contempt." Accordingly at the "third Counsell" in Michaelmas term "Mr Sellwyn" attended, and we find the following entry in the Black Books under date 26th October 1624:—"Whereas Mr Sellwyn was present at this Counsell and offered freely of his own accord threescore pounds to be pay'd the next day following, the Masters of the Bench accepted thereof, and thereupon ordered that he should reteyne his chamber during his lyfe, and that Mr Thomas Hughes and Mr Richard Boorne, two of the gentlemen of this House, at the intreaty of the said Mr Sellwyn, shall and may use and enjoy the said chamber during the lyfe of the said Mr Sellwyn, notwithstanding the former Order." You may see the name and arms of Jasper Selwin in the west window of Lincoln's Inn chapel. The Selwyns narrowly escaped being what is called a "legal" family, if indeed they did escape that fate. Jasper's son, William, entered Lincoln's Inn in 1610. He is described as "son of Jasper Selwin of Matesdon als Matson, County Gloucester, arm., bencher," for by this time, as we shall see, Jasper had become owner of the Matson estate. In 1667 Edward Selwyn—the name now assumes permanently its modern spelling—"son and heir apparent of William Selwyn of Matsen" (*sic*) was admitted of the Inn. After this the Selwyns of Matson forsook the profession of the law, and became country gentlemen, soldiers, administrators. But not entirely: a branch of the family carried on the legal tradition. Thus William Selwyn, K.C., a cousin of George Selwyn, was a Master of the Bench of Lincoln's Inn towards the close of the eighteenth century. He died in 1817, and was buried at Chislehurst. He had two sons, George and William, both of whom were Lincoln's Inn men, though George was afterwards ordained. Most people who know anything of the legal world have heard of "Nisi Prius" Selwyn, who was the

THEODOSIA, WIFE OF GENERAL THOMAS FARRINGTON

second son of the old K.C. He had three distinguished sons: William Selwyn, Canon of Ely; George Augustus Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand, and afterwards of Lichfield, and Charles Jasper Selwyn, a Lord Justice of Appeal.

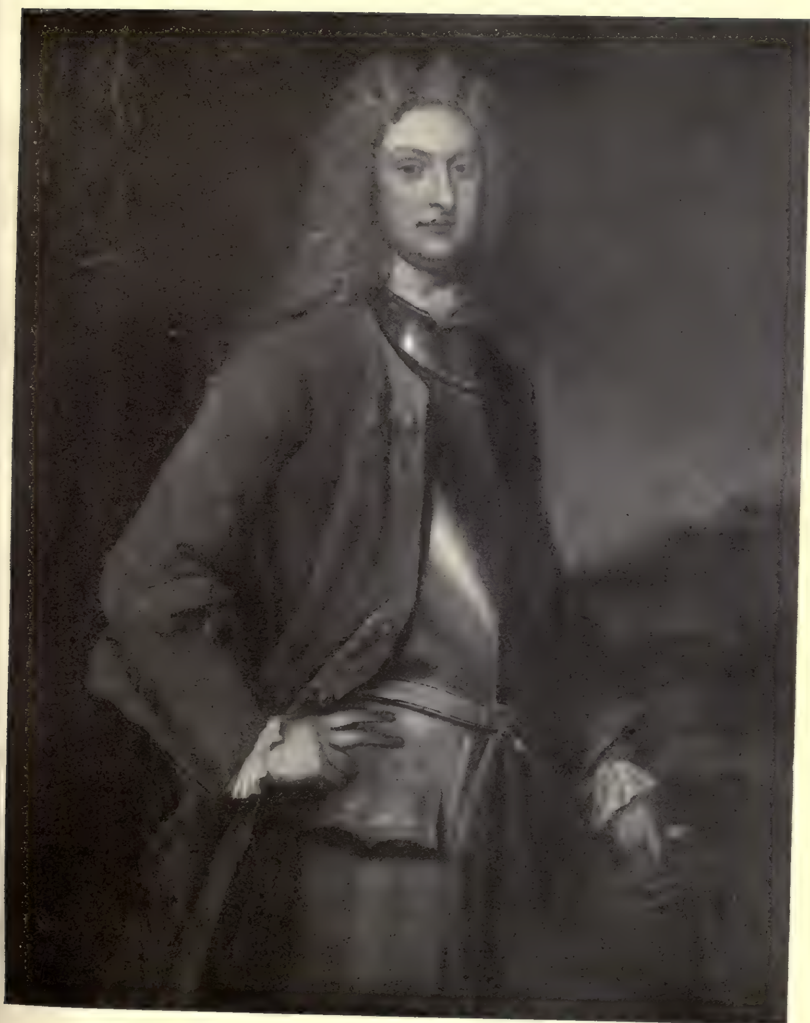
To return to Jasper Selwin's direct line: the next person of importance with whom we are concerned is Brigadier-General William Selwyn, the father of John, and grandfather of George Augustus Selwyn. William Selwyn was a soldier of some distinction. When a captain he had been on duty at Lincoln's Inn Fields at the execution of Lord Russell, and he was one of the Princess Anne's escort when she fled from her father's palace.[1] In 1688 he was Governor of Gravesend and Tilbury; in 1695 he served with the army in Flanders; and six years later he was appointed Governor of Jamaica. Meanwhile he had married, and thereby hangs a tale of some romantic interest. William Selwyn had a brother colonel in the Coldstream Guards whose name was Thomas Farrington. Farrington lived at Chislehurst, and it is to be supposed that Selwyn visited him there, perhaps more than once. Near the Farringtons lived Sir Richard Bettenson, the lord of the manor of Chislehurst and Scadbury, whose son and heir, Mr Richard Bettenson, had four pretty daughters. (Two, Frances, afterwards Mrs Hewett, and Dorothy, who died unmarried, hardly concern us.) The Farrington estate adjoined Scadbury, and what more natural than that Colonel Farrington and Colonel Selwyn should sometimes walk over and spend the evening with the Misses Bettenson? At all events, Miss Theodosia Bettenson became Mrs Thomas Farrington, and Miss Albinia Bettenson became Mrs William Selwyn. Just now let us follow the fortunes of General and Mrs Selwyn. They went to Jamaica in 1701. General Selwyn, however, did not long enjoy his governorship. He died in the following year, and his widow returned to England.

Judging from the portraits which survive, Mrs William Selwyn was not so handsome as her sister Theodosia. But she was a woman of charm, and of a certain vigour of character. We have a hint of her charm in the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. "My greatest pleasure is at Mrs Selwyn's," she writes in 1710 to Mrs Hewett; and, later in the same year,

[1] Webb's "History of Chislehurst."

on hearing of John Selwyn's safety after Malplaquet: "I take an interest in Mr Selwyn's success. In a battle like that it may be called so to come off alive. I should be so sensitive of any affliction that could touch you or Mrs Selwyn, that I may very well rejoice when you have no occasion for any." Mrs William Selwyn was a woman of character also. "She had so much love of justice," said George Selwyn, "and was so exact in the performance of all the duties of life, that it would be thought she never had seen a court, but at the same time so well-bred that she appeared as if she had never been out of one." Left a widow with six children—all under twelve—upon her hands, she devoted herself to furthering their interests in life. Thus in 1706 her eldest son, John Selwyn, was offered by the Duke of Marlborough a company in the Guards for £800. Mrs Selwyn tried in vain to have the price reduced. Would the duke not reduce it for the sake of his old friend and comrade William Selwyn? But the duke said no: "I have no manner of interest in it," he wrote; "and did it purely out of friendship to him, and in memory of his father, which you must be sensible of, when you consider that when the Queen permits the Captains of the Guards at any time to dispose of their commands, they usually do it for more than double that money. I could wish Mr Selwin might have it for nothing, but there is a necessity of applying this sum at least in charity to the widows, and to satisfy other pretensions." Sentiment, in short, was all very well, but the greed of the Marlboroughs was a stronger motive.

John Selwyn, then, went into the Guards; fought at Malplaquet (he was A.D.C. to the duke); escaped without a scratch; and returned to England in 1710. He purchased his colonelcy in the Duke of Argyle's regiment for £7000; but after the Peace of Utrecht and the fall of Marlborough he had to sell out. His military career closed, and he became a civilian and a courtier. On the accession of George I. he was made Comptroller of the Customs. This, however, is not the history of John Selwyn, but of his son, who made more of a figure in the world. We may therefore merely note that he held during his life various positions at court: Groom of the Bedchamber to George II.; Treasurer to Queen Caroline; Treasurer to the Duke of Cambridge and the Princesses, and, for a short period



COLONEL JOHN SELWYN

before his death, Treasurer to the Prince of Wales. He was also M.P. for Gloucester from 1734 until his death in 1751. John Selwyn appears to have been much respected by his constituents. A certain alderman of Gloucester, writing to George Selwyn after his father's death in 1751, and sending him "the usual present of a lamprey-pie from this Corporation to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales," asks him to be good enough to present it, "as your worthy father used to do." In another letter he refers to him as your "dear and ever-honoured father." John Selwyn was a kind and amiable man, but shrewd, and with a good deal of worldly wisdom. He does not escape Horace Walpole's caustic pen. "Old John Selwyn is appointed Treasurer to the Prince," he writes in 1751, "a shrewd silent man, humane, and reckoned honest: if he was he did great honour to his cause, for he made his court and his fortune with as much dexterity as those who reckon virtue the greatest impediment to worldly success."

John Selwyn married his cousin, Mary Farrington, daughter of General Thomas Farrington and his wife Theodosia. We must therefore now go back for a moment to the Bettensons and the Farringtons, and to the pleasantly rural Chislehurst—George Selwyn's "paroisse." Mary Farrington was a child of the manor. Her mother's father, Richard Bettenson, was the eldest son of Sir Richard Bettenson, who purchased the manor of Chislehurst and Scadbury from the Walsinghams about 1660. This Richard Bettenson married Albinia Wray, who is only mentioned here because she brought from the Cecil family into the Bettenson family, and thence into the Selwyn family, the Christian name "Albinia," which is to be found among the descendants of the Selwyns to this day. Thomas and Theodosia had three children: a son, Thomas, and two daughters, Albinia and Mary. Thomas Farrington inherited the old home, but died in 1758 without issue. His only claim to distinction is that he took part in a semi-political brawl at Chislehurst church in 1719, which gave Daniel Defoe the opportunity of writing a pamphlet. Albinia Farrington made a brilliant match. She married Robert Bertie, first Duke of Ancaster, and had four sons, one of whom, Lord Robert Bertie, inherited "Farrington's" on the death of his uncle Thomas. Mary Farrington became Mrs John Selwyn: but the mother

of George Selwyn was a remarkable woman, and cannot be dismissed so abruptly from these pages.

Early in life she was one of that brilliant group of women who were in attendance upon the Prince and Princess of Wales —afterwards George II. and Queen Caroline—at the "young Court" in Leicester Fields and at Richmond. This is not the place to speak of that gay, intriguing court, or of the vivacity, brilliancy, and—it must be said—frailty, of its women. Caroline of Anspach was bright and clever, and she liked bright and clever people about her. George, on the contrary, was not in the least bright or clever, and preferred dull German women to the vivacious English. Wit and vivacity puzzled the little man. But Caroline's friends: "Molly" Lepell, Mary Bellenden, Mary Farrington (they were mostly "Marys") and Mrs Howard were all witty, clever and handsome. Read the memoirs of John, Lord Hervey, and you will obtain some idea of the atmosphere in which these women lived and moved. It was not altogether a pleasant atmosphere: but it had its attractions. Certainly Mary Farrington remained in it for the best part of her active life. Can we make her live and breathe again at this distance of time? It is not easy. We learn from the memoirs of the period that she was witty and bright in conversation, which is quite probable. We can imagine her shrieking with laughter when the Queen's chaplain gravely protested against the "altar-piece" before which he had to read prayers, and which happened to be a "Venus" of the Dutch school. Such a joke appealed strongly to the Georgian sense of humour. Hervey calls Mrs Selwyn a "simple and cunning woman," and says that she spied for Sir Robert Walpole. But this is a characteristic Hervey touch: that spiteful chronicler seldom thought or wrote the best of the people he met, even if they happened to be of the Walpole faction. Mrs Selwyn was witty; she was clever; was she purer and better than some of the Court women? Horace Walpole would have us believe not. Writing many years after her death he says: "I remember to have heard forty years ago that our Gracious Sovereign entrusted Her Royal Highness of Orleans with an intrigue of one of her women of the bed-chamber, Mrs S. to wit; and the good Duchess entrusted it to so many other dear friends that it at last got into the *Utrecht Gazette*, and came over hither, to

MRS. JOHN SELWYN

the signal edification of the Court at Leicester Fields." But forty-years-old hearsay evidence is not of much value, especially when it comes from Horace Walpole's pen. And one distrusts post-mortem stories of this kind. We have all heard them, and know how easily they can be invented and with what difficulty refuted. Mary Selwyn may not have been spotless, but nothing has been proved against her character; and it is pleasant to think that the women of the Bettenson line were virtuous in an age when virtue was not fashionable.

The Selwyns' house in Cleveland Court (now Cleveland Square), close to St James's Palace, was the resort of the wits, beauties, politicians, of George II.'s time.[1] It was the scene of a famous encounter between Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Townshend in 1727; an encounter which was said to have been the original of the "quarrel scene" between Peachum and Lockit in *The Beggar's Opera.* The Duke of Newcastle and Mr Pelham were present. "My Lord," said Walpole angrily, "for once there is no man's sincerity whom I doubt so much as your Lordship's, and I never doubted it so much as when you are pleased to use such strong expressions." Whereupon Peachum Townshend seized Lockit Walpole by the collar, and there was an undignified wrestle between the two men. Swords were drawn, and would have been used but for the intervention of the spectators. But Walpole and Townshend were always quarrelling: they quarrelled even in the presence of royalty, if we are to believe Hervey. Townshend could not bear to see such a low fellow as Walpole—a mere "Norfolk dumpling"—so powerful in the state; and Walpole, for his part, took a malicious delight in poking fun at his jealous brother-in-law.

Mrs Selwyn died in 1777. For years before her death she had lived much at Chislehurst with the Townshends, where her son George often visited her. "I beg my duty to my mother," he writes in 1777,[2] "I should be glad to make my visits to her more frequent, but I could never come to her, but when I was as cheerful as possible." She kept her brightness and vivacity to the last, although Horace Walpole did call her a "dowager" so long before her death as 1750. Both

[1] This house is now numbered 3 Cleveland Square.

[2] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

she and Colonel John Selwyn are buried at Matson; and an inscription formerly on their tomb described them as "affectionate parents, kind to their dependants, charitable to the poor and faithful and beloved servants of George the Second."

Colonel and Mrs Selwyn had two other children besides George: Albinia, the eldest, and John, the second child. John Selwyn was a delicate and amiable man who died in 1751 at the early age of forty-two. We know little about him, except that he was the friend of Horace Walpole and Henry Conway. "I did not hurry myself to answer your last," writes Walpole to Conway in 1740, "but chose to write to poor Selwyn upon his illness. I pity you excessively upon finding him in such a situation: what a shock it must have been to you! He deserves so much love from all that know him, and you owe him so much friendship, that I can scarce conceive a greater shock." And again in the following year: "You must judge by what you feel yourself of what I feel for Selwyn's recovery, with the addition of what I have suffered from post to post." (Walpole was at Florence at the time.) "But as I find the whole town have the same sentiments about him (though I am sure few so strong as myself), I will not repeat what you have heard so much. I shall write to him to-night, though he knows, without my telling him, how very much I love him." According to his epitaph at Matson, he was one "whose virtues had been the comfort of his parents, and whose death shortened the life of his father." John was his father's favourite, and seems to have taken after him in character. He was quiet, kind and "sensible": a contrast to his brother George, who—to anticipate a little—was the scapegrace of the family. Albinia Selwyn married the Hon. Thomas Townshend, third son of the second Lord Townshend, and had five children: Albinia, afterwards Lady Midleton; Thomas, the first Lord Sydney; Mary, the faithful correspondent of her uncle, George Selwyn; Charles, and Henry. We shall hear a great deal more of the Townshends during the course of this narrative. Just now it is enough to say that they made their home at Chislehurst, Colonel Selwyn having bought the manor from his wife's relatives and settled it upon his daughter and her children. Albinia Townshend, however, did not care for the fine old Elizabethan house of Scadbury, and persuaded her husband

ALBINIA, SISTER OF GEORGE SELWYN, AND WIFE OF THE HON. THOMAS TOWNSEND

to pull it down and build a modern mansion. Mr Townshend —*immemor sepulchri*—pulled it down accordingly; but before he had built the new house his wife died, being only twenty-five years of age. This was in 1739. Nearly fifty years after her death, her brother George writing to Mary Townshend said: "You have often told me that you would let me have a copy of Dr Middleton's letter on the death of my sister. I shall be very glad of it, and I am put in mind to ask it by a triste recollection of the time of her death, which when you receive this will have happened just forty-eight years ago. I want to compare the letter with one which we read of Servius Sulpicius's to Cicero on a similar occasion. Neither one or the other would have answered the purpose intended by them. It is not difficult to know Cicero's character. It is impossible to be mistaken in Mr Townshend's, and I know myself also in that particular, and am sure that the best letter that ever was wrote could not then have lightened my grief on that occasion."[1]

The death of Albinia Townshend nearly broke her husband's heart. He had just been appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, but gave up the post at once, and never afterwards took another. Nor did he ever build his new house. Instead, he took the mansion of Frognal close by, which he afterwards purchased, and in which he lived until his death in 1780. Both the Scadbury estate and Frognal are still in the possession of the Townshend family.

So much for George Selwyn's parentage and family. Up till now the historian has never strayed far from Chislehurst, which, in accordance with George's dictum, one always thinks of as the real Selwyn-land. But we must not forget the old home of the Selwyns at Matson, as the Selwyns themselves too often did. Matson is a village situated on a spur of the Cotswold Hills, about two and a half miles from Gloucester. The manor belonged of old to the abbey and chapter of Gloucester. Llanthony Priory granted it under the name of "Mattesdon Manor" to the burgesses of Gloucester in 1576, from whom, through several hands, it came into the possession of Jasper the lawyer in 1597. Jasper seems to have been an exceedingly sensible man. Besides doing all the orthodox things in the legal world of London, he married Margaret Robbins, the

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

daughter of Thomas Robbins, owner of the manor adjoining Matson; "thus," says the chronicler, "acquiring one manor by purchase, and the other by marriage." The result was Matson as Jasper's descendants knew it: a modest country house and estate, without any pretensions to grandeur.

As the traveller approaches Gloucester by train from London, he may see on his right a hill rising with some abruptness from the level country around the city. This is Robbins Wood Hill, miscalled by Horace Walpole, and many another, "Robin Hood's Hill"; but the hill is named after the Robbins family, sometime lords of the neighbouring manor, and not after the outlaw of the Midlands, who knew not Gloucester. "It is lofty enough for an Alp," wrote Walpole in 1753, "yet is a mountain of turf to the very top; has woods scattered all over it; springs that long to be cascades in twenty places; and from the summit it beats even Sir George Lytellton's views, by having the City of Gloucester at its foot and the Severn widening to the horizon. . . . The reservoirs on the hill supply the city. The late Mr Selwyn governed the borough with them—and I believe by some wine too." The reservoirs are still there, and they still in part supply the city; but the borough is governed now without any reference to their possible failure. Matson House is situated half way up the hill, or perhaps not quite that: sufficiently high, however, to give one a wide view over the valley.

Standing in Selwyn's garden, by the Scotch firs planted in old days, perhaps by some secret sympathiser with the Stuarts, you may gaze into purple distances of wood and vale and hill: a scene of soft beauty, difficult to surpass in that or any English county. The house is a fine old Tudor mansion, with red-tiled roofs, and with many gables. It has been added to from time to time, but not, one imagines, since Selwyn's day. The rooms are panelled with oak, which some thoughtful Philistine person in Georgian days carefully painted over, but which has now been just as carefully restored. In the entrance hall a brass plate records how: "Their Majesties King George III., Queen Charlotte, the Princess Royal with her two sisters Princess Augusta and Princess Elizabeth, came into this cottage accompanied by William Duke of Queensberry on Tuesday, July 29th 1788"; and if one mounts the

MATSON HOUSE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

stairs to the attic one may see a certain window-sill with notches cut deep into the stone. These notches are protected by plates of glass, and the inscription below runs: "The notches in this window sill were cut by the future Kings Charles II. and James II. in their boyhood, when they were living in Matson House with their father King Charles I. during the siege of Gloucester by the Royal troops in August 1643." For the original of this story we must go to the memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall. George Selwyn told Wraxall "that during the memorable siege of Gloucester, undertaken by Charles I. in 1643, Charles Prince of Wales, and James Duke of York . . . who were then boys, remained at Matson." And he added that James II., after he came to the throne, used to mention the circumstances to his (Selwyn's) grandfather, when he went to court; observing "my brother and I were generally shut up in a chamber on the second floor at Matson during the day, where you will find that we have left the marks of our confinement with our knives on the ledges of all the windows." So that this anecdote is better authenticated than most of its kind; and your doubter has always to explain away the notches. Walpole records it with a slight variation. "His house," he says, speaking of Matson, "is small but neat. King Charles lay here during the siege, and the Duke of York, with typical fury, hacked and hewed the window shutters of his chamber, as a memorandum of his being there." The "typical fury" of James is a Horatian touch; and yet it is a life-like touch: in some curious way it makes the narrative convincing. There are other historical attractions within Matson House. The "King's Room" commemorates Charles I.'s unhappy visit; there is "Mie Mie's" Chapel, a tiny apartment with three stained-glass windows; there are even two secret chambers, only recently brought to light. Behind the house stands the little church, where many Selwyns are buried, and the churchyard, very small and quiet. Historical associations apart, there is an old-world charm about Matson which is very attractive. One must agree entirely with the Rev. William Digby, who spent his honeymoon here in 1766, and to whom it appeared "another Arcadia. It is really a sweet retreat." But Arcadia was not popular with English society in the eighteenth century. The country had not been discovered then: or rather, the

earlier discoverers had sailed away and their discovery had been forgotten, even as the Norsemen abandoned America ages before Columbus found it. (Arcadia was rediscovered before the end of the century by those stout explorers, Coleridge and Wordsworth.) So it happened that the Selwyns spent little time at Matson in the county of Gloucester. They were court people, and found St James's much more to their taste. The house was a convenient stopping place for friends travelling in the west of England; for Walpole and Gilly Williams, and honeymooners like the Digbys. George Selwyn would occasionally run down and spend a few weeks there in the heat of the summer. But he "could not live" at Matson in later life: he said so himself repeatedly. And in his early years it is probable that he did not stray far from Cleveland Court and from the friendly roofs of Chislehurst.

CHAPTER III

ETON AND OXFORD

WE first catch a glimpse of the boy Selwyn at Eton, which he entered, according to the registers, in 1728. In that year's list his name appears in the first form. At this time Dr Bland was headmaster, he whose translation of Cato's soliloquy, published in *The Spectator*, drew from Addison the criticism that "for conciseness, purity, and elegance of diction it could not be sufficiently admired." Selwyn was also at Eton under Dr George, who married Bland's daughter. Dr George was a prodigious Greek scholar; he could "read a newspaper off into Greek," as Selwyn told the third Lord Holland, and "knew the Greek for every English word except 'mutton cabobbed.'" Under Bland, and contemporary with George Selwyn, were several boys who were afterwards to become famous. There was one elegant youth of thirteen with "a broad, pale brow, sharp nose and chin, large eyes, and a pert expression," whose name was Thomas Gray. Gray, it was said, "never was a boy." Perhaps that was why his most intimate companion at Eton was Horace Walpole, who confesses that he himself was "never quite a schoolboy. An expedition against bargemen or a match at cricket are very pretty things to recollect; but thank my stars, I can remember things that are near as pretty." In Walpole's early letters—written while in residence at Cambridge—we get more than one glimpse of the Eton of his day. He speaks of the "Triumvirate": George and Charles Montagu and himself; and of an even more intimate and friendly body, the Quadruple Alliance. The partners in the "Alliance" were Gray ("Orosmades"), Richard West ("Almanzor"), son of the Irish Lord Chancellor West, Thomas Ashton ("Plato"), afterwards Rector of St Botolph's, Bishopsgate, and Walpole himself ("Tydeus"). Tydeus at Cambridge writes to Almanzor at Oxford, giving the news of Plato and Orosmades, and desiring in return "a short account of

the Eton people at Oxford." It is all very fresh and agreeable, this picture of boyish friendship. Selwyn, however, does not come into the picture at all. Walpole mentions him once as "Mr Selwyn," which does not imply any great degree of intimacy. But we need not wonder at this. Selwyn was two years younger than Walpole, and three years younger than Gray; prodigious differences in age to schoolboys. But there was in any case little to attract Selwyn in Gray and Walpole. Selwyn was entirely a boy: full of health and high spirits, and not in the least bookish. Walpole, on the contrary, was quiet, highly-strung, and fond of books. So was Gray, who regarded the other boys at Eton as so many little victims, playing about in the sunshine regardless of their doom. Besides, boys are essentially a clannish folk, and Selwyn had probably his own alliances and triumvirates. One writer says that his special intimate was "the vivacious Hanbury Williams," who was Selwyn's first cousin. "Both boys were rather distinguished for fine spirits than for fine talents," says he, "they were remarkable for vivacity, quickness, and social humour." They were certainly remarkable for these qualities in after life, but we know nothing whatever of their characters at Eton; and as Hanbury Williams had left Eton two years before Selwyn had entered it, the legend as to their school friendship may be at once dismissed. Other contemporaries of Selwyn's at school were Henry Conway (Walpole's cousin and friend), William Cole the antiquary (the "Rev. Mr Cole" of Walpole's correspondence), Richard Edgecumbe, and Lord Hertford. But only one authentic glimpse of the schoolboy Selwyn do we get, and this was when he had ceased to be a schoolboy. In 1741 Mr Henry Reade, an assistant master at Eton, writes to him in a quite affectionate strain. "Dear George," the letter runs, "an unwillingness to write to one's best friends is, of all others, the most oppressive and most affecting disease. We are perpetually reproaching ourselves for leaving the debt of gratitude unpaid, and at the same time cannot bring ourselves to a resolution of clearing the account. This has been my condition for these several months last past, and though I was every day in danger of losing your esteem by not writing, yet such was my indolence that though I knew my fault, I had not power to

MATSON HOUSE AND CHURCH

correct it." It is true that the bearing of this letter lies in an innocent sentence or two slipped in casually near the end. "I hear that Mr Thomas Townshend" (Selwyn's brother-in-law) "intends soon to send some relation to Eton. If you have any interest in the affair, I should be glad of your recommendation, and you may depend upon my utmost diligence and best endeavours." Nevertheless, when a schoolmaster writes to a former pupil as to a "best friend" and is afraid of "losing his esteem," it is a fair inference that the pupil has not been unattractive.

In the list of 1732 Selwyn's name appears in the fifth form, near the end. After this it disappears. We do not know when he left Eton, or what he did in the interval between 1732 and 1739; except that on one occasion, in 1733, he saw the Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II.'s mistress, at Goodwood House, and marvelled at the exceedingly well-preserved appearance of the old lady. In 1739 he went to Oxford, and was entered at Hart Hall, which in 1740 became Hertford College. Many of the registers and papers of Hertford were destroyed by fire in the year 1820, so that it is impossible to examine the original record of Selwyn's admission. But from the "Alumni Oxoniensis" we learn that "*Selwyn*, George Augustus, son of John Selwyn of Chislehurst, Kent, arm: matriculated at Hart Hall, 1st February 1738-9, aged 19."

What decided Selwyn to go to Oxford rather than Cambridge we do not know. It was rather a curious choice for one who was a Whig by descent on both sides of the family. At this time all good Whigs—men like Walpole and Gray and Mason—went to Cambridge. Oxford was Tory and Jacobite; Cambridge was effusively Hanoverian. Jacobitism died slowly in Oxford, partly for the reason that it was a "lost cause" such as Oxford loves, but principally for the reason that Whiggery coloured the other university. Consider the position in 1739. Twenty years before that date Thomas Warton the First had preached his famous sermon upon the text "Justice beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, restoreth all things": a rank Jacobite sermon, in which the preacher hinted not obscurely at restoration, while at the same time he kept skilfully from direct political reference. "Men praised it as the boldest and most guarded sermon that

had ever been heard at Oxford: the Masters waved their caps to the preacher as he passed through them out of church, and his health was drunk in every common-room."[1] Of course it did not mean very much: university enthusiasm of a political kind never does. But in 1719 it was more than picturesque to be Jacobite: it was good policy. You could, for example, be gently and unobtrusively converted by the gift of a deanery or a bishopric, or by court preferment, or by being sent as ambassador to the Turks or the Dutch. Walpole knew how to arrange these little things. Again, in 1719, the Hanoverians were not yet very comfortable upon the English throne. Nobody really liked these German people. Anything might happen. But in 1739 nothing had happened, except that Walpole had bribed, coaxed, and manœuvred England into loyalty to the Georges. Picturesqueness was fast becoming the only striking quality attaching to Jacobitism, especially at Oxford. We see this in the '45, when Prince Charles and his Highlanders marched to Derby. What did Oxford do? The answer is, exactly nothing. That is not quite accurate however; for on the authority of the Rev. Mr Mason, a Whig,[2] and a Cambridge man, she held "infernal orgies":

> "See Hydra faction spread its impious reign,
> Poison each breast and madden every brain.
> Hence frontless crowds that, not content to fright
> The blushing Cynthia from her throne of might,
> Blast the fair face of day; and, madly bold,
> To freedom's foes infernal orgies hold,
> To freedom's foes, ah, see the goblet crowned!
> Hear plausive shouts to freedom's foes resound."

Oxford was crowning goblets, while the poor Highlanders

[1] J. R. Green, "Oxford Studies."

[2] *Dr Johnson*: "Mason is a Whig, sir."

Mrs Knowles (not hearing quite distinctly): "A prig, sir, did you say?"

Johnson: "No, madam, a Whig, but he is that too." And so he was. "Years afterwards," says Green, "Mason was entering Oxford on horseback, and, as he passed Magdalen Bridge, he turned to his companion to express his satisfaction that the darkness of the evening would allow them to enter the town unnoticed. His friend was puzzled to conjecture what the advantage of this could be. 'What?' rejoined the poet, 'don't you remember my *Isis*?'" (The poem quoted from above.)

were dying in the north. But she had still one or two vigorous Jacobites of the academic kind left. Such was Tom Warton the Second, that "singular combination of the scholar and the buffoon, the hard reader and deep drinker." You are to imagine him as a "little, thick, squat, red-faced man," with "a gobble like a turkey-cock," as Johnson said. Tom was a Tory like his father, and refused to allow the Reverend Mr Mason to have the last word. He wrote:

> "Let Granta boast the patrons of her name,
> Each splendid foe of fortune or of fame.
> Still of preferment, let her shine the Queen,
> Prolific parent of each bowing Dean;
> Be hers each prelate of the pampered cheek,
> Each courtly chaplain, sanctified and sleek,
> Still let the drones of her exhaustless hive
> On rich pluralities supinely thrive."

But Granta and Isis went on being Whig and Tory respectively, till the accession of George III., when Jacobitism in Oxford died a natural death. It expired when Dr King, principal of St Mary's Hall, and leader of the Jacobites, joined in the address to his Majesty. Yet Green does well to remind us that Oxford Jacobitism, futile and ineffective as it was, was preferable to the soulless political conformity that fell upon the University in later Georgian days.

Such, politically, was Oxford when Selwyn entered Hertford College in 1739. Let us keep him upon the threshold for a little longer, while we glance at the University as Selwyn found it. To us it is an almost incredible Oxford. Someone has said that, of all the Oxfords, the eighteenth-century Oxford is the most difficult for modern men to realise. The mediæval Oxford, with its monks and priests and poor scholars, and its atmosphere of cloistered learning and peace, is intelligible and attractive; seventeenth-century Oxford, with its bubbling political life, we can understand; but who shall interpret for us the Oxford of the Georges? You look at the city and its colleges, and see men as trees walking. A twilight is over the place. There are no great teachers or preachers; no "move-

ments"; no life of the mind, or of the spirit. Dons drowse and drink in common-rooms; professors lecture to empty benches, or do not lecture at all; students fuddle their time away in taverns and coffee-houses; clergymen go mechanically through the exercises of the Church to yawning and indifferent congregations. Nothing matters. Educationally, Oxford has sunk to a sorry level. Read the satirical tracts of the day, and observe what the writers thought of 'varsity education. "Terræ Filius," whose proper name was Amherst, an extremely pert and amusing young gentleman, will relate his experiences as an undergraduate in search of learning. "I ask'd whether it was usual now and then to slip a lecture or so: his answer was that he had not seen the face of any lecturer in any faculty, except in poetry and music, for three years past, that all lectures beside were entirely neglected; both of great consequence: especially the first, as it is performed by so ingenious and accomplished a proficient." Mr Amherst's friend graciously made an exception in favour of Thomas Warton the First, not because the subject was important, but because the professor was such fun. Nobody attended the lectures, and so the lectures were never held. At the end of three years the students "supplicated for a dispensation" which they obtained on payment of a fee. "There ought to be some qualification," comments Amherst, "to wear them" (degrees) "besides perjury, treason, and paying a multitude of fees"—that is to say, besides subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, Jacobitism, and dispensations. If someone objects that "Terræ Filius" is not to be taken seriously, let us call other evidence. Let us go to the *locus classicus* of complaints against the university of Oxford in the eighteenth century: the memoirs of Edward Gibbon. Gibbon entered Magdalen as a gentleman commoner in 1752. "To the University of Oxford," he says, "I acknowledge no obligation, and she will as cheerfully renounce me for a son, as I am willing to disclaim her for a mother. I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College, they proved the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life. . . . The fellows or monks of my time were decent easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder. Their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes, and private scandal: their dull and deep potations

excused the brisk intemperance of youth; and their constitutional toasts were not expressive of the most lively loyalty to the House of Hanover. . . . During the first week I constantly attended these lessons in my tutor's room, but as they appeared equally devoid of profit and pleasure, I was once tempted to try the experiment of a formal apology. The apology was accepted with a smile. I repeated the offence with less ceremony; the excuse was admitted with the same indulgence: the slightest motive of laziness or indisposition, the most trifling avocation at home or abroad, was allowed as a worthy impediment. . . . It is whimsical enough that as soon as I left Magdalen College my taste for books began to revive." On the whole, this was a heavy indictment to draw against a university.

But in one thing the Oxford of Selwyn's day did not differ much from that of our own day: in the social life of the undergraduates. Oxford is eternally young. Georgian twilight notwithstanding, the youthful barbarians of 1739 were very much like those you will meet to-day between Carfax and Magdalen. They came up to Oxford to enjoy themselves. Well, their pleasures were different from ours, and not, perhaps, so healthy. They had no cricket, no athletics, and no rowing. Instead, they had "cocking" and horses, and gaming, and drinking at taverns, and making believe to be fine gentlemen from London. "Terræ Filius" paints the freshman for us in his "new suit of drugget, his pair of prim ruffles, new bob wig, and brazen-hilted sword," swaggering at coffee-houses. He soon becomes a "smart." "Rising late in an age of early risers"[1]—most people at Oxford were out of bed in those days at six or seven—"the smart's breakfast is scarce over by ten. . . . Then he is strolling to Lyne's coffee-house . . . where at the risk of inked ruffles, he indites a billet-doux or a stanza to the reigning Sylvia of the town. From Lyne's he saunters for a turn or two upon the Park or under Merton Wall, while the dull regulars, the 'slow' fellows are at dinner in hall according to statute." A little dinner in his rooms at one o'clock prepares the "smart" for the great business of the afternoon. "The afternoon is spent by our exquisite in learning the news of the town or parading before the windows of a toast. He drinks a

[1] Green, "Oxford Studies."

dram of citron at Hamilton's, and saunters off at last to chapel, to shew how genteely he dresses, and how well he can chaunt." After chapel, tea, and a stroll with Sylvia in Magdalen walks. Then supper, and then "he turns to the less refined pleasures of the night. He is seen, one of the group round the table at the Mitre or the Tuns; is loud in his song, deep in puns, put, or cards, toasts his mistress in the spiced cup, with the brown toast bobbing in it, or staggers home to his college 'a toper all night as he trifles all day.'" Such was a typical day and night of the Oxford "smart" of the eighteenth century. The experiences of Shenstone, a quiet practical sort of a man, who entered Pembroke in 1732, convince us that this was no fancy picture. He attended first "a sober little party," who amused themselves in the evening by "reading Greek and drinking water." This he left for "a very different party: a set of jolly, sprightly young fellows, most of them West-country lads who drank ale, smoked tobacco, and sang bacchanalism catches the whole evening: our pious orgies generally began with:

> "'Let's be jovial, fill our glasses,
> Madness 'tis for us to think
> How the world is ruled by asses
> And the wisest swayed by chink.'"

This not being sufficiently aristocratic, Shenstone joined the "gentlemen commoners" party. "*They* treated me with port wine and arrack punch, and now and then, when they had drank so much as hardly to distinguish wine from water, they would conclude with a bottle or two of claret. They kept late hours, drank their favourite toast on their knees, and in short were what were then called 'bucks of the first head.' . . ."[1]

This world of port wine and arrack punch, of toasts and coffee-houses and taverns, was, as we shall see, George Selwyn's world at Oxford. It was the world of the gentleman commoner: of the young exquisite with the golden tuft in his velvet cap, excusing him from chapel and lecture. There were other worlds, as Shenstone has indicated. "There was besides a sort of flying squadron of plain sensible matter of fact men, confined to no club, but associating occasionally with each party. They

[1] "Memoir of Shenstone," by Richard Graves.

anxiously enquired after the news of the day and the politics of the times. They had come to the University in their way to the Temple, or to get a slight smattering of the sciences before they settled in the country. They were a good sort of young people, and perhaps the most rational of the college." Was Samuel Johnson a member of this "flying squadron"? It is the only set in which we can place him, unless he belonged to the sober people who learned Greek and drank water. Or perhaps he was too poor and too proud to belong to any party; that is likely, when we remember his savage refusal of what Boswell called "an eleemosynary offering of shoes." (Johnson had just left Pembroke as Shenstone entered it.) But to complete our picture of Oxford life at this time, we must refer to one or two men who were certainly unclassed. Smarts like Selwyn and Foote probably never heard of them; yet they were destined one day to shake England: not perhaps to shake Selwyn's England (tremors only reached that preserve), but certainly to shake the England of the common people. These were, of course, John and Charles Wesley and their friends. John Wesley had entered Christ Church in 1720, and had graduated in 1726, in which year his brother Charles followed him to Oxford. But nearer Selwyn's day, in 1732, there came to Oxford a man five years older than Selwyn, and from the same city in the west, George Whitefield. Whitefield began life as potman in his father's public-house at Gloucester. At the age of eighteen he entered Pembroke College as a servitor, which status was a whole universe removed from that of a gentleman commoner. Hardly anything could give one a greater sense of contrast than to turn from, say, the pages of Nicholas Amherst to the pages where Whitefield records his Oxford experiences. We are out of the world of toasts and taverns with a vengeance. "I had not been long at the University before I found the benefit of the foundation I had laid in the country for a holy life. I was quickly solicited to joyn in their excess of riot with several who lay in the same room. God, in answer to prayers before put up, gave me grace to withstand them; and once in particular it being cold, my limbs were so benumbed by sitting alone in my study because I would not go out amongst them that I could scarce sleep all night. But I soon found the benefit of not yielding; for when they perceived they could not prevail, they let me alone as a

singular, odd fellow. . . . The young men so called (Methodists) were then much talked of at Oxford. I had heard of, and loved them, before I came to the University, and so strenuously defended them when I heard them reviled by the students that they began to think that I also in time should be one of them." Charles Wesley invited Whitefield to breakfast, and he soon became "one of them." "The course of my studies I soon entirely changed. Whereas before I was busy in studying the dry sciences"—Oxford was strangely devoted to the "dry sciences" in these days—"and books that went no further than the surface, I was resolved to read only such as entered into the heart of religion. . . . I daily underwent some contempt at college. Some have thrown dirt at me; others by degrees took away their pay from me; and two friends that were dear unto me, grew shy of and forsook me." Pathetic words, these. While we remember the "smart" drinking arrack punch and toasting his mistress, and while we insist upon him as the really characteristic Oxford type, we must not forget the poor servitor of Pembroke, wandering in Christ Church meadows of nights, and gravely concerned about his sins.

When George Selwyn entered Hart Hall in 1739, its principal was the Rev. Richard Newton, and there was no more vigorous head of a college at Oxford. Newton was a personality. To begin with, he was what Hearne called "founder-mad." After a good deal of trouble he obtained a charter for his hall, and it became Hertford College in 1740. But Newton was far more than a pious founder. He had ideas about university education, and believed in the simple life both for students and for dons in an age when simplicity was not advertised as a virtue. Thus when Mr Joseph Somaster wanted to leave Hart Hall for "Baliol" because, *inter alia*, "he could live cheaper there," Dr Newton issued a dignified defence of Hart Hall as a home for poor students. "I am moreover very willing," he wrote, "that Baliol College should be esteemed as cheap a House of Learning as any in either university; but I am not willing that Baliol or any other college whatsoever should be thought a cheaper place to live in than Hart Hall, because I do not think it possible." He then sets out Somaster's expenses for a quarter: they amounted to the not extravagant sum of £7, 17s. 1d., including rent, tuition, dues, wages, commons and bottels. "After this

manner did *this Commoner* live in Hart Hall, and after this manner, within a trifle over or under (and, if an instance be produced to the contrary, I will be bound to give a satisfactory reason for it), have *other commoners* lived, and do still live, in Hart Hall; and after this manner, whenever my family are not with me, which sometimes they are not for a fortnight or three weeks together, do *I myself* live in Hart Hall. Upon these occasions I hardly ever dine or sup out of the common refectory; I neither *vary* the meat, nor *exceed* the proportion that is set before the *lowest* commoner. Tenpence a day hath paid for my breakfast, dinner and supper, even when there is *Ale* in the society, which now there is not. I have, thank God, as good health as any man in England, and as good an *appetite* as any member of the community; and for a constancy would rather live in this manner in Hart Hall, so far as relates to *eating* and *drinking*, than at any nobleman's table in *Europe.* If young scholars can live cheaper in Baliol College, I must submit, for I do not pretend that they can live cheaper at Hart Hall." It was to this kind of life that Selwyn came at the age of twenty. He was not a "poor student" like Somaster. He was *superioris ordinis commensalis*—a gentleman commoner, privileged to wear a velvet gown and cap with a gold tassel, licensed to stay away from chapel and lectures when it pleased him. It often did please him. And it is probable that the simple fare of the common refectory was supplemented by the more various food and drink of the tavern and the coffee-house. It is probable, too, that George was a good friend to the Oxford tradesmen. At all events, in the following year we find that Selwyn had been seriously in debt more than once since his arrival at Oxford. In 1740 his father writes to him as follows:—

Thursday (1740)

DEAR GEORGE,—I am disposed once more to pay your debts, which is what you have no pretensions to ask. Let me know what your Oxford bills amount to, that they may be paid first, and I will remit the money to you; but don't always expect to be answered next post, for I have too much business to answer all letters next post, and yours is of a nature that I think does not merit punctuality. I am yours, J. S.

"To Mr GEO. SELWYN,
at Hart Hall, Oxon."

To which George replies:

"SIR,—I am sensible, I have been very careless and indiscreet in contracting so many debts, and frankly own that many, if not most of them, have been unnecessary. But nothing grieves me so much as that you should think it indifferent to me whether you are pleased or displeased with what I do. No son in the world can be more convinced than I am of your great affection for me, and of your readiness to comply with every reasonable desire I have had, particularly this of your condescending to pay my debts so quickly, though amounting to so great a sum. However, I beg to observe to you, that those in London do not amount to so much by half as Mr Goodchild has set forth, and before they are paid I shall be glad of an opportunity to remonstrate against some articles.

"I shall be ready to wait upon you whenever you command me, and, for what is past, beg you will only remember it when you find it repeated. I am, etc., etc."

Is not this a very proper letter? Is there not something manly and sensible about it? If I were a father with a son at Oxford and about to pay his debts, I should like to get from him just such a letter. And please to observe that this is the first occasion in this volume upon which George Selwyn appears and speaks, or purports to speak, for himself. This first appearance would be entirely satisfactory if we did not notice that the letter is endorsed (presumably by George himself): "Copy of a letter to my father, penned by Dr Newton, 1740." Penned by Dr Newton! It was the Principal of Hertford who gave such a comely form to the prodigal's repentance. But I do not think that the letter was entirely his. Observe that delightfully ingenuous touch about being "glad of an opportunity to remonstrate against some articles." Nobody but the prodigal could have suggested that.

Between 1741 and 1745 Selwyn's movements again become mysterious. For some reason or other he had left the university, temporarily, and had gone abroad. It was not the Grand Tour, for he appears never to have strayed far from Paris. At least he was there for about twelve months, from the autumn of 1742 to the summer of the following year. But without waiting to suggest an explanation of his wanderings, let us see what happened. From his letters we learn that he was invariably in

GEORGE SELWYN AS A YOUNG MAN

want of money. He finds it difficult to make both ends meet on "two hundred and twenty pounds a year, which I should otherwise think a competent allowance." He writes to his London agent, Mr Vincent Mathias, "to beg that if you know any means by which I can obtain of my father a sum of money over and above my yearly income, that I may be a little before time in my affairs, you will be so kind as to inform me of them. . . . In respect to my circumstances, when I consider how much all kind of economy was a stranger to me, and that carelessness and dissipation were by long use become almost natural, it is surprising to me that I have been able to keep within bounds as much as I have." He is in "extreme want of clothes," but thinks "it is useless to be very circumstantial upon this subject, since everybody's own reflections must easily suggest to them how many difficulties and necessities a person labours under who never has the present enjoyment of one shilling; and if my father has not entirely withdrawn his affection from me, I am certain he will think it a case that deserves his consideration." Three months later (January 1743) he again refers to "the many difficulties and mortifying circumstances which a want of money has, and does still expose me to"; and in March of the same year he is still in trouble. "If I cannot obtain any assistance from my father in such a necessity as this, I shall really think it a very hard case, especially as I have been guilty of no extravagance to reduce me to it; for if I was obliged to live in a more frugal manner than I have done since I have been in Paris, I do not know whether living in a cave might not be just as agreeable. I am conscious of having neglected to write to my family in Cleveland Court a great while, but it has not proceeded from any indifference or want of affection, but really a want of knowing what would be most proper to say to them in my present circumstances." These are letters of a typical prodigal. The prodigal is always in difficulties; it is never his own fault (has he not been marvellously economical?); and at the back of his brain he cherishes a little grievance that an affectionate parent has not been more prompt and liberal in his payments. In this case, however, the parent seems to have relented; for in July of this same year, Miss Anne Pitt (sister of William), writing to Selwyn from Argeville, is "extremely glad to find, by the letter you do me the favour to write me,

that you have reason to be satisfied with the disposition of your father towards you. I can pretend to no merit in this, but desiring to have the truth represented to him concerning you." Miss Pitt had evidently been acting as mediatrix between father and son. "It is certain that the happiness of your whole life depends upon your being well with Mr and Mrs Selwyn, which I heartily wish, for their sakes as well as yours." So the prodigal returned to his father's house in Cleveland Court, and no doubt was received, as most prodigals are, with open arms.

After this interval of wandering, Selwyn went back to Hertford College in 1744, or early in 1745. "I hope you divert yourself well at the expense of the whole university," wrote his cousin Sir Charles Hanbury Williams; "though the object is not worthy you. The dullest fellow in it has parts enough to ridicule it, and you have parts to fly at nobler game": as who should say: "You are a man of the world; you are wasted at the 'varsity: town is the place for you." Well, George Selwyn was certainly "diverting himself" at Oxford: but it was entirely at his own expense. The University laughed last and longest, as we shall see in a moment. For a few months Selwyn, no doubt, had a good time. He was "Bosky" to his friends and comrades, and no frolic was complete without him. Thus in April 1745, Viscount Downe writes to him that he has "prevailed upon Lord Abergavenny and Assheton to be of our party. If you will have your horse at Juggins's at eleven we will meet you. A ride is very agreeable this morning, but much more when we find it particularly so to you, the place of dining we will fix upon when mounted." Alas, poor "Bosky"! Soon after this his career at Oxford terminated abruptly, and the coffee-houses, the clubs, and Magdalen walks, knew him no more. Towards the end of May something happened, something so serious that Selwyn immediately left Oxford for London until the storm should blow over. But the storm did not blow over. Dr Newton removed his name from the books of Hertford College, although he generously allowed the fiction to go forth to the world that it was Selwyn's "own desire." "The Principal having signified to me," writes the Bursar of Hertford in June, "that it was your desire that your name should not be continued in the book of my office longer than the end of this quarter, I beg leave to acquaint you that it is left out accord-

ing to your request; and that there is due to the House £5, 11s. 6d. and to myself for coal 8s., in all £5, 19s. 6d." The event was not long delayed. At the end of July George Selwyn was publicly expelled from the University of Oxford, and all and singular the scholars and others were warned not to have anything to do with that abandoned person.

The details of this affair have never before been made public, although it has not been entirely a mystery. From letters printed by Mr Jesse it was known that Selwyn had been drinking at a tavern, and that, in some way or other, he had ridiculed the rite of Holy Communion. But that was practically all. Ideas were vague as to where, or when, the orgie had taken place, or who were present and took part in it. It has all been preserved, however, in the records of Convocation, now printed for the first time. Here is the story and its sequel, told in the judicial language of the University.

(29th July 1745)

[1] Die lunae viz vicesimo nono mensis julii A° Dom: 1745 causa convocations erat ut Georgius Augustus Selwyn nuper e collegio Hertfordiensi Superioris ordinis commensalis gravissimi criminis insimulatus, quatenus institutionem coenæ domini nostri Jesu Christi contumolioso et impio tractaverit tam nefandi facinoris Hanc Domum ultricem sentiret—

Imprimis lecta erat Accusatio Tenoris subsequentis—

The crimes wherewith George Augustus Selwyn, late of Hertford College, Gentleman Commoner, standeth charged, are these (viz.).

1. That on the twenty-first day of May last past, being drinking at a club, in company with several young noblemen and gentlemen of this University, at the house of one Charles Deverelle (?), an unlicensed seller of wines, near St Martin's Church in the City of Oxford, he the said George Augustus Selwyn did impiously affect to personate our Blessed Saviour, in His Institution of the Holy Sacrament; and did ludicrously and profanely apply the words used by our Saviour at the said Institution, to the intemperate purposes of the said club.

2. That he the said George Augustus Selwyn did then and there take an old cup or chalice, which he had with no small pains provided for this wicked end, and did pour red wine into the same, and did cause the said Charles Deverelle to drink of

[1] Acta Convocat. Univ. Oxon. Arch. 1745.

the said wine in the said cup or chalice ; and upon his, the said Selwyn's delivery of the said cup or chalice into the hands of him the said Deverelle, he the said Selwyn made use of these words, " Drink this in remembrance of me—" or words to that effect.

3. That the said George Augustus Selwyn did afterwards then and there take the said cup or chalice, and having made signs as though he was blooding at one of his arms, did apply the neck of a bottle of wine into the said arm, from whence the said wine did gently distill into the said cup or chalice ; whereupon the said Selwyn was heard to say, " It bloods freely," and that upon the refusal of one of the company to drink out of the said cup or chalice, he the said Selwyn did address himself unto that Person so refusing and upon this occasion did make use of these words, " Here's my body, Hoc est corpus meum—you know what it is in Greek—" or to that effect.

The truth of all which will appear by the several depositions taken in this behalf, and which are as follows:

LINCOLN COLLEGE
OXFORD

The Deposition of Charles Deverelle

This examinant saith that at a meeting of a club of gentlemen at his house on the twenty-first day of May last past immediately after dinner, a cup, which he heard some of the gentlemen say they took for a Communion plate, was going about with the Health of prosperity to the club, and that he heard one, whom he took to be Mr Selwyn, say that he would drink a bumper out of it, for he was resolved to have his Body full of wine, that he called for a Bottle of wine all which he this Examinant thinks Mr Selwyn drank, and that he afterwards called for another which a boy then in waiting carried to him, that this Examinant took Mr Selwyn to be in Liquour or to be ignorant of what he was about.

The contents of the above are
trew to the best of my knowledge.
CH. DEVERELLE

Sworn before me this nineteenth
day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM
(*i.e.* Eusebius Isham, Rector of Lincoln).

The Deposition of John Parker

The Examinant saith that on the day mentioned in Mr Deverelle's Deposition he waited on the Club at dinner, and that immediately after Dinner Mr Selwyn sent him to Mr Wilkins the goldsmith to borrow a cup, and that he returned with a new cup with two Handles to it, that Mr Selwyn upon sight of it told him that it was not the Cup which he meant and swore two or three times at him for mistaking and sent him back again for the old Cup, which he saw in the shop, with which the said Examinant returned and out of which Mr Selwyn began a health, but what Health he could not tell.

JOHN PARKER

Sworn before me
the 19th Day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM.

The Examination of the Honble. David Murray taken the fourteenth day of July 1745

Mr Murray says that he saw nothing or heard nothing of the cup till it was produced after dinner or about that time, that he remembers nothing that was said to the man of the House whilst he drank—but he saw Mr Selwyn pour wine from a bottle under his arm into the cup and heard him say that he bled very freely, or that it bloods freely, and that this was drunk by Mr Selwyn himself; no other gentleman that he knows of drank any wine pour'd out in that manner besides — that soon after this Mr Murray left the company and so (*sic*) no more of Mr Selwyn till he met him at the Coffee house, as he verily believes, before four o'clock; when the said Mr Selwyn appeared to be by several of his actions very much in Liquour. And the said Mr Murray has been inform'd by Mr Selwyn's companions that he is accustomed to drink a great deal at dinner. D. MURRAY[1]

Sworn before me,
the Day above written.
EUS. ISHAM

The Deposition of the Right Honble. Tho. Ld. Harley

This Examinant saith that on the twenty-first day of May last past or thereabouts, at a meeting of several gentlemen at Mr Deverelle's house immediately after dinner Mr Selwyn

[1] Son of the Earl of Mansfield.

drank in Rhenish wine, and put about a Health viz. Prosperity to the Club in a Cup which the said Examinant took to be a Communion plate, and did not upon that account drink out of it; and that it being customary for the man of the House to drink the said Health, red wine was put into a half-pint glass, which Mr Selwyn afterwards poured into the Cup and gave it to Mr Deverelle with these or the like words, "Take or Do this in Remembrance of Us." Moreover this Examinant saith that he did not perceive that Mr Selwyn, when this was done, was concerned in Liquour, and that the said Examinant believing the said cup to be a communion plate did, soon after the said words were mention'd by Mr Selwyn to Mr Deverelle, leave the Room. HARLEY

Sworn before me the 19th Day of July 1745. EUS. ISHAM

The Deposition of the Hble. Mr Rich. Leveson Gower

This Examinant saith at the time and in the place mention'd in Lord Harley's deposition immediately after dinner Mr Selwyn drank a Cup, which the said Examinant supposed to be a Roman Catholic Communion Plate, of Rhenish to the Prosperity of the Club, and that it being customary for the man of the House to drink the said Health red wine was poured into the said Cup, which the said Mr Deverelle drank, and this Examinant saith that soon after Mr Selwyn lent his arm and applied the bottle to it letting the wine run gently out of the bottle into the Cup saying "it bloods freely" and that talking of the Roman Catholick way of Communion he cross'd himself on the Forehead saying the Roman Catholicks did so when they went into Church and that Hocus Pocus came from Hoc est Corpus meum meaning thereby to ridicule as this Examinant supposed the Roman Catholick way of Communion: moreover the said Examinant saith that he supposed Mr Selwyn to be very much disorder'd with Liquour.

RD. LEVESON GOWER[1]

Sworn before me
the 19th Day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM

LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD
July 18th, 1745

The Deposition of Richard Ed. Hunt, Student of Christ Church

This Examinant saith that at a meeting of a club of several gentlemen of the University of Oxford at Charles Deverelle's

[1] Fourth son of John, first Earl Gower; born 1726, died 1753.

near St Martin's Church in the City of Oxford on the 21st day of May 1745 or thereabouts as he supposes immediately after dinner George Augustus Selwyn of Hertford College in the said University fill'd a Cup which he the said Richard Ed. Hunt took to be a piece of Communion plate with wine, and drank as he the said Richard Ed. Hunt supposed prosperity to the Club that he the said Richard Ed. Hunt did not drink it out of that Cup, imagining it an improper one to be made use of on that occasion, and this Examinant further saith that to the best of his Remembrance the said George Augustus Selwyn delivered the said Cup with red wine in it to the said Charles Deverelle (it being customary for the man of the House to drink the said Health) and said "Drink this in remembrance of me (*e.g.* us)" or words to that effect and afterwards applied the neck of the bottle to his Arm and made signs of blooding by a motion of his Fingers and pouring the Red wine in small quantities. He next applied himself to the said Examinant saying "Here's my body Hoc est corpus meum" and "you know what it is in Greek" or words to that effect. RD. ED. HUNT

Sworn before me this
eighteenth day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM

The Deposition of Thomas Prichard, Scholar of Trinity College

This Examinant saith that he was at the meeting above mention'd in Mr Ed. Hunt's deposition and that he heard the above named George Augustus Selwyn, upon the delivery of the above mention'd cup to the above mentioned Charles Deverelle say "Drink this in Remembrance of Us," and also that he the said Examinant saw the Bottle under the said George Augustus Selwyn's arm, but cannot say further in relation to that or anything else. THOMAS PRICHARD

Sworn before me
the 18th Day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM

The Deposition of Mr T. Ashton (sic) *Gentleman Commoner of B. N. College*

This Examinant saith that on the twenty-first day of May last past at a meeting of several gentlemen at Mr Deverelle's House immediately after Dinner Mr Selwyn of Hertford Col-

lege sent to Mr Wilkins for a cup, the messenger returning with a wrong cup was sent back again for an old Cup which Mr Selwyn had seen in his shop with which the messenger return'd, that this Examinant took the said cup to be a Chalice, that Mr Selwyn filled it with Rhenish wine and drank prosperity to the Club, that he applied a bottle to his arm and made signs of blooding, and addressing himself to Mr Ed. Hunt said "Hoc est corpus meum" or words to that effect, and "you know what it is in Greek" and this Examinant farther saith that Mr Selwyn was then much concerned in Liquour having, as this Examinant believes, drank to his own share near two bottles of Rhenish at dinner, moreover this Examinant saith that Mr Selwyn did this, as he imagines to ridicule the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

THOS. ASSHETON

Lincoln College.
Sworn before me this
28th Day of July 1745.
EUS. ISHAM

The said Examinant likewise saith that he did not apprehend Mr Selwyn to be so much disordered in Liquour as not to know what he did.

THOS. ASSHETON

Deinde lectum erat Decretum Tenoris subsequentis

Bannitio Selwyn

Stamp 6d. 6d.

Whereas George Augustus Selwyn late of Hertford College, Gentleman Commoner hath been accused and convicted before the Rev. Dr Isham Vice Chancellor, the Heads of Colleges and Halls and the Proctors of this University of certain Facts betokening a Habit of mind abandon'd to the most horrible impiety; and particularly of ridiculing and prophaning the Institution of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the presence of several young gentlemen, in the House of one Charles Deverelle near St Martin's Church in the City of Oxford on the 21st day of May 1745. And the said Vice Chancellor, Heads of Colleges and Halls and Proctors, in order, as far as in them lies, to punish the author of such abominable profaneness and to secure the morals and religious principles of the youth committed to their care, from being corrupted by so wicked an example, have judged that this said George Augustus Selwyn ought to be utterly expell'd and banish'd from our said University and the precincts thereof; we there-

fore the Doctors and Masters Regents and not-Regents (?) of our said University in Convocation assembled, having, on the day of the date hereof in our said Convocation, heard, as well the charge exhibited against the said George Augustus Selwyn as also the Proofs and evidences produced in support of the said charge, clearly and distinctly read over unto us, and having sufficiently weigh'd and consider'd of the same, Do, by these presents ratify and confirm the said Judgment of the said Vice Chancellor, Heads of Colleges and Halls and Proctors, and we do hereby pronounce Decree and declare that the said George Augustus Selwyn for and on account of the said crimes so alleged and proved against him, ought to be deprived of all and singular the Rights and Privileges of our said University, both now and hereafter; and that he ought to be utterly expell'd and banish'd from our said University and never henceforward to be permitted to enter and reside within our said University or the precincts of the same. And we do accordingly by these presents, so deprive, expell and banish him the said George Augustus Selwyn; and in case the said George Augustus Selwyn (this our sentence of Deprivation, Expulsion, and Bannition, notwithstanding) shall at any time hereafter, presume to enter and make stay within this our University or the precincts thereof we do hereby admonish and strictly enjoin all and singular the scholars and others, of what Denomination soever, belonging to our said University, that immediately upon their knowledge thereof they do acquaint the Vice Chancellor or the Proctors of our said University therewith: and that they the said scholars and other privileged persons do not, in such case, presume to accompany and converse with the said George Augustus Selwyn on any pretence whatsoever, either in publick or in private, upon pain of the Law and their contempt thereof. And lastly, to this intent that this our Sentence or Decree may be sufficiently promulged and that no one hereafter may pretend ignorance thereof, we do, by these presents, farther Decree and ordain, that, within Three Days from and after the Date hereof, the same be reduced into the form of an edict or Proclamation, under the Seal of Office of the said Vice Chancellor, be affixed at the usual most publick and conspicuous places within our said University and the City of Oxford.

Read and Unanimously passed in a full Committee of the University of Oxford on Monday the twenty-ninth of July 1745.

EUS. ISHAM, Vice Chancellor.
THO. WALDGRAVE, Proctor Senior.
ROBT. SPEED, Proctor Junior.
HENRY FISHER, Register.

Opinions will differ as to this escapade and as to the rightness of the sequel. Correct and virtuous people will shudder at the impiety, and think the wicked Selwyn well punished. Others, gentler and more charitable, though not perhaps so immaculate, will explain the matter as a drunken freak and be sorry for the culprit. At this distance of time it is hardly worth giving an opinion one way or the other. Let us merely note that Selwyn, at the age of twenty-six, was already too fond of Rhenish wine, and—to go deeper into character—was lacking in that fundamental reverence which is an attribute of all wise men. The sentence was undoubtedly severe, and so both Selwyn and his friends considered it. But, universities being what they are, and were—institutions almost entirely under the control of the clergy—no sentence less severe could reasonably have been expected.

One or two remarks may be made upon the depositions. It will be observed that neither the landlord nor the waiter turned informer. "Mr Selwyn gave a health, but what health he could not tell," says Parker. It was the gentlemen who gave Selwyn away. Of these gentlemen Mr Leveson Gower tried hardest to shield him. "I have deposed nothing else but what I told you," he wrote to Selwyn after making his deposition; "the sum of which is, that you said some things disrespectful about religion, which I thought tended to the ridicule of the Roman Catholic religion, and that you was disordered by liquor, which is really what I thought; and I hope will be of some service to you. What the rest have deposed I can't tell, not having seen anything. Assheton was never sent for, which is something very odd to me." Here Leveson Gower was wrong, as we have seen; or perhaps he wrote before Assheton's deposition was taken, which was on the day before Convocation met. But that deposition was the most damaging of all. Assheton will not let the sinner escape if he can help it. He takes the trouble to add a rider to the effect that Selwyn was not too drunk to know what he was doing. Yet only a few weeks before Assheton was meeting the sinner "at Juggins's at eleven," and riding out into the country with him and other members of Selwyn's set. He might at least have remembered his friendship, and taken a lesson in

reticence from Deverelle and Parker.[1] Again, it has been suggested by more than one writer that this escapade of Selwyn's was the foundation of the "Hell Fire Club" at Medmenham Abbey. It had, of course, nothing in the world to do with the Hell Fire Club, which was not founded until many years after this. The "club of gentlemen" which met at Deverelle's near St Martin's Church was one of a large number of so-called "clubs" which were a feature of the Oxford life of that day. Men would dine in hall and then adjourn to a tavern to drink wine. There they would imagine themselves to be "bucks of the first head" from town, and form themselves into clubs on the town model. "Clubbable men" were those who could drink plenty of Rhenish: that was the principal qualification for membership. Thus the men of All Souls adjourned to the Three Tuns to such an extent that, says Amherst, "we should judge it (All Souls) to be translated over the way, and that the Three Tuns Tavern was All Souls College did not the effigies of the good Archbishop over the door convince us to the contrary." And thus it happened that "the don was carried to bed as often as the servitor"; and when he recovered from his debauch no doubt hurried down to Convocation, to help to expel the young person Selwyn for intemperance and profanity.

Selwyn did not take his banishment without protest. He was prepared to move heaven and earth to get the decree annulled. His friends supported him loyally: for already Selwyn seems to have had a genius for friendship. Thus Sir William Maynard (Walpole's "disagreeable cub") wrote him: "D—n the University; I wish they were both on fire, and one could hear the proctors cry like roasted lobsters"; Mr Thomas Streatfield did not "wonder at your having a dispute with the University, for I observe they bear a hatred to every man of more merit than themselves"; and Lady Susan Leck—daughter of that Hamilton killed in Hyde Park by Mohun—gave her opinion in a postcript: "*P.S.*—I cannot help casting my eyes on that part of your letter where you seem to think the people of Oxford had principles: this

[1] Selwyn never forgot Assheton's conduct upon this occasion. Thirty years afterwards he stayed in the west country with this Assheton's son, and referred to the father as a "sad rascal."

really astonishes me, for you must know that they never had any, human or divine, party only governs."

Fortified by these sentiments, Selwyn had wild thoughts of going to law and of taking the opinion of the courts upon the decree of Convocation. He consulted his Oxford friends about it. One of these was Dr Henry Brookes, at this time Registrar of the Vice-Chancellor's Court. In his first letter Brookes was not discouraging. "If you find cause to conclude that either the matter or the manner of the decree passed against you was irregular, unjust, oppressive, or partial, your struggle to blunt the edge of that decree, and to avoid certain resulting inconveniences by a regular, a legal, and well advised appeal to the supreme judge and visitor of the University, may possibly find its justification in a primary law of nature, which dictates self-preservation and self-defence." A few months afterwards, however, he takes a different line. He points out the absurdity of George's appeal to the courts. "A solemn decree pronounced by the University of Oxford, the power of which body to make and enforce such decree is so well justified by charters, and confirmed by the legislature, that it will not readily yield, even to the weight of Westminster Hall." His true remedy was "an appeal to the King, as visitor of the University, and not by application to his courts of justice." But at the same time, says Brookes, if I were you I shouldn't do it. "You are pleased to call me your *friend*; that appellation gives me a right to tell you, with a freedom which you will excuse, that I have seriously and coolly considered your whole case, and were your cause *my own*, I should acquiesce under the first *onus*, and stir no further." He thinks Selwyn's suspicions of the loss of Dr Newton's esteem quite groundless; "and am, sir, your affectionate humble servant, H. B." Selwyn also wrote to Dr Newton for assistance in the matter. In reply Newton wrote a letter which is interesting in more ways than one. In the first place he encloses a copy of a letter written in the previous June—that is, before the expulsion. By it we learn that Selwyn had been in a little affair before that of Deverelle's tavern; that the Vice-Chancellor had had serious thoughts of expelling him for it; and that Newton had objected and had given Selwyn a good character.

"The upper part of the society here," he wrote, "with whom

he often converses, have, and always have had, a very good opinion of him. He is certainly not intemperate or dissolute, nor does he ever game, that I know of, or have heard of. He has a good deal of vanity, and loves to be admired and caressed, and so suits himself with great ease to the gravest and the sprightliest." That little touch about loving "to be admired and caressed" is surely very lifelike. It brings Selwyn before us almost for the first time. But, added Dr Newton, all this was in June. It "related to another affair than that for which you was expelled from this University; I do not see of what use it can be to you in the present case. The hope I had that the Christ Church tutors' suspicion of you was groundless, was a vain hope: for, eight days after, I did myself, at their instance, remove you from being any longer a member of this college, and my having done so was a proof to you that I now thought that suspicion well-grounded." Then a perverse idea occurs to Newton. It was *he* who had expelled Selwyn from the University, not Convocation. "I removed you for the same reason for which the University afterwards pretended to remove you: I had power to do it, which I think they had not, for after I had removed you from the college you ceased to be a member of the University." Newton expounds this highly questionable doctrine at some length, and no doubt to his own satisfaction. But he omits to give Selwyn any encouragement in his appeal against the decree. "Advising you seriously to review the conduct which has given offence, which I am confident you will then disapprove, I remain your well-wisher, etc., etc.

"For GEORGE AUGUSTUS SELWYN, Esq.,
at White's Chocolate House,
St James's, London."

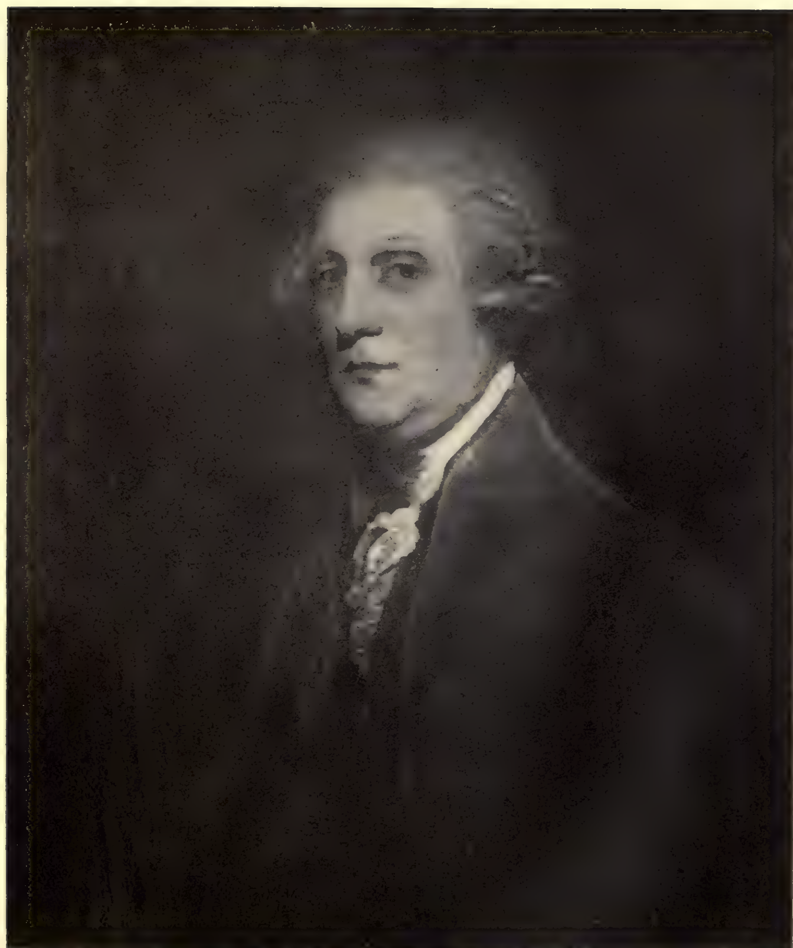
Of course it all came to nothing. The written letter remained, and no effort that Selwyn could make was likely to alter it, particularly as he happened to be guilty. In time he realised this, and desisted from his efforts. There was no appeal to the King or to his judges. Selwyn's short and inglorious career at Oxford was over.

CHAPTER IV

SELWYN ON THE TOWN

THE popular idea of George Selwyn is that he was an extremely witty person, with a taste for executions, who was always falling asleep. This may bear some distant resemblance to Selwyn in his middle period; but it has no relation at all to Selwyn the youth. At the age of six and twenty George Selwyn had as yet no reputation for wit; he had seen no executions to speak of; and he was remarkably wide awake. What manner of man was he when he came to town in 1745? In appearance, if we are to judge from his early portraits, he was singularly attractive. He had dark eyes and hair, a mobile mouth, and a round chin. The face, indeed, is full of intelligence and of humour. The humour is not in the eyes, however, which are almost melancholy (Walpole called them "demure"): Selwyn derived half his reputation as a wit from the fact that the alleged jokes proceeded from a man who looked exceedingly solemn and serious as he joked. But the full, curling, lips seem made for saying witty things, and perhaps sarcastic things also; and the Princess Marie Liechtenstein will have it that his slightly *retroussé* nose proclaims his power of repartee. But there are dangers in the reading of physiognomy. The Princess, for example, sees in George's face "the love for corpses combined with the facility for jokes" for which, according to tradition, he was famous. Now most people looking at the various portraits of Selwyn would entirely fail to perceive this extraordinary combination in his face: but still the Princess may be right. Mr Pitt was said to have liked a particular kind of pork pie, and Mr Fox had a passion for buff waistcoats. Has no female biographer of these distinguished men ever confirmed such predilections from their published portraits? On the whole, it is better to present Selwyn as Sir Joshua and others painted him, and allow each person to be his own interpreter of character.

The earliest portrait of Selwyn which we possess is not by Sir Joshua, but by an unknown and inferior artist. In this



GEORGE SELWYN

FROM A PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

picture (now at Quedgeley House) Selwyn appears as a handsome young man of twenty-three or four, so that it must have been painted about 1742-1743, when he was still an undergraduate at Oxford (p. 34). Selwyn was painted five times in all by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The first of these pictures in order of date is the "Conversation Piece," painted in 1759 for Horace Walpole, and containing full-length portraits of George Selwyn, Gilly Williams, and Dick Edgecumbe (p. 86). This picture hung over the chimney-piece in the refectory, or great parlour, at Strawberry Hill for many years. It is now in the possession of the Hon. Mrs Edward Stanley, of Bridgwater, and a fine replica, also painted by Sir Joshua, belongs to the Earl of Cadogan, and hangs at Culford. The next portrait by Sir Joshua, painted in 1761, is that in the possession of the Hon. Robert Marsham-Townshend (p. 48). Here Selwyn is still young and gay, with bright eyes, and an alert expression. This is a fine picture, but curiously misty in effect, owing to the fading of Sir Joshua's colours. Then we have a middle-aged portrait, painted either in 1764 or 1766, and now in the possession of the Earl of Rosebery (Frontispiece). This is in some ways the most interesting of all Selwyn's portraits. The face is calm and thoughtful; the eyes sombre but very direct. It is the face of a man whose first youth is over, and who is already beginning to be the " weary King Ecclesiast." For once Sir Joshua has forgotten his conventions of portraiture, and has put individuality and character into the face of his subject. Selwyn is gorgeously attired in a red coat trimmed with fur, and a yellow embroidered vest, with lace collar. He is nursing his favourite pug, Râton, and leans his head lightly upon his hand.

In 1770 Sir Joshua again painted George Selwyn, this time in company with Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle (p. 270). Here Selwyn is older, but not graver; in fact, he looks much more cheerful than in what we may call the Rosebery portrait, painted some years earlier. There is a fifth portrait of Selwyn, by Sir Joshua, the original of which I have not been able to trace. But there is an excellent copy by Jackson, R.A., now at Castle Howard. Jackson also made several pencil sketches from this picture, one of which is now at Holland House, and another (reproduced on p. 122) in Major Selwyn-Payne's possession, at Cheltenham. George Selwyn was one of Sir Joshua's

earliest patrons and most constant friends. Yet he was no blind admirer; more than once he criticised severely the artist's experiments in colouring, and time has proved that he was right. It is pleasant to think of Selwyn's many visits to the studio in Leicester Fields, and of his friendship for that great artist, and serenely wise and generous man. We may complete our catalogue of Selwyn's portraits by another Castle Howard picture, the pastel by H. D. Hamilton, an Irish artist, reproduced on p. 108.

To return to 1745. At this time Selwyn must have had what women call a "charming manner." He made friends easily, in his own rank of life and in others, and he always kept them. He "loved to be admired and caressed," as Dr Newton said. There is no doubt whatever that Selwyn, with a thousand faults, had the one great virtue of a good heart. He might be a sinner, but you could not help liking him, and forgiving the sin. There was much to forgive in this young man of twenty-six. He had spent his money, wasted his time, and been expelled from his university without a degree. His parents were evidently not at all in a forgiving mood: they found it easy to withstand his fascinations. Thus in 1746, when George dined with Ethelreda, Lady Townshend, and joked with her about the execution of Lord Kilmarnock, of whom she pretended to be very fond, she "burst into a flood of tears and rage, told him she now believed all his father and mother had said of him, and with a thousand other reproaches, flung upstairs." George was a most notorious young spendthrift and scapegrace. But still, I wish his parents had forgiven him. It is very questionable if his father at least ever did so. Colonel John Selwyn died in November 1751. It is said that his death was hastened by that of his favourite son, John, in June of the same year, which is probably true, and by the conduct of his second son, George, which we must hope is not true. Certainly after the death of his brother, George was in a very tender and chastened mood. On the 29th June 1751 he writes to his brother-in-law Thomas Townshend "not only to know how my father and mother do, but having the most entire dependence on your kindness and humanity, as well as on your particular friendship to me, to beg that you will not omit, when you find the most proper season for so doing, to present my duty to

them both, and to do justice to my present sentiments and concern, which I am no otherwise able to express than by assuring you they are such, as from the strongest ties of nature, and from my deep sense of the great obligations which I have to them, are the most just on so melancholy and affecting an occasion.

"It would, I am afraid, be in vain to flatter myself that I shall be able at any time to give much relief to their affliction, and at present can only think of sharing it with them. But as length of time never fails to weaken the force of the strongest impression, and may, in all probability, give them some leisure to think on me, it will be then that I shall hope for your good offices with them, and that you will be so good as to endeavour to persuade them of my most sincere desire to alleviate the weight of their misfortune by every opportunity that I can find, and to convince them of the love, esteem, and respect which I shall ever retain for the memory of our common loss, by a constant attention to follow his example. Dear Sir, I can subscribe with the greatest submission to the severest censure that could be passed on all my former conduct in this respect, only let me beg, that my heart, and the measure of my concern, may be judged by your own."

To this very proper letter Mr Townshend replied suitably, flattering himself "that you will not fail in what your duty, interest, and humanity, call so loudly upon you to do." Six weeks later the Rev. Charles Lyttelton in a letter fears that "things do not go quite right between you and your father. You need not be told of what importance it is to you to make every concession he requires. Your good sense and good heart will, I am persuaded, incite you to do what is right in this critical conjuncture, which must determine your future fortune and happiness." On 5th November Sir William Maynard "don't yet imagine you *quite* established in his good opinion"; and as this was written on the day of John Selwyn's death it is to be feared that George was never entirely forgiven by his father. He was probably not reconciled to his mother for some years after this. At all events, in an unpublished letter, dated 1754, his great-aunt Mrs Hewett, says she has been visiting George Selwyn, "which cuts me off from all his relations." But George was forgiven enough to be made the heir of Matson, which was substantially a free pardon.

At six and twenty, then, Selwyn was a good-looking young scapegrace, who, like so many scapegraces, was everybody's friend but his own. He was also by way being a young man of fashion. How could he be other than that? His parents were Court people. They moved in that select world where everybody knew everybody else, and where nothing mattered but birth. George was born into this world, and made himself very much at home in it. While yet a student at Oxford he had "seen life" in company with such well-known men about town as Richard Rigby and Hanbury Williams. "The newspapers can tell you as much news as I know, or ever will know," writes Williams to him in March 1745; "and to them I refer you for politics. When we talked together we talked of better things than these; and while we write to one another we will keep in the same track and never be serious." Thus the middle-aged man of fashion to his pupil, who learned the lesson eagerly enough. George Selwyn and his friends were never "serious." They could have been if they had taken the trouble, for none of them were in the least stupid; but they did not take the trouble. It was not their style to be serious. They talked of horses and women and cards, and kept serious things like politics for letters to their uncles and aunts. But in this are they very different from the young men of to-day? Do Selwyn's successors in St James's Street indulge constantly in highly intellectual conversation? They would be the first to deny any such impeachment.

George Selwyn was a young man of fashion. Now, young men of fashion—in spite of judicial dicta—must live. How did George find an income sufficient to support him in his arduous career? His father was not a rich man. It is true that by "adding one to one" he had attained a competent fortune. He was able, for example, to purchase the manor of Scadbury and settle it upon his daughter, Albinia, and her children. But John Selwyn was not particularly anxious to grant a large yearly allowance to the spendthrift George. He knew too well where it would go. At this point, however, the reader stumbles upon what was regarded by the aristocracy of England in Georgian days as a beautiful dispensation of Providence: the sinecure system. In those days there was never much trouble about younger sons or poor relations. The

Army and Navy having been exhausted, there was always the Civil Service: always the chance of obtaining by influence a Place—the word deserves a capital—the salary attached to which was good and the duties of which were none at all. Observe the practice. The younger son was appointed by Letters Patent to the Place at an adequate salary, with leave to appoint a deputy. The deputy, an obscure person, did all the work, and took all the worry, for a very moderate remuneration; and the balance of the salary went to the placeman. In Selwyn's day the patent placeholders were a strong and virtuous body of men who honestly believed that in some inscrutable and mysterious way the safety of the Constitution was bound up with themselves and their offices. And so when Burke abolished most of these sinecures, in 1782, a bitter cry went up from the dispossessed. The most eloquent defence of the system was written by Horace Walpole, who was himself an old and hardened sinecurist. Horace admitted, cynically enough, that the overtaxed poor might perhaps have some cause for complaint; but he also pointed out that it did not lie in the mouths of other members of the leisured classes to accuse the placemen of parasitism. "He who holds an ancient patent place," says he, "enjoys it as much by law as any gentleman holds his estate, and by more ancient tenure than most gentlemen hold theirs and from the same fountain, only of ancienter date than many of the nobility and gentry hold their estates; who possess them only by grants from the Crown, as I possess my places; . . . nor can I think myself as a patent-placeman a mere useless or a less legal engrosser of part of the wealth of the nation than deans and prebendaries who fatten on Christianity like any less holy incumbent of a fee." The argument was simple enough. Once you begin to abolish sinecures, where are you going to stop? What about the Church? What about the universities? What about the country gentlemen? In short, touch the placeman, and you begin a Radical campaign of which no one can see the end.

But in 1745 Burke was at Trinity College, Dublin, not thinking of touching anybody, and various members of the Selwyn family were calmly enjoying numerous and well-paid sinecure Places. The prevalence of the system is brought home to anyone who takes the trouble to examine the Docquet Book

of Privy Seals at the Record Office in Chancery Lane. Choose a well-known eighteenth-century name like Walpole or Townshend, and observe how often it recurs in that book. The Selwyns make a brave show. John Selwyn, senior, John Selwyn, junior, George Selwyn, Henry Selwyn, William Selwyn, H. C. Selwyn : they are all there, some of them occurring several times, and mostly in respect of sinecure offices. Thus Colonel John Selwyn was in 1739 appointed "Master of St Lawrence's Hospital in Cirencester or Cisester, with all authorities, privileges, profits, and emoluments," and in 1747 Senior Paymaster of Marines ; and in 1746 John Selwyn, junior, was appointed Junior Paymaster of Marines "in the room of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams," who had gone into the diplomatic service. And now we see whence our young man of fashion obtained some at least of his funds.

On the 1st of March 1740 George Selwyn, then nearly twenty-one years of age, was nominated to the not very distinguished offices of Clerk of the Irons and Surveyor of the Meltings at the Mint. The warrant under the Privy Seal is described as "a grant unto George Selwyn Esquire of the offices of Clerk of the Irons and Surveyor of the Melting Houses in the Tower of London To hold the said offices by himself or his sufficient Deputy or Deputys during his natural life with the yearly fee of Twenty marks for the exercise of the office of Clerk of the Irons and the like yearly fee of twenty marks for the exercise of that of Surveyour in as ample a manner as William Evans Esquire deceased or any other persons have held and enjoyed the same." The reader will at once observe that George's total salary as Clerk of the Irons and Surveyor of the Melting Houses came to the not very munificent sum of forty marks—that is to say, twenty-seven pounds—a year. This would not be of very much use to a young man of fashion. But here again one comes across another fine characteristic of the system. The salary of a post was not at all a conclusive indication of its real value. There were perquisites : rights, franchises, privileges, which the holder might exercise even as his predecessors did. Thus Selwyn was to exercise his office in "as ample a manner as William Evans Esquire deceased." It appeared that Evans had the right to receive rent for a house at the Mint. Evans

was an easy-going landlord, but Selwyn was different. "In respect to the rent," he writes to Mr Mathias, "I am resolved to fix it to twenty-five pounds per annum, as long as the house belongs to me. My successor, whoever he may be, may, if he pleases, let it for nothing; but I think it more probable that, if he considers what the value of the house is, he will raise the rent five pounds more. My tenant quotes General Evans as a precedent, but I cannot think he should be one for me: for he had a very plentiful fortune, and other employments much more considerable; in so much that, if he did not think it worth his while to be exact in regard to the profits of so inconsiderable a place as that in which I succeed him, he might afford to do it, but I believe you know my circumstances too well, not to think I am in the right to make every reasonable advantages I can." This rent and the salary brought the profits of Selwyn's "inconsiderable place" up to fifty-two pounds a year. There may have been other perquisites as well (there was, it is said, a weekly dinner, which Selwyn faithfully attended); but probably the total income was under £100. In addition to this Selwyn had in these early years an allowance from his father, which, in 1742, seems to have amounted to £220 per annum. Or possibly this sum included the profits of his Place: the point is not clear. But in any case Selwyn must have been fairly short of money for some years after his coming to town, say between 1745 and 1751. In the latter year came his brother's and his father's deaths, the former on the 27th of June, the latter on the 5th of November. But between June and November—to be accurate, on the 17th of August—Colonel Selwyn made a will "to settle and secure my estate in such manner as may preserve it to my family and prevent any controversies that may—after my death—otherwise happen concerning the same." He left to his only son George Augustus Selwyn for life, first, Matson "alias Matsdon" in the county of Gloucester, with all its rents and services, subject only to Mrs Selwyn's jointure. After Selwyn's death the estate was to go to "the Honourable Thos. Townshend Esquire and the Honble. Roger Townshend his brother"; second, the castle and manor of Ludgarshall or Luggershall in Wilts, "with the right or reputed right to vote in choice or Election of burgesses to sit in the House of Commons"; third, a house "near May-

fair Chappel," and another house, Danson, in the Cray district, both leasehold properties; and fourth, "the annuity or annuitys which I purchased for his [George's] life of Lord Tyrawley, charged on his lordship's estate in Ireland." The amount of these annuities is not given, but we now know them to have been three annuities of £100 per annum each.[1] Such was John Selwyn's will. He named no executors, and no residuary legatee: administration "with the will annexed" was therefore granted to his widow, Mary Selwyn. Some difficulty of a legal kind appears to have arisen; for a friendly action (George Augustus Selwyn *v.* Mary Selwyn) was instituted in the Court of Chancery, in which the Hon. Charles Yorke was briefed for the plaintiff. You may read Mr Yorke's argument, and consult his brief, in the manuscript department of the British Museum.[2] One other curious fact about John Selwyn's will deserves to be noted. It made no mention of a great estate which belonged to him, and which therefore descended to George Selwyn as his heir. This estate has always been placed in the West Indies by the biographers of Selwyn, no doubt because he held a sinecure post in the Barbadoes, and also because of the many references to Selwyn's "negroes" by Gilly Williams and others of his correspondents. But Selwyn had no property in the West Indies: the mysterious estate, with its equally mysterious negroes, was in North Carolina.

We learn this from a curious document preserved among the Newcastle papers in the British Museum.[3] This is a petition of George Selwyn to the Treasury, dated 1751, shortly after his father's death. In it he sets out at length a grant to John Selwyn in 1745 of sixteen tracts of land, each containing 12,500 acres, "lying in the extream parts of North Carolina, near the mountains and the Cataba Indians, with a quit-rent of Four Shillings Proclamation Money for every 100 acres, payable to the Crown after the expiration of ten years," on condition that he should settle one white person on every 200 acres: otherwise the unsettled land was to revert to his Majesty after ten years. Petitioner's father was prevented from settling the lands "partly owing to the continuance of the war, and partly

[1] See Chapter XIV.

[2] Add. MSS. 36195, f. 348; 36224, f. 6.

[3] Add. MSS. 34736, f. 183.

by frequent illnesses," although he was "at very great expences in surveying the land, passing the grants, and settling some white familys in that Wast (*sic*) and distant country." (This is surely a George Selwyn touch.) "Your Petitioner prays for a further exemption of Quit Rent, and also from the obligation of settling one white person in every 200 acres, for the space of 7 years, to commence from the expiration of the said term of ten years." The petition is signed "George Selwyn," and endorsed "Referred to the Board of Trade." What did the Board of Trade do with it? We do not know. We do not even know what happened eventually to the estate (or the negroes); it is not mentioned in his will. No doubt it was lost in the loss of America; and no doubt also it was this estate of 200,000 acres in North Carolina which made George Selwyn so fervent a supporter of Great Britain in the war of the Revolution.

On his father's death, therefore, George Selwyn became a man of property and of means. But nevertheless he added to his income four years afterwards by accepting another and better Place: and perhaps we may as well complete here our account of Selwyn the Sinecurist. By warrant under the Privy Seal dated 27th April 1755, and subsequently by Letters Patent dated December of the same year, Selwyn was appointed Paymaster of the Works "Concerning the Repairs, new Buildings and well-keeping of any of His (Majesty's) houses of Access," in place of Denzil Onslow, Esquire, at the salary of £400 a year "to be retained out of moneys coming to his hands." This was confirmed by George III. on his accession, the new Letters Patent being issued in March 1761. Selwyn held this post for twenty-seven years, until Burke abolished it in 1782. The practice was to "Imprest" to the paymaster from the Exchequer lump sums of money, which were duly disbursed and accounted for to the auditor at the end of the year. The account went up to the auditor year after year in the name of George Augustus Selwyn, but it is more than probable that George Augustus Selwyn never once saw the document. On one occasion the clerk who drew the account seems not even to have been sure of the paymaster's name, for a certain item runs:

"Augustus Selwyn? (*sic*) this accountant Paymaster of His

Majesty's Works at $^{\text{Cli}}_{\text{iiii}}$ a year, for a clerk at xx^{d} a day and for his allowance in lieu of lodgings at $^{\text{li}}_{\text{xxv}}\ ^{\text{s}}_{6}$ a year," and so on. When this post was abolished in 1782 Selwyn was very wroth, considering that as a good "Government man" he ought to have been spared: and indeed a sinecurist who had enjoyed £400 a year (not counting perquisites) for twenty-seven years might be pardoned a little irritation at seeing his income suddenly vanish by Act of Parliament. But Selwyn was consoled in 1784 by a Place which had escaped the reforming zeal of Burke, and which was exactly twice as remunerative as the Works' office. He was appointed by William Pitt Surveyor-General of Crown Lands: "of all and singular our Honors, Castles, Lordship Manors, Forests, Chaces, Parks, Messuages, Lands, Tenements, Woods, Services, Revenues, Possessions and hereditaments whatsoever," at "a certain annuity or annual fee of £800 of lawful money." Selwyn held this post until his death in 1791. He also for many years was Clerk of the Crown and Peace and Registrar of the Court of Chancery in the island of Barbadoes (the court was in the Barbadoes, not the registrar): an unconsidered trifle, snapped up by John Selwyn in 1724[1] The story of this "trifle," however, is worth telling. The grant was for John Selwyn's own life, and for the lives of his two sons, "and the life of the longer liver of them." John Selwyn never enjoyed this post, for his estate was only to begin on the death of Anthony Cracherode, Esquire, the then holder; and, as it happened, Anthony Cracherode, Esquire, survived John Selwyn. He died on 22nd April 1752. His deputy, one John Murray, continued to act until 13th July, and in these three months received the sum of £280 odd, fees and profits of the post. This came to the knowledge of the new registrar, George Augustus Selwyn, Esquire, who promptly (Selwyn-like) demanded the £280. Mr Murray refused to pay, and said the money was his. Thereupon Selwyn brought an "action on the case" against him in 1753. The trial came on in 1757, and the jury found for Murray. Selwyn appealed to the Court of Errors (in Barbadoes), and was beaten again. Then he appealed to the Privy Council, and briefed his friend Charles Yorke (who, by the way, with Mr Alex. Wedderburn, drew up a most admir-

[1] Add. MSS. 36125, f. 103.

able statement for the appellant).[1] The appeal was heard in February 1761—eight years after action brought—and the brief is endorsed in Yorke's handwriting: "Judgment reversed, with costs." So that Selwyn triumphed after many days, as indeed on the facts he was bound to do. It was this fact which gave rise to the legends about Selwyn's West Indian estates, and which was sufficient to "star" him in the books of the Jockey Club as a West Indian member. This completes George Selwyn's record as a Placeman.

One must apologise to the Man of Fashion for lingering so long over the sordid details of his yearly income. But really it is rather important; for Selwyn happened to come upon the town at a time when of all things it behoved a man to stand well with his bankers. You might be a jolly good fellow (as Selwyn was); but unless you could afford to lose a few hundred guineas of an evening with equanimity you missed the real joy of life. For it was essentially a time of play. Everybody played at cards, or diced, or otherwise gambled, from her ladyship of Walmoden at St James's down to the idle apprentices in Mr Hogarth's graveyard. Most of all the clubmen played: they had no other diversion. They did not sit down after dinner, as we do in more enlightened days, and drowse over a pipe and a newspaper, or talk fatuously about politics in the smoking-room. They drew forth the card-tables, lit the candles, and played picquet or macco till dawn. Lucky he who finished the night even, or a winner. It was a far more common thing for a young gentleman to rise from these tables "broke" or "utterly undone." At least that was the feeling next morning, when he would write off to his friends for assistance, and paint himself as in a condition of the utmost dejection and despair. But nobody in that circle was ever permanently "undone," not even Charles James Fox, who was so often guinea-less after a night at the macco-tables. There were always kind friends who made "arrangements," knowing that their own turn might come next. There were such things as deeds, bills, mortgages. In a week the young gentleman was again playing merrily, and perhaps winning back all that he had lost.

Now in this matter George Selwyn was essentially a "clubbable" man. He loved the gaming-table, and devoted

[1] Add. MSS. 36218, f. 90.

to it a goodly portion of his long life. Even so late as 1778, when he was old enough to know better, Selwyn confessed to his niece that he had "an ungovernable passion for play." To be sure George was guilty here of some slight exaggeration, for so far as one can discover from the records of his life he had a singular self-control, and never made any really great gambling losses. But he had the passion, especially in his younger days, and he indulged it with considerable freedom. His kind friends gave him many a hint upon the subject: "Permit me, sir," wrote the Rev. Knight Burroughs to him in 1751, "to make use of the liberty of a friend, and to entreat your favourable acceptance of my advice, which, though indifferent, may yet have some little value. Not that I would presume to instruct one that knows things so much better than myself, but I would only beg leave to caution you against indulging yourself in one amusement—I think I cannot give it a softer name—which you are sensible, by sad experience, has cost you many an uneasy moment. I need not explain myself any further, but will only add, that when once that fatal passion is rooted in the mind of any man, the Duke of Bedford's fortune will not be sufficient to make him happy. Let me, therefore, confine you to take a noble resolution, worthy of a man of sense and honour, worthy of yourself. . . . Part with but that one failing, and believe me, dear sir, you will soon become as happy and as immeasurably esteemed as any man in the world." Admirable advice, discounted in part by the fact that the writer is a humbug, who is waiting for his father's death when he should be "very happy, but not before," and who goes on to hint that a loan of £130 would be very acceptable. In any case Selwyn did not take the advice, and never quite gave up the gaming-table, as we shall see often enough in the course of this narrative.

No doubt Selwyn could, and did, indulge his passion for play at home, and in the houses of his friends. But he probably lost and won more money at his club than anywhere else. His first and favourite club was White's, in St James's Street. It will be remembered that Selwyn dated his letters to his friends at Oxford from White's Chocolate House. This was not surprising, for the Chocolate House was just round the corner from Cleveland Court, and the prodigal could compose his correspondence there without fear of parental interruption.

But he had a special right to put the St James's Street address on his notepaper, for on the 22nd of April 1744, he had been elected a member of the New or Young Club at White's. The club had been founded only in the previous year, when Selwyn's father and brother were elected ; so that all the Selwyns were amongst its earliest members. White's was then, as it is now, the club of the men of fashion. Then—shall we say, as now ?—it had a certain reputation for high play at cards : a reputation not altogether undeserved, although outsiders like Mr Pope and severe moralists like Hogarth might paint it in the blackest of colours. I sometimes think if George Selwyn could revisit London to-day he would find himself most at home in St James's Street. Somebody suggests Piccadilly. But Piccadilly has been brutalised, Americanised, since Selwyn's day. Its stark hotels and its middle-class *cafés* would vex that fastidious person. St James's Street, on the other hand, still preserves something of its eighteenth-century air. Selwyn would find the Palace much as he left it. If he walked up the street, he would pass Arthur's and Brooks's and Boodle's, changed a little perhaps exteriorly, but in their old remembered places. He would come at last to White's, with its famous bow-window. If he entered, he would surely not feel as a stranger feels. Those panelled rooms, square, comfortable, and entirely Georgian, would not be unfamiliar to him : the portraits of his bosom friends would gaze down upon him from the walls. On the whole, White's deserves some special mention from any biographer of George Selwyn.

It is the custom of writers on the eighteenth century to deal largely, and in truth somewhat wearisomely, with the clubs and club life of that time. If we are to believe some of these ingenious persons, London, in the days of Anne and of the Georges, was a town of clubs, at which resorts everybody who was anybody in the world of talent or of fashion was to be met with at some hour of the twenty-four. This is hardly so. Until the late eighteenth century, clubs affected a comparatively small number of people in the great world of London. But many of these people were literary people ; and here we see whence the exaggeration comes. For literary people (like other people) are fond of talking about themselves ; and having the fatal gift of writing, they are equally fond of writing

about themselves. Take up any biographical dictionary, and observe how much of it is occupied by literary men and women. An obscure poet, a writer of forgotten doggerel, has perhaps half a column to himself; the engineer, the scientist, the merchant, is lucky if he obtain half a line. Literary people like to write about themselves. They also like to represent their haunts as being places where genius burns fiercely; where there is always an abundance of wit and soul and reason; where the conversation remains permanently on an extraordinarily high level. But the eager youth, with his head full of dreams, who visits these shrines, is commonly disappointed —and always has been disappointed. Generally, however, he keeps his disappointment to himself, as Chatterton did, and, sitting solitary over his pipe and his bowl, writes to his friends in the country what a very fine thing it is to be surrounded by wits and geniuses of the first rank. Now all this is strictly relevant to the history of clubs, and even to the history of White's. Clubs began in coffee-houses, which became very numerous at the close of the seventeenth century. In 1710 there were 2000 of them in the cities of London and Westminster alone. And the most famous coffee-houses were those of the Covent Garden neighbourhood, which were affected by the literary class. When we think of "Will's" we think of John Dryden, smoking his pipe there of a summer evening, while "Button's" inevitably suggests Addison and Steele, also smoking their pipes. But all these coffee-houses were open to the general public, who might pay their pennies at the bar, sit down to their coffee and their tobacco, and listen to Dryden or Addison or Pope, as the case might be: always provided that the oracle would speak. There was no exclusive "club" in the modern sense of the word at all. It was Francis White who first conceived the idea of separating the regular customers from the vulgar herd: of providing them with a room where they might assemble without being stared at, and perhaps slapped on the back, by ordinary members of the British public. White founded his chocolate-house in St James's Street in 1693. It soon became the meeting place of men of leisure and of fortune, and also, as Mr Burke says, "of the followers who lived upon them." The separation of the aristocratic patrons of the chocolate-house from the common herd

began quite early in the eighteenth century; but the modern history of White's really begins in 1736. In that year the "Rules of the Old Club at White's" were first drawn up, and a list of the members made. The Old Club grew so quickly that it soon became necessary to restrict the election of new members. A New or Young club was therefore formed (in 1743) of gentlemen who were waiting their turn for election at the Old Club. George Selwyn had to wait nine years for admission to the Old Club. He entered the Young Club in 1744, and it was not until 29th November 1753 that he was elected to the other, on the same day as his friend and cousin Lord Robert Bertie. He was very fortunate. Some members of the Young Club had to wait much longer; and some, like the Earl of March and Ruglen, never got into the Old Club at all.

White's having from the beginning excluded the literary class, the literary class took its revenge by lampooning the club. No doubt it was a dreadful place. No doubt young gentlemen made and lost large sums of money there which might easily have changed hands in a more legitimate way. But was White's quite so bad as the satirists and the moralists painted it? Was it very much worse than other clubs patronised by these same satirists and moralists? Or was there something of an *omne ignotum* flavour about the anti-White campaign? One has suspicions. It is quite true that in the early days—in the days of the chocolate-houses—Dick Steele dated, or pretended to date, many of his *Tatlers* from White's. "All accounts of gallantry, and pleasure, and entertainment," says he, "shall be under the article of White's Chocolate House"; and the wise Addison knew the place:

> "Long ere they find the necessary spark
> They search the town and beat about the park
> To all his most frequented haunts resort,
> Oft dog him in the ring, and oft to Court
> As love of pleasure or of place invites,
> And sometimes find him taking snuff at White's."

But this was before White's became a club. After that date few literary men were admitted. Colley Cibber was an exception; but Colley was a butt for the young fashionables, a convenient person on whom they could exercise what they

called their wit. He was "King Coll" to them; they greeted him with huzzas when he appeared. Perhaps it was Cibber's membership that drew Pope's attention to White's. At all events, that agreeable satirist refers to the club not once but many times in his most caustic manner. He pictures King Coll:

> "Chair'd at White's among the Doctors sit,
> Teach oaths to gamesters, and to nobles wit."

As "Doctors" were loaded dice, the innuendo is damaging enough. Another couplet of Pope about White's is hardly quotable nowadays, in which he refers to the "British youth" engaged there with "felons,"—and with ladies who were not felons. But Pope, we must never forget, was a Tory, and White's had a Whig flavour. Swift was also a Tory. Does this explain his outburst of moral zeal against the club in his "Essay on Education"? "I heard," says he, "that the late Earl of Oxford, in the time of his ministry, never pass'd by White's Chocolate House (the common rendezvous of infamous sharpers and noble cullies) without bestowing a curse on that famous academy as the bane of half the English aristocracy." White's was pretty bad; but did the earl stop to curse *every* time he passed its door? Indeed, Swift was hardly an unprejudiced critic. He and his friend Pope had their own clubs, the October, for instance, and the Scriblerus, which I daresay were both very proper, though they could hardly be unexciting with two such members. But you cannot after all extract much amusement from toasting a Pretender in brandy punch: it palls after a time. I wonder did Swift never take a hand at the macco-table? Despite his rage against the aristocratic White's, he was very human, and loved the society of a lord almost as much as he loved to go home afterwards and write about it to his little M.D. But one man who satirised White's was never, I am sure, within its portals, and cared neither for cards nor peers. This was William Hogarth, who contrived to drag White's into his "Rake's Progress," as he contrived to drag in so many places and people. In Plate IV. we have a picture of St James's Street. The Rake is being arrested, to the horrid accompaniment of thunder and lightning. A tremendous flash of forked lightning issues from the heavens, and points directly

at a house near the Palace. At what house should it point but "White's," the home of the infamous sharper and the noble cully? And there is the sign painted plainly enough, for Hogarth never left anything to the imagination. In Plate VI. we are taken inside White's (or a similar gaming-house) and shown the gamblers at their cards. A highwayman sits by the fire, as an indication of the kind of person whom you might expect to meet at the club.

George Selwyn, though not a highwayman, probably found himself very much at home in White's. He had there a select circle of friends, one or more of whom he might always be certain of meeting at dinner, and of having a quiet game of cards with afterwards. His contemporaries and friends at the club included Gilly Williams, Lord March, Richard Edgecumbe, Richard Rigby and Horace Walpole. There was also another young gentleman elected a member of White's at this time, whose name, however, you will not find in the lists of members, but who is now quite as real to us as George Selwyn or Gilly Williams. I mean Mr Henry Esmond Warrington, who was frequently at the club in or about the year 1756, and who met George Selwyn there, and Lord March, and the Earl of Castlewood. You remember how they all three played at macco with him, and how March won some of his money fairly, and Castlewood the rest, not fairly. "By George, Mr Warrington," said Mr Selwyn, waking up in a rare fit of enthusiasm, "you deserve to win! You treat your luck as a gentleman should, and as long as she remains with you, behave to her with the utmost politeness. Si celeres quatit pennas—you know the rest. No? Well, you are not much worse off—you will call her ladyship's coach and make her a bow at the step." It is probable that between the years 1745 and 1760 George Selwyn spent more time at White's than at any other place in London. With Walpole and Edgecumbe he designed a coat of arms for the club which Walpole has described in the following words: "Vert (for a card table); between 3 parolis proper, on a chevron, sable, 2 rouleaux in saltire between 2 dice proper. In a canton, sable, a ball (for election) argent. Supporters, an old knave of clubs on the dexter, a young knave on the sinister side; both accoutred proper. Crest, issuing out of an Earl's coronet (Lord Darlington's) an arm shaking a dice-box, all

proper. Motto, alluding to the crest, 'Cogit amor nummi.' The arms encircled with a claret bottle ticket by way of order." The original coat of arms is now at Arthur's club, but you may see a copy in the hall at White's.

White's, like Brooks's, possesses tantalisingly few records of the eighteenth century. It has a bare manuscript list of members, and a betting-book, but nothing more. Curiously enough, we do not find Selwyn's name recorded even once in the betting-book of White's, where nearly all his friends and contemporaries figure. It must be confessed that many of these "betts" are very foolish, as bets are apt to be; and some are more than foolish: they are indecent, unprintable. But some are quite decorous:

"Ld. Montford betts Ld. Darnley that twelve members of the House of Commons do not die before February the 12th 1745/6 inclusive.

"pd."

Betting on death was very common; but betting on life was much more common. The gentlemen of England very often staked their money upon the arrival of an infant to one or other of their lady acquaintances.

"Sir Charles Wyndham betts Mr Fox two guineas that Lady Trentham has a son before Lady Marchant."

That is the sort of bet which occurs with great frequency in White's betting-book. But Selwyn's name is not in these yellow pages. If he laid bets he did not record them. It is probable that he preferred to win or lose money at cards: it was more exciting, and had the great merit of passing the time.

We can now form a tolerable notion of George Selwyn's life in these early years on the town. One day was very like another. George was esteemed an indolent person, so we must not expect him to begin the day too early.

"You get up at nine," wrote Carlisle to him on one occasion (to be sure this was in 1768, when Selwyn was a little older), "play with Râton [his dog] till 12 in your night-gown; then creep down to White's to abuse Fanshawe; are five hours at table; sleep till you can escape your supper reckoning; then make two wretches carry you with 3 pints of claret in you, 3 miles for a shilling."

This may have been George's day in 1768; but in the

forties and fifties he was more vigorous, and we can only accept Carlisle's programme up till twelve noon. After that, and before the time for the ordinary at White's, which was between three and five o'clock, George had a few hours to spare. He might occupy these in various ways. If there was an execution at Tower Hill he would go eastwards to see it; and in another chapter we shall go eastwards with him and watch the rebel lords having their heads cut off, as he did. Or, since he was a young man of spirit, and intensely curious about all kinds of life, he might attend one of the Rev. John Henley's lectures at Clare Market, and create some diverson by heckling the orator, as he did (with his friends Mr C. and Mr B.) in January 1745-6. "*You* have been at this sport before," wrote Mr Henley to him in a friendly letter; and perhaps he had, in his wild Oxford days. Early in the afternoon Selwyn would stroll down St James's Street (he lived in Bond Street then), looking in perhaps at Betty's, the fruiterer's, where the young men gathered sometimes for a gossip. He reached White's about three, in time for dinner, for folk dined early, and supped late, when George II. was King. After dinner the serious business of the day began. Gaming jackets were donned, and George and his friends sat down to play at macco, or picquet, or lansquenet, whatever lansquenet was. Meanwhile the wine circulated, and *bon-mots* were perpetrated with alarming frequency: that is to say, if we are to believe tradition. Only in this case I am afraid tradition is not altogether to be believed, and think that, more often than not, George and his friends merely swore and told naughty stories. The Hon. Richard Rigby, a White's man, shall describe one of these evenings for us. Rigby was a friend, but not an intimate friend, of Selwyn's. His name appears in some of the most improper bets in the betting-book; and, on the whole, he was not a pleasant kind of man.

"Am just got home from a cock-match," he writes to Selwyn on 12th March 1745, at seven o'clock, "where I have won *forty pounds* in ready money; and not having dined, am waiting till I hear the rattle of the coaches from the House of Commons in order to dine at White's; . . . I held my resolution (on the previous night) of not going to the Ridotto till past 3 o'clock; when, finding nobody was willing to sit any longer but Boone,

who was not able, I took, as I thought, the least of two evils, and so went there rather than to bed, but found it so infinitely dull that I retired in half-an-hour. The next morning I heard there had been extreme deep play, and that Harry Furnese went drunk from White's at 6 o'clock and won the dear memorable sum of one thousand guineas."

Rigby left the club at three in the morning to go to a "ridotto." What was a "ridotto"? The mention of the word suggests another member of White's, John James Heidegger, the inventor of ridottos. Heidegger was the man who first conceived the idea of acclimatising the masquerade in England. He began in a small way in the Haymarket: established a series of masked balls, for which he issued tickets at a guinea apiece or more. The balls became immensely popular. Everybody who wanted to see life went to Mr Heidegger's masquerades, where you could dance with all kinds of romantic and mysterious personages from midnight till dawn. Mr Heidegger prospered. He issued his tickets from White's Chocolate House; and in course of time, when he had increased in wealth and in reputation, he was elected a member of the club. But then something happened. The moralist began to attack Mr Heidegger's masquerades in the Haymarket. It appeared that they were the resort of improper persons of both sexes, which is not at all unlikely. Every poetaster and coffee-house satirist had his fling at the Haymarket performances. Their popularity began to wane. It was then that Mr Heidegger proved his true genius by re-christening them. They were no longer to be known as masquerades: henceforth they were ridottos.

> "In Lent if masquerades displease the town
> Call 'em Ridottos, and they still go down.
> Go on Prince Phiz, to please the British Nation
> Call thy next masquerade a Convocation."

Thus wrote the Rev. Mr Bramston, a gentleman whose taste was so nice that he disapproved of St Paul's. However, a ridotto was a new and mysterious thing to the English satirist and to the English public. The satirist found that he required some new adjectives; the public found that it was absolutely necessary to patronise the ridotto, just to see what it was like. So under its new name the masked ball became for half-a-

century quite a feature of town life; and among other things, Mr Heidegger made a great fortune, and retired to a country house at Barnes, where he actually entertained royalty. The ridotto figures frequently in George Selwyn's letters and in those of his friends; and no doubt, like Rigby, he often left the club in the small hours and went to the Haymarket, and joined in the revels there. Or there was Marybone, with its music, its wine, and its plum-cake; or Ranelagh, newly opened in these days, where one could also have music and dancing, and fireworks, and gardens to walk in; or, finally, Vauxhall, that old favourite of the British public. Only if we followed Selwyn to all these places, and drew fancy pictures of evenings he might or might not have spent in them, there is no reason why this chapter should ever end.

. . . Indeed, as any picture of George Selwyn's life at this time must necessarily be largely fanciful, as in these early years he walks like a shadow through the letters of his friends, would it not be wise to resort at once to a genuine work of fiction, and read in it how a contemporary young man of fashion spent his days and nights in London? Take down "The Virginians" from its shelf, and read afresh the adventures of Mr Harry Warrington, as narrated by the master of all of us who attempt to write about the eighteenth century. There are, of course, some adventures missing. Thackeray confessed that he could not in those polite early-Victorian days describe accurately the life of a young man of fashion like Mr Warrington. "The pure and outraged nineteenth century would blush, scream, run out of the room, call away the young ladies, and order Mr Mudie never to send one of that odious author's books again." And the same limitations must be observed to-day in the case of Mr George Selwyn. George was not a thoroughly immoral man like his friend March. But still, he did know a good many people whom perhaps he ought not to have known, and we must be careful. The twentieth century, like the nineteenth, might blush, scream, etc., only that nowadays it is the daughters who would be shocked, and who would firmly refuse the book to their mothers. Read, then, the adventures of Mr Warrington, and remember that, the name having been changed, the fables narrated concerning him might be narrated equally well concerning Mr Selwyn.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST SELWYN CIRCLE

TO read the letters of George Selwyn and of his friends is to make the acquaintance of a vast number of people of importance in their day. And we really make their acquaintance; they come out of the world of shadows and speak to us with their own voices, and look at us, as it were, with the eyes which Sir Joshua put on canvas. We get to know these people chiefly because they are discovered in moments of relaxation: at dinner, in the clubs, at the play, or going to see a man hanged. The historian of the eighteenth century shows us the same people on duty, dressed to receive the public. In his pages the King is an institution, entirely hidden from the vulgar; statesmen like Lord Chatham are immensely awful and remote, makers of war and of peace; Mr Pitt and Mr Fox belabour each other in an eternal House of Commons. But in the Selwyn letters the patricians of the eighteenth century lose their puppet quality and suddenly become alive. Selwyn goes down to St James's, and talks to the King, and makes his bow to the Queen. The King says he doesn't believe George will ever leave off play as long as he lives; and George smiles, and hopes his Majesty is not prophet as well as king. Chatham is a gouty old man who takes the waters at Bath for his health; the Duke of Grafton comes into Almack's and gets a cool nod from Selwyn, who is writing letters there; Mr Fox is merely "Charles," an "aspiring patriot," an aggravating young gentleman with a profound belief in his own parts and a faculty for involving his friends and himself in the most extraordinary monetary difficulties. Or if you are interested in beauty, Lady Sarah Bunbury will meet Selwyn to hear the latest news of Lord Carlisle, who is absent on the Grand Tour; and Elizabeth Gunning will complain to Lady Townshend that "Mr Selwyn and Mr Williams promised to send her a constant account of Lady Coventry, but that they had never wrote to her one line." This was George Selwyn's world. He moved in it easily and naturally, nodding to this

one and chatting to that, and turning his back on the other. It was Horace Walpole's world too, and we have all read about it in his letters. But Horace's letters are works of art. They are life, certainly, but life improved upon, selected, arranged. The *bon-mots* are polished as if they were precious stones; events are noted, not because they occurred, but because they happen to be picturesque; in everything is displayed the practised literary hand. These other letters to and by Selwyn, however, are neither selected nor arranged by the writers. They have the warm touch of actual life, and convince by the absence of that very quality which has made Walpole's immortal.

George Selwyn, then, was a man of many friends, all moving in this patrician world. He was the link that bound together many other men of diverse interests, likes, and dislikes. It is quite true that, being a sensitive and somewhat morbid person, he was himself often extremely sceptical upon this point. He would frequently complain that hardly anybody really cared for him: a common enough complaint with those who miss domestic love in life, as Selwyn did. "I do not agree with you," wrote Gilly Williams to him once, "in your constant declarations that, except three or four people, the rest are indifferent to you." He certainly had three or four *intimados*, as Charles Lamb might say; but "the rest" were not by any means indifferent to him. On the contrary, no man of his time had more people who were genuinely attached to him than George Selwyn. We need not stop to account for this. Selwyn had the rare secret of personal charm: the faculty of attracting friends easily and at first sight. It was a charm, however, which had its strict limitations. Selwyn, for example, was essentially a man's man. He numbered many women among his friends; but they were mostly clever, witty, women, who talked well at dinner; and they were only friends. We never hear of a love affair in his life. He seems indeed to have had a certain aversion from the other sex; an aversion which gave a great deal of amusement to his male acquaintances. Lord Holland, for example, writes to him: "My Lady Mary goes [to a masquerade] dressed like Zara, and I wish you to attend her dressed like a black eunuch"; and in another letter Gilly Williams makes an unmentionable reference to Selwyn and Horace Walpole, based

on the aversion from women of both these gentlemen. As we are upon this point, it may be said at once that George Selwyn had not the grossly immoral character which has sometimes been attributed to him. He possibly had irregular relations with women (though he never, apparently, kept a mistress), like all young men of his class and time; but if so they were very infrequent; they played a comparatively insignificant part in his life. And this not because George had elevated ideas about morality, or thought it wrong to do as others did. On the contrary, he was as immoral, or rather, perhaps, as unmoral, as most of his fellows. But women, as women, had simply no attraction for him. March was fond of his Zamperinis and his Renas. Well, that was all right; but give Selwyn a good dinner, a bottle of wine, and "the rigour of the game," and he was perfectly happy. This man loved children, but he did not love women, and perhaps women did not love him. It is an extraordinary thing that, search as closely as we may, we cannot discover that Selwyn, good-looking, kind-hearted, eligible, was ever "in love." He never sighed for a maiden. Did a maiden ever sigh for him? Nobody knows. And we need not stop to ask the reason of, or to discuss superfluous hypotheses that have been put forward to account for, Selwyn's lovelessness. Let it stand that he was one of those men (happily few) who are not attracted by the other sex. In the sphere of friendship, however, he had few rivals. It is far more easy to say who were not George Selwyn's friends among the rank and fashion of the eighteenth century than to catalogue those who were. But there were circles within circles, greater and lesser constellations revolving round the central sun. Let us speak first of George's intimates, and afterwards a word may be spared for those who were further away.

Among Selwyn's hosts of friends, two men claimed the first place in his regard. One was "Gilly" Williams; the other the Earl of March and Ruglen. These two were even a little jealous upon the point. "Thank you, my dear George," wrote Gilly Williams once, "for including me in your pacquet of friends. Not even March himself is worthier of that appellation, for no one can esteem and love you better." And again: "March says he intends to write to you this post, and as I love you as much as he does, I am determined for this time

to be a better correspondent." At this distance of time, however, there is little doubt as to who should be placed first, and it is not Gilly Williams. March was the nearest, the most trusted, and the most constant of Selwyn's friends for a period of nearly half-a-century. Gilly Williams came next, at a not very long interval. But Williams was so sprightly and so amusing that no biographer of George Selwyn could keep him waiting until the second turn, even for such a man as the Earl of March and Ruglen.

Nothing very much is known about George James ("Gilly") Williams, perhaps because there is nothing very much to know. Lawyers are familiar with certain musty old reports which are generally cited as "P. Wms." Gilly was the son of this Williams, whose Christian names were William Peere. William Peere was a successful lawyer; his son was only a successful man about town. He was born in the same year as Selwyn, lived in the same street in London (Cleveland Court), was a member of the same club, had the same friends, and very much the same virtues and vices. In early days he consorted much with Selwyn, and was one of the "out-of-town party" who met at Strawberry Hill, the other members being Selwyn, Dick Edgecumbe, and the master of Strawberry himself. Gilly was a placeman also, being appointed Receiver-General of Excise in 1774, no doubt by his nephew by marriage, Lord North. The rest is silence. We cannot point to anything Gilly Williams ever did to justify his being remembered by posterity. But he must have been an amusing companion, as he was certainly a warm-hearted friend. His reputation for wit a little alarmed him. "I have desired Lord R. Bertie to propose me at White's," he observes in 1751. "Don't let any member shake his head at me for a wit, for God knows he may as well reject me for being a giant." But here Gilly was too modest. He is at least the most racy of correspondents. Between seventy and eighty of his letters to Selwyn have been printed, and they are (as Mr Jesse might say) "among the most agreeable of the collection." They extend over a period of twenty years, and are far more lively than Walpole's, if not so finely wrought. Gilly does not trouble to turn his phrases in Walpole's neat literary way, but he does manage to write a letter which bubbles with humour. It would be easy to quote

a score of instances of this quality from his correspondence: "I congratulate you," he writes to Selwyn in 1747, "on the near approach of Parliament, and figure you to myself before a glass at your rehearsals. I must intimate to you not to forget closing your periods with a magnificent stroke of the breast: and recommend Mr Barry as a pattern, who I think pathetically excels in that beauty. You rejoice me much in telling me our venerable archdeacon survived his last year's debauch on the fowls and egg-sauce; and don't doubt but by your annual visits Mr Cole receives an annual refreshment." "You must have observed that most letters from the country are spun out by descanting on those received, and which they attempt answering; and that every sentence begins with being either sorry or glad." "Squinting Wilkes and liberty are everything with us now. It is scarce safe to go to the other side of Temple Bar without having that obliquity of vision."

But Gilly was not only a humorist: he was a shrewd delineator of character as well. Take for example his sketches of the Coventry family. Selwyn was an intimate friend of the first Lady Coventry (Maria Gunning), and when she died, he took a great interest in little Nanny Coventry, her daughter. When he went to Paris, as he so often did in his middle years, he used to receive from Williams regular reports as to Nanny and her doings: where she was, how she was, and what she looked like. But Gilly's pen did not stop at Nanny. Nanny's father amused him very much, and the second marriage of Nanny's father was an exquisite joke. The whole story can be pieced together from Gilly's letters; it is as good an example of his epistolary style as any other: "This packet brings very serious news indeed. I received a notification in form last night that Nanny would shortly bend the knee to Bab St John as her mother-in-law [stepmother]. God grant this woman long life, or the poor children will have more odd uncles, aunts, and cousins, than any people of their condition in England." This was on 20th July 1764. A little later: "the King has most graciously acceded to the match, and told the Earl she was the wisest, prudentest, handsomest of his subjects." The marriage took place on 27th September. On the 29th Gilly wrote: "You may talk as you please of what you have seen and heard since we parted, but I would not have given up

my last night's supper for the whole put together. The Earl brought his new Countess to Margaret Street the night after the consummation. You know him so well, that I daresay you are perfectly master of his words and actions on such an occasion ; and as for her ladyship, it was all prettiness, fright, insipidity, question and answer, which neither good stuffs, diamonds, a new chair, with a very large coronet in the centre, like the Queen's—neither of these I say, had power to alter ; and as my friend was never cut out for decent and matrimonial gallantry a very awkward air made them both as entertaining a couple as ever I passed an hour with." "You will certainly want to know how the children relish their new relative. I will give you a trait of Nanny that pleased me. When Mademoiselle broke it to them Maria cried, and the little one said, 'Do not cry, sister! If she is civil to us we will be civil to her ; if not, you know we can sit up in our rooms, and take no notice of her.' There is a degree of philosophy in this infant that I do not think age can improve." October the 8th : "Her little ladyship seems happy and tolerably reconciled to her new mamma. . . . I like the behaviour of the children much, and likewise the propriety of Bab's behaviour to them ; but you would have laughed to have seen what a hearty kiss the little one would often give Mademoiselle, as looking upon her as the only real friend she had in the family. You can easily imagine such a scene wanted a second person, equally acquainted, equally interested, and equally disposed to enjoy it : if you had been at our party it would have been complete. There is no possibility of saying more of *her* at present than that she is very pretty : the rest is all grimace ; but as to his lordship, he certainly surpasses all you can conceive of him ; his plantations, his house, his wife, his plate, his equipage, his—etc. etc. etc.—are all topics that call forth his genius continually. . . . I do not love to deal in horoscopes, but his lordship will certainly tire of this plaything, as he has done of all he has hitherto played with, and be plagued with the noise of the rattle when he is no longer pleased with blowing the whistle. He means to instruct by lectures in his table-talk, and by drawing pictures of good and bad wives. You know how he succeeded in the last ; God grant him better success in his present plan." "Poor Lady

Coventry makes an excellent mother, but God help her! a most unworthy successor to the bustle and uproar which followed that name formerly." "Pray, dear George send some serious admonitions to your daughter Nanny. Her spirit is much beyond that of her late mamma's. There is seldom a night she does not fight us all round. The very last night of all, she hit me a box of the ear, and told her good-natured step-mother not to be so impertinent as to trouble her head about her. The father talks to her out of Lord Halifax's 'Advice to his daughters' which, God knows, comes much too early in the day for her comprehension, so that I fear she will be outdone before she knows that she is to blame. . . . The house is full of tobacco; the yard is full of tenants, and the Peer, with an important face, is telling us how much he pays to the land-tax."

Gilly Williams' published letters to Selwyn cease in 1770. But there is no reason to believe that the friendship of the two men was ever diminished. On the contrary, there are many references to Gilly in the later correspondence of George Selwyn. He is always "dining with Williams," or playing pharo with Williams, or seeing him at the house of some mutual acquaintance. Gilly survived his friend by many years, dying at his house in Cleveland Court in 1805. In his last published letter to Selwyn, he says: "I always found myself treated in that set [Madame du Deffand's] as a jeune garçon, qui n'avait point encore l'habitude du monde. Faith! there may have been some ground for it." There was indeed some ground for it. We must always think of Gilly as a *jeune garçon*: boyish, irresponsible, gay. He never quite grew up, which is, perhaps, the reason why Selwyn liked him so much. It is also, perhaps, the reason why Horace Walpole tolerated rather than liked him: Walpole, who was never anything else than grown up. Williams was the only man of his set who kept constantly young to the end.

The most confident biographer (even in this age of confidence in the art) might well pause before giving a sketch of the next member of the Selwyn circle, the Earl of March and Ruglen. For here is the Wicked Nobleman of melodrama in real life. And, as writers of melodrama are invariably bungling persons, who, in their eagerness to make the nobleman wicked, only

succeed in making him ridiculous, it may easily be guessed that in this case life leaves melodrama far behind. March was wicked, but there was nothing absurd about him. He was dreadfully natural and normal. You would never have taken him for a monster if you had met him at dinner at Selwyn's, or playing hazard at White's, or in the paddock at Newmarket: there were no outward marks of the beast upon him. He had a scheme of life, a vicious scheme, if you will, which he lived out calmly and deliberately, and with no faltering or remorse. Melodrama would have made Lord March repent after great misfortunes, or, failing that, would have brought him to a violent and (the gallery would declare) well-merited end. But in real life neither of these things happened; and this, I think, is why real life is so much more impressive than melodrama. Lord March never repented; he had no misfortunes worth mentioning; and his end (so far as we know) was peace. It is all a sad puzzle for the moralist. Well, the legends about this nobleman—who is now better known to us as "old Q," but who, as Selwyn's friend, is more familiar as Lord March—the legends about him "are awful," as Thackeray said. So they are. But legends have a way of obscuring the real truth about a man. They seize hold of one phase of his character and exaggerate it until there is no character left: there is nothing but an incarnate quality. Our friend the writer of transpontine literature does exactly the same thing. And in each case the man ceases to be a man, and becomes a monster, something more or less than human. Lord March has suffered in this way. He has been smothered in legends. You decline to believe that this astonishing figure ever walked the pavements of Piccadilly, or played hazard with Selwyn in St James's. He is a rank Surrey villain, and should stay on his own side of the river. It is true that whitewashing villains is a very popular amusement nowadays, almost as popular as pulling down saints from their pedestals. But we need not whitewash this villain. Let us grant to all moralists whatsoever that Lord March was a very wicked man; but then let us assert, and endeavour to prove, that he was a very good man also.

March, says one writer, was "a little sharp-looking man, very irritable, and swore like ten thousand troopers." He was certainly not handsome, if his portraits are to be believed; but

he had the grand air ; you would never take him for anything but what he was, an aristocrat to his finger-tips. Put a star on his bosom, and a broad blue ribbon across his waistcoat, and he will even become the Typical Aristocrat, beloved of the gods. Thackeray draws him at Tunbridge Wells in a blue frock with plate buttons, buckskins and riding-boots, and wearing a little hat with a narrow cord of lace. But this was in the afternoon, to be sure ; at night he reappeared in a neatly-curled feather top, with a bag wig and grey powder, and in a "rich and elegant French suit"—smuggled from Paris, no doubt, by George Selwyn. Thus attired, Lord March begins to emerge from the shadows. How can we establish him as a credible human figure? He was Groom of the Bedchamber to his Majesty King George III., and was often in waiting at St James's, or riding out with the King in the Park : but in this capacity he is only human on occasion. He is human, for example, when, in writing to Selwyn from the Palace, he ends his letter abruptly with : "The King is coming! so farewell." You can almost see the lord-in-waiting hurriedly close and fasten his packet as the squat figure of the King appears in the doorway. Or again, Wraxall will paint for you a scene in the Duke of Queensberry's house in Piccadilly, where the Duke, dressed as "the Dardan Shepherd," will present an apple to the fairest of three females, "habited as they appeared to Paris on Mount Ida." "This actually happened," adds the chronicler solemnly ; and perhaps it did, but it was only once in a while. March had a normal daily life which was not very different from that of his friends, as we learn from his letters to George Selwyn. In these letters there is nothing about Mount Ida, and very little about the King. But there is a great deal about horses, and women, and cards ; we listen to the common tittle-tattle of St James's, the talk of horsey men at Newmarket. Lord March loved the turf. He went regularly, almost religiously, to Newmarket, although he was not always happy when he arrived there. "The Meeting has ended very ill, and I am now near a *mille* lower in cash than when we parted. . . . Bully, Lord Wilmington and myself, are left here to reflect coolly upon our losses, and the nonsense of keeping running horses." So he borrows some money from Selwyn for the second meeting, and "this time my dear George,

your money has been lucky indeed. I am returned with my pockets full; by the second meeting, clear gain, four thousand one hundred guineas. This good fortune has come very apropos, and I have the pleasure of being indebted to you for it, which makes it still more welcome, for without your money I could not have risked near so much." Lord March loved horses, and he loved betting; he is the hero of a hundred sporting wagers. After horses, he loved women, and was even faithful to them "in his fashion." When we come to discuss the loves of Lord March, however, we are indubitably on delicate ground; for in that licentious age March was noted for his licence, and changed his mistresses far more often than he changed his sky. The most valiant of apologists would find it difficult to excuse or justify March's conduct in these matters. But Wraxall does suggest a certain explanation of it. He says that in early life March fell in love with Miss Pelham, who reciprocated the sentiment, but that Mr Henry Pelham would not hear of his daughter marrying such a wicked young man. The match was accordingly broken off, whereupon Lord March became more wicked than ever, and the lady "the most infatuated gamester in the three Kingdoms." This story may very well be true—a passage in one of Gilly Williams' letters lends some colour to it; but March seemed naturally to possess the cold, methodical temperament of the debauchee. "I wish I had set out immediately after Newmarket," he writes, "which I believe I should have done if I had not taken a violent fancy for one of the opera girls [the Zamperini]. This passion is a little abated, and I hope it will be quite so before you and the Rena [another mistress] come over, else I fear it will interrupt our society." It was really very awkward. And again: "I like this little girl, but how long this liking will last I cannot tell: it may increase or be quite at an end before you arrive." "Nous avons boudé un peu pour deux jours," he writes cheerfully, "but we shall make it up. This is an unlucky passion; I wish I had never seen her." He had indeed the greatest difficulty in keeping his various loves in good humour, and thought women generally were "exceedingly wrong-headed." They would not see that when the unlucky passion had abated it was time to go. Certainly March showed them the door very gracefully; he even wept at parting from them. "I am just preparing to

conduct the poor little Tondino to Dover," he writes on one Wednesday morning at six o'clock; ". . . my heart is so full that I can neither think, speak, nor write. How I shall be able to part with her, or bear to come back to this house, I do not know. The sound of her voice fills my eyes with fresh tears. My dear George, j'ai le cœur si serré que je ne suis bon à prèsent qu'à pleurer. . . . Take all the care you can of her. Je la recommande à vous, my best and only real friend." Yes, it is very sad; but somehow we get over these things. "Our attachment as lovers has long been at an end"—but this was concerning the Rena, quite another lady—"and when people live at as great a distance as we have done it is ridiculous to think of it." So the Rena gave place to the Tondino, and the Tondino to the Zamperini, and the Zamperini to somebody else. The best we can say for Lord March is that if he had married Miss Pelham he might have become an affectionate husband and father: his heart was not all bad. But he did not marry her, and he must be found guilty and delivered up to the moralist for a sentence adequate to his many crimes.

But before convicted persons are sentenced they are, in our jurisprudence, allowed the benefit of any evidence of character which may be called in their favour. Lord March was no common libertine. Without any extraordinary intellectual gifts, he had yet an acute and vigorous mind, and a strong, masculine judgment. "If I were compelled to name the particular individual," says Wraxall, "who had received from nature the keenest common sense of any person I ever knew, I should select the Duke of Queensberry." March's letters to Selwyn do not, perhaps, quite bear out this extravagant estimate; but they do show that it was at least founded on fact. One must admit that his judgments constantly are shrewd, even if one does not happen to agree with him. Thus, at a time when Voltaire was one of the men most execrated by English society, March refers to him as "poor Voltaire, who, by the bye, has done more real good by his writings on tolerance than all the priests in Europe." Or again, describing an Opposition speaker, "In one part of his speech he said, addressing himself to Wedderburn, that though a squalling starling, he thought he had a right to reply to the learned canary bird. In another

part he said, that though a poor apothecary and a quack, he might perhaps prescribe a remedy with success, when the regular physician had failed. . . . The whole was in this style, and Burke said, that his honourable friend had spoken like an independent country gentleman, and a very accomplished orator." This is the sarcastic method in perfection. But it is questionable if March had any great sense of humour. He was, perhaps, the only member of the early Selwyn circle who was not a wit, professed or otherwise. One would have said confidently that he was an entirely serious person but for an anecdote related by Mr William Wilberforce which goes to show, first, that March had humour, and second, that Wilberforce had none. "I remember," says the philanthropist, "dining when I was a young man with the Duke of Queensberry at his Richmond Villa. The party was very small and select—Pitt, Lord and Lady Chatham, the Marchioness of Gordon, and George Selwyn (who lived for society and continued in it, till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse), were among the guests. We dined early, that some of our party might be ready to attend the opera. The dinner was sumptuous, the views from the villa quite enchanting, and the Thames in all its glory: but the Duke looked on with indifference—'What is there,' he said, 'to make so much of in the Thames? There it goes, flow, flow, flow, always the same.'" With exquisite solemnity Mr Wilberforce relates this as an anecdote about the Duke of Queensberry. It is rather an anecdote about Mr William Wilberforce.

The finest thing in the life of Lord March—the thing which redeems it from being an entirely selfish life—was his close friendship with George Selwyn. It began in very early days in London, and it continued without a break until Selwyn's death in 1791. These two men had not so very much in common. March loved women and horses; Selwyn was indifferent to both. Selwyn dabbled in politics, and was a House of Commons man for over thirty years; March looked on politics with a cold, contemptuous, eye, and wondered how sensible men could engage in them, when there were so many other interesting things to do. But there was not an entire dissimilarity of tastes between the two. Both loved play, clubs, Paris, the easy life of the man of pleasure and of fashion. There

was something almost pathetic in March's attachment to Selwyn. It was like that of a younger brother to an elder (March was the younger by five years), in whose judgment and good sense he reposes the most unwavering confidence.

March's letters are full of this feeling. "How can you think, my dear George," he writes, "and I hope you do not think, that anybody or anything, can make a *tracasserie* between you and me? I take it ill that you even talk of it, which you do in the letter I had by Ligonier. I must be the poorest creature upon earth—after having known you so long, and always as the best and sincerest friend that anyone ever had,—if anyone alive can make any impression upon me, where you are concerned. I told you, in a letter I wrote some time ago, that I depended more upon the continuance of our friendship than anything else in the world, which I certainly do, because I have so many reasons to know you, and I am sure I know myself."

And again: "There is now one thing that I depend upon in this world, which is that you and I shall always love one another as long as we remain in it."

Their love was so genuine that they drew freely upon each other's banking accounts, which is, after all, a severe test of friendship in this world of ours. "I shall be obliged," says March, "to take a thousand of yours to go down [to Newmarket] but it will be replaced in a few days."

On another occasion he writes a letter which is worth transcribing in full:

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I have lost my match and am quite broke. I cannot tell you how much. I am obliged to you for thinking of my difficulties and providing for them in the midst of your own. Let me hear soon. Yours very affectionately,

"M. and R."

It is the same thing when Selwyn loses. "So you have lost a thousand pounds" (March to Selwyn), "which you have done twenty times in your life-time, and won it again as often, and why should not the same thing happen again? . . . As to your banker, make yourself easy about that, for I have three thousand pounds now at Coutts'. There will be no bankruptcy

without we are both ruined at the same time." In appraising Lord March's life and conduct we must not forget this fine friendship with Selwyn. We must put it in the scale against those taints and vices with which the pens of a hundred makers of books have rendered us familiar. It will not weigh the balance even, of course; for in the present texture of society virtue is regarded, and perhaps rightly regarded, as of more importance than love. But even the most rigid moralist might pause before sentence is pronounced upon the Duke of Queensberry. He might pause long enough to ask himself the question whether he has ever instructed his banker to honour the cheques of his dear friend Brown. It is one thing to give tithes of anise, mint, and cummin; but we can all do that on occasion, especially when we have an audience. The other is much more difficult.

Legends gather thick about the head of Lord March when he is no longer Lord March, but fourth Duke of Queensberry. He owns a villa at Richmond, where he is in the habit of holding "orgies," assisted by his friends of the corps di ballet. Then there is the famous house in Piccadilly, where Silenus sits on a balcony under a green parasol (it was green, was it not?) ogling with his remaining eye every pretty girl that passes. There is the groom on horseback ready to pursue the pretty girl, at a nod from his master. The groom's name is John Radford, whether married or single not stated. The raw veal cutlets, the morning baths of milk (affecting for years the reputation of the entire metropolitan milk supply), Mount Ida and the Dardan Shepherd: are not these tales to be found in all self-respecting works of reference? They are perhaps not entirely false. But if the Duke of Queensberry sat on a balcony under a green etc., it was not only for the purpose of looking at pretty girls. He was probably quite as glad to see George Selwyn drive up from Twickenham in Horry Walpole's chariot, and stop at his (Q's) door, and come up to the balcony, and share the green umbrella. March never ceased to be a libertine, but he also never quite arrived at being a fool: and the Marchian legends invariably represent him as a fool. There is, of course, something strangely tragical about March's old age, for it is the old age of a man who had the capacity to do something important in life, and who did nothing, or less than nothing;

who saw his failure with a terrible clearness, and did not regret it; who looked back over a long career of pleasure and of vice, and found it good. But the essence of tragedy is dignity, and there was a certain dignity about Lord March's end. Wraxall, who was a toady and a busybody, and who did not know the duke half so well as he pretended, nevertheless made the truest reflection upon this. "Notwithstanding," says he, "the libertine life that he had led, he contemplated with great firmness and composure of mind his approaching end, and almost imminent dissolution; while Dr Johnson, a man of exemplary moral conduct, and personally courageous, could not bear the mention of death, nor look without shuddering at a thigh-bone in a churchyard." Wraxall is right, although perhaps it was by chance. Johnson, the saint, dies like a sinner; Queensberry, the sinner, dies like a saint. There is no moral here, except that a man is the victim of his temperament in a greater degree than most people imagine. But we must not go to the other extreme from that of the makers of legends, and become sentimental over the last days of "old Q." Let him go down to posterity as a black sheep:

> "If white and black blend, soften, and unite
> In thousand ways, is there no black and white?"

Of course there is, Mr Pope. But most people can remember that. The difficulty is to make them remember that there is such a colour as grey.

Richard Edgecumbe, the next name on the list of Selwyn's friends, has been best described by Horace Walpole in an anecdote which will bear repetition. "—— met Dick Edgecumbe," he writes, "and asked him with great importance if he knew whether Mr Pitt was out. Edgecumbe, who thinks nothing important that is not to be decided by dice, and who consequently had never once thought of Pitt's political state, replied, 'Yes.' 'Ay! How do you know?' 'Why, I called at his door just now and his porter told me so.'" Edgecumbe, it will be seen, had a vein of humour, like most of his friends; but "thinks nothing important that is not to be decided by dice" hits him off in a phrase. You are to figure him as a little chubby man, so little, indeed, that he was less than George II.; a fact which pleased the other little man immensely. Edgecumbe was at Eton with

Selwyn and Walpole; but we make his acquaintance at an even earlier period than this, and in connection with a name more famous than either of these. We meet him first at Plympton, which is not far from Mount Edgecumbe, where Dick was born and brought up. He had a young friend there named Reynolds, who could draw and paint a little, it seemed. Dick "put him up" to sketching a certain "jolly moon-faced parson," the Rev. Thomas Smart, who comes down to posterity like the proverbial fly in amber, because he happened to be the (perhaps unworthy) subject of Joshua Reynolds' first picture. Edgecumbe was thus one of the earliest friends of Sir Joshua, and one of his earliest patrons too. He was something of a connoisseur: was a member, for example, of the Dilettanti Society,[1] who kept a painter of their own; and he himself dabbled both in paint and in poetry. It was he who painted the arms of White's for Horace Walpole: no very difficult task, it is true. Edgecumbe kept up his friendship with Selwyn and Walpole from the Eton days; was a member of White's with them; was "chief herald painter" to Walpole's "Out-of-Town" party, and spent many a merry evening at Strawberry with Selwyn and Gilly Williams. The master of Strawberry, wishing at once to patronise the fine arts and to possess a record of his "Out-of-Town," commissioned Sir Joshua to paint the portraits of these three men in a "conversation piece," which he accordingly did, and the picture hung at Strawberry Hill for many a day. Walpole has preserved Edgecumbe's name from oblivion in the same way as he has preserved Selwyn's: by recording his jokes. They are not very good jokes, perhaps, but they are good enough for a "miscellany" letter. "Between the French and the earthquakes," writes Walpole in 1756, "you have no notion how good we have grown; nobody makes a suit of clothes now but of sackcloth turned up with ashes. The fast was kept so dumbly, that Dick Edgecumbe, finding a very lean hazard at White's, said with a sigh, 'Lord, how the times are degenerated! Formerly a fast would have brought everybody hither; now it keeps everybody away!'" Poor Edgecumbe had a short but merry career. He entered the House of Commons in the same year as George Selwyn (1747); stayed there till 1754; was

[1] George Selwyn was also a member of the "Dilettanti," but he was not elected until 1770.

a Lord of the Admiralty in 1755, and Comptroller of the Household in 1756; and died in 1761, at the early age of forty-five. Only one set of verses by him survives: "The Fable of the Ass, Nightingale and Kid," the quality of which may be judged by the following extract:

> "Once on a time it came to pass,
> A Nightingale, a Kid, and Ass,
> A Jack one, all set out together,
> Upon a trip—no matter whither.
> And through a village chanced to take
> Their journey—where there was a wake
> With lads and lasses all assembled:
> Our travellers, whose genius them led
> Each his own way, resolved to taste
> Their share o' the sport—we're not in haste,
> First cries the Nightingale, and I
> Delight in music mightily!
> Let's have a tune—ay, come, let's stop,
> Replied the Kid, and have a hop. . . ."

Edgecumbe was not a poet; but he achieved the proud success of being included in Walpole's "Catalogue of Noble Authors." The compiler professed a real regard for him—as real, that is, as he ever professed for anybody. "In a day or two" says he, "I expect Mr Williams, George Selwyn, and Dick Edgecumbe. You will allow that when I do admit anybody within my cloister, I choose them well." Dick died on the 13th of May. On the 14th Walpole writes a long letter to his friend Montagu, telling how Jemmy Lumley had a party of whist at his own house last week; relates his adventures afterwards; and tells a naughty story about the Duchess of Argyle. But there is no mention of poor Dick. At the following Christmas, however, the polite letter-writer drops a decorous tear in his memory: "I have been my *out-of-town* with Lord Waldegrave, Selwyn, and Williams; it was melancholy, the missing poor Edgecumbe, who was constantly of the Christmas and Easter parties. Did you see the charming picture Reynolds painted for me of him, Selwyn, and Williams? It is by far one of the best things he has painted." Edgecumbe never

GEORGE SELWYN, RICHARD EDGECUMBE, AND GILLY WILLIAMS

AFTER THE "CONVERSATION PIECE" BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, FORMERLY AT STRAWBERRY HILL

married. He left four illegitimate children, however, by his mistress, Anne Franks, for whom he appointed by his will Horace Walpole trustee. History does not record what Walpole thought of his trusteeship.

When we travel outside the inner circle of Selwyn's friends we find many less intimate acquaintances who deserve a more extended notice than one is able to give them here. There is Richard Rigby, for example, Paymaster of his Majesty's Forces, an amusing, lewd, pushing placeman; Lord Buckingham, with whom Selwyn lodged, in 1745, "up two pair of stairs in a room at half a guinea a week"; George, afterwards first Marquis Townshend, and his brother Charles; and a host of others. But one name we must linger on for a time, partly because it is that of a relative and close friend of Selwyn's, and partly because it is that of a man whose type naturally attracts the writer of biography. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams was George Selwyn's first cousin. His father, John Hanbury, married Albinia, sister of Colonel John Selwyn and daughter of General William Selwyn, whom most books of reference persist in calling "John." (The *Dictionary of National Biography* does it, and adds insult to injury by referring to him as a major of militia.) Charles Hanbury had a godfather named Williams, who left young Hanbury a fortune on condition that he would take his godfather's name: which he accordingly did. Hanbury Williams makes a great figure in the social history of the mid-eighteenth century. He flashed like a meteor across the fields of literature, politics, and diplomacy. He was the schoolfellow and friend of Henry Fielding. From his house Henry Fox made the runaway match with Lady Caroline Lennox, daughter of the Duke of Richmond: a match which threw the entire patrician world into moral mourning. Sir Charles was rich and handsome; had a pretty turn for light verse; was a model of fashion for all the young bucks of St James's Street. Diplomacy called him—or rather, he called to it—and he went abroad, first as envoy to Dresden, then to Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg. He was a brilliant diplomatist, if writing brilliant despatches entitle him to that adjective; and, as it happened, his brilliancy was his undoing. He had nearly concluded a swift and sensational treaty with Russia, in which Austria was to join, when, at the last moment, Maria

Theresa withdrew, the British Government withdrew, and Sir Charles received from home, not thanks, but a cold letter of censure. This was distinctly unjust; for the Government, and even the King himself, had pressed on the treaty by every means in their power.[1] But governments (and kings) were like that in the eighteenth century; and if Williams, instead of being brilliant, had been humdrum; if, instead of forcing the pace in "the honeymoon" of his ambassadorship, to use his own phrase, he had allowed things to drift in the ordinary diplomatic manner, all would have been well. The result of this miscarriage was very sad. Sir Charles lost his reason; came home by slow stages to England; and died by his own hand (it is said): a victim to brilliancy: an awful example of the value of humdrum in British politics. He was only fifty-one when he died.

Sir Charles Williams was undoubtedly a man of distinguished parts. In the sphere of high politics he is more akin to Canning than perhaps to any other statesman. He had the same incisive touch, the same invincible gaiety, the same contempt for the mediocre and the dull. But it was as a writer of satirical verse that Sir Charles was most famous in his own day. Long after his death an industrious compiler issued a selection of his verse, together with certain of his letters, in three volumes. Thomas Carlyle looked at it once, and dismissed it with a contemptuous reference to "the slop-pails of an extinct generation." There is, no doubt, something of the slop-pail about more than one of these poetical pieces; but that is not by any means the whole truth. The *Quarterly* reviewer is nearer it who said that Williams had "a real vein for writing squibs—he had gaiety—the quality which is found in the lighter verses of Congreve, or the playful pages of the Twopenny Post Bag." In fact Sir Charles Williams was quite one of the most effective squib-writers in an age when squib-writing was an art of some importance. Can we fancy our statesmen to-day waiting in fear and trembling for the next set of light verses from some well-known literary hand, which shall hold them up to ridicule, even to the endangering of their administration? Conceive Mr Asquith, for example, or Mr Balfour, surreptitiously pur-

[1] For his secret instructions on going to Russia, see Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35479, f. 227.

chasing a copy of Mr ——'s new poem; giving it an indignant reading in private; buying off the poet, perhaps, with a diplomatic mission or a judgeship. Yet this is not so very different from what actually happened many times in the eighteenth century. Then the satirical verse was a most potent political weapon; it settled the fate of ministries. The whole town read the latest squib; shook its sides with laughter; men nudged and winked when the object of the squib (who might be Lord of the Treasury or Secretary of State) walked into his club of an evening, horribly conscious that his friends had all a moment before been enjoying themselves at his expense. Sir Charles Williams' pen was often dipped in gall. Observe how he tormented William Pulteney, first Earl of Bath, with his "Ode to the Earl of Bath," "New Ode to the Earl of Bath," "A Newer Ode than the Last" (to the Earl of Bath), "Ballad" (to the Earl of Bath), "Lines" (to the Earl of Bath), and heaven knows how many more to the same unfortunate nobleman: all of which the nobleman probably read, or heard about from his dear friends. No wonder Sir Charles Williams was offered so many positions of less freedom and greater responsibility on the Continent. Obviously he was a student of Pope, with some of Pope's polish, and a good deal of his wit. His description of the two Charles's, Churchill and Stanhope, is quite in the Twickenham manner:

"But with old age its vices came along,
And in narration he's extremely long,
Exact in circumstance and nice in dates
On every subject he his tale relates.
If you name one of Marlbro's ten campaigns
He tells you its whole history for your pains:
And Blenheim's field becomes by his reciting
As long in telling as it was in fighting . . .
. . . But see, another Charles's face
Cuts short the General, and relieves his Grace.
So when one crop-sick parson in a doze,
Is reading morning service through his nose,
Another, in the pulpit, straight appears
Claiming the tired-out congregation's ears,
And with a duller sermon ends their prayers.

For this old Charles is full as dull as t'other,
Baevius to Maevius was not more a brother;
From two defects his talk no joy affords,
From want of matter, and from want of words."

Williams could also write very good light verse, not of the satirical kind. A good specimen is his "Ballad in imitation of Martial, on Lady Ilchester asking Lord Ilchester how many kisses he would have."

"Dear Betty, come give me sweet kisses,
For sweeter no girl ever gave:
But why in the midst of our blisses
Do you ask me how many I'd have?

I'm not to be stinted in pleasure,
Then prithee, dear Betty, be kind;
For as I love thee beyond measure,
To numbers I'll not be confined.

Count the bees that on Hybla are straying,
Count the flowers that enamel the fields,
Count the flocks that on Tempe are playing,
Or the grains that each Sicily yields;

Count how many stars are in Heaven,
Go reckon the sands on the shore;
And when so many kisses you've given,
I still shall be asking for more.

To a heart full of love let me hold thee,
A heart that dear Betty is thine;
In my arms I'll forever enfold thee,
And curl round thy neck like a vine.

What joy can be greater than this is?
My life on thy lips shall be spent;
But those who can number their kisses
Will always with few be content."

Sir Charles Williams had no reputation as a writer of prose, perhaps because he wrote so little; but his prose nevertheless had a certain distinction. "Conciseness (and I hope clearness) is what I pique myself upon," he says in one of his letters,

which were undoubtedly both concise and clear. He wrote with a Gallic lucidity of phrase not often to be found in the eighteenth century; *Eöthen* had the same quality in the nineteenth. Williams' style, indeed, suggests no writer more than Kinglake, as anyone may discover who takes the trouble to read his correspondence with Henry Fox. But after all, he was an amateur in literature; it is in another capacity that we have to consider him for a moment before dismissing him from these pages. In all probability George Selwyn never remembered a time when his cousin Charles was not also his friend. But the difference between them of eleven years made the relationship rather one of patron and pupil than of intimacy between equals. While George was yet at Eton, Charles was a fine gentleman in London; and again, while George was pretending to study at Oxford, or dunning his father from Paris, Charles was entertaining the town with his squibs, and setting the mode for St James's Street. It is quite likely, indeed, that George Selwyn was first launched on the life of London by his cousin, who introduced him to the clubs, and to society, and to the half-society of those days also. We have seen how he wrote to Selwyn at Oxford, imploring him to enjoy himself, and what came of the advice. When Selwyn returned to town from Oxford Williams had gone abroad; and as he remained abroad practically all the time from 1745 until his death in 1759, Selwyn probably saw little of him. But at intervals they met in London, at the house in Cleveland Court, and at White's. Williams was gaiest of the gay—he had an enormous stock of sheer animal spirits—and he was accustomed to keep the table in a roar as he related, with a wealth of detail, entirely apocryphal stories of his cousin George. We have this from a distinguished authority, Dr John Warner, who, however, belongs to a much later period of George Selwyn's life, and has no business to come into the narrative at this point, except to be quoted as an authority. He relates how Sir Charles was once telling a large company a story about Selwyn, "with many strokes of rich humour received with great glee before his face, when a gentleman who sat next to the object of their mirth said to him in a low voice, 'It is strange, George, so intimate as we are, that I should never have heard of this story before.' 'Not at all strange,' he replied, in the same voice, 'for Sir Charles has

just invented it, and knows that I will not by contradiction spoil the pleasure of the company he is so highly entertaining.'" Warner says he had this direct from Selwyn; and indeed it has an air of verisimilitude; it is characteristic of both men: Williams, the invincibly gay, Selwyn, the invincibly amiable, appreciative of good stories even when told against himself. Upon this Warner assigned to Williams a most important place in the first Selwyn circle. He says that he (with Lord Chesterfield) was the author of an enormous legend about Selwyn: the legend of his "fondness for corpses" and executions. This contention will be examined in its proper place. Here it is sufficient to note that no one was more responsible for George Selwyn's bent towards the life of pleasure and of fashion than Sir Charles Hanbury Williams.

At the close of Sir Charles' one published letter to Selwyn, he says: "Mr Walpole sits by me while I write: always think of him with affection, for he delights in you." Horace Walpole was by far the most distinguished of the Selwyn circle, and as yet he has been left entirely out of the picture. But Horace deserves, and shall have, a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER VI

STRAWBERRY HILL

FORTUNATELY it is no part of our duty here to attempt an estimate of the character of Horace Walpole. That has already been done by more that one eminent hand. It has been done, for example, by Lord Macaulay; and when Macaulay speaks, his words are what Carlyle called Alfred Tennyson's: "Decisions." Whether you agree with them or not, you are bound to give them a certain respectful consideration. Now, Macaulay on Horace Walpole is as amusing and as vigorous as Macaulay on anybody else; but it is obviously breaking a butterfly upon the wheel, and the spectator can't entirely repress his sympathy for the unfortunate butterfly. Nevertheless, Macaulay seems to have enjoyed the operation extremely. With what gusto does he launch his attack upon the Letter-Writer! How he trounces him in that commanding English of his! How grimly and pertinaciously does he insist upon exploring every corner of the Letter-Writer's not very extensive soul! "A gentleman-usher at heart," says he contemptuously, and the judgment will go echoing and re-echoing down the ages as long as print and paper endure. And of course Walpole was a snob: a mean admirer of mean things. But then he was a good deal more than this, only that Macaulay intended to give him a trouncing, and the trouncing style does not lend itself to accurate portraiture. In fact, Macaulay ought never to have written upon Walpole at all, just as he ought never to have troubled himself about Mr Robert Montgomery. His hand was too heavy for such work. Horace Walpole was an odd, affected, amusing creature (although he would have been shocked at the application of any of these adjectives to himself), and odd, amusing creatures did not appeal to Macaulay. Like the puppet-master in "Tom Jones," he is not entertained by the antics of Mr Punch. He points out firmly, and with unanswerable logic, that the gentleman is deformed, and speaks

in a high-pitched, unnatural voice, and has the manners and the morals of a bargee. All of which is true: only that most of us are content to look on at the show, and laugh when Mr Punch thwacks his wife, and drop our pennies in the hat when it comes round. Horace Walpole is not a Punchinello, to be sure; but in his pleasant, high-bred way he is a very amusing play-actor. When he occupies the stage himself he is never stupid or dull, and you can't deny his cleverness when he is merely pulling the wires for the other little puppets. Nor does it really matter a pin to us now what Walpole's character was as a man. It is enough to remember his fine achievement in the sphere of literature as the greatest of English letter-writers: greatest, whether we look at the body of his work or at its quality. This judgment could be sustained at length, if this were the place to sustain it, even though it be admitted that none of us can put our hand upon our heart and admit honestly that Walpole is our favourite letter-writer. But this is not the place to sustain it. We have to consider Walpole in quite another capacity from that in which he is best known to posterity.

Horace Walpole occupies a unique position in the circle of George Selwyn's friends. He is the Boswell of the party, and chronicles the words of his Johnson with almost the assiduity of the other Boswell. The analogy may indeed be pushed for a considerable distance. Johnson, as we all know, survives in the pages of his biographer, rather than in those of his Dictionary or of his "Lives of the Poets"; and Selwyn survives, not only as a wit, but also as a man, almost exclusively in the letters of Horace Walpole. The analogy must not of course be pushed too far. Boswell revered his master and carefully preserved his lightest word as though it were the word of an oracle. Walpole was under no such obsession with regard to Selwyn. But Selwyn was a sayer of good things; he uttered just that kind of light and airy speech which might sparkle afterwards in a chatty letter to a friend. Walpole noted the words as they came; jotted them down on the back of an envelope (or on his shirt cuff, perhaps); and elaborated them at leisure in a letter to General Conway or Mr George Montagu. How much of the result was Selwyn's and how much Walpole's it would perhaps be idle to inquire. It may well have been that when

Walpole said, as he so often did, that he would conclude his letter with a *bon-mot* of George Selwyn's, he meant that he would conclude with a *bon-mot* of Horace Walpole's. Or again, it may have been that Selwyn supplied the idea, and that Walpole gave it literary form. The result is not important enough to justify a prolonged investigation of the point. It is sufficient to observe that if Selwyn was the Receiver-General of waif and stray jokes, Walpole was their self-appointed Registrar-General.

Walpole, as we have seen, was a friend not only of George Selwyn, but of the whole Selwyn family. The friendship came about most naturally, since both the Selwyns and the Walpoles were Court people, and both were in the same political interest. Colonel John Selwyn was attached officially to George II. for many years, and Sir Robert Walpole was that monarch's principal minister. Furthermore, there was a connection by marriage between the two families. Sir Robert Walpole's sister had married Charles, second Viscount Townshend, and their son Thomas, Horace Walpole's cousin, had married Colonel John Selwyn's daughter Albinia. There was no doubt, therefore, a good deal of commerce between the Selwyns and the Walpoles, between the house in Cleveland Court and the house in Chelsea, when George Selwyn and Horace Walpole were boys. But the friendship of these two really began in the seventeen-forties, when both were young men upon the town. The Eton days were over; so was Walpole's Grand Tour with the poet Gray; and Horace and George were seeing life from the club window of White's. The references to Selwyn in the Walpole correspondence begin very early, and continue until very late. One of the earliest occurs in 1746, when we are told that "The Prince of Hesse had a most ridiculous tumble t'other night at the opera; they had not pegged up his box tight after the ridotto, and down he came on all four; George Selwyn says he carried it off with an *unembarrassed* countenance." Already Walpole was beginning sedulously to chronicle the witticisms of his friend. Many a night these two spent at White's, though one can never conceive that Walpole had any real interest in the gaming-table. No doubt he looked on at the play, and perhaps took a hand at picquet, as a gentleman should, and then came home to his house in Arling-

ton Street, quite sober, and at a respectable hour. Once he found a housebreaker awaiting him: but that is a story which should be told in Walpole's own words, and should be entitled: "The Housebreaker, The Letter-writer, and The Wit." "Last Sunday night," says Walpole in a letter to Montagu, "being as wet a night as you shall see in a summer's day, about half an hour after twelve, I was just come home from White's, and undressing to step into bed, I heard Harry, who you know lies forwards, roar out 'Stop Thief!' and run down stairs. I ran after him. Don't be frightened; I have not lost one enamel, nor bronze, nor have been shot through the head again. A gentlewoman, who lives at governor Pitt's next door but one to me, and where Mr Huntley used to live, was going to bed too, and heard people breaking into Mr Freeman's house, who, like some acquaintance of mine in Albemarle Street, goes out of town, locks up his doors, and leaves the community to watch his furniture. *N.B.*—It was broken open two years ago, and I and all the chairmen vow they shall steal his house away another time, before we will trouble our heads about it. Well, madam called out 'Watch!'; two men, who were sentinels, ran away, and Harry's voice after them. Dawn came, and with a posse of chairmen and watchmen found the third fellow in the area of Mr Freeman's house. Mayhap you have seen all this in the papers, little thinking who commanded the detachment. Harry fetched a blunderbuss to invite the thief up. One of the chairmen, who was drunk, cried '*Give me the blunderbuss. I'll shoot him!*' But as the General's head was a little cooler, he prevented military execution, and took the prisoner without bloodshed, intending to make his triumphal entry into the metropolis of Twickenham with his captive tied to the wheels of his post-chaise. I find my style rises so much with the recollection of my victory, that I don't know how to descend so tell you that the enemy was a carpenter and had a leather apron on. The next step was to share my glory with my friends. I despatched a courier to White's for George Selwyn, who, you know, loves nothing upon earth so much as a criminal, except the execution of him. It happened very luckily that the drawer, who received my message, has very lately been robbed himself, and had the wound fresh in his memory. He stalked up to the Club-room, stopped short, and

with a hollow trembling voice said, '*Mr Selwyn! Mr Walpole's compliments to you, and he has got a housebreaker for you!*' A squadron immediately came to re-inforce me, and having summoned Mereland with the keys of the fortress, we marched into the house to search for more of the gang. Colonel Seabright with his sword drawn went first, and then I, exactly the picture of Robinson Crusoe, with a candle and lanthorn in my hand, a carbine upon my shoulder, my hair wet and about my ears, and in a linen night-gown and slippers. We found the kitchen shutters forced, but not finished; and in the area a tremendous bag of tools, a hammer large enough for the hand of a Jael, and six chisels! All which *opima spolia* as there was no temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in the neighbourhood, I was reduced to offer on the altar of Sir Thomas Clarges." As a little picture of an episode in London life in the eighteenth century this is difficult to beat. You can see the unfortunate carpenter in the area, General Walpole shivering in his linen night-gown and slippers, the crowd of drunken chairmen, the arrival of the White's contingent headed by George Selwyn, while the rain pours pitilessly down. Not often was the Letter-Writer in the midst of such an alarm.

But it was when Walpole established himself at Strawberry Hill that he and Selwyn passed most time in each other's company. We first hear of Strawberry in June 1747. "You perceive by my date," writes Walpole to his cousin Conway, "that I am got into a new camp, and have left my tub at Windsor. It is a little plaything-house that I got out of Mrs Chenevix's Shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw"; and then he goes on to describe his new toy. It was a toy of which Walpole never tired. He bought it a "Villakin," a tiny country house with stuffy, comfortless, rooms; he left it a Gothic castle, filled with books, pictures, prints, stained glass, curios, armour: impressed, in short, both inside and out, with the odd taste of the owner. Walpole was very happy at Strawberry, fiddling about amongst his printing-presses and his stained glass. It was only a two-hours' drive from town, so that he could spend the morning in Arlington Street and dine at Twickenham in the afternoon. During nearly fifty years he took that drive many, many, times a year. What more natural than that he should desire pleasant companion-

ship in his "light-bodied chariot" to beguile the journey? This, no doubt, was the origin of the *out-of-town* party, to which reference has already been made. Walpole knew where and how to pick his men. White's was the place: there were no dull-dogs at White's. And where could you find three more cheerful fellows than George Selwyn, Gilly Williams, and Dick Edgecumbe? Remember Walpole's requirements. He would have no mere crack-pated man of fashion. What he wanted was agreeable company; people who could talk well and brightly; who knew something about life, and (perhaps) literature, and (certainly) art. Now all three, Selwyn, Williams, and Edgecumbe, fulfilled these requirements. They were witty; they moved in Walpole's circle; Edgecumbe was an artist of some ability; and Gilly Williams decidedly knew good literature and good art from bad. We must suppose that these four often drove out together from St James's Street to Twickenham, and dined there in bachelor state. Sometimes they returned the same night, waking the echoes of Hammersmith and Kensington with the sound of their chariot wheels; sometimes they spent a few days at Strawberry before town saw them again. Nearer our own day Mr Peter Cunningham has taken his seat in the chariot, and pointed out for us the interesting houses they passed on their way. We need not follow him, except to note how few are the changes a hundred and fifty years have made in the landmarks. Gone is the "Hercules' Pillars" at Hyde Park Corner, where Squire Western stayed; gone also is Q.'s house in Piccadilly; but observe how many of the great houses still remain: Kingston House, Kensington Palace, Holland House, Gunnersbury, Osterley, Sion House, Pope's Villa, Radnor House, and Strawberry itself. It is pleasant enough to think that time has dealt so leniently with these famous places.

When our four gentlemen arrived at Twickenham, they (having dined, of course) formed themselves into a "committee of taste," and fell to discussing the latest improvements in Strawberry. Or the "chief herald painter," Edgecumbe, would make a sketch, while Selwyn criticised the out-of-town "conversation piece" by Sir Joshua, which hung over the chimney in the great parlour. Just how often these out-of-town parties were held we do not know; but for some years they

were certainly fixtures for Easter and Christmas. "In a day or two I expect Mr Williams, George Selwyn, and Dick Edgecumbe," writes Walpole on 24th December 1754; and again in 1761, after Dick's death, he misses "poor Edgecumbe, who was constantly of the Christmas and Easter parties." Lord Waldegrave took Edgecumbe's place, and the parties continued until Waldegrave's death in 1763. But no doubt the informal gatherings at Strawberry were much more frequent. Here is a dateless scrap rescued from one of the famous boxes, and addressed to George Selwyn: "Dear Sir, do send me the second volume of Rousseau. Take care, for a few leaves of this 2nd are loose. I am this instant going to Strawberry Hill; I don't know how to ask you to go and dine there, but if you should like it, I will bring you back as soon as you have dined. H. Walpole." Besides the "Out-of-Towns," and these occasional informal dinners, there were great and splendid entertainments, from which Selwyn was seldom absent. Thus, on a June evening in 1764, the Abbot of Strawberry writes to his friend Montagu: "Strawberry, whose glories perhaps verge toward their setting, has been more sumptuous to-day than ordinary, and banquetted their representative Majesties of France and Spain. I had M. and Madame de Guerchy . . . Lord March, George Selwyn, Mrs Ann Pitt, and my niece Waldegrave. The refectory never was so crowded; nor have any foreigners been here before that comprehended Strawberry. Indeed, everything succeeded to a hair. A violent shower in the morning laid the dust, brightened the green, refreshed the roses, pinks, orange flowers, and the blossoms with which the acacias are covered. A rich storm of thunder and lightning gave a dignity to the heavens; and the sun appeared enough to illuminate the landscape, without basking himself over it at his length. During dinner there were French horns and clarionettes in the cloister; and after dinner I treated them with an English, and to them a very new, collation, a syllabub milked under the cows that were brought to the brow of the terrace. Thence, they went to the printing-house, and saw a new fashionable French song printed. They drank tea in the gallery, and at eight went away to Vauxhall." The Abbot adds that the company seemed quite pleased with the place and the day, as well they might, for "all was handsomely done," and the Abbot spared not the

treasury of his abbey. Among the curios which may have interested them were: "a holy-water-pot of earthen-ware, given by Mr G. A. Selwyn," which stood by the door of the chapel; a piece of painted glass in the little parlour, "the arms of Ayliffe, impaling Clifford of Frampton," also given by Mr Selwyn; and the original sketch for the arms of White's, in the green closet.

So much for Selwyn's visits to Strawberry. When he was in the country or abroad Walpole sent him an occasional letter; but, for some reason or other, this correspondence is not very distinguished: it is not characteristic of the writer. Thus, in 1759, Walpole sends him an account of the battle of Minden: "All I know you shall know, though I dare to say, not a jot more than you know already. Just as the battle turned, Prince Ferdinand sent Mr Ligonier to order Lord George to bring up all the cavalry. That message was scarce delivered before Fitzroy came to order only the British Cavalry. Lord George said that must be a mistake, and that he would go and ask Prince Ferdinand what he really would have. The Horses were not carried up; Lord George was coldly received after the battle, Lord Granby warmly; they all dined together, and next day came out the famous order of thanks. Lord George was enraged, sent over for leave to resign and to return, has leave: has written an explanatory letter to the Duke of Richmond which I have not seen, and is not come that I know." This is interesting only as a contemporary account of an incident which Lord George Sackville never got over until the day of his death. It is not Horatian. The same day or thereabouts he scribbles a note slightly more characteristic: "Yesterday, at past three, Lord Holderness received a mysterious letter; I don't know from whence; not a word of it was told; upon which the stocks took it into their head that the King of Prussia was killed, and in their panic tumbled down a hundred pair of stairs. Betty [the St James's Street fruiterer] says the Germans are in tears; my Lady Townshend has been with Hawkins [a surgeon] to know if it is possible for the King of Prussia to live after his head is shot off." This was in 1759. The next letters from Walpole to Selwyn are dated 1765-1766, and they are written from Paris. This was a journey which Walpole had been meditating for quite a long time. "Horry Walpole has

now postponed his journey till May," writes Gilly Williams to Selwyn in March 1765. "He procrastinates on this side of the water as much as March on the other. To tell you the truth, as I believe he has no great cordiality for his excellency [Lord Hertford], he is not very impatient to see him. How do you think he has employed that leisure which his political frenzy has allowed of? In writing a novel, entitled 'The Castle of Otranto,' and such a novel that no boarding-school Miss of thirteen could get half through without yawning. It consists of ghosts and enchantments; pictures walk out of their frames, and are good company for half an hour together; helmets drop from the moon, and cover half a family. He says it was a dream, and I fancy one when he had some feverish disposition in him."

It was not until September that Walpole started for Paris. In the meantime George Selwyn had come home from a prolonged stay in that city, and it is quite likely that it was he who finally made up Walpole's mind for him. Certainly he gave him an introduction to Madame du Deffand, for which Walpole was grateful. "I was in your debt before," he writes to Selwyn in December, "for making over Madame du Deffand to me, who is delicious: that is, as often as I can get her fifty years back: but she is as eager about what happens every day as I am about the last century. I sup there twice a week and bear all her dull company for the sake of the Regent. I might go to her much oftener, but my curiosity to see everybody and everything is insatiable, especially having lost so much time by my confinement. I have been very ill a long time, and mending much longer, for every two days undo the ground I get. The fogs and damps which, with your leave, are greater and more frequent than in England, kill me. However, it is the country in the world to be sick and grow old in. The first step towards being in the fashion is to lose an eye or a tooth. Young people, I conclude there are, but where they exist I don't guess: not that I complain; it is charming to totter into vogue." He mixes with the high society of the capital, the Queen, Madame Geoffrin, the Duchess d'Aiguillen, Madame de Rochfort, and is "very well amused." He visits the Hôtel de Carnavalet, Madame de Sévigné's house, which "sends its blessings to you. I never pass it without saying an Ave Maria de Rabutin Chantal,

gratia plena." He remembers the out-of-town, and says: "When we three meet again in Strawberry, I think I shall be able at least to divert Mr Williams; but till then you must keep my council. Madame du Deffand says I have *le fou mocqueur*, and I have not hurt myself a little by laughing at Whisk and Richardson, though I have steered clear of the chapter of Mr Hume; the only Trinity now in fashion here." In January he writes again to Selwyn, a letter full of tittle-tattle about mutual friends in Paris. "I hope some of the English," he concludes, "who are here in plenty, will carry you over the new head-dress of the men, which is exactly in a sugar-loaf shape, and very little lower. As the mourning (for the Dauphin) checks their fancy in cloaths, it has broken out on the tops of their heads. Adieu! my dear sir, I can talk to you of nothing English, for I hear nothing but of your politics, about which I do not care a straw." Selwyn probably kept Walpole supplied with all the London gossip; for in March the latter writes: "I laughed till I cried at your description of Mr Pitt, hopping and crawling and dressing: but I took care not to publish it *here*, where they believe he is more alert and has longer talons than the Beast of the Gevaudan . . . in short they consider him as the Chinese do the East India Company whom they call *Mr Company*. You see how true the saying is that nobody is a hero in the eyes of his own *valet de chambre*. In England you are all laughing at the crutch of a man who keeps the rest of Europe in awe. It is now and then such a Clytus as you, that prevents a poor drunken mortal from passing for a God." "I am really coming," he adds, "though I divert myself well enough, and have no sort of thirst after your politics. But lilac-tide approaches, and I long as much to see a bit of green as a housemaid does that sticks a piece of mint in a phial: I don't write to Mr Williams because writing to you is the same thing; and I forget him no more than I hope he forgets me." Soon after this Walpole was back in his beloved Strawberry. But he had acquired the fatal habit of going to Paris; for in December of the same year Gilly Williams writes to Selwyn (himself in France): "Horry Walpole is lost in loo and politics. It is this day Conway and the next Chatham, and he is behind them both alternately at the Opera. I thought he would have been more regular in his correspondence with you,

as he intends passing the next spring in that very round of foreign ecstasy which you so rapturously describe." It was August, however, before Walpole reached Paris. He left it in October, just as Selwyn arrived. "Thank you," writes Walpole from Arlington Street in the middle of that month, "I am as well as anybody can be that has been drowned from above and below, that was sick to death for eight hours, with the additional mortification of finding himself not invulnerable." But notwithstanding the horrors of the Channel passage, Walpole could not break himself off the Paris-going habit. Every year or two found him there, fluttering round the old blind Madame du Deffand. He did not always report progress to Selwyn; we have, indeed, no more Parisian letters for some considerable time. In 1771, however, he sends him from Strawberry Hill a theatrical bill, advertising a dramatic entertainment which had recently been produced at the *Comédie Italienne*:

RÂTON ET ROSETTE
PARODIE RÉMISE AU THÉÂTRE
AVEC SES AGRÉMENS . . .

Now it happened that "Râton" was the name of Selwyn's favourite dog and "Rosette" the name of Walpole's. "Who would have thought," says Horace, "that Râton and Rosette would be talked of for one another? But neither innocence nor age are secure! People say that there never is a smoke without some fire; here is a striking proof to the contrary. Only think of the poor dear souls having a comic opera made upon their lives! Rosette is so shocked that she insists upon Râton's posting to Paris and breaking the poet's bones; *sauf à les ronger après.* If he is a *preux chevalier* he will vindicate her character, *d'une manière éclatante.*" A pretty little piece of correspondence this between two unromantic, middle-aged bachelors.

Up to this point we have traced the history of the Walpole-Selwyn friendship almost entirely from the letters of Walpole. But we now have the help of Selwyn's own letters to Lord Carlisle, which from 1770 or thereabouts contain many references to his friend "Horry." We have seen in what light Walpole regarded Selwyn; we are now to see what Selwyn thought of Walpole. Thus in February 1768 he writes: "Mr Walpole's

book ('Historic Doubts on Richard the Third') came out yesterday, but I got it from him on Saturday, and Lord Molyneux carried it for me that morning to Sir John Lambert to be forwarded to your lordship immediately. I'm confident that it will entertain you very much, and, what is more extraordinary, convince you; because I have that good opinion of your understanding as not to think that ages and numbers can sanctify falsehood, and that such is your love of truth as to be glad to find it, although at the expense of quitting the prejudice of your whole precedent life. I will not forestall your judgment by saying anything more of this book, but only wish it may afford as much entertainment as it has me. This historic doubter dined with me yesterday. . . . Horry seemed mightily pleased with the success which his new book has met with; nobody cavils at anything, but here and there an expression; his hypothesis is approved of from the most reasonable conjectures and the most indisputable authorities." Selwyn, it is interesting to note, was convinced by Walpole's argument, which convinced neither Voltaire, nor Hume, nor Gray, nor the Dean of Exeter, nor even the doubter himself, who abandoned the argument, and purged himself of his heretical views on Richard III., many years after this.

In 1772 Walpole visited Castle Howard, which charmed him. "Oh, George," he writes to Selwyn, "were I such a poet as your friend [Carlisle] and possessed such a Parnassus, I would instantly scratch my name out of the buttery-book of Almack's; be admitted *ad eundem* among the Muses; and save every doit to lay out in making a Helicon, and finishing my palace." Two years afterwards he travelled down to the west of England, and paid his second visit to Matson. "Horry Walpole has a project of coming into this part of the world the end of this week," wrote Selwyn, "and if he does, of coming to see me on Saturday. I shall be glad to converse with anybody whose ideas are more intelligible than those of the persons I am now with." This was in reference to Walpole's note to Selwyn: "I think I shall be with you on Saturday . . . but it is so formidable to me to begin a journey, and I have changed my mind so often about this, though I like it so much, that I beg you will not be disappointed if you do not see me. If I were juvenile enough to set off

at midnight and travel all night, you would be sure of me; but folks who do anything eagerly neither know nor care what they do. Sedate me, who deliberate, at least do not determine but on preference; therefore, if I surmount difficulties, I shall at least have some merit with you; and if I do not, you must allow that the difficulties were prodigious, when they surmounted so much inclination. In this wavering situation I wish you good-night, and hope I shall make to-morrow as resolute as Hercules on Mr Bruce; but pray do not give me live beef for supper." As it happened, the difficulties, not the inclination, were "surmounted," and Walpole reached Matson on the Friday, one day before time. "At night I heard that Mr Walpole was here," says Selwyn; "I was then at Gloucester, so I hurried home, and have now some person to converse with who speaks my own language." Those who wish to know how the Letter-Writer spent his week-end at Matson must read his letter to the Rev. Mr Cole, dated 15th August 1774: "You will not dislike my date [Matson]," he tells the antiquary. "I am in the very mansion where King Charles and his two eldest sons lay during the siege. . . . The present master has done due honour to the Royal residence, and erected a good marble bust of the royal martyr in a little gallery. In a window is a shield of painted glass, with that King's and Queen's arms which I gave him. So you see I am not a rebel, when Alma mater antiquity stands godmother." Walpole left Matson on the Monday, Selwyn having provided "very fine weather for him, and Gothic to his heart's content." George was in the thick of an election fight; and Horry looked on at his friend's canvassing and speech-making, and reflected on his own wisdom, and thought himself "the greatest philosopher in the world" because he had given up such a childish pursuit as politics, and had taken to serious things like painted glass and the Gothic.

At this time Walpole was beginning to feel the burden of years and of gout. He was only sixty, but men aged quickly in those days. Once he writes to Selwyn that he can't stir out of his bed-chamber, "which is up two flights of stairs . . . but I hope that will not hinder you from calling on me, whenever you have nothing better to do." Despite

gout and years, however, he managed to pay one more visit to Paris (in 1775) to bid farewell to Madame du Deffand. He sends a chatty letter to Selwyn, promising him "some royal prints. New fashions in dress, furniture, baubles, I have seen none. Feathers are waning, and almost confined to filles and foreigners." He is back in October, "as peevish as a monkey," Selwyn tells Carlisle. They meet occasionally at dinner, and compare their symptoms and their "distresses," as peevish old bachelors do. Or there are invitations to Strawberry for Selwyn and his child friends: "Lady Caroline Howard, la Signorina Fagnani,[1] and Miss in the lodging, or any other three ladies are very welcome to see Strawberry Hill any morning this week: but Mr Selwyn is not, as he has not made a visit there in form to the Sénéchal of the Castle since he resided at Richmond." Then follows in a feigned handwriting: "Your Honour, my master is going to town this evening, and will not be back till Thursday. From your Honour's most obedient to command, Margaret Young. Pray be secret." Once Walpole goes to the play; which rouses the sarcasm of the other old bachelor. "Mr Walpole" says he, "more *defait*, more *perclus de ses membres*, than I ever yet saw any poor wretch, is come to-night to the play-house, to see the Tragedy of Narbonne. The gout may put what shackles it likes on some people: *on les rompt, et la vanité l'emporte*. He seems as able to act a part in the drama as to assist at the performance of it." It was very annoying to see an old fellow like Horry hobbling off to the theatre, when George (very asthmatic and shaky) had to stay at home. It was much more appropriate when, on another evening, Walpole came in when Selwyn and a young friend were "playing together at whist with two dummies," and remained till near eleven.

The years were getting on, and there is not much more to chronicle in the lifelong friendship of these two men. Imagine Selwyn at Richmond, feeble and querulous; and Walpole at Strawberry, more and more of the abbot and the recluse. It must have been about this time that Selwyn described Strawberry Hill to the third Lord Holland as a "catacomb, or at best a museum, rather than a habitation," and the master of it as "one of the most carefully finished miniatures and

[1] See Chapter XI.

best-preserved mummies in the whole collection." They visit each other now and then, and talk of Paris, and of the fate of mutual old friends there. The Bastille has fallen; the guillotine has been running patrician blood; we are filled with abhorrence at these crimes. Is not Grénier's Hotel "more like a hospital than anything else? Such rooms, such a crowd of miserable wretches, and Mme. de Boufflers among them . . . altogether a piteous sight," says Selwyn. But why linger on these things? It is more pleasant to go down the river to Isleworth and pluck roses in the Duke's garden: or to go up the river to Twitn'am and take tea with Horry. We shall not have many more opportunities. There comes a day when Walpole writes to Miss Berry that he is on the point of losing, or has already lost, his oldest acquaintance and friend, George Selwyn. "These misfortunes, though they can be so but for a short time, are very sensible to the old; but him I really loved, not only for his infinite wit, but for a thousand good qualities." A few days afterwards: "I have had another grievous memento, the death of poor Selwyn. . . . From eight years old I had known him intimately without a cloud between us, few knew him so well, and consequently few knew so well the goodness of his heart and nature." And again: "Poor Selwyn is gone to my sorrow, and no wonder Ucalegon feels it."

No wonder, indeed. But Ucalegon, gouty and old, must not dwell upon it; agitation must be avoided at his age. Here is a good story about Caroline Vernon, *fille d'honneur*, who lost £200 at faro t'other night. And don't you notice that the evenings are lengthening, and the spring coming on? Soon it will be lilac-tide again, when we may leave Berkeley Square for Strawberry, and wander in the pleasant river garden, companioned by the ghosts of those who were once our friends.

CHAPTER VII

"MR SELWYN THE WIT"

"I DO not comprehend how I have the courage to scribble away at such a rate to 'Mr Selwyn the Wit': but you see the effect of flattery." So wrote that charming woman, Lady Sarah Bunbury, in a certain "amazing long letter" which she sent to Selwyn from Spa. Just exactly when George Selwyn began to be known as "the Wit" is doubtful: probably when Walpole's letters began to circulate; and that, of course, was when both the Letter-Writer and the Wit were young men. But the epithet, once given, could not be shaken off, and Selwyn kept it for the rest of his life. It was a burden which he bore with considerable equanimity. "I could never get an admirer of my erudition but Wraxall," he wrote, "of my wit I have had indeed plenty, that is, all the fools in Town, who never had any idea of what wit is, and to which I am sure I stand [as] clear of making any pretensions as anybody ever did. But if I had, would it be wonderful? When Lady Tweedale protests, I cannot speak but it is a *bon-mot.*" It is perhaps useless to inquire whether Selwyn actually did or did not say all the good things which were attributed to him in his lifetime. Probably he did not: no man does say quite all the good things that are attributed to him. But when you give a man the name of wit, he at once becomes a convenient peg upon which to hang (if you can be said to hang a joke) all the witticisms which fly about in an intellectually healthy state of society. In our own day, for example, not a *bon-mot* was uttered between New York and San Francisco of which the author was not either Mark Twain or Mr Chauncey Depew. It was hopeless for these eminent men to deny paternity: nobody believed them. This is a good story: therefore it is Mark Twain's; that is a brilliant epigram: therefore it is Mr Depew's. So argued the public; and in time the eminent men recognised the uselessness of denials, and perhaps even began to believe that they had after all said these

GEORGE SELWYN

FROM THE PASTEL BY H. D. HAMILTON

brilliant things, and had forgotten them. It appears that "Mr Selwyn the Wit" became, even in his lifetime, a superstition: the young fellows at White's would point him out as one who, in their fathers' day, was the most famous wit in town. But that is the common fate of wits. Gradually, but surely, they are found out. People cease to laugh with them, and begin to laugh at them. Something like this was Selwyn's fate. But let us be tender with this reputation of Selwyn's, and continue to think of him as the Wit, if only because we must soon shatter his more gruesome reputation as the lover of corpses. Brutal indeed would be the historian who would deprive a man of two reputations in one volume. George Selwyn must continue his journey to posterity as a wit; for assuredly he can proceed as nothing else.

But, first, what is a "wit"? To answer this question we need hardly enter upon a lengthy discussion as to the difference between wit and humour. That is an old and trite discussion; and in the end, people do not agree about it. But most of us perfectly well know the difference between the two. Humour is, of course, incomparably the higher thing. The humorist loves as well as laughs; sees not only the temporary incongruity, but the permanent congruity which includes that; his is the only sane point of view. When the last word upon the subject is said, no man is entirely sane who lacks a sense of humour. The wit is in a different category. He need not necessarily have a heart: he is better without one. What he must have is a certain mental agility, the capacity to see likenesses and differences on the spur of the moment: or even, as Mr Birrell would say, "on the spur of an hour and a half." If his mind be well stored this capacity will be increased, so that a man will not speak loosely or thoughtlessly but the wit shall on the instant confound him with a line from Tully or from Hyde. Thus when George Selwyn and Lord Weymouth had a dispute as to whether "central" or "centrical" were correct, and Selwyn argued for "central," somebody told him that Charles Fox had decided against him. "Then," said Selwyn, "carry him my compliments with the following authority from the 'Rape of the Lock':

> "'Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
> As ever sullied the fair face of light,
> Down to the *central* earth, his proper scene
> Repaired to search the gloomy cave of spleen.'"

This is an excellent example of how reading lends wit its aid. Even better is Swift's quotation when a lady in a crowded drawing-room swept down and broke a fine fiddle with the fringe of her gown:

"Mantua vae miserae nimium vicina Cremonae!"

As it happens, we have George Selwyn's own opinion upon wit and humour. "Charles [Fox]," says he to Carlisle, "aims sometimes at humour; he has not an atom of it, or rather, it is wit, which is better, but that is not his talent either, and they are indeed but despicable ones in my mind, *et de tous les dons de la nature celui qui est le plus dangereux et le moins utile.*" This is a very curious and interesting passage, for two reasons: first, because Selwyn was wrong about Fox, who had humour rather than wit: his nature was the large nature of the humorist; secondly, because we have here Selwyn's considered opinion that wit is better than humour, but that both are despicable and dangerous talents. In those days wit was indeed more highly esteemed than humour: wit was a gentlemanly thing; humour smacked of the vulgar. But it is questionable whether Selwyn had any clear idea of the distinction between the two. He himself was a wit; but occasionally—very occasionally—he lapsed into humour. Thus he writes to Carlisle: "The late Lord Holland's servants, preserving their friendship for my thief whom I dismissed, were so good, when their Lord died, to send for him to sit up with the corpse, as the only piece of preferment then vacant in the family. But they afterwards promoted him to be outrider to the hearse. Alice told me of it, and said it was a little comfort and relief to the poor man for the present; and Mr More the attorney to whom I mentioned it, said that they intended to *throw him into the same thing*—that was the phrase—when Lady Holland died. I beg you to reflect on these circumstances — they are dignes de Molière et Le Sage." Of Le Sage, perhaps: but Molière? Cannot the humorist claim this, rather than the wit? Or stay: does Mr Meredith's "Comic Spirit" make good *his* claim? Perhaps wit, comedy, and humour, all have their share in Selwyn's story. To wit rightly belongs the "piece of preferment"; comedy and humour may contend for the rest. . . . But we are slipping into a discussion which we wished to avoid. What we want to find is the eighteenth-century connotation of

the term "wit" as applied to a person. Definitions of wit and humour will not help us much, because the eighteenth-century wit might have either of these qualities, or neither, or both. It is of more importance to look at the persons who bore the title, and see why they had it, and what they did with it.

It should be noticed first that the wits of Queen Anne's and early Georgian times were practically all men of letters. Everybody knows the names of Pope and Swift, Gay and Prior, Addison and Steele, Budgell and Tickell. These men were all "wits" in the language of the time; yet how different were their qualities! Pope, wounding he cared not whom with his poisoned rapier; Swift, terrible in his hatred and scorn; Gay and Prior, bubbling over with animal spirits and gentle humour; Addison, the serenest mind in literature; Steele, adorably human: how different they were! But the world called them wits, and they were all alike in one respect: they proved their right to the title by their pens. No doubt they made some play with their tongues too. They sat in coffee-houses, amid clouds of smoke, and it is quite possible they said witty things occasionally for the benefit of the public who came to look on. But it must have been only on occasion—for the reminiscences of those who saw the great men at the coffee-houses are singularly tame. One old gentleman had seen Dryden at Will's, and could only remember that the poet had his chair inside during the winter, and outside during the summer: which was hardly worth remembering. But, after all, as some wise man has said, "the only test of genius is the production of works of genius." The pen is a great solvent of reputations. Now Pope and Addison and their friends did at least prove their wit and their genius by pen and paper and printer's ink. You might come away from Button's under the impression that Mr Addison was a singularly overrated man; but there next morning on your breakfast-table was *The Tatler*, fresh from the press, with an undeniably amusing article from Mr Addison's pen. But with the passing of the Queen Anne and early Georgian wits came a change. The professional wit, who was also a professional man of letters, disappeared; the Aristocratic Amateur took his place. Now the Aristocratic Amateur is the curse of every art, not because he does not take himself seriously enough, but because he takes himself too seriously. This applies

even to the art of saying good things in society. The amateur prepares his impromptus, and carefully fashions in secret his repartees. His *obiter dicta* are immortal. Happy the hostess whose dinner-table he adorns.

The later eighteenth-century wit, then, was essentially an aristocratic amateur. This gentleman came slowly into vogue. In Restoration times Dorset was such an one; so was Rochester; both these peers were also minor poets, and wrote amusing, if anæmic, verses. We must also class Bolingbroke under this head. It is true that Bolingbroke had something very like genius. He both wrote and spoke well. "Lord Bolingbroke," said Lord Chesterfield, "talked all day long full as elegantly as he wrote. He adorned whatever subject he either spoke or wrote upon by the most splendid eloquence; not a studied and laboured eloquence, but by such a flowing happiness of diction which (from care perhaps at first) was become so habitual to him, that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would have borne the press without the least correction either as to method or style." Yes, but there it is. From the point of view of art you must always distrust the eloquent person, and the person whose conversation would "bear the press" without correction. The real artist is commonly neither eloquent nor polished in conversation: stupid people discover themselves to be quite brilliant beside him. Bolingbroke therefore must go down as an aristocratic amateur, but of a very high kind. And after Bolingbroke, Chesterfield. This "beetle-browed, hook-nosed, high-shouldered gentleman" is the most famous of all aristocratic amateurs of the eighteenth century. It is not surprising that he should be classed as an amateur in wit, since he was an amateur in so many other things also. He was statesman, diplomatist, author, patron, and reformer of the calendar; he was only indeed a wit in his idle moments. But he is important to us as being the first Wit with a capital W—that is to say, he had a reputation for *conversational*, as distinct from literary wit, though he had that as well. His "Letters" of course bring him into the literary circle: but only as an amateur. No man can say that they have the true professional stamp: that they express the personality of the writer in a medium which he has thoroughly conquered and made his own. Apart, however, from his literary work, Lord Chesterfield had

in his lifetime, and for many years, the reputation of a wit. Johnson said that his *bon-mots* were "nearly all puns"; and so a good many of them were. One, not recorded, which Chesterfield made upon Lord Melbourne, angered Selwyn very much; for it happened to be in bad taste, and its author kindly fathered it upon the younger wit: "I hate to go to the house [Melbourne's]," wrote Selwyn, "for one thing, and that is because it is the object of envy to I do not know how many women, who are always recording what I am supposed to say on its being built. You must have heard of that foolish pun of my Lord Chesterfield's which he was pleased to make me the author of." The witticism recorded in Boswell, however, is quite good for the eighteenth century. "My Lord Tyrawly and I," said Chesterfield, "have been dead these two years, but we don't choose to have it known."

Lord Chesterfield is further important to us as being the link between Bolingbroke and George Selwyn. With Bolingbroke he is the statesman and the man of letters; with Selwyn he is the wit, pure and simple. Chesterfield was born in 1694, and was therefore of the generation before Selwyn's. He was a middle-aged man, and his *bon-mots* were beginning to lose their flavour with the town, when Selwyn appeared in St James's Street. The two men met frequently at White's, and perhaps the older wit gave the younger lessons in their common art. At all events, Selwyn succeeded gradually to something like the reputation of Chesterfield, although he never attained the wide fame of that peer. And Selwyn wore his rue with a difference. He was not a literary man, and never wrote a line for publication in his life. He was a wit, and nothing else: that is to say—for now we have arrived at something like the connotation of the term in the eighteenth century—he was a person moving exclusively in the higher social circles, who cultivated the art of witty conversation. He was the perfect type of the aristocratic amateur.

When we come to examine Selwyn's achievements as a wit, we are—there is no use in denying it—acutely conscious of a sense of disappointment. For in these recorded *bon-mots*, stories, epigrams, there is little wit and less humour. If ever there was a sparkle, it has died out; the laughter and the fun are gone. Every writer upon George Selwyn has made

the same discovery, and has felt the same disappointment. "What?" they say in effect, "is this your brilliant eighteenth-century wit? Was it these faded anecdotes that brought smiles to the eyes of our great-grandfathers and -grandmothers?" "The humour has evaporated in the bottling," says Thackeray, shaking his head sadly. "No task can be more disappointing in its result," says Mr Jesse, "than that of collecting the scattered *bon-mots* of a man of professed wit, with a view to prove that his reputation is well deserved." It is indeed a sorry business. To begin with, wit—as distinct from humour—is itself a sorry business, and hardly worthy of a civilised man. But there are one or two things which Selwyn's critics might do well to remember. They might remember that Helen's face is never so fair as to those who actually launched the

> "thousand ships
> And burned the topmost towers of Ilium."

Men and women have their day and die. Fashions change. New generations grow up healthily sceptical about the looks of the Grecian lady or the exploits of Moses. Then, what good story is the better for re-telling? And can a retort ever sound *quite* so happy as at the electric moment of its saying? We all know how difficult it is to repeat a really good story. The point hangs fire, somehow, and we finger the trigger uneasily for a few moments (the politely interested spectator repressing yawns meanwhile) before the weapon at length goes off, or before we realise that it has missed fire altogether. And then the retort, the repartee. How difficult it is to make it shine for the second time! The fact is that there are certain elements in the "first fine careless rapture" which can never be ours again. We can never again have, for example, the atmosphere of the moment charged with a hundred subtle personal emotions and sympathies. That has gone for ever. Nor can we have—and this is all-important in connection with George Selwyn—the manner of the speaker: the look in his eyes, the tones of his voice, his trick of gesture. We spend an evening at the pantomime or at the theatre in roars of laughter; and next morning we are a little ashamed of ourselves. After all, what was there to laugh at? We cannot for the life of us remember that the clown or the comedian said anything that was particu-

larly amusing. Over the breakfast-table—in the cold morning light—we entirely fail to justify our laughter to the family. But were we laughing, then, at the words of Harlequin or of Mr Payne? Of course not. We were laughing at Harlequin's droll capers, at the exquisitely funny way in which Mr Payne slapped Mr Grossmith on the back. Now, according to contemporary opinion, George Selwyn had at least the manner of the born wit. He knew how to give that touch of freshness to the ordinary which the Latin grammar tells us is so difficult. He said trite things gracefully. And he knew also the value of contrast. Selwyn had a dark, even a saturnine, countenance: he was essentially a melancholy man; his demeanour was solemn and grave. When a man of this type makes a joke (and they nearly all do) the effect is heightened by the unexpectedness of the thing; for, after all, surprise is at the very core of humour. Selwyn had all this advantage of contrast, and made the most of it. Again, he was undoubtedly a very somnolent person, especially in his middle and later years. According to his friends, he was continually falling asleep. He slept in the House of Commons; he slept at the card-table; the only place perhaps where he did not sleep was in bed. Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who was his colleague in Parliament for some years and knew him well, discussing this question of manner, said: "The effect [of his jests] when falling from his lips became greatly augmented by the listless and drowsy manner in which he uttered them, for he always seemed half asleep; yet the promptitude of his replies was surprising. The late Duke of Queensberry, who lived in the most intimate friendship with him, told me that Selwyn was present at a public dinner with the Mayor and Corporation of Gloucester in the year 1758, when the intelligence arrived of our expedition having failed before Rochfort. The Mayor, turning to Selwyn, 'You, sir,' said he, 'who are in the ministerial secrets, can, no doubt, inform us of the cause of this misfortune?' Selwyn, though utterly ignorant on this subject, yet unable to resist the occasion of amusing himself at the enquirer's expense, 'I will tell you in confidence the reason, Mr Mayor,' answered he; 'the fact is that the scaling ladders, prepared for the occasion, were found on trial to be too short.' This solution, which suggested itself to him at the moment, was considered by the Mayor to be

perfectly explanatory of the failure . . . not being aware, though Selwyn was, that Rochfort lies on the river Charente, some leagues from the sea-shore, and that our troops had never even effected a landing on the French coast." "I don't know a single *bon-mot* that is new," says Horace Walpole, "George Selwyn has not waked yet for the winter. You will believe that when I tell you that t'other night having lost eight hundred pounds at hazard, he fell asleep upon a table with near half as much more before him, and slept for three hours, with everybody stamping the box close at his ear. He will say prodigiously good things when he does wake." But did he say "prodigiously good things" when he woke? That can only be decided by giving recorded specimens of Selwyn's wit, and leaving each person to judge of the matter for himself.

Here, for example, is Selwyn's adventure with Audrey Lady Townshend. (They say this lady was the original of Lady Bellaston in "Tom Jones": but this is distinctly a libel.) "On Sunday last"—Walpole, of course, is the narrator—"George Selwyn was strolling home to dinner at half an hour after four. He saw my Lady Townshend's coach stop at Caraccioli's Chapel. He watched, saw her go in; her footman laughed; he followed. She went up to the altar, a woman brought her a cushion; she knelt, crossed herself, and prayed. He stole up and knelt by her. Conceive her face, if you can, when she turned and found him close to her. In his demure voice he said, 'Pray, madam, how long has your ladyship left the pale of our Church?' She looked furies, and made no answer. Next day he went to her, and she turned it off upon curiosity; but is anything more natural? No, she certainly means to go armed with every viaticum; the Church of England in one hand, Methodism in the other, and the host in her mouth." We want Mr Meredith to bring out the full comedy of this incident: the eccentric lady saying her prayers on the sly; the artful Selwyn stealing up the aisle and whispering in her ear in his mock-serious voice; the eccentric lady's dismay on hearing the voice; and the triumph of the artful one. This indeed is not a specimen of Selwyn's wit: it is a specimen of his appreciation of the comic. Here, however, is wit, almost of a Thackerayan kind. At the sale of Mr Pelham's effects Selwyn, who was present, observed thoughtfully, as he pointed to a silver dinner service, "Lord!

How many toads have been eaten off these plates?" And here is quite the best of Selwyn's *bon-mots.* A namesake of Charles Fox having been hung at Tyburn: "Did you attend the execution, George?" asked Fox. "No, Charles," drawled Selwyn, "I make a point of never attending rehearsals!" One of the waiters at Arthur's club having been committed to prison for a felony, "What a horrid idea," said Selwyn, "he will give of us to the people at Newgate." George II., for some reason or other, did not like Selwyn, and called him "that rascal George." "Rascal?" murmured Selwyn when he heard it, "that's an hereditary title of the Georges, isn't it?" Selwyn made one good and one bad "House of Commons" joke. Here is the good one: An M.P. being ill, and not getting any better, "why" asked Selwyn, "don't they give him the journals to smell to?" And here is the bad one: observing Mr Ponsonby, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, tossing about bank-bills at a hazard-table at Newmarket, "Look," said Selwyn, "how easily the Speaker passes the money-bills." Once upon a time, too, a certain M.P. met Selwyn leaving the House of Commons. "What?" says he, "is the House up?" "No," replied Selwyn sadly, "but Burke is." One wonders if this is the origin of the famous "dinner-bell" epithet. Another political *bon-mot* of Selwyn's is also worth recording. On the fall of the Grenville ministry, more than one member of that Government ascribed the downfall of their party mainly to the enmity which existed between the Princess Dowager and the Duchess of Bedford. "These gentlemen," said Selwyn, "put me in mind of thieves, who, on their way to execution, always assign their ruin to lewd women."

George Selwyn's witticisms, like everybody else's, may be divided into good, bad and indifferent. We have now seen most of those which can rightly be called good; but how many of the bad and the indifferent remain! You may open Walpole's letters at almost any page and stumble upon an (alleged) witticism of Selwyn's. You may carefully make a collection of these witticisms, but the result will not be pleasing. Frankly, they are most of them—even allowing for the inferiority of the written to the spoken word—indifferent, not to say bad. Let us winnow out a few more of them, however. One night at White's, observing the Postmaster-General, Sir Everard Fawkener,

losing a large sum of money at picquet, Selwyn, pointing to the successful player, remarked: "See how he is robbing the mail!" Lady Coventry was one day exhibiting a new dress to George Selwyn. It was blue, with spots of silver of the size of a shilling, and a silver trimming, and cost (says Walpole) "my lord will know what." She asked George how he liked it; he replied: "Why, you will be change for a guinea!" "How did you like the farce?" queries Horace in another letter. "George Selwyn says he wants to see High Life Below Stairs, as he is weary of Low Life above Stairs." Fox and Richard Fitzpatrick once lodged together at Mackie's, an oilman, in Piccadilly. Someone mentioned this at Brooks's, and said it would be the ruin of poor Mackie. "On the contrary," replied Selwyn, "so far from ruining him, they will make Mackie's fortune; for he will have the credit of having the finest pickles in his house of any man in London." Fox was once boasting at Brooks's of the advantageous peace he had ratified with France, adding that he had at length prevailed upon the court of Versailles to relinquish all pretensions to the gum trade in favour of Great Britain. Selwyn, who was present, but apparently asleep in his chair, exclaimed: "That Charles, I am not at all surprised at; for having permitted the French to draw your *teeth*, they would indeed be d——d fools to quarrel with you about your gums." A young gentleman (Mr Thomas Foley) having fled to the Continent from his creditors: "'Tis a *pass-over*," remarked Selwyn, "that will not be much relished by the Jews." Walking once with Lord Pembroke, Selwyn was besieged by a number of young chimney-sweeps, who kept asking for money. "I have often," says Selwyn, with a bow, "heard of the sovereignty of the people: I presume your Highnesses are in Court mourning?" It was at Earl Gower's dinner-table that Charles Townshend and George Selwyn once (and perhaps many times) had a combat of wit, the honours at the end remaining easy. After the party broke up, Charles carried George in his chariot to the door of White's. "Good-night," cried Charles, as they parted. "Good-night," replied Selwyn—"and 'member, this (*hic*) is the first (*hic*) *set-down* you have given me to-night." One has inserted here the time-honoured bibulous interpolations; for George must have been very drunk when he perpetrated this unworthy pun.

As time went on, Walpole recorded fewer and fewer of Selwyn's witticisms, for the very good reason that Selwyn grew wiser, and graver, and sadder even, as he grew older. He had little inclination to laugh, and joke, and cut capers. His mode passed too; and why record the *bon-mots* of a demoded person —of a wit that was—even if he be your dearest friend? But among Selwyn's own letters to Carlisle in later years we find a wintry gleam of humour here and there. The sun comes out and shines uncertainly for a moment; and then the sombre clouds roll up again and there is nothing but gloom. He recommends his butcher to Carlisle, with a remark: "So much for that, and more it is not *meat* for me to say. I have known you make a worse pun than that" he adds, "and therefore do not find fault with this." But no man could make a worse pun than that. Something better is his description of a certain engraving which he saw in a shop in St James's Street. "His design is ingenious; it is the story of Pharaoh's daughter finding Moses in the bulrushes . . . I would have a pendant to it, and that should be of Pharo's sons, where might be introduced a good many of our friends and acquaintance from the other side of the Street." Selwyn, by the way, was an inveterate punster; but it is a mistake to say that his wit was, like Chesterfield's, "all puns." Feeble as it was, it was not so feeble as that. There is again considerable humour in his reference to a certain invitation to dinner. "It was to meet Mr Pitt, and to eat a turtle: *quelle chère!* The turtle I should have liked, but how Mr Pitt is to be dressed I cannot tell. . . . You will not believe it perhaps, but a Minister of any description, although served up in his great shell of power, and all his green fat about him, is to me a dish by no means relishing, and I never knew but one in my life I could pass an hour with pleasantly, which was Lord Holland." Humorous and shrewd too is his hit at what Matthew Arnold called "the extreme license of affirmation about God." "His [God's] ways," wrote Selwyn, "are inscrutable, and yet there is not one, from his Grace of Canterbury to the lowest fish-woman in St James's Market, who is not constantly accounting for everything He does." Probably Selwyn's last recorded *bon-mot* is that which he scribbled upon a letter to his niece Mary Townshend. "I am sorry to putt you to this expence," he writes, "but I hope

at the Resurrection to repay you in franks." Good old Tory that he was, fondly to imagine that the British M.P. would be found franking letters amid the crash of worlds.

Selwyn's mode as a wit passed; other and younger men took his place. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, for example, began to be spoken of as his successor. Selwyn did not like this at all. What man does like to be superseded, even as the exponent of an art which he affects to despise? Besides, Sheridan was a nobody; a mere Irish adventurer; still further, a member of the detested Opposition. Now it happened that Sheridan's friends were determined to elect him to Brooks's club, of which George Selwyn was a prominent member, and Selwyn was equally determined to keep him out. "Two [members]," says Wraxall, "held him in peculiar dislike; I mean George Selwyn and the Earl of Besborough. Conscious that every exertion would be made to ensure Sheridan's success, they agreed not to absent themselves during the time allotted by the regulations of the club for ballots, and as one black-ball sufficed to extinguish the hope of a candidate, they repeatedly prevented his election." Wraxall then goes on to tell of Sheridan's triumph. "Sheridan's friends had recourse to artifice. Having fixed on the evening when it was resolved to put him up, and finding his two inveterate enemies posted as usual, a chairman was sent with a note, written in the name of Lady Duncannon to her father-in-law, acquainting him that a fire had broken out in his house in Cavendish Square, and entreating him immediately to return home. Unsuspicious of any trick, as his son and daughter-in-law lived under his roof, Lord Besborough, without hesitating an instant, quitted the room, and got into a Sedan chair. Selwyn, who resided in the vicinity of Brooks's, in Cleveland Row, received nearly at the same time, a verbal message to request his presence, Miss Fagnani[1] (whom he had adopted as his daughter . . .) being suddenly seized with an alarming indisposition. This summons he obeyed; and no sooner was the room cleared, than Sheridan, being proposed as a member, a ballot took place, when he was immediately chosen. Lord Besborough and Selwyn returned without delay on discovering the imposition that had been practised on their credulity, but too

[1] See Chapter XI.

late to prevent its effects." There is another version of this story, in which the Regent detains Selwyn in the hall of the club with a long and pointless anecdote until the election is over. But both versions are probably apocryphal.

When all has been urged that can be urged in favour of George Selwyn as a wit, the fact remains that the quality of his wit was poor. He was not of course in the same class with the wits of Queen Anne's time; nor even with Chesterfield; and certainly not with later wits like Hook and Sydney Smith. And this for a very good reason: his wit lacked the "fundamental brain-work" without which great wit is impossible. One cannot read the letters of George Selwyn without very quickly coming to the conclusion that the texture of his mind was commonplace. He was by turns a good-natured young man about town and an amiable country gentleman; but he was nothing more. He dwelt on the surface of things. His views and opinions were the ordinary obvious views and opinions of the ordinary, obvious Englishman. Not of such stuff are great wits made. A fine wit goes with a fine brain; and Selwyn's brain was not fine. How then can we account for his vogue? That question has already been partly answered: it was the vogue of a voice and a manner. For the rest we must fall back upon the "pass-the-mustard" theory of wit. "When Lady Tweedale protests, I cannot speak but it is a *bon-mot.*" Exactly. Brown or Jones may say exquisitely funny things to Lady Tweedale, without extracting from her the most wintry smile; but Mr Selwyn sends her ladyship into fits of laughter by merely remarking that it is a fine morning. That, however, is the sort of world we live in: a difficult world for those aspiring nobodies, Brown and Jones, but an easy world for a person whose position is so well assured as was that of "Mr Selwyn the Wit."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MORBID SELWYN

NO tradition about George Selwyn is more obstinate than that which attributes to him a constant and morbid interest in criminals, in the execution of criminals, and, generally, in the details of suffering and of death. People spoke thus of him during his life, much to his own vexation; and since his death every writer upon Selwyn—with the one exception of Dr John Warner, his "parasite"—has accepted the tradition as something established beyond a doubt. These gentlemen follow a well-understood method. They find stories in Walpole and elsewhere of Selwyn's "fondness for executions"; they take them with great seriousness; and they transfer them to their own pages with additions like "It is well known that Mr Selwyn . . ." or, "Mr Selwyn had, as everybody knows . . ." That is how traditions are entrenched as the years go on. Biographers (except they be Germans) are a lazy folk: or were in Victorian days. They don't stop to investigate hoary and venerable anecdotes, partly because it is a trouble to do so, and partly because at the end of your investigations you probably only succeed in spoiling a good story. Indeed there is something to be said for this view, and criticism of the higher kind too often robs biography of some of its brightness. But truth is again coming rapidly into fashion; and the truth about the "morbid Selwyn" is that there was no such person, at least in the sense in which the term is used by the lethargic biographer. George Selwyn was no doubt in his later years a morbid and melancholy man. But he was morbid and melancholy about himself: about his health, his friends, his money, his future. He was not excessively morbid or melancholy about thieves and murderers, Tyburn Tree, and the dead-house. Yet this tradition about Selwyn is highly curious and interesting, and is worth a somewhat extended examination.

Walpole began it, at least in print, and at a very early period.

GEORGE SELWYN.

FROM A PENCIL DRAWING BY J. JACKSON, R.A., AFTER AN ORIGINAL BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"You know," he writes to Montagu in 1747, "George never thinks but *à la tête tranchée*: he came to town t'other day to have a tooth drawn, and told the man that he would drop his handkerchief for the signal." Could anyone, by the way, read this story and not perceive its club origin? But Walpole had an excellent eye for "copy." Three years afterwards he writes to Sir Horace Mann: "Pray mind how I string old stories to-day. This old Craggs [who had been a footman] was angry with Arthur More who had worn a livery too, and who was getting into a coach with him, turned about and said, 'why, Arthur, I am always going to get up behind, aren't you?' I told this story the other day to George Selwyn, whose passion is to see coffins, and corpses, and executions"—the legend is growing now—"he replied that Arthur More had had his coffin chained to that of his mistress. 'Lord!' said I, 'how do you know?' 'Why, I saw them the other day in a vault at St Giles's.' He was walking this week in Westminster Abbey with Lord Abergavenny, and met the man who shews the tombs: 'Oh! your servant, Mr Selwyn; I expected to have seen you here the other day, when the old Duke of Richmond's body was taken up!' Shall I tell you another story of George Selwyn . . . ? With this strange and dismal turn, he has infinite fun and humour in him. He went lately on a party of pleasure to see places with Lord Abergavenny and a pretty Mrs Frere, who love one another a little. At Cornbury there are portraits of all the royalists and regicides, and illustrious headless. Mrs Frere ran about, looked at nothing, let him look at nothing, screamed about Indian paper, and hurried over all the rest. George grew peevish, called her back, told her it was monstrous when he had come so far with her, to let him see nothing: 'And you are a fool, you don't know what you missed in the other room!' 'Why, what?' 'Why, my Lord Holland's picture!' 'Well, what is my Lord Holland to me?' 'Why, do you know,' said he, 'that my Lord Holland's body lies in the same vault in Kensington Church with my Lord Abergavenny's mother?' Lord! she was so obliged and thanked him a thousand times." These anecdotes sound very convincing, until we remember that Lord Abergavenny was one of "Bosky's" bosom friends at Oxford, and used to meet him "at Juggins's, at eleven," with Assheton and Lord Downe. Where did Wal-

pole pick the stories up? Would it be a wild guess to say that it was at White's, where Abergavenny retailed them to a circle of choice spirits at the four o'clock ordinary, while Selwyn laughed, and ate his dinner with the utmost good humour, and Walpole (some way down the table) made mental notes of them for his next letter?

To Lord Holland—not he of the Kensington vaults, but Henry Fox—is attributed what is quite the best *bon-mot* on this subject. The story is told by General Fox, son of Charles James, in a letter to Leigh Hunt. "George Selwyn was, as you say, a great friend of Henry Fox. He had a strange (but not uncommon) passion for seeing dead bodies, especially those of his friends. He would go any distance to gratify this pursuit. Lord Holland was laid up very ill at Holland House shortly before his death, when he was told that Selwyn had called to inquire after his health. 'The next time Mr Selwyn calls,' he said, 'show him up: if I am alive I shall be delighted to see him, and if I am dead he will be glad to see me.'" This story is far too good to be touched by the higher criticism. But Mr Jesse's exquisite comment upon it must be reproduced: "and yet," says he impressively, "this was the same individual who delighted in the first words and in the sunny looks of childhood; whose friendship seems to have partaken of all the softness of female affection; and whose heart was never hardened against the wretched and oppressed." Yes, indeed.

But Lord Holland was always poking fun at Selwyn on this subject. "You saw Mr Delmé the night before he shot himself," he writes, "and I suppose you took care to see him the night after." This indeed was the kind of humour which appealed to Lord Holland, who, with a hundred good qualities, had lurking somewhere in his nature a black drop of bitterness. Holland, however, was not the only correspondent of Selwyn's who kept this mortuary jest going. Thus Gilly Williams "almost forgot to tell you that the day I left you I rode near ten miles on my way home with the Ordinary of Gloucester and have several anecdotes of the late burnings and hangings which I have reserved for your private ear. I do not know whether he was sensible you had a partiality for his profession, but he expressed the greatest regard for you, and I am sure you may command his service." And George (the first Marquis) Townshend writes: "To my

well-beloved friend and companion George Selwyn from my cell at Dundee . . . I know you will not dislike this style, which gives my epistle the air of a malefactor's confession." "The boys," in short, were constantly chaffing Selwyn on his alleged morbid tastes. But by degrees the joke travelled outside this circle, and tickled the ears of even royalty itself. Thus a story almost as good as Lord Holland's is attributed to his Majesty King George III., whose *bon-mots* were surely of the rarest occurrence. Anthony Storer relates it in a letter to Sir William Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, in which he describes Selwyn at court. "George was most magnificent," he writes, "and *new* in every article of dress. Either a few days before this event or soon afterwards, he was at the levée: at the same time there was someone in the circle who had brought up an address from the country and was to be knighted on that occasion. George, as soon as the King had spoken to him, withdrew and went away; the King then knighted the ambitious squire. The King afterwards in his closet expressed his astonishment to the Groom in Waiting that Mr Selwyn should not wish to stay to see the ceremony of his making the new Knight, observing that it looked so like an *execution* that he took it for granted Mr Selwyn would have stayed to see it. George heard of this joke, but did not like it; *he is on that subject still very sore.*" The italics, as commentators say, "are ours." George was becoming a little tired of the joke. But it was destined nevertheless to pursue him beyond the grave. Hardly had the breath left his body when *The Gentleman's Magazine* minted it afresh and gave it new currency. "It was amongst the well-known singularities of that witty character Mr G. Selwyn that he had a particular *penchant* for public executions," wrote Mr Urban. Whether it arose from a principle of curiosity or philosophy it is perhaps difficult to determine; but so it was that scarcely any great criminal was carried to the gallows but George was a spectator on the opposite scaffold. "The execution of Damiens, the celebrated assassin"—by the way, he was not exactly an "assassin": he only gave his Majesty King Louis XV. a slight wound with a pen-knife—" . . . so excited Mr S.'s curiosity that he went over to Paris a month before that event to purchase in

time a convenient place to behold so novel a spectacle. Everything being previously prepared and the day arrived, George took his stand, dressed in a plain brown bob wig, and as plain a suit of broad cloth, an undress he generally wore, and which at that time of day evidently pointed him out as an English *bourgeois*. The horrid ceremony commenced, when Mr S. from his *dress* and the *sympathy* which he showed upon this occasion, so attracted the notice of a French nobleman that, coming round to him on the scaffold and slapping him on the shoulder he exclaimed: 'Eh bien, monsieur, êtes-vous arrivé pour voir ce spectacle?' 'Oui, monsieur.' 'Vous êtes bourreau?' 'Non, non, monsieur; je n'ai cette honneur; je ne suis qu'un amateur.'" The same story is to be found in the posthumous Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall. This was the gentleman, it will be remembered, who sat in Parliament as Selwyn's colleague for the borough of Ludgershall. In the Memoirs, Wraxall, who knew Selwyn "with some degree of intimacy," gives on the whole a fair sketch of his character. But he drags in the inevitable legend. "Selwyn's nervous irritability," he says, "and anxious curiosity to observe the effect of dissolution on men, exposed him to much ridicule, not unaccompanied with censure. He was accused of attending all executions; and sometimes, in order to elude notice, disguised in a female dress." (This is something quite new.) "I have been assured that in 1756, he went over to Paris expressly for the purpose of witnessing the last moments of Damiens, who expired under the most acute tortures for having attempted the life of Louis XV." And then follows Mr Urban's story. Damiens was put to death in March 1757, and there is no record of Selwyn's having been in Paris in that month. Of course he may have been, and may even have attended the execution in the Place de Grêve, but again, he may not. No admirer of George Selwyn could wish him to have seen this miserable butchery. Remember what they did to Damiens, messieurs the patricians of France. They lacerated his flesh with red-hot pincers, and poured boiling oil and boiling lead into the wounds. After this preliminary pleasantry they tied his limbs separately to horses, and the horses tore him to pieces. It does not bear thinking about. This weak-minded young man had slightly injured another man

with the small blade of a pen-knife; but the other man happened to be a King.[1]

The Damiens anecdote was denied in a subsequent issue of the *Gentleman's* by an anonymous correspondent, generally presumed to be Dr John Warner. "You copied it," he says, writing from Paris, "I suppose, as you must many other things, from a misinformed newspaper . . . I am irresistibly compelled to set you and your readers right, from a feeling of the Sophoclean maxim of its being base to be silent. When he lived it was his own affair, but now he is gone it becomes us to help him who cannot help himself. Nothing could be more abhorrent than the taste for executions from his real character, which, I presume, you will allow me to know from a friendship of forty years, of which I feel the deprivation most sensibly, as I may truly say, as David did of Jonathan 'very pleasant hath thou been to me.' He was better by nature (as Jean Jacques will tell you we all are) than he was by grace; for (besides excellent abilities and a most pleasant imagination as all the world knows), he had from her one of the most tender and benevolent hearts. . . ." This defence would appear not to have satisfied some readers of the magazine, who, in the manner of readers, no doubt bombarded the editor with letters on the subject; upon which Mr Urban observed, somewhat tartly: "knowing as we do most thoroughly, the indubitable veracity of our Paris correspondent" (Dr Warner) "we cannot possibly admit a word further on the subject of Mr Selwyn's supposed propensity to be present at executions." The correspondence, in short, was "now closed." Mr Urban might have closed it in a much more decisive way if he had been able to quote a letter written by the Baron Friedrich von Grimm to M. Diderot on the 1st of April 1765. In this letter Grimm tells exactly the same story, not of course about Selwyn, but about M. de La Condamine, the apostle of inoculation. La Condamine was not unlike George Selwyn in character. "Un caractère gai," says Grimm, "curieux outre mesure, vrai en tout, infatigable dans la recherche de la vérité, sans acception de

[1] One of the fine ladies who were present at the execution, Madame de Priandeau, had her sensibilities aroused by the difficulty which the horses had in tearing Damiens to pieces. "Oh, the poor horses!" says she, "how *sorry* I am for them!"

personne ni de cause, le rend précieux à ceux qui aiment à voir des originaux. Sa curiosité insatiable sur tous les objets jointe à une grande surdité, le rend souvent fatigant aux autres: quant à moi, il m'en a toujours paru plus piquant." Then we have the original "Damiens" story. "Cette curiosité le porta, il y a quelques années à assister au supplice du malheureux Damiens. Il perça jusq'ua bourreau, et là, tablettes et crayon à la main, à chaque tenaillement au coup de barre, il demandait à grands cris: 'Qu'est-ce qu'il dit?' Les satellites de maître Charlot voulurent d'ecarter comme un importun; mais le bourreau dit: 'Laissez, monsieur est un amateur.' Rien ne prouve mieux le pouvoir des passions, puisque la simple curiosité a pu porter un homme, d'ailleurs plein de sensibilité et d'humanité, à se raidir contre le spectacle le plus horrible dont on puisse se former l'idée."

As this letter was written only eight years after the event, and as Grimm knew La Condamine intimately, there can be no reasonable doubt that La Condamine, and not Selwyn, was the original "amateur"—if such a person existed. But who can trace a story to its source? On the same page of the Grimm correspondence we learn that Madame de Choiseul was once writing a letter while M. de La Condamine stood behind her. "I would tell you more," the lady wrote, "only M. de La Condamine is looking over my shoulder, reading what I write to you." "Madame," cried La Condamine, "could anything be more unjust? I assure you, you are mistaken." Concerning how many people has this story been told since the world began? As to the Damiens anecdote, however, Wraxall had the "Corréspondance Littéraire" before him, and should not have passed on the libel on Selwyn in any such careless and casual way.

This anecdote, then, was just about as authentic as that which connects Selwyn with another famous tragedy, that of Miss Ray. In the former story he was supposed to be in Paris when he was very probably in London; in the latter he was supposed to be in London when in fact he was in Paris. Everybody has heard of Parson Hackman and Miss Ray. This lady was the mistress of Lord Sandwich, that high-minded nobleman who had the sublime audacity to denounce John Wilkes for blasphemy and vice, and whose name comes down to us

linked, not with morality or religion, but with ham. Miss Ray was shot while quitting Covent Garden Theatre on the 7th of April 1779, by the Rev. James Hackman, a young clergyman-admirer of hers. "Last night," said one of the journals next morning, "the following melancholy fate terminated the existence of the beautiful, the favoured, and yet the unfortunate Miss Ray. As she was stepping into her carriage from Covent Garden Theatre, a clergyman, whose name we hear is Hackman, and who lives in Craven Street, came up and lodged the contents of a pistol in her head; which done, he instantly shot himself, and they fell together. They were carried into the Shakespeare, and the ablest assistance called for, but Miss Ray expired in a few minutes. The desperate assassin still lives, to account for the horrid act, and it is hoped, to suffer for it, his wound being on the temple, and supposed not to be dangerous. An express was instantly sent for Lord Sandwich. He came about 12 o'clock, in the most lamentable agonies, and expressed a sorrow that certainly did infinite honour to his feelings." (It was certainly very kind of him to be sorry at the brutal murder of the mother of his nine children.) Miss Ray's body lay at the Shakespeare Tavern for some days, and George Selwyn was said to have seen it there. "A correspondent says that George Selwyn, with a humanity which did honour to his feelings"—ah, those dear old eighteenth-century "feelings"!—"out of his great esteem and respect for that amiable lady, who was so inhumanly murdered in coming out of the playhouse, attended at the Shakespeare while the body lay there, sitting as a mourner in the room, with a long black cloak on, which reached to his heels, and a large hat slouched over his face. This made a singular addition to a countenance naturally dark and rueful, and rendered him as complete a figure of woe as ever was exhibited at any funeral, or in any procession. It was his friend, the Duke of Q——y, who detected him in that garb; his Grace, by a similarity of feelings, being drawn to the same place." Was this correspondent's name by any chance Charles Fox? Or Dick Fitzpatrick? Or Gilly Williams? At all events, Selwyn was indubitably in Paris at the time, or at least on his way thither. (He was at Dover on the 7th, and reached Paris on the 12th.) His friend Dr Warner wrote him on the eighth: "I called to-day, in coming from Coutts's,

at the Shakespeare Tavern, in order to see the corpse of Miss Ray, and to send you some account of it; but I had no interest with her keepers, and could not get admittance for money." Selwyn wrote from Paris to Mary Townshend in the same month: "We have a Miss Wray (*sic*) of our own, a sinister story, with a different catastrophe."[1] On the 4th of May he writes again: "Our Hackman here destroyed himself with a coup de couteau when his pistol failed. What is become of the lady his wife I do not know. She was wounded in the breast. It happened in the Luxembourg Gardens the day after my arrival from Lyons. . . . Hackman I find has died with a better character than Lord S. lived with. I never thought his Lordship would be inconsolable—*il n'est pas fait de cette étoffe.*"[1] Various kind friends supplied Selwyn with details of Hackman's execution. The Countess of Upper Ossory wrote: "Mr Hackman's behaviour was glorious yesterday. Jack Ketch deserves to be hanged, for when the poor man dropped the handkerchief, it fell under the cart, and he ran to pick it up; so by that means kept the poor wretch some moments in that horrid state." Lord Carlisle (like Mr Boswell) attended the execution ("in order to give you an account of it") and described how Hackman "threw down his handkerchief for the cart to move on, Jack Ketch, instead of instantly whipping on the horses, jumped on the other side of him to snatch up the handkerchief, lest he should lose his rights, and then returned to the head of the cart and . . . . Jehu'd him out of the world." Executions were grim things in those not distant days. They are grim still: only they don't take place at the Marble Arch.

Such are some of the chief stories about Selwyn's "fondness for executions," which may rightly be termed apocryphal. But we must not give to him too virtuous a character, or make him better than his time. Selwyn would not have been a man of fashion of the eighteenth century if he had not occasionally witnessed the last scene in the life of a criminal. At what executions, then, was he really a spectator? It is interesting to notice that the mortuary jest begins about 1746, when the rebel lords were executed on Tower Hill. Selwyn was certainly present upon this occasion, and perhaps it would have been better for his reputation and his comfort if he had stayed

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

at home. But he saw an historical sight which is worth more than a passing reference. At the end of the year 1745, certain Jacobite prisoners, captured at Culloden and elsewhere, were brought to London to be tried. George Selwyn, like all the young men in St James's Street, was keenly interested in the matter, and followed it closely at every stage. Thus in December a servant at the Tower advises Selwyn of the arrival of "the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and this day eight officers and seventeen private men taken on board the *Soleil*." Among their prisoners was Mr Radcliffe, son of Lord Derwentwater. The mob mistook him for the Pretender's youngest son and nearly tore him to pieces. The poor young man "wished he had been shot at the Battle of Dettingen"; he "had heard of English mobs, but could not conceive they were so dreadful." In the following May a Mr Lang writes to Selwyn: "I find by the papers, that the rebel lords [Cromarty, Kilmarnock, and Balmerino] are in the river, therefore suppose their trials will come on." They were tried at the end of July, and Horace Walpole and George Selwyn were both in Westminster Hall at the trial. Walpole describes the scene in a letter to Sir Horace Mann on 1st August: "I am this moment come from the conclusion of the greatest and most melancholy scene I ever yet saw!"—observe that he hastens to compose a letter upon it at the earliest opportunity—"You will easily guess that it was the trials of the rebel lords. As it was the most interesting sight it was the most solemn and fine: a coronation is a puppet-show, and all the splendour of it idle:—but this sight feasted one's eyes and engaged all one's passions. It began last Monday; three parts of Westminster Hall were enclosed with galleries and hung with scarlet: and the whole ceremony was conducted with the most awful solemnity and decency, except in the one feint of leaving the prisoners at the bar, amid the idle curiosity of the crowd, and even with the witnesses that had sworn against them, whilst the lords adjourned to their own house to consult. . . . The first appearance of the prisoners shocked me; their behaviour melted me! Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Cromarty are both past forty, but look younger. Lord Kilmarnock is tall and slender, with an extreme fine person: his behaviour a most just mixture between dignity and submission; if in anything to be reprehended, a little

affected, and his hair too exactly dressed for a man in his situation: but when I say this, it is not to find fault with him, but to show how little fault there was to be found. Lord Cromarty is an indifferent figure, appeared much dejected, and rather sullen; he dropped a few tears the first day, and swooned as soon as he got back to his cell. For Lord Balmerino, he is the most natural brave fellow I ever saw: the highest intrepidity, even to indifference. At the bar he behaved like a soldier and a man; in the intervals of form, with carelessness and humour. He pressed extremely to have his wife, his pretty Peggy, with him in the Tower." Lord Cromarty was pardoned; Lords Kilmarnock and Balmerino were executed on Tower Hill on 18th August. On the 13th Mr William Skrine writes to Selwyn to know "what method you design to take for" seeing the execution. Selwyn's "method" was to hire a window in a house on the Hill: no doubt Mr Skrine and other friends were with him. Here is his voucher:

"TOWER HILL
"14th August, 1746

"SIR,—As you are unknown to my servants, you will please shew them this, when you will be let into my house. I am, Sir, Your most humble Servant, S. BETHELL"

The ubiquitous Walpole was of course also at Tower Hill upon that day; perhaps he had part of George's window. It was a great occasion for the Letter-Writer, and he did full justice to it: "As the clock struck ten," says he, "they came forth on foot, Lord Kilmarnock all in black, his hair unpowdered, in a bag, supported by Forster, the great Presbyterian, and by Hawe, a young clergyman, his friend. Lord Balmerino followed alone in a blue coat, turned up with red, his rebellious regimentals; a flannel waistcoat, and his shroud beneath: their hearses following. They were conducted to a house near the scaffold; the room forwards had benches for spectators; in the second Lord Kilmarnock was put, and in the third, backwards, Lord Balmerino; all three chambers hung with black. Here they parted. Balmerino embraced the other, and said: 'My Lord, I wish I could suffer for both.' . . . At last he [Lord Kilmarnock] came to the scaffold, certainly

much terrified, but with a resolution that prevented his behaving in the least meanly or unlike a gentleman. . . . He then took off his bag, coat, and waistcoat, with great composure, and, after some trouble, put on a napkin cap, and then several times tried the block. The executioner was in white, with a white apron, out of tenderness concealing the axe behind himself. At last the Earl knelt down, with a visible unwillingness to depart, and, after five minutes, dropped his handkerchief, the signal, and his head was cut off at once, only hanging by a bit of skin, and was received in a scarlet cloth by four of the undertaker's men, kneeling, who wrapped it up, and put it into the coffin with the body; orders having been given not to expose the heads, as used to be the custom. The scaffold was immediately new strewed with saw-dust, the block new covered, the executioner new dressed, and a new axe brought.

"Then came old Balmerino, treading with the air of a general. As soon as he mounted the scaffold he read the inscripton on his coffin, as he did again afterwards; he then surveyed the spectators, who were in amazing numbers, even to the masts of ships in the river, and pulling out his spectacles, read a treasonable speech, which he delivered to the sheriff, and said the young Pretender was so sweet a Prince that flesh and blood could not resist following him; and lying down to try the block, he said, 'If I had a thousand lives I would lay them all down here in the same cause!' He said, if he had not taken the Sacrament the day before, he would have knocked down Williamson, the Lieutenant of the Tower, for his ill-usage of him. He took the axe and felt it, and asked the headman how many blows he had given Lord Kilmarnock, and gave him three guineas. Two clergymen, who attended him, coming up, he said, 'No gentlemen, I believe you have already done me all the service you can!' Then he went to the corner of the scaffold, and called very loud for the warder to give him his perriwig, which he took off, and put on a night-cap of Scotch plaid, and then pulled off his coat and waistcoat and lay down; but being told he was on the wrong side, vaulted round, and immediately gave the sign by tossing up his arm, as if he were giving the signal for battle. He received three blows, the first certainly took away all sensation. He was not a quarter of an hour on the scaffold; Lord Kilmarnock above half a one.

Balmerino certainly died with the intrepidity of a lion, but with the insensibility of one too. As he walked from prison to execution, seeing every window and top of house filled with spectators, he cried out, 'Look, look, how they are all piled up like rotten oranges!'" For a gentleman of Mr Walpole's refinement, this is a wonderfully detailed account of a nasty business. *He* never thought *à la tête tranchée*, or had a morbid interest in corpses and executions. The morbidness, oddly enough, belonged entirely to the man in the other window-seat, who saw the executions too, but didn't write letters about them.

George Selwyn's next "execution" was that of Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat. Selwyn attended the trial in Westminster Hall (March 1747); and on one morning lent his ticket to Mr Vincent Mathias, by which he had "one of the best seats in the hall, and I lost not a word of all that was said." Lovat was executed on the 8th of April, and died, we are told, "with a dignity which would have done credit to an ancient Roman." Selwyn was again at Tower Hill on this occasion: perhaps in Mr Bethell's window. "I must tell you an excessive good story of George Selwyn," writes Walpole to Conway. "Some women were scolding him for going to see the execution, and asked him, how he could be such a barbarian to see the head cut off? 'Nay,' says he, 'if that was such a crime, I am sure I have made amends, for I went to see it sewed on again.' When he was at the undertaker's, as soon as they had stitched him together, and were going to put the body into the coffin, George, in my Lord Chancellor's voice, said 'My Lord, your lordship may rise.'" In July of a year about this time Selwyn received a curious note from a Mr T. Phillips. "I can with great pleasure inform you, my dear Selwyn," it ran, "that the head is ordered to be delivered on the first application made on your part. The expense is little more than a guinea; the person who calls for it should pay it. *Adieu*, *mon cher mondain*." Mr Jesse prints this note with the egregious comment: "The editor has been induced to insert this brief note because, from George Selwyn's peculiar tastes and eccentricities, he thought it not altogether improbable that the *head* here alluded to might be one of the rebel lords." Poor Selwyn! Rebel lords have heads, it is true; but so have statues, and

game, and parsons' sermons, and a good many other things, the names of which may be found in dictionaries.

These are the only two executions which we positively know Selwyn to have attended, and in each case it would have been a distinction in his circle not to have attended them. Of course he may very probably have seen a good many others at Tyburn Tree; it was the fashion in those days to do so. Young bucks would give breakfasts to their friends, and would adjourn afterwards to the vicinity of the Marble Arch, and watch the last scene in the life of some wretched criminal or other. We may still be an imperfectly civilised people; but have we anything quite so bad as this Tyburn business of the eighteenth century? Think of that dreadful procession from Newgate to the gallows: the cart contains the hangman, the Ordinary of Newgate (a "terrible fellow for melted butter"), and the criminal, who bows and smiles to the shouting, filthy mob. It draws up at length under the gallows, and Mr Ketch leisurely adjusts the rope. We allow the unfortunate a few moments for prayer, or to make a speech, or to eat an orange, or to exchange jokes with his friends in the crowd. Then he drops the handkerchief (good God! after what frightful hesitation!); the cart moves on; and the body is left swinging and quivering but a few feet from the ground, and before the eyes of half the metropolis. George Selwyn may have been present at more than one of these public shows in his younger days: it would have been strange if he had not been. How many "execution breakfasts" did Gilly Williams give, I wonder? There, for example, was the case of "Harrington's porter." "An ample confession has been made concerning the robbery committed last year at Lord Harrington's" (writes Gilly Williams to Selwyn); "the porter and another man will be hanged. Lady Harrington is in great spirits with the discovery." They are all in great spirits, to be sure. "Harrington's porter was condemned yesterday. Cadogan and I" (says Gilly) "have already bespoken places at the Brazier's, and I hope Parson Digby will come time enough to be of the party. I presume we shall have your honour's company, if your stomach is not too squeamish for a single swing." Later on Gilly arranged a breakfast for "Wednesday next, the morning the porter makes his exit. If Parson Digby is in town I shall send him a card; he is our ordinary on all

these great occasions." The breakfast apparently came off as arranged; for Gilly reports to Selwyn (who was in Paris): "Harrington's man was hanged last Wednesday. The dog died game, went in the cart in a blue and gold frock, and, as an emblem of innocence, had a white cockade in his hat. He ate several oranges in his passage, enquired if his hearse was ready, and then, as old Rowe used to say, was launched into Eternity." Henry St John, brother of Frederick, Lord Bolingbroke, also attended this execution, and wrote to Selwyn: "What served to encourage my writing was the curiosity which you expressed to hear of Waistcott's [Wisket, the porter's] execution, which my brother and I went to see at the risk of breaking our necks by climbing up an old rotten scaffolding, which I feared would tumble before the cart drove off with the six malefactors. However, we escaped and had a full view of Mr Waistcott, who went to the gallows with a white cockade in his hat, as an emblem of his innocence, and died with the same hardness as appeared through his trial." It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to explain away Selwyn's "curiosity" about this execution. Were not the letters of his friends full of references to an event which interested the whole town? And it is amusing to note how eager some of these friends were to assure Selwyn that they only patronised executions so that they might satisfy his "curiosity." "Hullo! Here's a hanging," they seemed to say, with the engaging air of Mr Wemmick; "let's go and see it, and describe it to George."

Selwyn appears to have been interested in two other well-known criminal cases. One was that of the Kennedys, which excited considerable attention in its day. Two brothers, Matthew and Patrick Kennedy, were indicted on the 23rd of February 1770, for the wilful murder of John Bigby, a watchman, in a riot on Westminster Bridge; of which offence, after an eight hours' trial, they were convicted and sentenced to be executed on the Monday following. But on that morning an order was received for the respite of the prisoners, and they were informed that the sentence had been commuted to transportation for life. But observe the working of our beautiful criminal law. On the pardon being reported to the Privy Council, Lord Mansfield objected, and Matthew Kennedy was again ordered for execution. Upon this George Selwyn him-

self waited upon the King, who, on hearing from Selwyn that his pardon had actually been promised by the Secretary of State, Lord Rochford, again commuted the sentence. This, however, was not nearly the end of the matter. Matthew was actually on board ship on his way to a penal colony when the widow of Bigby lodged a fresh appeal against the brothers at the Old Bailey, and both Patrick and Matthew were once more brought before the court. Matthew was described as appearing "in double chains, in a blue coat, with a handkerchief about his neck, and looking greatly dejected." Among the persons on the bench were Lord Spencer, Lord Palmerston, George Selwyn, Esq., and "several persons of distinction, friends to the unhappy prisoners." Selwyn probably came in answer to a note from John St John (brother of Henry) informing him that "the widow of the watchman last night upon the breaking up of the Sessions, presented an appeal of murder against the Kennedys. I have been with Mr Wallace and others this morning, and make no doubt but that they have already defeated themselves in their conduct in this appeal, which is the most difficult matter to conduct of any in the law. I want very much to know where Matthew is at present and hope he is out of reach. I have sent to enquire." At the close of the hearing (on the 4th of July) the brothers were remanded till the next Sessions at the Old Bailey.

Meanwhile the friends of the Kennedys were not idle. A copy of a Memorial to the King was found among Selwyn's papers, but with no signatures attached. It recommends to the royal clemency "the case of Matthew Kennedy, now ordered for execution," pointing out that "the fatal event happened, not from any corruption of mind, but a most unfortunate, not habitual, deprivation of sense and reason": and further urging that Kennedy in fact did not give the fatal blow at all. There was "backstairs" influence used as well. Thus Horace Walpole in a note to Selwyn says: "Try privately, without talking of it, if you cannot get some of the ladies to mention the cruelty of the case; or what do you think of a hint by the German women, if you can get at them?" When the November Sessions came on, the Kennedys were again placed in the dock. But it then appeared that the widow had been "bought off," and had allowed the appeal to be dismissed.

"When she went to receive the money [£350]," says *The Gentleman's Magazine*, "she wept bitterly, and at first refused to touch the money that was to be the price of her husband's blood; but being told that nobody else could receive it for her, she held up her apron, and bid the attorney, who was to pay it, sweep it into her lap." One would have thought that now at least the Kennedys would have heard definitely their fate. But no. "Mr St John's compliments to Mr Selwyn; would be infinitely obliged to him if he would be so kind as to remind Lord Rochford of the situation of the poor Kennedys, who are still in irons in the King's Bench, though all proceedings against one are entirely at an end; the eldest having had a free pardon made out for him before the appeal was brought against him, and the youngest having suffered an additional year's imprisonment." At length, in April 1771, after eighteen months of misery and suspense, the Kennedys appeared for the last time at the Old Bailey, and were informed that their punishment had been commuted, Matthew to transportation for life, Patrick for fourteen years. Patrick was afterwards pardoned. The Earl of Fife visited Matthew on the convict ship and gave Selwyn a pathetic description of what he saw there. "I went on board, and to be sure, all the states of horror I ever had an idea of are much short of what I saw this poor man in; chained to a board, in a hole not above 16 feet long; more than fifty with him; a collar and a padlock about his neck, and chained to five of the most dreadful creatures I ever looked on. What pleasure I had to see all the irons taken off, and to put him under the care of a very humane captain, one Macdougal, who luckily is my countryman, and connected with people I had done some little service to! He will be of great service to Kennedy; in short, I left this poor creature, who has suffered so much, in a perfect state of happiness. I am thus tedious, because I know you will be glad to hear that his afflictions are over, as I am sure the poor man will succeed and do well. Pray do all you can to obtain the pardon of the other. Methinks, as Matthew has been at least four times hanged, it may satisfy for the crime alleged against the two. If you make any contribution, I humbly think it should be very private. What is laid out for this man to-day I insist on being by myself, for I never in my life, had a more ample

return for money." Here at least is a letter which did "infinite honour to the feelings" of the writer.

One point connected with the Kennedys remains to be noticed. George Selwyn evidently took the keenest interest in the case, and did perhaps more than any other man to help the unfortunate brothers. And why? Certainly not from any "morbid interest" in criminals. The flippant critic might indeed remark that that should have stayed his hand. One, and perhaps the principal reason, is on the surface: Selwyn helped the Kennedys because he had a kind heart and was genuinely touched by their distress. But alas! there were many such tragedies in those days of a brutal criminal law, and Selwyn and his friends could not be expected to interfere in every case. No doubt public attention was drawn in the newspapers to the outrageous treatment of the Kennedys. But Junius has given us a hint as to why Selwyn's set took the matter up. The Kennedys had a pretty sister, who was "no better than she ought to have been," and it is said that her brothers owed their lives to the efforts she made with her paramours on their behalf. "The mercy," says Junius brutally, "of a chaste and pious prince extended cheerfully to a wilful murderer, because that murderer is the brother of a"—let us omit the ugly word—"would, I think, at any other time, have excited universal indignation."[1] On this we need only say that, honest woman or not, Miss Kennedy deserves our admiration for the splendid and plucky fight she made for her brothers. Following the leading case of Mary Magdalene, much should be forgiven her—*quia multum amavit.* Selwyn, of course, was not one of her lovers. But Mr St John—judging from a passage in a letter from Lord Grantham to Selwyn—probably was; and it was he who enlisted Selwyn's powerful aid in the movement on behalf of the Kennedys.

The other criminal case in which Selwyn took some interest was that of Dr Dodd. Everybody has heard of this pious humbug and forger: everybody, at least, who has read Boswell, and most sensible people have done that. "Led astray from

[1] Horace Walpole confirms this suggestion; indeed states explicitly that George Selwyn interfered in the Kennedy affair to oblige two of his friends who kept the young lady. A fine portrait of Miss Kennedy, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is now in Mr Waldorf Astor's possession, at Cliveden.

religious strictness by the delusion of show, and the delights of voluptuousness"—the hand is the hand of Dodd, but the voice is the voice of Johnson—Dr Dodd forged a bond in the name of Lord Chesterfield for £4200. He was tried and condemned to be executed; and though heaven and earth were moved to obtain a reprieve (the expression is apt enough when we remember that numerous prayers were put up for him by his brother clergy, and that the city of London petitioned the King on his behalf) the reprieve was refused by the King in Council. Hanging was of course a dreadful punishment for writing another man's name to a bond; but, since hanging was the punishment, posterity can affirm with a clear conscience that Dodd was an eminently suitable person to hang. The law made no mistake upon this occasion. The execution took place on 7th June 1777. On his way to the gallows, happening to approach the street where he formerly lived, he was so much affected as to shed tears. But it was weakness, he said, and not cowardice that overwhelmed him; and he added: "I hope I am going to a better home!" George Selwyn was at Matson at this time (it is curious how many famous "exits" he missed by being out of London), and asked Anthony Storer to give him an account of the execution. "Upon the whole," wrote Storer, "the piece was not very full of events. The Doctor, to all appearance, was rendered perfectly stupid from despair. His hat was flapped all round, and pulled over his eyes, which were never directed to any object around, nor even raised, except now and then lifted up in the course of his prayers. He came in a coach, and a very heavy shower of rain fell just upon his entering the cart, and another just at his putting on the night-cap. He was a considerable time in praying, which some people standing about seemed rather tired with: they wished for some more interesting part of the tragedy. The wind which was high, blew off his hat, which rather embarrassed him, and discovered to us his countenance, which we could scarcely see before. . . . He then put on his night-cap himself, and upon his taking it he certainly had a smile on his countenance, and very soon afterwards there was an end of all his hopes and fears on this side the grave." Dodd "would not suffer his legs to be pulled," and his body was hurried away to a house in the city, where some friendly doctors tried in vain to

restore animation. Selwyn was evidently quite satisfied with Storer's account of the matter, for Storer writes a week or two later: "I can scarcely flatter myself, notwithstanding I have your word for it, that mine could give you any sort of satisfaction. . . . But as I wish to get this scene out of my mind, you will excuse me if I do not dwell upon it. I agree with you perfectly, that after one's curiosity is satisfied, an impression remains that I had rather be without." Selwyn had apparently confessed to Storer that he had a "curiosity" as to what took place at Dodd's execution. But who was not "curious" about Dr Dodd? Did not the Countess of Huntingdon intercede for him? And Lord Percy present a petition to his Majesty? And Dr Johnson write a "Last Solemn Declaration" and a number of other documents for the criminal? It would have been strange indeed if Selwyn, down in Gloucestershire, had not showed some curiosity about the last moments of the Rev. William Dodd.

Such, then, is George Selwyn's record as a person with morbid and mortuary tastes. He was present at two State executions on Tower Hill; he desired his friends to keep him informed as to certain other and almost equally famous executions at Tyburn; and he is the hero of a score of club anecdotes, chronicled, for the most part, by the veracious Horace Walpole. We must also allow, of course, that for most of his life he was chaffed unmercifully by his friends upon the point. But good-humoured chaff of this kind is one thing; the solemn affirmations of post-mortem biographers are quite another. How are we to explain the origin and the persistence of this legend about Selwyn? Dr Warner, in his letter to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, was the first to suggest an explanation which has the air of probability. "I shall content myself with informing you," he writes, "that this idle but wide-spread idea of his being fond of executions (of which he never in his life attended but one, and that rather accidentally from its lying in his way, and not from design) arose from the pleasantries which it pleased Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and the then Lord Chesterfield to propagate, from that one attendance, for the amusement of their common friends." This suggestion has been scouted by various solemn owls of editors, but it very probably comes near to the truth. Selwyn's "morbid passion" was a club joke, and

nothing more. It was hatched in White's by "the boys," perhaps on George's return from the execution on Tower Hill, and was industriously circulated by the eavesdropping Walpole. No doubt the joke was carried very far—too far in Selwyn's opinion, and was exceedingly stale before it was finally embalmed as a biographical fact. But this was entirely owing to the fatal good-nature of Selwyn, who didn't mind the laugh being against himself. Once or twice, however, the worm turned. In 1777, for example, was published "The Diaboliad," a satirical poem, by Mr W. Combe. This was the kind of "poem" which a thousand gentlemen could write with ease in the days of the Georges. It was in rhymed couplets, which went on and on with relentless persistency until the author got tired. The story of "The Diaboliad" was that the devil wished to nominate a successor for the throne of hell, and sent his messengers to London to find him. They come to the West End, and on their appearance:

> "Pigeons are left unplucked, the game unplayed,
> And F(ox) forgets the certain Bett he made,
> E'en S(e)l(wy)n feels ambition fire his breast,
> And leaves, half-told, the fabricated jest."

The candidates come down to hell and appear before the devil to urge their claims. All the noted men of pleasure attend: Fox, and Pembroke, and Beauchamp, and the rest. Selwyn is among them; but Mr Combe lets him off very lightly:

> "The murmurs hushed, the Herald straight proclaimed
> S—l—n the witty next in order named,
> But he was gone to hear the dismal yells
> Of tortured ghosts and suffering criminals.
> Tho' summoned thrice, he chose not to return,
> Charmed to behold the crackling Culprits burn,
> With George, all know ambition must give place
> When there's an *execution* in the case."

As will be observed, Mr Combe had a pretty wit. He had also a sneaking regard for George Selwyn. "I would not," he adds in a note, "be guilty of injustice to any character. George does not want humanity. Nay! he has an uncommon portion

of this Virtue; it extends even to the *gallows*, and is well known to have bedewed his cheeks with tears at the lamentable fate of that pious personage called Sixteen Stringed Jack. And I may venture to assert that he never saw a man hanged in his life but *when the sport was over* he would have been really happy to have restored him to life. It requires a kind of knowledge which everybody does not possess to reconcile the apparent contradictions in the human character. . . . All the world knows that Mr S—— is attached to gaming, and that when he games, he wishes to win. And there are many will tell you that this love of play, when it has taken root, becomes the leading, if not the sole, propensity of the human breast. But in the character before us there is an evident example of two leading propensities in the same mind, which upon certain occasions form a spirit of accomodation and blend with each other. This very gentleman, though he had made a very considerable bett that he should not be at a certain execution, was nevertheless discovered to be actually present at the *spectacle* dressed like an old woman, in a Joseph and bonnet, and seated on horseback, etc. etc. This is a twofold irresistible propensity! Nevertheless, George is a man of humanity." The reader will notice here the original of Wraxall's story about Selwyn appearing at executions "in female dress."

Now it happens that we have Selwyn's own comment upon "The Diaboliad," which is at the same time a defence against the charge we are discussing. Writing to Lord Carlisle, Selwyn said: "The author of a new Grub Street poem, I see, allows me a great share of feeling, at the same time that he relates facts of me which, if they were true, would, besides making me ridiculous, call very much into question what he asserts with any reasonable man. . . . The work I mean is called 'The Diaboliad.' His hero is Lord Evesham. Lord Hertford and Lord Beauchamp are the chief persons whom he loads with his invectives. . . . I am only attacked upon that trite and very foolish opinion concerning *le pene ed i delitti*, acknowledging [it] to proceed from an odd and insatiable curiosity, and not from a *mauvais cœur*. In some places I think there is versification and a few good lines, and the piece seems to be written by one not void of parts, but who, with attention, might write much better. I forgive him his mention of me, because I

believe that he does it without malice, but if I had leisure to think of such things, I must own the frequent repetition of the foolish stories would make me peevish." Someone in the columns of that invaluable periodical, *Notes and Queries*, has referred to this defence as inadequate. But is it inadequate? "You are kind enough to call me a man of feeling," says Selwyn, in effect. "What sort of feeling should I have if these stories were true?" This defence seems not only adequate, but proper: it is the right thing to say. Anything further said, either by Selwyn or by an admirer of Selwyn, would surely be in the nature of a glimpse into the obvious.

And yet there is one further thing which might be said by way of conclusion. Granted that Selwyn's "fondness for executions" was a foolish fable, the stoutest defender of Selwyn must still admit that he was the *kind* of man concerning whom such a fable might easily arise. A recent writer has expressed the opinion that something "sinister" hangs around the name of George Selwyn. Now "sinister" is an ugly word, indeed a terrible word; and one cannot but think that in this instance it is misapplied. Sombre George Selwyn certainly was; at bottom he was a melancholy man. But his sombreness and melancholy had nothing evil in them; they sprang from no corruption within. You cannot read his letters and the letters of his friends and believe otherwise. Yet since he was (and looked) melancholy, and a little sarcastic, and too lazy to trouble much about what people thought of him, it is natural enough that queer legends such as that which we have been discussing should gather round him as the years went on. A man has no business to look as if he enjoyed hangings and funerals. If he does he must take the consequences.

CHAPTER IX

SELWYN AS M.P.

WE must now go back a little, and take up the thread of George Selwyn's life where we dropped it in the fourth chapter. Not that chronological order matters much in Selwyn's case. His life was, on the whole, eventless: it had few dates of any great importance. But perhaps 1747, when he first entered the House of Commons, was one of these. For Selwyn was a genuine House of Commons man. He sat there for the long period of three and forty years; he heard (or slept through) nearly all the principal debates during that time; he voted stolidly for one hardly knows how many successive ministries. To think of this is to realise what a profoundly interesting parliamentary career Selwyn's was, or might have been. Only the antithetical style of Macaulay could do justice to it. Failing that, let us at least remember that Selwyn sat in the same house with William Pitt the elder and Henry Fox, and heard both these great men in their prime; heard the early speeches of their sons also, and lived to take his last and most lucrative sinecure from the hand of William Pitt the younger, and to call his once good friend Charles James Fox "Mr Fox"; saw England win an empire under Chatham, and lose another empire under North; was mobbed by patriots in the legendary days of Wilkes; was "ill-treated"—according to himself—by at least two Prime Ministers; found "Bourk" a very civil person—until the Irishman took to depriving decent people of their places: what, in those forty years, did Selwyn not see, and whom did he not know, in the world of politics? If he had kept a diary, it would have been a precious document—that is to say, if he had kept it on the principle of Mr Pepys, or on the principle of Mr Boswell. It is not likely, however, that he would have followed in the footsteps of either of these eminent men. For years he wrote an almost daily letter to Lord Carlisle, and his political jottings in this correspondence are not encouraging. "Cursed

tiresome debate," says he, on one evening; on another, "Charles spoke well." Perhaps George's diary would not have been quite the kind of book we want. But a diary written by somebody who had the gifts of Boswell and the advantages of Selwyn! This does not bear thinking about overmuch.

George Selwyn came of a parliamentary family. His father, John Selwyn, was M.P. for Truro in 1714-1715, for Whitchurch (Hants) in 1727, and for Gloucester city from 1734 until his death in 1751. His uncle, Major Charles Selwyn, was M.P. for the borough of St Michael in 1722, for Gloucester city in 1727, and for Ludgershall in 1741. This uncle (who, by the way, married Maria Hyde, a kinswoman of James II.'s Queen) made one speech in Parliament which had the honour of being "reported" in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1746, and which was afterwards published as a pamphlet. It contains nothing of any importance or distinction; but it does call William Pitt "a sordid orator." The Selwyns were good judges of the sordid. Then John Selwyn, jun., was M.P. for Whitchurch from 1734 until his death in 1751. George Selwyn entered the House in 1747 as M.P. for Ludgershall,[1] his colleague being his uncle, Thomas Farrington. Ludgershall is a little village in Wiltshire, south of Savernake Forest, and not far from Salisbury Plain. Once upon a time it was a place of some importance, with a substantial Norman castle. But long before George Selwyn's day its importance, like its castle, had vanished. Nothing was left of the castle but a few stones; there was a market-place with a cross in it; there were a few poor houses with lands attached. But one enormously valuable privilege it still retained: the right, namely, of returning two members to the House of Commons. John Selwyn purchased this right, together with the lordship of the manor, at some time before the General Election of 1734, and Ludgershall became the Selwyns' "pocket-borough." Pocket-boroughs had their advantages. Thus you had none of the wear and tear of a contested election: no hustings, no speeches, no mobs. If there were any voters (and there were some at Ludgershall) you

[1] Selwyn spelt this word "Ludgarshall," "Luggershall," and "Ludgershall," with a fine impartiality. "Ludgarshall" would appear to be etymologically correct, since the place is called after a Saxon personage named Lutegar. But the spelling in the text is the modern one.

requested them politely to return your candidate to Parliament, and they did so, thinking they had no option in the matter. Or you made an *ad hoc* assignment of property to your steward and your gardener and your footman, who thus became free and independent burgesses, and did their duty on the polling day. Or, happiest of all conceivable cases, you might own a borough without a single house or a single burgess: the classic case of old Sarum. There the procedure was of the simplest. The steward came down one afternoon, erected a tent under a spacious elm-tree, and nominated William Pitt, Esq., as parliamentary candidate for the ancient borough of Old Sarum. No rival candidate appearing, William Pitt, Esq., was declared duly elected, and the thing was done. Halcyon days these for nervous candidates. But how many other privileges did pocket-boroughs not possess? You could put your sons or other relatives into them, as George Selwyn did; or you could dispose of them for a consideration, as George Selwyn did more than once; or, if you were truly patriotic, or had a lively anticipation of favours to come, you could put the seat at the disposal of the Prime Minister, as again was the case with George Selwyn. Consider for a moment the history of Ludgershall in the Selwyn period. Here is a list of its members from 1741 to 1791:

1741	Major Charles Selwyn Thomas Hayward	1774	Lord Melbourne Lord George Gordon
1747	George A. Selwyn Thomas Farrington	1780	G. A. Selywn Lord Melbourne
1754	Sir John Bland Thomas Hayward	1784	G. A. Selwyn Sir N. W. Wraxall
1761	Thomas Whately John Paterson	1790	G. A. Selwyn W. B. Harbord
1768	Lord Garlies Penistone Lamb, first Lord Melbourne		

Thus George Selwyn himself sat for Lugershall in four Parliaments; three of his uncles had each a turn; and the rest were strangers. But the strangers mostly paid for the

privilege. Thus it was said that in 1768 George Selwyn got no less than £9000 for the double seat. This may well have been so; for though in that year the Duke of Grafton desired Selwyn to nominate for the seat two ministerialists, Lord Garlies and Lord Melbourne, and though Selwyn immediately (was not Grafton Prime Minister?) complied, it is more than probable that both Garlies and Melbourne paid well for their seats. "I will nominate Garlies and Melbourne," said Selwyn in effect, "but my price is so-and-so." Certainly Selwyn had no liking for either of the two men; "I pity you at being obliged to re-elect Garlies," wrote Henry St John to him at this time; "it is troublesome to repeat these things often." And two years later Selwyn writes a curious letter to Lord North, protesting that, though he had returned Garlies and Melbourne in 1768, he was under no obligation to fill any future vacancy up, except at his own option. Nevertheless, he allowed Lord Melbourne to sit for Ludgershall again in 1774 and in 1780. Why? Surely because he paid for the seat. In 1782 that ungrateful peer deserted Selwyn's politics (and North's), and began to coquet with the Opposition. Selwyn was angry and protested; but Melbourne only laughed at him, and went about telling everybody that he could do what he liked, for he had bought the seat. Whereupon Selwyn wrote to Carlisle: "He says that he purchased the seat at Luggershall. It is a falsehood. If he did, he has not paid the money he ought for it; but both Lord N[orth] and Robinson have acted in this, towards me, in the most scandalous manner in the world, and I will inform the K[ing] of it myself by an audience, if I can find no other means of doing it. I warned Lord North over and over again of this *supercherie*. I knew his intention, and he was so weak as to neglect this means of pinning this fitz scrivener, fitz coachman, this fitz cook, to his word, and putting it in his power to use me in this manner, as if he had bought of me a seat in Parliament, which no man living ever did, but the King himself." An equivocal defence this. Would it be unfair to deduce from it that the "fitz-scrivener" did pay a certain sum for the seat, and that the balance was to be taken by Selwyn in the form of a "place" from Lord North, which the Prime Minister callously omitted to provide for him? Whether this be the true explanation

of the transaction or not, we know at least that George Selwyn was not the man to give away a valuable seat in Parliament. There was always a something in exchange, we may be sure.

Selwyn entered Parliament at a peculiarly interesting time politically. The "long Walpolian struggle" was over; Sir Robert, beaten, but not disgraced, had retired as the Earl of Orford to the obscurity of the House of Lords. The Pulteneys and the Sandys and the Carterets had tried to govern in his stead, and had failed dismally. Then came the "Broad-Bottom" administration—Newcastle and Pelham, and Fox and Pitt; and it was when this Government was in office that Selwyn first entered the House. As it happened, the times were quiet. For six years, from 1748 to 1754, there was peace both at home and abroad. What was the House of Commons like in those years? It cannot have been altogether dull. Henry Fox was there, the greatest of all debaters excepting his own son; Pitt, too, splendid in declamation, the tribune of the people; and Selwyn might listen as often as he liked to the "clear, placid, mellow" oratory of Murray. No, the Commons was not dull. And then there was always Newcastle to be studied in another place. Surely Selwyn, a shrewd enough observer of human nature, must have delighted in the Duke of Newcastle! Horace Walpole did, and has left us many a laughable sketch of that gentleman. Well, the Duke was never anything but childish, and futile, and ridiculous; but somehow, one can't help liking him. Selwyn certainly liked him: but then Newcastle was an old friend of the Selwyn family. Did he not mildly rebuke John Selwyn once for burning tallow candles at dinner? "Dear John," says he, "if you will burn tallow, pray snuff your candles." I like that little anecdote of the Duke. John Selwyn wrote many a letter to him, which you may read in the Newcastle papers at the British Museum.[1] And Mrs John, George's mother, had *her* correspondence with this family friend:[2] but only to ask a living for a clerical relative. The incumbent of such-and-such a place was very ill—actually on his death-bed; and would the Duke kindly remember that Mr C. Selwyn was an amiable and earnest young person, in every way fitted

[1] Add. MSS. 32689, etc.

[2] Add. MSS. 32991.

for the post? It must have been pleasant enough for George Selwyn to enter the House under the *ægis* of this absurd old man.

The eighteenth-century House of Commons, like the eighteenth-century Oxford, is somewhat difficult for us modern men to realise. Is not the Long Parliament, with its bubbling political life, its soaring private members, nearer to us than this first Parliament of George Selwyn's? Under Mr Pelham and the Duke the private member dozed his time away happily on the back benches. He had no political enthusiasms, and he never made speeches (George Selwyn probably never made a speech, except upon a private Bill, in all the forty-three years of his life in Parliament). Why should he? There was Mr Fox, and Mr Pitt, and Mr Murray, to do that. The private member's duty was to eat his dinner and drink his port, and serve on a committee occasionally, and vote steadily with his party. It was a lazy life, nor did the habits of the House make for strenuousness. It met early, twelve o'clock, and seldom rose later than nine or ten; time enough for George Selwyn and his friends to get back to White's for supper and a game of picquet. Conceive the aspect of the House, with Henry Fox and William Pitt on the Government Front Bench, and the jolly, port-drinking country members behind them: nobody of distinction on the Opposition benches. We are talking of 1747, or thereabouts. True it is that we have no contemporary description of the House at this time; the art of descriptive reporting had not yet been invented. But thirty years or so afterwards a German pastor, the Rev. Karl Moritz, visited England, and wrote down his impressions, in letters to a friend. They are very interesting letters, as letters always are when people write down simply and clearly what they see. Mr Moritz visited the House of Commons, and was delighted with it. It was no longer Henry Fox's and William Pitt the elder's House when Mr Moritz came to it; but it was still George Selwyn's: I like to think that Moritz actually saw Selwyn there, as he saw Charles James Fox. But if we read the German's letter we shall have a very fair idea of the House of Commons as Selwyn knew it. It was "rather a mean-looking building, that not a little resembles a chapel. The Speaker, an elderly man with an enormous wig, with two knotted

kind of tresses or curls behind, in a black cloak, his hat on his head, sat opposite to me on a lofty chair; which was not unlike a small pulpit." Moritz goes on to describe the arrangement of the House with its benches "covered with green cloth, always one above the other, like our chairs in churches. . . . The members of the House of Commons have nothing particular in their dress; they even come into the House in their great coats, and with boots and spurs. It is not at all uncommon to see a member lying stretched out on one of the benches while others are debating. Some crack nuts, others eat oranges, or whatever else is in season. There is no end to their going in and out." Moritz was lucky enough to hear Charles Fox speak. "Fox," says he, "was sitting on the right of the Speaker not far from the table on which the gilt sceptre lay. He now took his place so near it that he could reach it with his hand, and there placed, he gave it many a violent and hearty thump, either to aid, or to show, the energy with which he spoke. . . . It is impossible for me to describe with what fire and persuasive eloquence he spoke, and how the Speaker in the chair incessantly nodded approbation from beneath his solemn wig; and innumerable voices incessantly called out, hear him! hear him! and when there was the least sign that he intended to leave off speaking they no less vociferously exclaimed go on!; and so he continued to speak in this manner for nearly two hours." The good German said that if he had seen nothing else in England than this, he would have thought his journey thither "amply rewarded." We must all be of the same opinion. Anyhow, it was in this "mean-looking building," among the booted and spurred country members, the crackers of nuts and the eaters of oranges, among the Foxes, and Pitts and Burkes and Rigbys, that George Selwyn sat (and slept) during so many years. Think of this next time you walk through the corridor to the Central Hall at Westminster, and note on the floor the brass rods marking the position of the table which Charles Fox thwacked so violently and so often.

George Selwyn sat for Ludgershall for seven years—the full space of one Parliament. It is very probable that, on his father's death in 1751, he might have become junior member for Gloucester if he had so chosen. John Selwyn had been

M.P. for that borough for seventeen years, and had won the respect and esteem of the good citizens of Gloucester in that time. After his death in November 1751, a deputation from the Corporation of Gloucester waited upon George Selwyn in London, "to consult with you concerning a representative for our city in the room of your dear and ever honoured father." One of the deputation, by the way, was Mr Gabriel Harris, Alderman of Gloucester, then and always a good friend of the Selwyn family. We do not know what answer George Selwyn (*æt.* thirty-two, and a scapegrace) returned to the respectable deputation; but it was not until the General Election of 1754 that he himself became member for Gloucester city, his colleague being Mr Charles Barrow. He was re-elected in 1755 on becoming Paymaster of the Works. George began his career as M.P. for Gloucester with all the omens favourable. His family was well known in the city; his father had been immensely popular; and he himself was not disliked. The historian is therefore grieved to have to announce that George's parliamentary connection with Gloucester was anything but untroubled. During the first Parliament, from 1754 till 1761, he seems to have had no difficulty with his constituents, and he was re-elected in 1761 without opposition. But in 1768 all this was changed. For some reason or other, George had lost his popularity, and was in imminent danger of losing his seat. Can we account for this sad state of things? It is not very difficult to do so. We shall come to his politics in a moment; but here it may be said that George Selwyn was a thick-and-thin Government man, a contemner of Wilkes and liberty, a fervent supporter of the privileges of the Crown. Now there was always a good deal of sturdy radicalism in Gloucester, even from the days of the Commonwealth. The good burgesses were loyal and law-abiding; but they admired John Wilkes, and thought that patriot a sadly persecuted man. Above all, they "had their feelings," which George Selwyn steadily refused to consider. He was essentially an aristocrat, who regarded constituents as necessary nuisances; nasty, factious people, who unfortunately had votes, and things of that sort, and who must therefore have some little attention paid them. Now an M.P. of this type may be very virtuous, but he is bound in time to achieve unpopularity; and he invariably complains bitterly

when the storm breaks. The storm broke upon Selwyn at the General Election of 1768.

The first sign of the storm was the appearance of a third candidate in the field, who began vigorously to canvass the city against Selwyn. If this person had been a lord, or a member of a county family, the thing would not have been so bad. But he was a low tradesman, a timber merchant. Conceive the just indignation of Mr George Selwyn and his friends at White's. "I am heartily sorry my dear George," writes Gilly Williams, with true sympathy, "that this damned carpenter has made matters so serious with you." There seems to have been something peculiarly exasperating to Selwyn's circle in the connection this poor gentleman had with the timber trade. "I was very sorry to find by your last" (writes Carlisle from Turin) "you had an opposition at Gloucester. Why did you not set his timber yard a-fire? What can a man mean, who has not an idea separated from the foot-square of a Norway deal plank, by desiring to be in Parliament?" That was the way they looked at it. Well, Selwyn won the seat again. In the immortal words of Gilly Williams, he "gave the carpenter a duster"; but it was after a tremendous battle, in which Alderman Harris performed prodigies of valour. (Selwyn took no risks, however. He got himself nominated and returned for the Wigtown Boroughs, a pocket-borough belonging to Lord Garlies' family, but elected to sit for Gloucester.) And there was other help besides that of Mr Harris; for Selwyn called in the powerful aid of Lord Hardwicke to redress the balance between himself and the carpenter. "My Lord," writes Selwyn to Hardwicke in March 1768,[1] "I have been acquainted by Mr Pitt [of Gloucester] of your Lordship's obliging commands to him to exert your interest here in favour of Mr Barrow and myself. I return your Lordship a great many thanks for that favour, and have the honour to be, with very great respect, your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant, G. Selwyn." Mr Barrow thanked his lordship in similar strain. If this were all it would hardly be worth mentioning. But it is not all. Fortunately we have Mr John Pitt's letter to the Earl of Hardwicke,[2] which sheds an amusing side-light

[1] Brit: Mus. Add. MSS. 35608, f. 142.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35608, f. 140.

upon the causes of Selwyn's unpopularity in Gloucester, as well as upon the management of an election in those Georgian days. Hardwicke has notified his pleasure to Mr John Pitt that his Gloucester tenants should vote for Mr Selwyn and Mr Barrow. Mr John Pitt replies: "I sent over to two of your Lordship's tenants who are all that are free, and waited with them on Mr Barrow and Mr Selwyn, and communicated to them your Lordship's commands." He goes on to say that he had long since made up his mind to vote for Mr Barrow only, and to leave his tenants free to vote as they pleased. A meeting was held which he (Pitt) did not attend. He was told if he "had been there and proposed Mr Guise, Mr Selwyn had never been in the nomination." Proceeding, he explains his resentment against Selwyn: "Previous to the last election here I made use of the honor enjoined me of applying on all occasions to my late lord. His Lordship's commands were to assist Mr Selwyn and Mr Barrow, which I did in such a manner as to draw on me the resentment of the opposite party. They deputed some gentlemen of the law to acquaint me my interfering in the elections was subjecting myself as a custom-house officer to £500 penalty; and if I proceeded I must expect to be sued. I answered that was about the sum I made by my place, and I was ready to forfeit it to the commands of the person I was indebted to for it, and accordingly redoubled my spirit, and having 148 Tenants in the City, a great number of whom were free and of the poorer sort, I laid out and expended on them out of my own pocket near as much as Mr Selwyn's election stood him in. I took every opportunity of waiting on and obliging Mr Selwyn. I on no occasion put him to or suffered others to put him to any expense. I took no slight at his coolness towards me as I thought I discovered the cause. I expected, I wished for, no return from him and knew it was not in his power to make me any. I was paying a debt of gratitude I owed by purchasing an obligation to a higher gratitude. I was sure the title was good how wrongfully soever the enjoyment might be withheld. During the canvass while he was expressing his obligation to His Lordship on the one side, he could not restrain his reflections almost with the same breath on the other, with this difference that the one was poured out in private to me whilst the other was scattered over the whole city by being delivered in the hearing of the

whole Corporation of which his lordship was the honour and protector. For one evening at the Tolsey in company with the whole Corporation and the principal gentlemen of this City, a gentleman asking his opinion of the first advise sent by Sir Jos. York of the King of Prussia's Victory at Torgau, he answered that that news would have been looked on as extraordinary had it come from any other quarter than Sir Jos. Yorke, but he had amused the town with so many false intelligences that he had rendered his name a proverb, as anything wild and not believed was called a Yorkism. I gave him a look, sat a little, and then took my hat and walked off. I immediately advised his lordship of it and received the enclosed answer on which I redoubled my assiduity and never discovered the least dissatisfaction, so that many were surprised at my sudden turn from Mr Selwyn and thought I was fallen into the opposite party. The present candidates are only the two old members and Cator [the "Carpenter"], all sanguine, but tho' the blow is aimed at Barrow yet the contest will lie between Selwyn and Cator. Barrow is secure and I think Selwyn will be the other member. I am, my lord, Your lordship's most obliged and dutifull humble servant,

"JOHN PITT

"GLO., 11 Mar. 1768."

Comment upon this delightful letter is needless. But does it not bring Selwyn out of the shades to see him at the Gloucester banquet, explaining what a "Yorkism" is, while that devoted follower of the house of Yorke, John Pitt, gives him a look and "walks off" in disgust? Hogarth should have painted that scene. Only he could have painted John Pitt giving Selwyn a look.

The next election was in 1774. Selwyn passed through the same horrible pangs of doubt and anxiety concerning his seat as he had done in 1768. He put off his journey to Gloucester as long as possible. "My heart fails me," he writes, "as the time of my going to Gloucester approaches. . . . But there will [be] no trifling after the end of next week. . . . Then the judges will be met, a terrible show, for I shall be obliged to dine with them, and be in more danger from their infernal cooks than any of the criminals who are to be tried. How long I shall

stay the lord knows, but I hope in God not more than ten days at furthest, for I find my aversion to that part of the world greater and more insuperable every day of my life." He reached Gloucester at last, and was consoled for a few days by the presence of Horace Walpole. (He had only Râton, his dog, as company in the election of 1768.) He felt a "monstrous oppression of spirits," and had serious thoughts of "a total renunciation of Parliament, Ministers, and Boroughs" and "the emoluments attached to those connections." But he "opened his trenches" before the town "as one who intended to humbug them for one seven years more.

> "J'ignore le destin que le ciel me prepare
> Mais il est temps enfin qu' Iarbe se declare."

He gave a dinner to the Corporation, made a speech ("which I am glad that nobody heard but themselves"), and prophesied, as a result, "a peaceable election." He was right. No third candidate troubled him upon this occasion, and on the 7th of October 1774, he was returned as M.P. for Gloucester for the fifth time.

But he had accurately judged "the destiny which heaven had prepared for him," nevertheless, which was "to humbug the town for one seven years more," or still more accurately, for six. As the General Election of 1780 approached, Selwyn seems to have realised that he could not possibly hold the seat at Gloucester. He had sinned too deeply ever to be forgiven. There was the disgrace of the American War, of which Selwyn (mindful of his "places" and his negroes) had been a determined supporter. Like Burke at the neighbouring city of Bristol, he had been "How-de-do'd" out of all hope of success at the election by an enterprising candidate, Mr Webb, while he, Selwyn, was attending to his parliamentary duties (and his "emoluments") in London. To be even more apt, while he slept, an enemy had been sowing tares. But the time came when he had once more "to engage in the bustles and disputes of that abominable town of Gloucester." He went down to Matson early in August, whence he writes to his nephew Charles Townshend on the 19th:[1]

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

"I thank you for letting me know your speculations in regard to the dissolution of Parliament. It seems to be very probable from what I observed before I left London as well as from what you have picked up lately. I shall not be sorry because I wish the uncertainty in which I live now, as to the event of the election here, was at an end and much of the preparatory trouble will be necessarily abridged. I intend to be at Luggershall on the day of that election if possible; I believe the two candidates will be Lord Melbourne and myself. I hope that you will find or make for us a majority on the Poll and if you perform the same office anywhere else you may return whom you please. If they are factious they may represent who they will but they will very ill represent yourself. I thank you for wishing me out of my difficulties. The most oppressive one to me is that of breathing, I find my cough but very little better and my nights are the most uncomfortable in the world. I am the more dispirited because I have here no advice but that which I brought from London upon which I can depend. There are but two Apothecaries and they are both in opposition to me. One is so violent that I cannot trust him to make up the medicine which Dr Robinson has prescribed, and the other is afraid of coming to my home lest he should give umbrage to his party. I was in hopes that change of air would supply the best of other remedies but it has done me as yet little good that I perceive. I must have patience. Mie Mie is much obliged to you for the remembrance of her. She likes Matson, which forces me to acquiesce in a longer stay than I should otherwise make among such factious people. I hope that in little more than three weeks I shall be released from them, and meet you at Luggershall, where the people are more united in their attachment to my interest. Pray write me a line now and then, I long to hear how things are likely to go in the West Indies, or more properly are gone. Yours most Affect^{ly}."

Can you withhold your sympathy from this poor sick gentleman, with both the available apothecaries in opposition? On 31st August he again writes:[1]

"I heard by express (but not from Government) that the dissolution of the Parliament would be to-morrow. I was told by Robinson[2] before I left London that it was not then determined upon (which was a lie) and that when it would be determined upon that I should have notice of it (that is another) for he

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS. [2] Lord North's secretary.

meant from himself. Instead of that I am to guess at it by a lettre de cachet, to desire me to remain *à mes terres* while a Congé d'Elire is sent to Gloucester to chose some candidate not yet fixed upon; for Mr Stock an attorney here has employed an attorney there, to find out a candidate who is neither here nor there, and so at first Lord Fairford was agreed upon, without consulting either Lord North or Lord Hillsborough, then Mr Bearcroft the fat lawyer and then little Howell the lean surgeon, and now they have nobody at all, and this to throw out by a coup de Baguette Mr Barrow who has established himself by an indefatigable attention for above thirty years in the good will of his constituents. I can neither be sorry or angry that he is chose, and he won't have been contented with that if he had not seen such strange supineness and inconsistency and weakness of all sorts as he has observed in the surviving part of my old friends of which he has taken an advantage. That I have kept my seat six and twenty years is much more astonishing than that I am obliged to resign it now. With a little more vigilence in the country among the few here who are attached to Government—allways when they talk so by Government meaning themselves—who would have been more active if the administration had supported them, this might have continued in my hands one Parliamemt more, but so would my plague and trouble, a very little of which at my time of day is a great deal too much. I have not relinquished this in form nor shall I if I do not appear on the day of election as a Candidate.

"Mr Barrow and Mr Webb must of course be chose, a canvass or a poll in my favour would only shew that my interest was lost beyond recovery and which my friends now will not admit. I have been very attentive since I came down here to all that has been said and have collected, I believe, the truth and from thence have taken my rest without difficulty or regret. I should have been sorry if any personal behaviour of my own had occasioned this, but as it is agreed on all sides that no objection lies to me but to my principles and situation in respect to Government and as these are what they always have been, and I hope always will be by whatever name they are qualified, so I am contented. I will meet you at Luggershall if you desire it, if you do not think it necessary, I will follow the humour I shall be in, some days hence. My cough is going more expeditiously than I expected, although there be still some remains of it. I do not know what accommodations I shall find at Luggershall for as I must be absent from hence, if I go, some days, I should like to take Mie Mie with me as it will not be a popular elec-

tion. . . . I have had a letter to day from Warner who tells me of a rumour of very bad news of the Quebec fleet.[1] From your being silent about it, I am in hopes that there is no foundation for it. There has been enough lately for whoever wishes to throw a stone at administration and I hope not more than by other reprisals we shall recover. Warner says that he is to dine at neighbour Charles's to-morrow. I am sorry that I am not to be of the party. How long you are to have neighbour Warner I do not know. But the neighbourhood is a very commodious one for him. I received a letter from your sister Mary yesterday, wrote in very good spirits which I am glad of. I hope that another year, I shall have the pleasure of having some of the family here, if there comes any news, pray lett me know it. I am ever most affectionately yours."

In another letter to Carlisle, Selwyn describes some of his experiences at this election, not without humour. "I wish to God that it was all at an end," says he.

> "'What sin, to me unknown
> Dipped me in this, my father's or my own?'"

The answer is, entirely his own. But Lord North and the Government seem to have bungled the business too. It was Selwyn's intention "to resign all thoughts of being a candidate at the next election"—so he informed Lord North—because he was ill, and it would cost money (which he couldn't spare) and, above all, "I have subjected myself to the humours of these people till I am quite tired of them." Lord North, however, appears to have persuaded him to stand, together with Sir Andrew Hammond, in the Government interest. The Opposition candidates were Mr Charles Barrow and Mr John Webb. Mr Webb issued his address to "the worthy Freemen of the city of Gloucester" in the *St James's Chronicle* of 5th-7th September 1780. As an election address it is a model of brevity, combined with a judicious vagueness:

"The sudden Dissolution of Parliament calls upon me to renew my Application to you for the Favour of your Votes and Interest at the approaching Election, and to assure you that as it is the Height of my Ambition to represent my Native City, so shall it be my constant Endeavour, if I have the Happiness to be Chosen, to discharge my Duty with the Strictest Fidelity to you,

[1] See Warner's Letter, Jesse, iv. 371.

and the firmest attachment to the real Liberties of the Constitution. I am, with great Respect, Gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant, JOHN WEBB

"*N.B.*—These gentlemen who have not taken up their freedom, are desired to leave a State of their Claims, directed to Mr Samuel Jones, at Mr King's, the Merry Carpenter, in Old Street; or at Mr Mathews, the Sun, in White Street, near St George's Church, Southwark."

So many freemen of Gloucester lived in London that it appears to have been worth the while of the candidates on both sides to make special efforts to secure the London vote. In the *St James's Chronicle* of the same date we read: "The friends of Mr Selwyn and Sir Andrew Hammond are requested to take notice that a committee is appointed, who meet every afternoon at seven o'clock, at the Rainbow Coffee-House, King Street, Covent Garden, to Consider of the means most effectual for obtaining success to these Gentlemen at the ensuing Election for the City of Gloucester; and every Well-wisher to their interest will be received at the said Committee." Selwyn's nephew Charles Townshend worked indefatigably for him in London. On the 5th of September he "dined" the Gloucester freemen at the White Hart, in Bishopsgate Street. "Mr Mathews, the great man, made a speech," he tells his uncle, "which from my ignorance of Gloucester politics, I did not perfectly understand; . . . there was one flower in his speech which was often repeated and much admired; that he came from an egg which never deceived, and that it was a blue egg." Charles himself made a speech, which was "very well received." "The best-dressed man of the company," he adds, "seemed to suspect that you and Barrow would be returned, as two or three of them told me; but the great leaders are confident that you and Hammond will carry it." Selwyn and Hammond, however, did not carry it. The election ended on the 14th of September, when Mr Webb and Mr Barrow were returned. There is no doubt whatever that this was a grievous blow to Selwyn and his friends, who had been hoping for a different result. "I have so strong a presentiment of your success," writes Warner, "that I am almost tempted to give you joy of the event to-morrow." Alas, on the morrow George was hurrying to London, with an angry mob at his heels.

"MATSON
"Saturday night, 16, September [1780]

"DEAR CHARLES,—I am this evening setting out for London, I was yesterday burned, and to-day hung in effigy upon a sign post. The election for the County is to-day and the Town full of ale and mob, and I have received information that they intend when it is dark to make a visit to this house. What they will do here, the Lord knows, but, as soon as I received this intelligence, I thought it advisable to send Mie Mie to the house of a neighbouring gentleman, where she dines, and we shall call upon her on our way to London. I am as much obliged to the absurdity of Mr Robinson for all this, as if he had brought himself combustibles to fire my house. I will not anticipate my part of the story which I have to relate to you. It is replete with all things abominable, and the contrivers of it deserve any punishment that can be dealt the worst conduct that ever was. I have left behind me a dying speech which is now printing off, and of which I shall bring you a copy. As I cannot get further to-night than Frog Mill, so it will be Monday to be sure, before I arrive in Town. I shall hear to-morrow by the servants which I leave here to-night if a House at Matson remains or not. Yours most affectionately, G. S."[1]

Matson remained, but Selwyn had had enough of Gloucester. "That infernal place," he called it. "It has been truly a *cittá dolente* to me." On the 6th of November he resigned his position as alderman of the city (he had been alderman for many years, and had been twice elected mayor); but the corporation, by a majority of five, refused to accept his resignation "upon the letter now read." Selwyn's studied contempt for Gloucester continued, however; for on the 7th of November 1785, we read:

"On 7th November, 1785, George Augustus Selwyn Esquire one of the Aldermen of this city having neglected to appear at the last Council House held on the thirtieth day of September last And it having been proved at this house upon oath that he was summoned to appear now to give his reasons for such his non-attendance in pursuance of an Act of Common Council held on the tenth day of January last And Mr Selwyn having now neglected to appear or send some person to give any reasons in pursuance of such summons It is Resolved that he has incurred the penalty of Degradation But the Execution of the sentence of the Bye Law is suspended to the next House

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

And Mr Woodcock has undertaken in the meantime to speak to Mr Selwyn and to make a Report at the next House."[1]

The matter appears not to have been mentioned again, so no doubt George escaped the terrible penalty of degradation. But I wish we had a copy of his "dying speech."

Selwyn kept his seat in the House by returning himself, together with Lord Melbourne, for the borough of Ludgershall. (He was probably very glad to be rid of Lord George Gordon, M.P. for that borough from 1774 to 1780, who had been distinguishing himself in other directions. What a shock it must have been for Selwyn, down at Matson, to hear of the exploits of the mob on that fatal 7th of June—of the mob led by the member for Ludgershall![2]) It would be pleasant now to record that his parliamentary troubles were over, that in the shelter of the Wiltshire pocket-borough he remained free from all anxieties about votes and interests for the rest of his days. Alas, it was not so. In 1782 he had that little difficulty with Lord Melbourne who had "bought the seat," and had then joined the Opposition. In 1784 things seem to have gone smoothly enough at the General Election, when Selwyn chose Sir Nathaniel Wraxall to sit with him for Ludgershall. But who would have thought that the modern spirit would have penetrated to Wiltshire in time for the election of 1790? that the free and independent voters of Ludgershall, tainted perhaps with the heresies of the French Revolution, scorched by those flying sparks from France which Selwyn dreaded so much, should have begun to murmur about their "rights," should have failed to appreciate their grand old privilege of supporting whomever the lord of the manor commanded them to support? Yet this is what actually happened. Once again sympathy is invited for this poor harassed gentleman, whose most cherished ideas on the subject of property and of politics were being thus rudely attacked at the end of a long parliamentary life.

[1] Corporation Minutes.

[2] "Have you heard his [Selwyn's] incomparable reply to Ld. George Gordon, who asked him whether he would return him again for Ludgershall? He replied, 'His constituents would not.' 'Oh yes! if you recommend me, they would choose me if I came from the coast of Africa.' 'That is according to what part of the coast you came from. They certainly would if you came from the *Guinea* coast.'" H. Walpole to Lady Ossory, 6th June 1780.

[To MARY TOWNSHEND][1]

"CLEVELAND COURT
"Thursday [June 1790]

" . . . I am, as yet, uncertain of my arrangements and my mind is much disturbed at the opposition which I have at Luggershall. It is not only because it is prejudicial to my own interest and mortifying by the circumstances of it but that I see how my father's views may be eventually frustrated in regard to this Borough in future times. Whatever my own disappointments are, the concern arising from them can now be but of a short duration and although that be a triste consolation I must have recourse to it, on more accounts than one. The trouble and fatigue and anxiety of mind which this causes to your brother Charles add greatly also to what I suffer on my own account and I could never excuse to myself the giving him this trouble if the interests of his own family were not so materially concerned. I thought nothing of this kind could have happened, having had so much Reliance upon the nature of the Borough and supposing that whatever was wanting to confirm our property in it would be supplied by the vigilance of others whose pretensions although only in reversion were seemingly more permanent.

" Weak princes are allways supine and lose by security, what could not have been extorted from them if they did not think themselves secure. This misfortune I undergo, and share with my most Christian brother Louis XVI. The Poissards of Paris or of Luggershall were too much despised by us, and I shall not be surprised if, instead of being at the head of the poll my head may be upon one before the election is over, for I am told that the democrates at Luggershall are already very riotous and may overpower les troupes de ma maison."

"Saturday M.

" I intended to have sent this two days ago but so confused is my mind at present that I overlooked it. Since that Mie Mie has told me that, considering my late illness and that she perceives how low my spirits are at times she is resolved to go with me, that is as far as Andover, where we shall lie on this day seven night, and the next day I propose to go over to Luggershall to begin my campaign. As soon as I return into this part of the world, I intend to pass a day with you at Chiselhurst to thank you in person for your kind offer to me and to Mademoiselle. Charles was to sett out to-day, I was with him last night, and although I saw him immersed in

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

business which would be very perplexing to others yet I had the satisfaction to perceive as I thought a resource in his temper and spirits and activity for which he is much to be envied. I would willingly have taken the whole burthen of this from off his shoulders if I had been equal to it. But, his endeavour to be usefull to his brother[1] and his pleasure in serving everybody else is very uncommon and will not be often imitated. I do not wonder to see Lord Sydney so much chagrined at what has happened when so little might have prevented it had we had active persons on the spott to have purchased what has now fallen into the hands of this banker, who will make the family pay dear for the bargain he has made, and add to this the development to the world of the state of this Borough, which, in everybody's opinion almost was a property in which no one had a share but ourselves. It is now the virgin unmasked, and we must be contented if we can keep what we have, and pretend to no more at present, but in future do, as all courtiers do, gett what we can. Yours most affectionately."

In spite of the "democrates," Selwyn was on the 12th of June again returned for Ludgershall, together with Mr W. B. Harbord, how, we do not know: perhaps the "troupes de la maison" managed it. And perhaps also Mr Harbord's guineas had something to do with it. But the aftermath of these days troubled Selwyn greatly.

[To CHARLES TOWNSHEND][2]

"RICHMOND
"September 27, 1790

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—I received yours yesterday afternoon. It is not consonant with common sense, to be vexed at what one experiences every day, which is the enormous wickedness of such a low abandoned fellow as Hutchins, but I confess that I am, and it is because a report the more groundless and of what is the least to be conceived has given Mr S[elwyn] so much uneasiness, by the effects which it has had. I have no recollection of anything in that degree relative to this, but that which Mr S. himself told me, that among a great deal of other low abuse, that had been thrown out; but, when he mentioned it he seemed to have so just a contempt of it, that I never thought of taking any more notice to him of it. I do not remember to have spoke to this Hutchins but once, and that was, I believe, in his own house, if I am not mistaken in regard to the man. Then I think, that, either Mr H. Selwyn or Mr

[1] Thomas, first Viscount Sydney. [2] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

Harbord, or both were with me ; and this I should have forgott if the fellow, speaking of bribery, which he did in order to vent some of his spleen, he said *that* could not be laid he believed to my charge, for I had never bribed him, or had he seen any of my money. However, he ventures to assert that I flew at higher game, and if I bribed no one in particular that I gave a hundred pounds a year to bribe the whole Borough, and that *this* the Minister of his Parish putt into his pocket. He will take his oath of this ; I dare say that he will, but I beg that in this case he may treated as a Peer, and lett him assert what he does upon his Honour. I should think the one would be just as good a voucher as the other. I am sorry that Mr Selwyn should have suffered this, or any other wickedness of the sort, to have made an impression upon his mind : But, I am, at the same time very much ashamed that any gentleman of a more liberal education should have countenanced such a report, by giving the least credit to that which must reflect so much disgrace upon my relations as well as upon myself. But, it may be perhaps, that there are those who say that they believe, what they *do not* believe, in order to place my conduct and veracity in the most suspected light, that they can. I will, if Mr Selwyn pleases, either write a letter to *him* upon this subject, or to Mr Smith, to whom I am indebted for a great deal of game this season, and for which I intend to return him my thanks in a letter. I will do all I can, but to prevent my Constituents in the B. of Ludgarshall from lying, or from any other crime to which, by malice, or for gain they may be led to commit, I believe is of all things the least practicable. Now, as to the Borough, I will say a few words, and they are these. That I think it either entirely lost to my father, and his Representatives, or if regained at any time so as to be upon the eligible foot it has been till this period it must cost Lord Sydney, or his family, a great deal of trouble and expense. I have been for a long time of opinion that the plan upon which the government of that place was carried on, was not the most proper, which might have been thought of. Mr S. has been of as much service as it was possible for one in his station to be, but as Agent for a Borough his station was eccentric, you have had yourself infinite trouble, and vexation which I am sorry for, and was more than either your affection to your brother or to me, could have given us the least reason to expect. But, you and Mr S. have both of you been I say of infinite service, nor could your kind intentions have been disappointed if all other assistance had been given to this business which was necessary to have secured its success. If any mistakes have

been made, if any omissions have been, which ought not to have been, I can only say, that nothing of that sort can be laid to your account, or to Mr Selwyn's, and for my own part, I have been so very passive, and last year was so ill, that I can be accused only of having done nothing, but that I relied too much upon the assistance of others. However, enough for what is past. For the future, the person, whoever he may be, to whom the Borough is to belong, will do right to have an Agent constantly upon the spott, and to give a particular account to the persons interested of what is done to the prejudice of that interest, which he should be paid to support. Then you would be able to advise, or inspect, or do what you please without committing yourself, or being exposed to those insults which have been offered to you in so scandalous a manner. I wish undoubtedly, that Everett's practices may be made so clear as to defeat his purpose of wresting this Borough out of my hands now and of my successors. But, I fairly own that I do not encourage myself to hope for any such issue. I rather am of opinion that Everett will carry his point from the unaccountable failure in conduct, of those who are to defend themselves and their property, and that I shall not only have been at a very great and useless expense to return two members of parliament who would have given Mr Pitt their warmest support, but that my hopes of any emolument to be derived from it will be frustrated, because, although I have done the utmost in my power to assist his Majesty's ministers, for three and forty years, I am become quite useless to them. If I see this, at present, in too gloomy a light, I cannot help it, all I know is, Mr Pitt may clear the prospect for me whenever he pleases, and the sooner he does this the better, and in my opinion, as much for his own sake as mine. I shall be always happy when I can see you, but now more particularly, and therefore when you return from Ludgarshall, I will go to London for that purpose, if it does not suit you very well to come here.

"I am, my dear Charles, full of acknowledgment to you, for all you have done and are ready to do, for my ease, or advantage, and am with the truest affection yours,

"G. SELWYN"

This is really a very characteristic letter. George is sad to think that Ludgershall may be lost to the Townshend family; but he is still more sad to think that his hopes of "emolument" may be "frustrated"; and he wants Mr Pitt to "clear the prospect" by the gift of another post, though Mr Pitt had already given him a post worth £800 a year. Well, neither posts nor

pocket-boroughs were to trouble Selwyn much longer. He died in the following year, and Samuel Smith, Esq., of Putney, reigned at Ludgershall in his stead. But Selwyn's death did not put an end to the insurrection at Ludgershall. On the 28th of June 1791, the following paragraph appeared in *The Morning Chronicle*: "The independent Electors of the Borough of Ludgershall, we are informed, intend to enter a caveat in Doctors Commons against that part of Mr G. A. Selwyn's will where he has given their property to Lord Sydney. They having a great majority of legal votes, conceive that the right of representation lies in them, and are of opinion that if Mr Selwyn had survived the 24th of March, he would have found it necessary to have made some little alteration in his Will." On the previous day the same journal had referred to Selwyn's "diminished interest" in the borough of Ludgershall. As a matter of fact, Ludgershall was settled property, and devolved upon Lord Sydney (Thomas Townshend) as remainderman by the settlement. But Selwyn added a codicil to his will in 1790 to make assurance doubly sure. The paragraph in the *Chronicle*—a radical journal—was probably a journalistic joke; at all events, no caveat was entered at Doctors' Commons. The freeholders of Ludgershall, however, had already taken other steps to assert their claim, as is proved by the following entry in the journals of the House of Commons under date 16th February 1791—an entry which also explains the mysterious reference in the *Chronicle* to the "24th of March": "Whereas by a certificate in writing, subscribed by two members of this House, I have received information of the death of George Augustus Selwyn Esquire, late one of the sitting members for the Borough of Ludgershall in the County of Wilts, whose election and return to serve in Parliament for the said borough was complained of by several Petitions presented to the House of Commons, which are ordered to be taken into consideration on Thursday, the 24th day of March next: now in pursuance of an act etc., I do hereby give you notice hereof. Given under my hand etc. Henry Addington, Speaker. To the Returning Officer of members to serve in Parliament for the Borough of Ludgershall, in the County of Wilts." The committee appointed to try the petitions reported on the 15th of April that the deceased and

his colleague were duly elected, no doubt to the disappointment of *The Morning Chronicle* and the freeholders of Ludgershall. As for that insurgent borough, it survived, but still in its feudal chains, until the debacle of 1832. Its end was not inglorious. "I am the owner of the borough of Ludgershall," cried its member from his place in the House during the debate on the Reform Bill, "I am the constituency of the borough of Ludgershall, and I am the member for the borough of Ludgershall; and in all three capacities I assent to the disfranchisement of Ludgershall." Such disinterestedness—extremely rare in 1832, as Mr Walter Bagehot reminds us—was worthy of the finest traditions of English aristocracy.

It is time now to speak of George Selwyn's politics. Fortunately there was nothing complex or esoteric about his political creed. His was the simple faith of the Vicar of Bray, and he held it with the same engaging candour and firmness as were displayed by that cleric. George, in short, was a placeman, who held that it was the first duty of all placemen to keep their places, and to annex as many more as circumstances (and a friendly Prime Minister) would permit. You might reduce his creed to articles somewhat in this fashion:

1. Government is an important body of persons to whom a mysterious Providence has confided the patronage of a large number of well-paid, sinecure, Places.

2. It is better to have a Place than not to have a Place. Remember this when what you call your convictions trouble you.

3. All Governments should be supported while there is the slightest chance of receiving a Place in exchange for a vote. Death-bed repentances on the part of Governments are not unknown; therefore for Heaven's sake be careful how you withdraw your valuable support from a Minister. A Placeman should keep his eye upon the eleventh hour.

4. You may abuse an Opposition as much as you like. When it becomes a Government, however, treat it with respect. It is pedantic to carry your prejudices into the Opposition Lobby.

5. Subject to the foregoing, the King should be master in his own house.

The fifth article is added out of fairness to Selwyn. He

was a placeman, it is true, but he was a King's man also. Perhaps he was a King's man partly because he thought that the King would always and eventually win, as against aspiring politicians. But he had also a hereditary attachment to the royal house, which was perfectly unselfish and genuine. "If I only see his [the King's] hat upon the throne," he cried once in an ecstasy of loyalty, "and ready to be put upon his head when he can come and claim it . . . I shall be satisfied." Could King-worship be more touching or more unaffected than this? As to whether Selwyn was a Whig or a Tory, what does it matter? The placeman knows not these ordinary political distinctions. They mean nothing to him. Selwyn was of course a Whig by birth; but he was, as Dr Warner said, "a discoloured Whig"—very much discoloured. Does not the great apostle of Whiggery refer somewhere to the Georgian Whigs who "crawled and licked the dust at the feet of power"? Let Selwyn's politics go at that. Too often had George to brush his garments after making an obeisance to some great man or other.

Let us look for a moment at the results of this political creed. We need not go further back than 1768, when Pitt and Grafton were in power. Before that Selwyn had no doubt been a fairly consistent Government man, during the shifting and short-lived ministries which then were in fashion. Newcastle and Pitt, Bute, and Grenville, and Rockingham: I am sure Selwyn voted for them all, with possible qualms of conscience when Rockingham was in office. He must have rejoiced at the Pitt-Grafton coalition, acceptable as it was to the King. Anyhow, he is soon in negotiation with the Duke of Grafton about a place. "I had yesterday morning my conference with the D. of G.; he has assured me that I should have the place of Treasurer to the Queen, added to that which I already have. . . . The two places together, if I am not mistaken in the estimate, will be near £2300 per annum. I'm much obliged to the D. for his liberal and kind manner of treating with me. I have succeeded better, I find, in negotiating for myself, then when I employed another; but I have this time to deal with a person who seemed willing to comply with anything which I could propose in reason, and has even gone beyond my proposals; and I have reason to flatter myself that His Majesty has not that reluctance

to oblige me, which his Grandfather had, and has certainly a much better opinion of me." But George was never appointed Treasurer to the Queen. "I do assure [you] my dear Lord," he writes to Carlisle in 1773, "my spirits are very much below par, for a variety of reasons, and I wish that I could go from hence to change the scene. The ill-treatment which I have met with from the D. of G. and Lord N[orth] has been very ill-timed, and the altercation there has been about it very disagreeable to me." It was certainly very unkind of the Duke of Grafton, who had often entertained Selwyn at Euston, and had relieved him of a good deal of surplus money at cards. Why visit great houses, and play the deuce with your fortune, if nothing tangible results? Selwyn might have argued in this sensible way; but never mind: Grafton had failed him; he would try North. "Except Lord North take me by the hand, poverty is to be the *jucundus amicus in viâ pro vehiculo*." But Lord North had so many people to take by the hand. Selwyn, however, went on steadily supporting his lordship's administration, steadily voting with him on the American War. As we have seen, he went out of his way to oblige the Premier in the Gloucester election of 1780. There was nothing else to do; for were not the Opposition, besides hampering his Majesty and the Government in the most factious manner, proposing all kinds of terrible innovations in the ancient constitution of this realm? There was Burke's Bill for example. Burke had been "very civil" to Selwyn, notwithstanding political differences. But what is a poor placeman to do when civil persons take to depriving him of bread and butter? Conceive Selwyn's feelings on listening to a certain "speech on economical reform" in 1780. Burke began by attacking the King's household, the wardrobe, and kitchen, and the rest. Well, that does not affect us: we are not Lord Chamberlain or Groom of the Stole; but now the terrible man turns to the Board of Works, of which institution we happen to be Paymaster. "The good works of that Board of Works, are as carefully concealed as other good works ought to be; they are perfectly invisible. . . . That office too has a *treasury* and a paymaster of its own"—tut, tut—"*and lest the arduous duties of that important exchequer should be too fatiguing, that paymaster has a deputy to partake his profits and relieve his cares*, . . . I propose therefore, along with the

rest, to pull down this whole ill-contrived scaffolding, which obstructs, rather than forwards, our public works." Well, we have heard the worst; we mop our brow and think regretfully of our threatened four hundred a year. Four hundred a—but what is that? "The *mint*, though not a department of the household, has the same vices" (sensation in the bosom of the Clerk of the Irons and Surveyor of the Meltings: a poor thing sir, that post). "It is a great expense to the nation, chiefly for the sake of members of Parliament." Is it any wonder, that, years afterwards, when the King's madness declared itself, Selwyn should exclaim in the bitterness of his soul: "That I should live to speak of my master at last as a lunatic! Burk[e] walking at large, and he in a strait waistcoat!" It is pleasant to think that Burke recovered his sanity on the fall of the Bastille.

As Lord North's government verged to its decline, Selwyn found himself between the devil and the deep sea. He had served the devil faithfully, but for naught; the deep sea of the Opposition was about to overwhelm him. We come now to the most diverting episode in Selwyn's political history. Never surely, since the world began, have the sorrows of the placeman—his racking agonies of alternate hope and fear, his sad remembrances of promises broken and vows unfulfilled—been laid bare as George Selwyn laid them bare in his letters to Carlisle during the change of ministry of 1782. He sees the storm coming and awaits it philosophically. "I have only desired, if they are resolved to turn me out, to have three months' warning, that I may get into another place, which I shall certainly have if I go with the same character which I had in my last. I am sober and honest, and have no followers, and although I used to be out at nights and play at the alehouse, I have now left it off." An engaging picture this, of the reformed rake. But in a week or two his philosophy begins to desert him. He is "filled with horror and indignation" at the talk which he hears at White's, Charles's talk, and Richard's (Fitzpatrick) and that of the other young bucks of the Opposition. However, "no future minister can hurt me, for none will I ever trust. Lord North and his Secretary, Robinson, have acted such a part by me that I should never have believed anything but a couple of attorneys of the lowest class to have done." While

the Cabinet making is going on George's spirits rise and fall daily. "When I left the House, I left in one room a party of young men, who made me, from their life and spirits, wish for one night to be twenty. There was a table full of them drinking—young Pitt, Lord Euston, Berkley, North, etc., etc., singing and laughing *à gorge deployée*: some of them sang very good catches; one Wilberforce, an M. of P., sang the best." But George is in no humour for singing catches with Pitt and Lord North. He goes home and writes to Carlisle: "I utter no complaint, but I feel the danger I am in, and the distress which it may occasion to me, and still more Lord N[orth's] abominable treatment of me." It was quite like North's insensibility to sing catches while people's places were in danger. Yet on another day we are able to resume our philosophy. "Burke was last night in high spirits. I told him that I hope, now they had forced our entrenchments, and broke loose, that he and his friends would be compassionate lions, tender-hearted hyaenas, generous wolves. You remember that speech of his; he was much diverted with the application." There is a pretty touch about this meeting between Selwyn and the man who robbed him of his post. "The juncture of time"—'tis the eleventh hour, friends—"the abominable treatment which I have received from the late Ministry, and the little expectation of any favour from the present, hold out to me a most melancholy prospect . . . I long to see you, Lady Carlisle, and the children. This is the only balm in this infernal business." But our nephew Tommy Townshend is Secretary of State in the new ministry, and really . . . you never know. "If any favour is shown to me, it must come to me in a becoming manner, or I shall not accept it." The eleventh hour has struck; North, the villain, has gone without a word (though "that scoundrel Robinson has a pension of £1000"); and the Opposition has at length become a Government. Away, therefore, with pedantry! Away with prejudice! "The new government, for it is more than a new administration, has given me quite a new system for my own conduct. If they have by violence etc., got into places from whence I would have excluded them, if now they should behave rightly in them, and the country becomes better and safer for their conduct, *it would be folly not to assist them.*" Truly George Selwyn was the perfect placeman.

Well, Fox and his friends came into power for a few months; Burke's Bill became an Act; and the Paymaster of the Works lost his place. We do not know what his feelings were at this cruel crisis; we can only guess at them. But the "balm" was not long delayed. Providence, indeed, seemed to be stage-managing the affairs of the country with special reference to our distressed placeman. Rockingham died; Shelbourne fell; Mr Fox (late Charles) and Lord North formed their fatal coalition; that too disappeared. And then young Mr Pitt came into power. Now George Selwyn had watched with interest and with sympathy the rise of this strange young man. "A premier at the starting-post," he had called him once with a fine sense of prophecy, after hearing him speak. He did not hear Pitt's maiden speech, but was told that it "gained an universal applause." "A sensible and promising young man," remarked Selwyn on another occasion. It is interesting also to note that the Selwyn family were on terms of personal friendship with the Chatham family.

"FROGNAL
"October 21st, 1774

"Mrs Selwyn and Mr Townshend present their best compliments to Lord Chatham, and beg leave to express their sincere joy and thanks for the favourable account which he had been pleased to send them of the present state of his health, which they hope is like to be soon re-established. Lord Midleton's fondness for Peper Harow carry'd him from us a few days ago, but we expect him back again soon, and he will then certainly take the first opportunity of paying his respects to Lord Chatham, which he was very desirous of doing when he was here, if his Lordship had then been in a condition to admitt of visits. Mr Thomas Townshend, junior (who return'd the day before yesterday from Hampshire), is gone this morning with his sister to London in order to see his brother, who has had a slight return of some symptoms of his late disorder. Both father and son will very soon avail themselves of the privilege which the improvement in Lord Chatham's health gives them of paying their respects in person.

"Mrs Selwyn and Mr Townshend beg leave to present their most respectful compliments to Lady Chatham and the rest of the family of Hayes."[1]

And in another letter Mrs Selwyn "cannot help disobeying

[1] Chatham MSS. Record Office.

her ladyship's commands not to write as she cannot resist the pleasure of congratulating her ladyship on the safe arrival of Lord Pitt at Quebec. . . . Mr Townshend and the family at Frognal desire to join with Mrs Selwyn in congratulations to Lord and Lady Chatham, the Lady Pitt, and the Mr Pitts, on this occasion." This agreeable friendship bore fruit after many days, though it would be improper to suggest that there was in it necessarily anything of intelligent anticipation of favours to come. But Mr Pitt became Premier on the 18th of December 1783. Nine days afterwards *The Morning Chronicle* announced that George Selwyn had been appointed Surveyor-General of Crown Lands. On the 31st of December the same journal said: "The moving of the writ of the *patriotic* George Selwyn, who has accepted the office of Surveyor of Crown Lands, occasioned an universal burst of laughter in the House; yet perhaps," continues the radical organ, "this is no laughing matter; for as he is the proprietor of the borough of Ludgershall, the office may perhaps have been given him for his interest in a new Parliament, and consequently this appointment shows that all thoughts of a dissolution are not quite extinct." The *Chronicle* was not far wrong. Parliament was dissolved on the 25th of March, and Pitt returned to power with a great majority, which included the patriotic Mr Selwyn. Let us leave the member for Ludgershall in his last and most lucrative place, calmly enjoying his eight hundred a year, doubly sweet after the long bitterness of waiting.

George Selwyn does not appear to have accomplished much in the House of Commons during his forty-three years of parliamentary life. There is no record of his ever having made a speech of any length or importance during that time. That is not remarkable, however, in the eighteenth-century House of Commons, whose ordinary members were content to leave the speech-making to the gladiators on the Front Benches. But Selwyn attended the House steadily, did his duty in the Lobby, and slept profoundly through the long debates: so at least says Wraxall. I should like to have heard Burke thundering against the American War, and to have seen North and Selwyn deliberately snoring through the performance. There was something fine about this assured patrician slumber. But even in those days there were duties to which the private member, however somnolent, had to attend. There was a lamprey-pie

to be presented every year to the Prince of Wales from the Corporation of Gloucester; there were deans wanting preferment, and humbler citizens desirous, like their betters, of snug berths under Government. Selwyn had often to recommend aspiring constituents to those in authority. Sometimes he did it with a good grace, as when he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle's private secretary asking that the controllership of customs in the port of Gloucester should be given to Mr Thomas Lander.[1] Sometimes one imagines that the recommendation must have damned any faint chances the poor candidate might have otherwise had. Here is a letter from Selwyn to the Duke of Newcastle,[2] "recommending" the Rev. Dr Gally, who had written "to acquaint me of the death of the Dean [of Gloucester] together with such importunities that I would testify to your Grace his zeal and activity for his Majesty's interest and his friends. I cannot refuse to do so, although I have already apprised him of your Grace's prior engagement, as well as my own predilection in favour of Mr Harris, if that could have been of any consequence whatever. Of what use this testimonial will be to do (*sic*) Dr Gally, I do not know, but beg that it may be considered that it was what I did not think possible for me to refuse, and therefore that it may be excused in him who is with the greatest respect, etc." The moralist who is in want of a subject would do well to examine the Newcastle manuscripts or the Hardwicke manuscripts at the British Museum, or the Chatham manuscripts at the Record Office, where he will see how the great men of the eighteenth century were approached by those desiring favours from them. What elaborate prostrations, what grovellings, what whinings and toadyings are here! Dignitaries of the Church scrambling for deaneries and bishoprics; members of Parliament wanting sinecures; lawyers wanting judgeships; country gentlemen yearning for peerages; you will find them all in the letter-books of the great men. Can you wonder at the arrogance of the Pelhams and the Newcastles and the Chathams and the Norths, when you remember the clouds of incense which rose around them daily? And how pleasing it is to think that if one could see the letter-books of our modern Prime Ministers, no such moral reflections would occur to us,

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32907, f. 50.
[2] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32878, f. 112.

since promotion, they say, now goes by merit, and virtue is always suitably rewarded! Well, Dr Gally wrote on the same day as Selwyn to the Duke, saying that "it would be a great grief and disgrace to me to have a stranger to our body put over my head." Apparently Dr Gally was disappointed; for in the following year there is another vacancy, and another "recommendation" from Selwyn,[1] "forced by the repeated sollicitations of Dr Gally to wait upon your Grace once more concerning the Deanery of Gloucester for which he has desired my intercession on his behalf. I intended to have saved both myself and you from this trouble by explaining to him the inutility of my demand, by assuring him that I either had no interest on this occasion, or if I had it must be employed in favour of my friend Mr Harris, whose pretensions at Gloucester equal the Doctor's and with me much better. However, since he has thought fit that I should so far second his intention as to declare that his merit in regard to the government and its interest is very good, and that he himself would certainly be a very acceptable person, I could not refuse it, and therefore hope that I shall have your Grace's pardon." Poor Dr Gally! Did he ever obtain the Deanery of Gloucester? I do not know, though it would be easy enough to find out, if it were of any importance. But it is all very trivial now, and is only quoted as an illustration of the irksome duties of the private member in the eighteenth century, or any other century.

The annals of George Selwyn's quiet life in Parliament include his work on Private Bill Committees, which even in those days formed no small part of an M.P.'s duty. As chairman of one of these committees George seems to have admired his own performances prodigiously. "No sooner [had I] begun to read the preamble to the Bill [Sedgemoor Enclosure] but I found myself in a nest of hornets. The room was full, and an opposition made to it, and disputes upon every word, which kept me in the chair, as I have told you. I have gained it seems a great reputation, and am at this moment regarded one of the best chairmen on this stand." But in spite of George's talents the Bill was lost. He moved in the House "to have Thursday fixed for it. We had a debate and division upon my motion and this Bill will at last not go down so glibly

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 32900, f. 241.

as Bully [Lord Bolingbroke] hoped that it would." Later on, "Bully has lost his Bill. . . . There were fifty-nine against us, and we were thirty-five. We were a Committee absolutely of Almack's. . . ." George had evidently made heroic efforts to save the Bill. "It is surprising," says he, "what a fatality attends some people's proceedings. I begged last night as for alms, that they would meet me to settle the votes. I have since I have been a member been at twenty of these meetings, and always brought numbers down by this means. But my advice was slighted, and twenty people were walking about the streets who could have carried this point." He then explains how the Bill was lost: by over-cleverness on the part of the promoters. "They sent one Bill in to the country for the assent of the people interested and brought me another, differing in twenty particulars, to carry through the Committee, without once mentioning to me that the two Bills differed. This they thought was cunning, and I believe a happy composition of Bully's cunning and John [St John's] idea of his own parts." The opponents of the Bill kept quiet until the Report stage, when this objection was taken with fatal results. It was not, however, only in an official capacity that George Selwyn haunted the committee-rooms. Wraxall gives us a brief but engaging account of how the two members for Ludgershall spent some of their leisure time at the House. "As he [Selwyn] had an aversion to all long debates in Parliament, during which he frequently fell asleep, we used to withdraw ourselves to one of the committee-rooms upstairs, where his conversation was often, very instructive." What did they talk about? "It was not so much as a man of wit," remarks Wraxall, "that I cultivated his society. He was likewise thoroughly versed in our history, and master of many curious as well as secret anecdotes, relative to the Houses of Stuart and Brunswick." With this little picture we may end our chapter on Selwyn the politician. Burke is making one of his confounded harangues in the House on economy, and Selwyn is tired. "I've had enough of it," says he to Wraxall, "shall we go upstairs?" So, bowing to the Speaker, the two men leave the chamber, and mount the stairs to the committee-room, where there is an arm-chair, and a fire perhaps. There Selwyn gossips about the old days at Court: about Molly Lepell, and Mrs Howard,

M

and Mary Bellenden; about the Duchess of Portsmouth even, Charles II.'s favourite. She knew a lot about the Stuarts, that queer old lady. What's this she said once about Charles I.'s executioner? The talk drifts on until it gets dark, and the narrator begins to nod, when Wraxall steals away, leaving Selwyn quietly sleeping.

CHAPTER X

SELWYN IN PARIS

GEORGE SELWYN was, for many years of his life, a constant visitor to, and a devoted admirer of, the city of Paris. In this he resembled the majority of young men of fashion of his time, who, with but little persuasion, would forsake the clubs of St James's Street, or the waters of Bath, for the many dear delights of the French capital. And not only men of fashion, but historians, men of letters, philosophers: they all exhibited the same preference. Was not Mr Hume a familiar figure in the most exclusive Parisian circles? Did not Mr Horace Walpole endure the pangs of sea-sickness (very distressing to a gentleman of his refinement) on many occasions, merely to gratify his intellectual passion for a distinguished lady of France? Yet it must be confessed that for every journey to that country made by Mr Walpole, Mr Selwyn probably made half-a-dozen. You see, he was that now extinct type: the young man of fashion with an interest—not very profound, but real enough so far as it went—in current political and literary thought. And that brings us naturally to the question as to why the young man of fashion in the eighteenth century should so persistently affect Paris. The answer is, of course, that Paris stood for three things which had a perennial attraction for the young man: fashion, the Court, and the *salon.*

Paris, in the first place, was the centre of fashion. It set the tone for dress, for manners, for the art of living generally. The gentlemen of England did not consider themselves well-dressed unless they wore the latest Parisian designs in velvets, and ruffles, and wigs. Dr Tobias Smollett, who visited Paris in the course of his travels, has a characteristic sneer at this amiable vanity. "The good Englishman," says he, "instead of a plain English cloth suit and a bob-wig, must here provide himself with a camblet suit trimmed with silver for spring and autumn, with silk cloaths for summer, and cloth bound with

gold or velvet for winter; and he must wear his bag-wig à la pigeon." To be sure the honest doctor never troubled much about fashions, least of all about French fashions. That stout old Saxon travelled through France and Italy in true British style, damning and denouncing most heartily the inferior ways of the foreigner; so that Mr Sterne, who followed him, considered himself bound to weep copiously at every opportunity, in order to prove to the foreigner that all Britons were not so unsympathetic. But George Selwyn and his friends had none of the prejudices of Doctor Smollett. When George visited Paris he was laden with commissions to buy the things for which the city was famous. Velvets, silks, satins, laces; china, glass, furniture, wines: George, with the utmost good-nature, bought them all, and sent them (or carried them) to his friends in England. Lord March asks for "a dozen pair of silk stockings for the Zamperini, of a very small size, and with embroidered clocks. She is but fifteen." "Vous êtes charmant pour les commissions," he observes elsewhere; which Selwyn certainly was. As for Gilly Williams, that sprightly person is always in need of velvets and point ruffles; while Mr Henry St John wants a library. These articles ordered from Paris were, of course, not brought to England openly: they were smuggled. George Selwyn was personally, as he informed his niece, "not a great, but a very successful smuggler." And if he were making a long stay in France there were certain "smuggling captains," known to Gilly Williams and himself, who could always arrange for the safe despatch of silks and laces from Calais to London without the formality of passing the Dover customs. Yes: the gentlemen of England were smugglers all. It was no sin with them to cheat the State. To be found out, however, was considered an annoying circumstance. "All my stockings have been seized," wrote March to Selwyn once, "by not being taken out of the paper and rolled up, which would have made them pass for old stockings." An obviously stupid man, this smuggler.

But in the second place, Paris in George Selwyn's time possessed the most brilliant court in Europe. Compare the court of St James's for a moment with that of Versailles. Under George II. the English court was incredibly dull and stupid. Its ornaments were vulgar German women, half-

educated peers, and their still less educated wives, ecclesiastical hangers-on of an awful pomposity and commonplaceness. But Versailles: who has not heard of the almost legendary splendours of that court under Louis XV.? "All day long," we are told, "an unbroken stream of carriages rolled between Paris and Versailles." And, at the palace, what crowds of fine ladies and gentlemen! What silks and satins, laces and ruffles, lights and jewels and laughter! Here were the most beautiful and the most vicious women in Europe: the candles shone upon their bold shameless eyes (can't you fancy the free look of a Pompadour?), their white shoulders, their glittering diamonds. Picture them in the great gallery at Versailles under the three thousand wax candles. In the centre sits the King, playing at lansquenet, with Madame de Pompadour close by, you may be sure. The Duke of Luxemburg stands behind the King's chair: he claims that tiresome honour. At the other end of the gallery the Queen has her gambling-table, this poor lonely Queen, scorned by her husband's courtesans. There is no great competition for seats at this table. Other tables are scattered around, presided over by ladies of noble birth. Madame La Duchesse de Choiseul is there, I hope: a charming, pure, and gracious woman: the most lovable woman, perhaps, in all that great gallery of Versailles. See; there are crowds about the gambling-tables, watching the play: Paris society, and London society too (George Selwyn is among them, and Lord March). George will write a long account of the scene to his niece Mary Townshend. The Duc de Luynes will also write an account of it, and all the world will read it in his memoirs. The Duc says there were pickpockets present; he also grumbles at the draughts, which blew out a number of candles, and gave a number of distinguished persons colds. But these are trifles, upon which a just regard for the dignity of history should forbid us to dwell. Rather let us remember the wax lights, the music, the glitter of jewels, the bright eyes of the women, in this astonishing Vanity Fair of Louis XV. Observe that monarch himself, shuffling the cards for La Pompadour. He is the handsomest man in France, and the weakest, the idlest, the most debauched. Do not ask his achievements as a king. La Pompadour was his mistress: there is his title to fame! Yet he arrogates to himself the most absolute authority in the

State. "Legislative power belongs to me alone; public order emanates from me; I am its supreme guardian." So wrote this ladies' pet, this curled and scented Cæsar. They tell us that great nobles strove for the honour of handing Louis his cane, of presenting him with his snuff-box, of offering him his gloves. Ministers of religion disputed as to who should say grace at his Majesty's meals; and to prevent mistakes, they all said it together. When his Majesty spoke, it was the voice of a god. "One cannot," wrote the Duc de Luynes, "one cannot be too much impressed by all the marks of piety and goodness in the king." On this occasion the piety and goodness of the King consisted in the admission that even he was mortal, and must die.

Nothing can make Louis XV. a noble or even an interesting figure: he is too like our George IV. for that, though George was a young man of unimpeachable morals compared with him. But Louis' Queen, Marie Leczczynski, daughter of Stanislaus, King of Poland, is interesting—pathetically, almost tragically, interesting. She deserves mention here, also, because she was George Selwyn's friend, and Selwyn admired her with a great admiration. The Earl of March, at Fontainebleau, writes to Selwyn: "I dine to-day at what is called no dinner at Madame de Ceingnies. The Queen asked Madame de Mirepoix, si elle n'avait pas beaucoup entendu médire de M. Selvyn et elle? Elle a répondu, oui, beaucoup, Madame. J'en suis bien aise, dit la Reine." And George Selwyn, passing through Paris in 1778, sees Marie Antoinette at Versailles, who wakes memories in him of the other Marie:

"I dined this day sevennight," he writes to his niece, "at Versailles, and was there comme une Beguille, staring at a Royal family, and I had the honour, I believe, to be stared at too by the Queen, for Mme. de Darport who was in attendance upon her, and was so good as to reconnaitre me, told her, as I imagine, who I was. But she must not expect me to be in love with her as I was with the late Queen, although she is really one of the handsomest women of her Court and seems the happiest, which I am sorry for it, could not be said of ma pauvre Reine defuncte."[1]

History has no stranger tale than that of how Marie Leczczynski came to be Queen of France. Her father was a

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

Polish nobleman who, by grace of Charles XII., reigned in that country for five years. After Pultowa, he lost his throne and fled to France, where they gave him a small pension. Stanislaus lived the life of a country gentleman at Weissenberg, with a ragged crew of Polish retainers. He hoped that his daughter Maria would make a good match, say with a German margrave, or a French duke. He never in his wildest moments imagined her Queen of France. But Louis XV. wanted a wife, or rather, it was necessary that he should marry. He was not particular as to his choice, and only bargained that the lady should be passably good-looking. All other troublesome details he left to the Duke of Bourbon, who in turn left them to his mistress, Madame de Prie. This woman decided that Maria Leczczynski should be Queen. Conceive the raptures of Maria's father, and Maria's mother, and of Maria herself. On hearing the news the good parents and their child knelt down and thanked Heaven for this crowning mercy. You are to picture the Duc d'Antin coming to Weissenberg to make a formal demand for the hand of the princess, with a guard of a hundred and fifty strong, and with ten carriages, each drawn by ten horses. Stanislaus gathers his ragged regiment of Polish servants, and goes out to meet him in a carriage hired from, perhaps, the nearest livery stable. The dignity, however, was not all on the side of France. The historian would fain dwell for a moment upon this brave old Stanislaus who (years after this), as Duke of Lorraine, kept at Luneville the simplest and most idyllic court in Christendom. He hated pomp and cermony; went to bed o' nights at nine o'clock; kept a dwarf, whom they baked in a pie once; read history and philosophy; patronised men of letters, and talked familiarly with Montesquieu, and Helvetius, and Voltaire. Finally the old King set fire to his dressing-gown, and so died. But all this is a long distance away from the Queen of France, and still further from George Selwyn. Let us hasten to say then, that Maria was married at Strasburg, and journeyed through rain and storm and mud to Paris, to begin her sad life there. Marie (she was now French) was not beautiful: her nose was too long; but she had a lovely complexion, so lovely that "fresh water was the only paint it required." And she was amiable, and pious; she was fond of needlework, and made altar cloths for churches. She could also sing a little, and paint a

little; the only thing she could not do even a little was to please her husband. It was her fate to sit passively by and watch other women please him, and rule both him and the country. Such was Marie with the unpronounceable name, Queen of France in the days of which we write.

But, in addition to the attractions of the French court, there were for Englishmen in the eighteenth century the attractions of the French salon. The eighteenth century was the golden period of the salon in Paris. It declined in the nineteenth, and has disappeared as an institution altogether in the twentieth. As for London, there has, perhaps, only been one true salon in that city: Holland House under the third Lord Holland. In George II.'s time there was of course nothing approaching a salon in London—that is to say, there was no house where men and women of intellect met regularly, in an unconventional way, under the ægis of a distinguished host or hostess, and discussed the affairs of the universe without colour of prejudice or passion. There were only dinners, and card-parties, and balls, given by patrician ladies of an inconceivable dulness. But when George Selwyn and his friends crossed the Channel to Paris they found many salons open to them, presided over, for the most part, by women who could hold their own with the best and most brilliant minds in France. Volumes have been written about these famous meeting-places, and there are volumes still to come. Here we can only indicate a few of the houses which George Selwyn patronised on his many visits to Paris. There was, for example, the house of Helvetius, the encyclopædist, one of the many apostles of utility. Again, there was Baron H'Olbach (or D'Olbach) who "kept the café of Europe." Selwyn seems to have been fairly intimate with D'Olbach, and visited him many times at his house in the Rue Royale, known as "the Synagogue." D'Olbach was an author also: wrote "Christianity Unveiled," "The Priests Unmasked," and other works of a rationalist character. But he was best known as a gossip and a giver of good dinners. It was the fashion to dine or sup with Helvetius on Tuesday, with Madame Geoffrin on Wednesday, with D'Olbach on Thursday, and with Madame du Deffand on Sunday. But now we have mentioned the names of two of the most distinguished *salonières* in Paris in the eighteenth century, both intimate friends of George Selwyn: Madame Geoffrin

and Madame du Deffand. Madame Geoffrin we can discuss with some abruptness; but Madame du Deffand was Selwyn's oldest and closest friend in Paris; her name and his are linked in many curious and interesting ways; and she must therefore have considerably more attention paid her than her rival.

For rivals the two ladies were; not—so far as we know—in love, but in reputation. They each kept a salon, which had its own circle of visitors—though many, like Walpole and Selwyn, patronised both houses—its own special characteristics and atmosphere. Madame du Deffand's was aristocratic; Madame Geoffrin affected the aristocracy of intellect only. At du Deffand's might be found the best blood of France and England; at Geoffrin's—well, at Geoffrin's, "les philosophes étaient chez eux." Madame du Deffand referred to her rival's salon as "une omelette au lard." History, unfortunately, has not preserved Madame Geoffrin's retort: possibly it was also something in the cookery line. At which salon would you have preferred to visit? At Madame du Deffand's you would have met fine ladies and gentlemen, wits, leaders of fashion; at Madame Geoffrin's sculptors, musicians, painters, philosophers. Perhaps the wise man would distribute his favours impartially, remembering that fine ladies and gentlemen are not always dull, and intellectuals not always illuminating. This was George Selwyn's plan. But Selwyn was really of the du Deffand faction, and only paid flying visits to the camp of the enemy. I suppose Madame du Deffand was much the more fascinating woman of the two, but nobody could love Madame du Deffand, however much one might admire her, whereas Madame Geoffrin was a kind little *bourgeoise*, who was regarded with affection by those whom she befriended.

Madame du Deffand, however, was in some respects the most remarkable woman of her time, and she was the contemporary of many women who are rightly entitled to that adjective. Born Marie de Vichy Chamrond, she married in 1718, at the age of twenty-five, the Marquis du Deffand, who is now only remembered as the husband of his wife. Yet he did not occupy that position (except in name) for long. Soon after her marriage we find Madame du Deffand spoken of as the mistress of the Regent, the Duke of Orleans; and although this is doubtful, she traded on the reputation for the rest of her

life. Her second alleged *liaison* was with no less a man than Voltaire, whose acquaintance with her began in 1722, and lasted until his death—nearly sixty years afterwards. Yet Madame du Deffand was careful in her amours; she was never ostracised by her own class: "*elle n'etait jamais complétement déconsidérée*," as they said. So early as 1730 she began her last and most faithful "attachment," that with Charles François Hénault, President of the French Academy, the "old President" of Gilly Williams and the other members of Selwyn's circle. This was an extraordinary *liaison.* It was never very passionate or sentimental: "on ne saurait lui [Hénault] faire cette injustice," observes Grimm ironically: but it was evidently based on a certain affinity of the mind. They attracted each other, these two, and not entirely on the physical plane. At all events the connection lasted, in its tepid, platonic, way, for nearly forty years, until Hénault's death, indeed, in 1770. Hénault was, on one side, a man of the world, a seeker after pleasure, a favourite with women; on the other he was a grave savant, who discoursed with encyclopædists and philosophers, and wrote serious works like "*L'histoire Abrégé Chronologique.*" There was something of the quack about this man. He belonged to the eternal type of those who know a little of everything and a little of everybody; whose names are always in the papers; who dabble in literature and art, and give lectures on subjects which they imperfectly understand. But he suited Madame du Deffand well enough, because he had no nonsensical views about love and the domestic virtues. As for Madame du Deffand herself, who shall paint her character? I always think of her as the Jane Welsh Carlyle of the Paris salons. Hers was a personality that glittered and sparkled like a diamond. She was brilliant, polished; none could resist her brightness and her charm. She talked on an equality with Voltaire, and Montesquieu, and Rousseau, and D'Alembert. She wrote letters which, a hundred years later, gained the highest praise from the eclectic Sainte Beuve. And she had courage too: she lost her eyesight completely in middle life, yet it made no difference to her mode of living. She continued her salon; she kept her old friends, and made many new, even of the fastidiousness of Mr Horace Walpole; her "Sunday suppers" remained as popular as before. The world has

THE DUCHESS DE CHOISEUL AND MADAME DU DEFFAND

AFTER THE PICTURE BY CARMONTEL

never seen anything quite like the sway exercised by this old blind woman over wits, philosophers, poets, men of fashion: everybody with whom she came in contact. Yet she had little joy in life; it was to her an immense boredom. And why? Surely for the same reason that causes other people to find it a boredom: because they are selfish, self-centred, incapable of real affection. Madame du Deffand had many virtues; but she was deficient in heart. When she lay on her death-bed, her faithful secretary, Wiart, who had served her for long years, stood beside her, blubbering. "And so you really love me!" she exclaimed, in a kind of amazement. It was to her a novel idea.

The history of Madame du Deffand's salon began in 1753, when the lady established herself in the Convent St Joseph, Rue St Dominique. Here she quickly gathered about her a circle of the brightest spirits in France. It is impossible to do more than name some of the principal *habitués* of this distinguished nunnery. Among the women were the Maréchale de Luxemburg, the Maréchale de Mirepoix, Madame la Duchesse de Choiseul, and the Marquise de Boufflers. If, in all this company, you, like Thackeray at the court of George II., want "somebody to love," choose Madame de Choiseul. She was a charming and beautiful woman, of a deep, affectionate nature. "I am happy," she wrote once to Madame du Deffand, "*et je ne m'ennuie pas*," which was more than her correspondent could say. "You are happy," replied Madame du Deffand, "because you can feel, and you are content because your conscience has never given you the slightest reproach." Madame de Choiseul was one of the few aristocrats who lived through the Terror without quitting Paris. They could not touch that pure and gracious spirit. But by far the most romantic personality in the du Deffand circle was undoubtedly Mademoiselle Julie de L'Espinasse, and the story of her connection with Madame du Deffand is the most romantic in the history of the salon. She came to the Convent of St Joseph in 1754, a young lady of fascinating manners, with something of the wildness of illegitimacy in her blood. She helped Madame du Deffand to do the honours; received the guests if Madame was indisposed; entertained them with her lively wit and humour. Now when a young and fascinating woman comes into competition with a woman who

is also fascinating, but old, trouble of a varied kind may be expected naturally to ensue. And trouble quickly developed in the du Deffand-L'Espinasse *ménage*. The elder lady grew jealous ; thought that Julie was intriguing against her ; fancied that the wits and the philosophers were coming to see Julie when they ought to be paying their court to Julie's mistress. They slipped into the *petit appartement* and talked with twenty-six, before they adjourned to the *salon* and offered a perfunctory homage to sixty. After ten years the rupture came. Madame charged Mademoiselle Julie with treason ; words like *détesté*, *abhorré*, *humilié*, *écrasé* were bandied about freely between the two women ; Madame wept loudly more than once, and Julie took a dramatic dose of opium—enough for a scene, but not enough to kill her. Finally the ladies separated, Julie establishing a salon of her own, and drawing several of the *habitués* of Madame du Deffand's salon with her, including D'Alembert and Marmontel. In 1776 Julie died, and Madame said coldly, on hearing of her death, " If she had died sixteen years ago, I shouldn't have lost D'Alembert." But you may read the story of Julie and Madame, written in exquisite English, in that fine novel of Mrs Humphrey Ward's, " Lady Rose's Daughter." So much for the women who haunted the Convent St Joseph in the Rue St Dominique. As for the men, one can only mention the names of Voltaire and Montesquieu, Hénault, D'Alembert, Marmontel, Pont de Veyle, the Abbé Barthélemy, Horace Walpole, " Fish " Crawford, and George Selwyn ; and pass on. Yet the name of the Abbé Barthélemy tempts one. He was a friend of Selwyn's, as shall presently appear ; but he was also surely first cousin to the Vicar of Wakefield. When he was stationed at Marseilles he studied Arabic, and preached sermons in that language to Arab sailors from the East. But when the sailors came to confession the kindly cleric would shake his head, and inform them that he didn't understand the Arabic sin-vocabulary. And may we not mention Pont de Veyle, the tamest, the most spaniel-like, of Madame's followers ? Grimm gives us an imaginary conversation between the two which sheds a light upon the characters of both. " Pont de Veyle ! " " Madame ! " " Where are you ? " " By the fire." " Have you your feet on the fender in a homely sort of way ? " " Yes, Madame." " There are not many intimacies as old as ours ! "

"That's true." "Fifty years old . . . and in all that time not a cloud, not even a cloudlet." "That has often struck me." "But Pont de Veyle, that wouldn't have happened only that at bottom we have always been quite indifferent to each other!" "I daresay, Madame!" . . . Indifference was the note of the friendships of Madame du Deffand.

George Selwyn's visits to Paris began, as we have seen, in the early days when, as an undergraduate of Oxford, he spent some months there in an impecunious condition. That was in 1742-1743. Between that date and 1779 we have the records of at least eight visits to Paris, and he probably paid many more of which we have no record at all. "I expected the date of my next letter from Paris," writes Gilly Williams to him so early as 1748, "for more than once you have travelled like the prophets in the Scripture, without scrip or purse, or changes of raiment." We know nothing, however, of the wandering of the prophet between 1748 and 1762; but in the latter year, on the 6th of September, George travelled to Paris in the train of the Duke of Bedford, who was sent to that city to conclude a treaty of peace with France. When the treaty was signed, by the way, Selwyn was "much obliged to the Duchess for the pen that signed it"—so Henry Fox wrote to the Duke—"which will be looked upon with veneration ages hence, for George is already taking care of its preservation." It was at this time that George was "thought to have a better pronounciation than any one that ever came from this country": but this was probably in his own estimation only. At this period of his life Selwyn seems to have visited practically Paris every year. Next year (1763) we find him there again (I wonder did he pass Doctor Smollett on the road?) obtaining all the London news from March and Gilly Williams. Gilly tells Selwyn that March has been entertaining "the Bouffler" to a breakfast and concert. We have no details of March's breakfast; but it was during this visit of Madame de Boufflers to England that Topham Beauclerk brought her to see Dr Johnson in Inner Temple Lane, when he "heard a voice like thunder," and, looking back, saw Johnson in "a rusty-brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches

hanging loose"—bent on attending the lady to her carriage. Selwyn remained in Paris all through the summer of 1763, "conversing" according to Gilly Williams, "with men of beard and wisdom, while Lord March and I are up half the night with people of a profligate character, singing the 'Blue Bells of Ireland' and other songs equally impure and vulgar." Next year, however, Selwyn paid what was perhaps his longest visit to Paris. He seems to have crossed the Channel in April, after having first asked Captain Robert Digby, then in Paris, to obtain a house for him. Digby recommended his own lodgings, "a green appartement, au premier," at the Hôtel de Tours; but we do not know whether Selwyn took the hint and the rooms, or insisted upon a house. At all events we find him in the early summer of 1764 settled for a long stay in Paris. Lord March joined him in August, and the two young men proceeded to enjoy life, each in his fashion. Gilly Williams supplied them with the news from London: who was dead or dying, who had taken and also given up office, what was the latest fashionable marriage. There were the usual commissions. "Dick Cox is here and says, if you will buy him a set of dishes and plates of the blue and white china which you brought over last year for your mother, he will give you as many dinners off them as you will condescend to accept of." By September Selwyn's friends begin to expect him back. "This awaits your landing," writes Lord Holland in that month, sending him an invitation to Kingsgate, near Margate. But George had no intention of returning to England just then. By October Gilly Williams is beseeching him to "come and live among your friends, who love and honour you"; in November, "I never write to you but that I hope it will be the last, and that we are to see you again in your native country, which," added Gilly slily, "has its charms"; in December, "God bless you my dear George! When you have nothing else to do, let me hear from you—see you, I suppose I never shall"; and in January, "It is not I alone, but all your friends, nay, the King himself, who have expressed themselves with some concern that you still continue to run after gewgaws and hunt butterflies, when your presence is absolutely wanted at Westminster. I have authority for mentioning the surprise of the Royal Personage." Still George remained in Paris,

kept there, it was said, not by Madame du Deffand but by Lord March, who was cultivating the half-world with his usual ardour. It was at this time that Gilly Williams put March up at the Old Club at White's, but "they swore he was now a foreigner and rejected him." Selwyn and March finally got back to London about the beginning of April, the former having been absent nearly a year.

We have now reached 1765, an important date in the story of Selwyn's connection with Paris: for in that year Horace Walpole, after "procrastinating on this side of the water as much as March on the other," took his long-planned journey to the French capital, and was introduced to Madame du Deffand by George Selwyn. In December Walpole wrote from Paris to Selwyn, thanking him "for making over Madame du Deffand to me, who is delicious; that is, as often as I can get her fifty years back, but she is as eager about what happens every day as I about the last century. I sup there twice a week, and bear all her dull company for the sake of the Regent." He has the usual acute remarks upon the various people whom he has met. "Your old flame, the Queen, was exceedingly kind to me at my presentation . . . Madame Geoffrin is extremely what I had figured her, only with less wit and more sense than I expected." "She has little taste and less knowledge," he tells the poet Gray—"but protects artisans and authors." One of the authors whom Madame Geoffrin "protected" at this time was Edward Gibbon; another was David Hume. Both these gentlemen probably thought themselves as independent as Mr Walpole. However, Walpole's introduction to Madame du Deffand was an important event in his own life. It began an intellectual *liaison*—had Walpole ever any other kind?—which lasted until Madame's death in 1780. There was something humorous, something even a little contemptible, about this platonic intercourse. The parties to it were no longer young: Madame was sixty-eight, Mr Walpole nearly fifty. Both were old enough to know better than to carry on a correspondence which was full of sham love-making, sham confessions, sham emotion; which was postured, superficial, affected. It was real in patches, of course; as when Walpole offered Madame pecuniary help, and Madame nobly refused ("*je ne suis pas dans le cas d'en avoir besoin*"). But the other was the prevailing

tone. These elderly pseudo-lovers *numbered* their letters, and carefully preserved them for the benefit of posterity. Now posterity enjoys the letters of Madame to Walpole; but where are the letters of Walpole to Madame? That was the question asked by the *Athenæum* in 1858, on the publication of Mr Peter Cunningham's edition of Walpole's letters, and it has never been satisfactorily answered. The fact is that Mr Walpole, beginning to be doubtful as to the view posterity might take of this correspondence, asked for, and obtained, all the letters he had written to Madame du Deffand. This was shortly before her death. Did Mr Walpole burn the letters? If so, it was with many a pang. You can fancy him consigning *Op.* 1, *Op.* 2, etc., to the flames with an agonised countenance, hesitating long between dread of ridicule and a pride in literary polish. Madame was not so particular; but then she was a woman; and women do not fear ridicule as men do. She had written a brilliant series of letters to her intellectual paramour, and she left them in his hands, as she left all her papers (he was her literary executor), and as she left her dog, Tonton. So we have the letters to-day. To read them is like wandering in a hothouse, where everything is stuffy, forced, artificial. You long for some common vigorous person to take his walking-stick and poke it through the window, and let in some fresh air. Now George Selwyn was a common vigorous person, with plenty of shrewd sense, and he probably used his walking-stick in the manner mentioned. You will find traces of that weapon in the Carlisle correspondence, in Selwyn's references to Madame du Deffand. Certain it is that his friendship with Madame cooled perceptibly after Walpole's began.

After 1765 we begin to know more of Selwyn's doings in Paris, since his name occurs continually in Madame's letters to Walpole, to "Fish" Crawford, to Madame de Choiseul, and to others. In October 1766 he is again in the beloved city, this time with his young friend Lord Carlisle. "Little Mary [his great niece] complains that you promised to take her to France, and are gone without her." Gilly Williams begs "a truce of your nonsense of the regard and friendships you find where you are. . . . It is all buckram, and I know you so well that I am sure you would have given up your princes, presidents, all your old blind women, and all your mad ones, to have passed

the twelve hours which I shall do here [Matson] before I get into my chaise for Bath to-morrow morning." On the 19th of October Madame du Deffand entertained George and his "petit milord" to supper, and George scared her by giving her a false report of "Fish" Crawford's death in Scotland. "Fish" Crawford was, of course, "the Fish" of the Selwyn letters, and the "Petit Crawford" of the du Deffand letters. He was Mr James Crawford, of Auchinames, a member of the Selwyn circle, and a very constant friend of Madame's. A little later we have a most interesting character sketch of Selwyn in a few lines by Madame herself, which tells us for the first time what that lady thought of him. Walpole had written to her concerning his friend: "of all the English whom you see in Paris, Mr Selwyn has the most wit. But you must draw him out; you must make him speak bad French. He makes so many efforts to speak your tongue like a true academician, that he totally forgets to throw in the ideas. *C'est beau vernis pour faire briller des riens*": to which Madame replied: "What you tell me of Mr Selwyn is perfect; I add to it that he has only intellectual brilliancy (*de l'esprit de tête*), and not a scrap of heart; you will put into language much better than mine what I wish to say." Again she writes: "I am a little sorry to say good-bye to Mr Selwyn; I have not seen him often; he is amiable enough; sarcastic too, but not, I think spiteful." She elaborates this sketch in a letter to her "petit Crawford" penned about the same time: "I am very far from thinking Mr Selwyn stupid, but he is often in the clouds. Nothing strikes him or wakens him save ridicule; though he catches even that on the wing. His words are graceful and delicate, but he cannot carry on a conversation. He is *distrait*, indifferent. He would often be bored, but for an excellent recipe against boredom which he possesses: that of going to sleep whenever he wishes. It is a talent which I envy him; if I had it, I should make good use of it. He is sarcastic without being spiteful; formal, but polite; he loves nothing and nobody but his Lord March; one would never think of forming a close relationship with him, but one is very glad to meet him, and to be in the same room with him, although one has nothing to say to him." In default of Madame's full-length "portrait" of Selwyn, which does not survive, this sketch will serve very well to show us what the

lady thought of him. It is not wholly unlike George Selwyn; and it is very characteristic of Madame du Deffand. George saw this estimate of himself, and perhaps he did not like it. "You have shown Mr Selwyn all I said about him," wrote Madame to Crawford in March 1767. "I don't quite remember what it was; nothing bad, I am sure, because I was far from thinking evil of him. But I would have said much more good of him that I really think, if I had known he was to read it, had it only been to do credit to my discernment. I love Mr Selwyn, and I have all kinds of reasons for that; he does not often laugh at me; I am indebted to him for many kindnesses, I should be charmed to see him again."

George lingered in Paris through the winter of 1766, despite many entreaties from Gilly Williams to return to his own country. "We hear of your falling asleep," says he, "standing at the Old President's, and knocking him, and three more old women into the fire." Perhaps Selwyn was interested in the Hume-Rousseau controversy then proceeding; certainly Horace Walpole was, who started it by his unfortunate "letter to the King of Prussia," which Rousseau thought to have been written by Hume. "He talks of nothing else," said Gilly in the same letter. In December Gilly "cannot take leave of you, my dear George, without desiring you to remember that you are an Englishman." Lord Bolingbroke had similar advice to offer. "For God's sake return home," he writes. "Nature never meant you for a Frenchman. Burn your formal bag-wig, and put on your far more agreeable scratch." He asks him to bring with him "two or three pair laced ruffles" and "a suit of plain velvet. By plain is meant without gold and silver; as to the colour, the pattern, and design of it, he relies upon Mr Selwyn's taste." But "there is nothing Mr Selwyn can import from France that will give Lord Bolingbroke half the satisfaction as the immediate importation of himself; for no one, neither the Queen of France nor the President Hénault, can possibly admire Mr Selwyn more, or love him with half the sincerity and warmth as his obedient humble servant, B." George finally "remembered he was an Englishman" on the 18th of January, on which day he left Paris "chargé de deux paquets pour vous," wrote Madame to Walpole. But if he executed all his commissions, his packets were more than two. One of Madame's

gifts to Walpole was a character sketch, or "portrait" of "Grand Mam'an—" *i.e.* Madame de Choiseul, their very good common friend. These "portraits" of Madame du Deffand were equally famous in England and in France.

George stayed in London for the parliamentary session, but was back again "dans ce cher Paris" in August of the same year. He had March to keep him company, and Walpole too, though Walpole left early in October and advised Selwyn to "come away the first fine day." Yet the visit was, for some reason or other, not a success. "I understand you will leave Paris this year with *moins de regret* than ever," wrote Lady Sarah Bunbury to him. "What is the reason of that? Is Madame de Deffand unkind?" The truth is he was growing tired of Madame du Deffand. "Poor Selwyn left yesterday [12th November] at 5," wrote that lady to Walpole, "he did not wish to see me at all. He wrote me a little grumpy note." When he returned to London he was in no hurry to write to Madame in Paris. "I haven't had a word from Mr Selwyn," she tells Walpole in December. "Is it because I have bored him also *de mes tendresses*? I am in truth an absurd old woman." Madame's *tendresses* would probably have bored most healthy Britons; they were more suited to Walpole's type. Indeed, George was weary of the flirtation. "I have a long letter, almost every week from my flame also," he writes to Carlisle in January 1768, "Mme. du Deffands,[1] but these are passions which *non in seria ducunt*. She is very importunate to me to return to Paris, by which (?) if there is any sentiment it must be all of her side. I should not be sorry to make another sojourn there; but if I did, and it was with *you*, I should not throw away with old women and old Presidents, which is the same thing, some of those hours which I regret very much at this instant." A most ungallant and ungracious letter, but it was written to young Lord Carlisle, who had probably been chaffing him upon his elderly admirer. Carlisle was at this time on the Grand Tour, and on his way back he called at Paris, where he supped constantly with the "old blind woman." Once Selwyn had enclosed in his packet to Carlisle a short note ("three lines") to Madame, who was so charmed with it that she sent it on to Madame de Choiseul, who read it

[1] Always so spelt by Selwyn.

out at Fontainebleau "in a great circle." This vexed Selwyn considerably, who was always morbidly anxious that his letters should be burned as soon as read. He complained to Madame, who replied in her spirited way: "I have only shewn one of your letters, five or six lines long, and very charming. You told me, 'I write you when the fancy takes me, and the fancy took me on Friday!' Could that make you ridiculous? It is only in England you need fear ridicule; in all other countries you are safe from it, and particularly in France, and still more particularly in my special circle. Your letters are thrown into the fire as soon as I have replied to them. Besides, your prudence leaves you nothing to be afraid of; the journals give me much more news than your letters. So my dear Lindor"—Madame's pet name for Selwyn—"the fears that you display have rather the air of seeking a quarrel with me, which would be unfair. I am charmed with your correspondence; but I only desire it so long as it is agreeable to yourself." One is bound to admit that Madame could administer this sort of gentle rebuke in the most delightful and delicate fashion.

After 1767, George Selwyn did not see Paris again for eleven years. I suppose he grew more lazy with the coming of middle age, more content with White's and the good houses of England. In December 1768 he has almost made up his mind to another visit. "Tell me if I shall take lodgings for you," writes young Carlisle in his enthusiastic way. "Where shall I take them? If you disappoint me I shall be furious. The blind woman is in raptures." But this was a false alarm: George could not tear himself away from England. He still, however, kept up his connection with Paris by a correspondence—scanty and infrequent—with the old blind woman, and by letters from friends staying there. "Madame Geoffrin m'a chanté la palinode," writes Charles James Fox to him in 1770. "I dine there to-day; she enquires after you very much. I have supped at Madame du Deffand's, who asked me if I was *déja sous la tutèle de M. Selvin*? I boasted that I was." "Madame du Deffand complains that you neglect her," he says in another place, which was quite probable, though it did not trouble Madame excessively: nothing troubled her much then or at any time. She lost the President Hénault in November

1770, and controlled her feelings in the most praiseworthy manner. "I have so many proofs of his want of friendship," she tells Walpole, "that I believe I have only lost an acquaintance. . . . I have renounced the pomps and vanities of this world; you have made a perfect proselyte of me; I have all your scepticism on the subject of friendship." Admirable master, and admirable pupil! We find little mention of Selwyn in her letters, or in anybody's letters—so far as Paris is concerned—for some years after 1770 In 1772 Madame would be "very glad to see Lindor again; his faculty of falling asleep when he is bored makes his society very convenient; I wish all my visitors had the same faculty." But again Lindor was not to be enticed. In 1775 Walpole was in Paris, and reported to Selwyn upon Madame in the rather shamefaced tone he adopted when writing to his friend about that lady. "Madame du Deffand would have been more pleased with your message, which I delivered immediately, if she had greater faith in it: yet when (Fish) Crawford and I come so often, how can she doubt her power of attraction? If possible, she is more worth visiting than ever. So far am I from being ashamed of coming hither at my age, that I look upon myself as being wiser than one of the Magi, when I travel to adore this Star in the East. The star and I went to the Opera last night, and when we came from Mme. La Valliere's at one in the morning, it wanted to drive about the town, because it was too early to *set*. To be sure, you and I have dedicated our decline to very different occupations. You nurse a little girl of four years old, and I rake with a woman of fourscore. *N'importe*: We know many sages that take great pains to pass their time with less satisfaction. . . ." And we hear of "Tonton" for the first time. "Mme. du Deffand has got a favourite dog that will bite all their noses off"; evidently a much more ferocious animal than Râton, Selwyn's pet. It was not until 1778, when Selwyn visited Paris on his way to Italy,[1] that the old friendship with Madame du Deffand was renewed. He arrived on the 26th of April 1778. France was on the eve of war with England; but in those days a fact like that perturbed English travellers in France very little.

[1] See Chapter XII.

"I do not imagine" (Selwyn writes to Mary Townshend[1] on the 10th of May) "that at this moment either Lord North or M. de Maurepas, or the friends of M. de Choiseul or even the omniscient Jackson could tell me if we shall have a war, and much less how long it will last. I take it for granted that that must be decided by what happens on the other side of the Atlantic. . . .

"I have now seen or visited all who remain of my former acquaintance" (he goes on). "I have received every degree of civility I could expect, as well as every appearance of friend ship, which really they act so well, some of them, that it is almost as good as the original. [Was this a hit at Madame du Deffand?] . . . The Tourbillon in which I have lived, of suppers, visits, and protestations of attachment, shops, commissions, and all the *remise*, *ménage*, and *tout amassé* (?) of a great town, makes me wish myself upon the top of Mount Cenis in my wicker chair."

But he had time to visit the old blind woman, shortly after the last visit paid to her by Voltaire.

"That rascal [Benjamin] Franclin has putt notions into their head, which I hope have no foundation. I have not seen him or Voltaire. I would not go in search of either, if they had come in my way, well. Voltaire has been twice at Madame du Deffand's. The first time he was very good company, and so was she. It was bien attaquée, bien defendu, et toute la conversation piquante et interessante au dernier point, but the second time, l'ennui en était affreuse. They got into philosophical reflections upon the misery of human life, which tired everybody."

In reference to this visit Madame wrote to Walpole: "I had a visit yesterday from Voltaire. I put him at his ease by refraining from reproaches. He stayed an hour, and was infinitely amiable." Voltaire died on the 30th of May 1778.

"As to Mme. du Deffands herself" (continues Selwyn), "she is not viellié d'un jour, and they are so good as to say that I am not changed neither in any respect, and that they are glad of it. I know the contrary, for I know that I have onze ans de plus, and I believe, onze dents de moins. But I have enough left to confine my tongue, which I wish my countrymen would consider also, but they tell them everything they know, or don't know. I was afraid that I had lost my language

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

or theirs, more properly speaking. But Mme. du Deffands says, au contraire, il me parait que vous parlez avec plus de facilité et moins d'accent que jamais; that may be true or not, I do not much care. . . . Mme. du Deffands has a carpet fort velouté. I forget what we call that sort of carpet, it is a manufacture with us, introduced a few years ago. She wants to cover the whole room with it, which is about twenty feet square. The colours must be jaune et Crameris chiefly. She wants to know the price of such a carpet. Shall I give you the trouble to ask and to send me word? If you direct to me chez Mme. du Deffand, a lá Communauté de St Joseph, Rue St Dominique, she will open the letter, which I mean only to be the tapissier's answer to that question, either in French or English which you please, for if in English, Wiart, her mâitre d'Hôtel, will translate it for her. But how she will then get it over I know not, for I know that M. le Controleur General is fort difficile à ferrer, and although we sup at his house often, he would do nothing for us about that. But if you can buy for me at Pickering's a pound of the best Hyson tea, and send it by anybody who comes here, to be carried to her, I should be glad. I do not know what to send them here for all their civilities."

Selwyn did not spend all his time in the Rue St Dominique upon this occasion.

"I was the day before yesterday with the Maréchal Bison in his garden, he had thirty-six persons at dinner. . . . The Maréchal's garden, dans son genre, is the finest you ever saw, and the greatest quantity of fruit in it. . . . He keeps the best table, in short, on ne peut parler trop longtemps de Monsieur le Maréchal. But I took the liberty to give him my opinion how his garden could be improved, dont il parut ne m'en savoir trop bon gré. The gravel is the worst in the world, and it is rare to have any gazon where the verdure is good, or well-kept. I have never yet seen a roler. Now the Maréchal has plat fermé, and gravel walks, and his gazon very beautiful; but he chooses that you should walk up to your ankles in bad gravel, and has very little of the other."

George delivering a lecture upon gardening is an engaging picture. He concludes with a patriotic outburst:

"I have told everybody what a vigorous defence we are making in England, in case they come there, but ils pensent à rien moins qu'à cela, I am afraid of nothing but that Gun-

powder Destains,[1] and Rodney tells me I need not be afraid of him.

"I must own that I wish these people to be well drubbed. . . ."

Coming back from Milan, Selwyn was very attentive to Madame du Deffand, who was then, it must be remembered, eighty-one years of age. "He has called every day," she told Walpole.

[SELWYN to MARY TOWNSHEND, 30th October 1778]

"Mme. du Deffands is to receive this morning all the letters she wrote to Voltaire. I think his and hers make up three or four hundred. She is pestered to print them but will not. I suppose the publick will not wait long for them. But I called upon her two nights ago and she had gone to sup out of town."

On his return to London, however, his letters were "very irritating. He promises to tell me many things, and tells me nothing; he only trifles. He pretends that you [Walpole] wished to let me have some of his *bon-mots*, but that you couldn't translate them." In the following year, 1779, Selwyn paid his last visit to Paris, and said farewell to his old blind friend. We were then at war with France, and he asked Madame du Deffand to use her good offices in obtaining his passport. She also tried to procure a house for him, but eventually he lodged in the Hôtel de Bourbon. Selwyn arrived on the 14th April. "He came to the door of the salle á manger" (Madame to Walpole) "and as he was in morning dress did not enter. Next day, Thursday, he came at noon; he brought me your book, some tea, and some small scissors for which I gave him a commission. I expect him this evening to supper. . . . Friday he came to supper, and brought me razors for my nephew, and some fans at twelve sous each; he played at loto, and stopped to talk with Mme. de Beauveau, Mme. de Cambise, and me; he told us all his projects, his fears, his hopes. . . ." It is pleasant to find George on such good terms with the old lady so near to the end of her life. In reading these letters of Madame to Walpole one would imagine that she was in the best of health and spirits. But it was not so.

[1] The French admiral, D'Estaing.

[SELWYN to MARY TOWNSHEND, 20th May 1779]

"I think my friend Mme. du Deffands declines very much. But last night, although she had not been out of her bed for two days, she had company; twenty were playing in her bedchamber, and ten at supper in the next room. The hot victuals were brought to her in her bed, and she played at loto by substitute, and directed by memory."

There is a picture for the moralist: this astonishing old woman of eighty-two, sick, blind, playing cards in bed at midnight, before a room full of people. You cannot grow sentimental about the old age of Madame, consecrated as it was to eating and drinking and being merry, lacking as it was in most of the things that give life grace and dignity. Yet not in all of such things: for there was a kind of desperate courage in it; an adherence to standards of conduct which she had always observed; a resolution to remain to the end as she had been from the beginning. "Friendship, love, truth, goodness?"—we can imagine her arguing—"I do not believe in them. What I do believe in is intelligence, good humour, patience, evenness of temper; and after that in the enjoyment of life to the utmost of one's power." She kept (and practised) her philosophy to the end, which is more than can be said for some philosophers. Nor assuredly can we grow sentimental over the last stages of the long friendship between Madame and George Selwyn. Beneath the surface of this friendship there was always a certain mutual distrust, arising from the fact that Selwyn doubted the sincerity of Madame du Deffand, and that Madame knew that he doubted it. This note remained to the end. On the 15th of June 1779 Selwyn left Paris, and for the last time. "I regret him much," wrote Madame to Walpole, "he leaves us content enough with me." "I don't know," she says again, "what account Lindor will give of me. He has said many pretty things, has made a thousand protestations of friendship; all that was like ice. . . . He has wit, no doubt, but it is neither wide in range, nor profound, nor even agreeable, unless he is suddenly inspired. . . . Ah, *mon ami! que les gens aimables sont rares!* It is useless to look for them; one must learn how to get on without them." On 3rd December she complains to Walpole at the absence of letters from "Lindor." "He is a

curious creature," she remarks; "only you and your young duke [Richmond] observe the ritual of friendship; all the other English disdain even the appearance of it." Almost the last reference to Selwyn in her correspondence is a similar complaint. "Why does Selwyn keep his promises so badly? What better proof can he give me of his friendship and his gratitude than that of keeping me supplied with news?" This was in December 1779. It is only fair to Selwyn to say that he had other business on hand to take his attention. But his correspondence with Madame had never the ardour and spontaneity of Walpole's. This strange old Madame du Deffand died on the 24th of August 1780, plucky and worldly to the end. "Je n'ai rien à regretter," she said on her death-bed. With her death we may well conclude this chapter; for after that event Paris knew George Selwyn no more.

CHAPTER XI

"MIE MIE"

GEORGE SELWYN'S love for children has been referred to already in our discussion upon his lack of love for women. He was never without a child-sweetheart apparently. "Heaven is remarkably indulgent to you," once wrote Gilly Williams, "to secure you a nursery in perpetuo. The moment the old one is fledged, and takes to wing, you have another, with clouts, and a pap-spoon, to which you are equally attentive." "What stuff is this!" was George's half-angry comment; but it was very near to the truth, nevertheless. For a long time Selwyn took an affectionate interest in the Coventry children, as we have seen. Jesse prints a pretty little French letter of Lady Anne Coventry's (aged five) to Selwyn, thanking him for the present "que vous avez le bonté de nous envoyer. Nous esperons," she adds, "que vous tiendrez la promesse que vous nous avez faite de nous venir voir ici." At another time Selwyn directed his affection to the Carlisle children, Caroline and George, who called him "Coffee" (this is highly descriptive), and generally looked upon him as a good-natured and benevolent uncle. But the real love of his life was given to the little girl whom he, and everybody in his circle, called "Mie Mie," but who is known to readers of Burke and Debrett as Maria Fagnani, afterwards Marchioness of Hertford. This was George Selwyn's romance. It came to him late in life: he was fifty-two when Mie Mie was born; but it was none the less genuine because the hero was a man of middle age and the heroine a child in short frocks. It is hard to think of a finer romance than this, where there were devotion and innocence, tragedies of parting, and joys of meeting again. History is full of the other kind of romance: that between man and woman, in which passion and selfishness, the desire of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, are called by noble and generous names, and held up by the historian for the everlasting approval of posterity. But the man of sixty and the girl of ten! There

is a romance touched with the incomparable purity of childhood. Selwyn would have it that there was nothing strange in the story; it angered him when people discussed it as though it were a conundrum or a problem in metaphysics. Perhaps he was right, and it is we who are strange who think it so. One of the finest things Madame du Deffand ever said (no doubt she was profoundly conscious of its fineness) she said in writing to Walpole about Selwyn and Mie Mie. "Y a-t-il bien loin de là à l'amour de Dieu, tel que l'entendent les Quietistes?" That was a just criticism, addressed, however, to a man who was no authority upon the love referred to.

Maria Fagnani was born on the 25th of August 1771.[1] Her mother was the Marchioness Fagnani, wife of an Italian nobleman whose family belonged to Milan. The Marchioness appears to have been a woman not above suspicion. Contemporary opinion, for example, agreed in thinking that, whoever Maria's father was, he was not the Marquis Fagnani. The same opinion was inclined to fix paternity upon either George Selwyn or his friend Lord March, probably because both these gentlemen took a considerable interest in the child. But neither Selwyn nor March ever admitted paternity (at least in writing): so that the question has to be decided on the balance of probabilities. The two men appear to have been acquainted with Madame Fagnani soon after her arrival in this country, in or about 1770. On Selwyn's death in 1791 *The Gentleman's Magazine* said in the course of its obituary notice: "When the Marchioness F——, an Italian lady of great beauty, left London about thirty years ago [this was ten years "out"] she stopped at Dartford, and sent for the Duke of Queensberry and George Selwyn. The gentlemen attended her, and finding her purpose, endeavoured to persuade her to return. She withstood their entreaties, but left with them her infant, whom Mr Selwyn took under his protection, and always treated with the affection of a father. This anecdote is mentioned without any disrespect to the lady, whose conduct towards Mr Selwyn procured her the esteem of all his friends, and whose company is acceptable in the most fashionable circles." The anecdote, however, is, in Dr John Warner's

[1] In most works of reference, and in all the books about Selwyn, the name is wrongly spelt "Fagniani." The spelling in the text is the correct Italian form.

words, "not worth noticing." We do not know when George Selwyn first met Madame Fagnani. But this we can say with certainty, that there is not a scrap of evidence to show that Selwyn either was, or believed himself to be, the father of Madame Fagnani's child. The evidence is all the other way. *À priori*, the thing is unlikely: Selwyn's aversion from women has already been pointed out. But we search his letters in vain for any shadow of a suggestion that he himself was Mie Mie's father. On the contrary, he denies it by implication many times; and once at least he denies it explicitly:

[George Selwyn to Mary Townshend, 13th June 1778][1]

"It is an insuperable difficulty to make people comprehend that one can love another person's child as much as one's own, although it is in common speech often allowed. If that was once admitted, I should expect that no one would think extraordinary what I have done and suffered and exposed myself to for her sake. If poor Mie Mie had been avowedly mine, I should desire to have my conduct judged by Lady Midleton's feeling. But why or how I happened to love her at first, I cannot well describe, but by that chain of circumstances which I have never sought for, but coming in my way, made too much impression on my sensibility. It was really a Scrape for me, but if it was an Escape for her, I am contented. I shall finish my life with satisfaction if, of the two, I happen to have been the only sufferer."

This, of course, is not absolutely conclusive; but it is conclusive enough for ordinary sane men. Lord March, however, cannot be exculpated so easily. It is significant that we first hear of Madame Fagnani in connection with a shopping commission given by this nobleman to a friend in Paris on her behalf.

"I carried Madame Fagnani's letter to Madame Thiery, marchande de gaze," writes Henry St John to Selwyn on 22nd December 1770. "She said she could not make the *gaze* . . . in less than six weeks or two months. . . . You will inform Lord March of this, as he gave me the commission." And in the following August it is March who reports Mie Mie's birth to Selwyn: "Last night Madame Fagnani was brought to bed of a girl. They wished it had been a boy; however, cette petite princesse héritéra les biens de la famille; so that they

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

are all very happy." Again, March seems to have taken charge of the child soon after its birth. "I am enchanted to learn that my daughter is in good health," writes Madame Fagnani to Selwyn in July 1772, "though I fear she will suffer much in cutting her teeth. I venture to beg of you to continue to give me tidings of her, as without your kindness in writing to me from time to time I should have been ignorant, for the last three months, of the fate of *ma petite*. My Lord, on his part, is a little indolent; but I forgive him this little fault on account of the many good qualities of his heart which he has to counterbalance it. . . . Pray present my compliments to Lord March, and tell him I expect to hear from him." This affectionate parent was very much at ease about her daughter, aged eleven months. March's concern for the child extended to her early education. "My Lord March hinted to me," writes a certain Alexander Crauford, of Richmond, to Selwyn, "the last time I had the honour of seeing him, his intention of placing dear Mie Mie at a boarding school not far from town." Finally, Lord March continued to take a paternal interest in Mie Mie for the remainder of his life; and on his death bequeathed her the substantial sum of £150,000, and made her husband residuary legatee. This may have been due entirely to his friendship for George Selwyn; but, on the whole, the probabilities are that, if Mie Mie was not legitimate, Lord March was her father. The saving clause is necessary; because, after all, the commonplace solution of the mystery may be the true one, as it so often is. Certainly Selwyn always wrote and spoke as if Mie Mie's father was the husband of her mother: even in his will he describes her as "the daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness Ffagnani." In any case the point is, for us, one of small importance. It is sufficient if we deny vigorously the alleged paternity of George Selwyn.

But Selwyn began to take an interest in the child—probably through his association with March—from her very early days. When she is aged eleven months he is reporting to her mother on the great teething question. When she is still less than three years old he tells Carlisle that he is determined to lose no time "in settling for my dear Mie Mie that which may be the only thing done for her"; in other words, in making his will in her favour. "My affection and anxiety about her,"

he says, "are beyond conception." In 1775 March and Selwyn were competing amicably—these two middle-aged, unromantic bachelors—in their attentions to this young lady of four: March was thinking of sending her to boarding school; while Selwyn took her to Richmond for a few weeks for change and fresh air. He draws a pleasing picture of himself in a letter to Carlisle, "writing in my garden, and Mie Mie at work in it, and I have ordered them to bring my dinner here, which I shall have on my grass plat, under an apple tree." By 1776 March seems to have placed himself *hors concours*; and Selwyn proudly assumed entire control of the infant. He decided to send her to school, and, after much anxious thought, and many consultations with lady friends, he selected Mrs Terry's establishment at Campden House, Kensington. Here he watched over her with the most assiduous care. "Mrs Terry presents her compliments to Mr Selwyn: has the pleasure to assure him that dear Mademoiselle Fagnani is as well to-day as her good friend could possibly wish her to be. She is this minute engaged in a party at high romps." "Mrs Terry presents her best compliments to Mr Selwyn: is very sorry to find that he is so uneasy. The dear child's spirits *are not* depressed. She is very lively: ate a good dinner: and behaves just like other children." Mrs Terry must indeed have been a little embarrassed by the fussiness of Mr Selwyn. He would call at the school and stay "his hour" on the days set apart for visitors. On other days he would send anxious notes to inquire how the dear child was, and whether she slept well or ill. When the holidays came Selwyn would take Mie Mie to "Brighthelmstone" for the bathing, or to Chislehurst for the fresh country air. These were halcyon times for Selwyn and his little maid.

They did not last long. In the same year in which Mie Mie was placed at school with Mrs Terry, Madame Fagnani began to hint to Selwyn that he must soon give her up to her affectionate parents. They had been separated from her quite long enough, it appeared. They would shortly be returning to Italy, and the dear child must return with them; her grandparents particularly desired it. Selwyn was in despair. He had already decided to adopt Mie Mie, and he could not or would not believe that the Fagnanis would assert their para-

mount claim. However, he had an interview with Madame Fagnani in August 1776, when a compromise was arrived at. Madame agreed to leave Mie Mie in England under Selwyn's care for a year; but after that she was definitely to be sent home to Milan. Selwyn was satisfied, for the time being. He had a year before him, and he was entreated by his friends to make the best of it. But Selwyn was so constituted that he could not "make the best" of things: he could not live in, and enjoy, the moment, but was always anticipating misfortune. The shadow of parting with Mie Mie, therefore, hung over him during that grace of twelve months, and was reflected in his letters to his friends. To do him justice, Madame Fagnani never failed to impress upon Selwyn the absolute finality of her decision. "As a friend I advise you, while there is time before you, to prepare yourself by degrees for the worst." Poor Selwyn was doing all he could in this direction. But he had also some idea at the back of his brain that, in some way or other, he might even yet prevent Mie Mie's departure from England. This probably accounted for the peremptory tone of Madame's letters to him. "I feel your affliction very deeply, and I can assure you that I share it. It is not my intention to make a merit of it, but it is my duty to tell you that I have made a last effort with my parents with a view to procure your happiness. . . . To this I have received a very cold reply, and one which was very contrary to my wishes. . . . There only remains for you to wish my death and that of my husband, for then, perhaps, you might keep Mie Mie some months longer: as to keeping her for good, all hope is out of the question." Selwyn asked Lord March to use his influence with Madame for him; but March had "no opinion of his credit there." Meanwhile, Selwyn's letters to his friends were in sombre vein.

[To Mary Townshend][1]

"Monday night [*circ.* June 1, 1777]

"I find by a note which I received this evening from your brother, that you have expectations at Frognal of my making you a visit and bringing with me the Abbé Reynal.[2] It is true that I asked Charles, if he thought that such a companion

[1] This and the following letters are from the Marsham-Townshend MSS.

[2] William Francis Reynal, the well-known writer. He was the "infidel" with whom Dr Johnson would not shake hands.

"MIE MIE"

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY ROMNEY

would afford any entertainment to Mr Townshend, and he said yes, as he believed; but I was not determined as to the scheme or the time: and should certainly not have taken you by surprise. I think a day or two's preparation at least might be necessary for the reception of such an Erudite, and I should have known first Mr Townshend's inclination about it, particularly as to the time. But to speak the truth, I have not a day to bestow upon learning or learned persons, and much less spirits, I have had one visit from the Abbé which I have returned, but I believe that he is so much engrossed by my Lord Sheilbourne, and such other Mæcenas's. But I shall have but little of his company. I propose to go to Matson for six weeks, and the day which I have fixed for setting out is on Sunday seven night next; before that I hope to make you one or two visits for a few hours, but I question if I shall trouble you longer at present. I believe that I might act more like a wise man if I began to wean myself from what I must so soon lose. But I am not wise, or pretend to be so, and wisdom in circumstances like mine, is to me very suspect. I am apt to think that where the passions are concerned, there is not such a difference between one person and another as is pretended by those who when they cease to feel an impulse, are desirous to have it thought that by good sense they have resisted it. I am very ready to own that having been, I do not know how, betrayed into an attachment, which as it appeared to have nothing blameful in it, I therefore rather indulged, I am now, by adverse circumstances and interests absolutely opposite to mine, as much as their feeling, made extremely unhappy, and it is the least that can be said of it, to call it a scrape. I thank you very much for acquainting me with my mother's being so well. I hope to hear that she continues to be so, and excepting this absence of six weeks shall hereafter be at no great distance from you, and ready to give you and the family as much of my company as you will be troubled with. . . . I beg my best love to them all, and my duty to my mother. I should be glad to make my visits to her more frequent but I would never come to her, but when I was as cheerful as possible, and I am very much afraid that she will perceive that I cannot be so, and shall be very awkward in assuming the air of it. I ask pardon for this little épanchement d'un cœur qui est fort gros, et triste. But I cannot help speaking of what is constantly the subject of my thoughts, and I believe when I am speaking to you of what I feel, it is to one whose natural sensibility will encline you to pity me, as much as the regard which you have always expressed to one who is ever most affectionately yours."

"Friday night [*circ.* June 1777]

"My setting out for Matson still stands for Sunday sevennight, so between this and that day I am desirous to make a visit to Frognal and for as many hours as can be contrived. Mrs Townshend before you left London invited Miss Louisa Selwyn, Mie Mie and I, to dine at Chicelhurst. You say that Mie Mie and I may come together to Frognal. On ne peut pas disputer des gents, but to speak the truth her company is to me more eligible than that of a savant's now I have a party to propose. But you must lett me know very truly and very exactly how it can be arranged. Suppose for example, that Miss S. and I sett out with Mie Mie to dine at Chiselhurst as Mrs Townshend proposed in order to return at night to London. But if there was a bed for Miss Louisa at your brother's and at Frognal one for me, and another for Mie Mie and her maid to lie together, or Miss Louisa to lie at Frognal and Mie Mie and her maid in the bed at Chiselhurst, then we would not return hither till next day. This I should like better than two expeditions to Frognal next week. But pray tell me, how this will accord with your convenience, and lett me know if we shall go on Sunday or return on Monday or sett out on Monday and return on Tuesday morning or if beds are to be out of the question, which day, Sunday or Monday, will be best for our going to dinner. I send you this by a special messenger because the post does not admitt of an answer in time. . . .

"Now for news.

"Lord Carlisle accepts of Sir John Shelley's staff which is to be taken gently out of his hands upon the conclusion of this session. They give Mr Ekins, L^d. C.'s Tutor a living of £1100 a year, I forget the name of it. It is in the North, and was held by the late Bishop of Oxford as I am told. This doucer to Ekins recommends the other to Lord Carlisle, and it is not to lose the opportunity of obliging his Tutor that he accepts the other, so Ekins whose living at Morpeth proves to be £700 a year, will now have £1800 a year in preferment.

"Welbore Ellis is to have the place of Treasurer of the Navy, and C. Townshend Welbore's place. I do not hear who goes to the Treasury. Coll. Keene is to have Worseley's place who is dying, and Mr de Grey the Board of Trade, Sir R. Payne the Green Cloth in the room of the late Mr de Grey. C. Fox expects Sir W. Meredith to breakfast with him and thereby insinuates a defalcation from him. This is all I know of Politics. I am afraid of speaking about news from America, although what I have heard is good and that all individuals which we care for are well. But I never will say anything upon that

subject that is not very authentic, and I do not hear of anything of consequence having happened from those who have brought the latest intelligence.

"Pray be very sincere in your answer about my lying at Frognal, the lying or not lying in the country is not very material, and à tout evenement, I can send Miss L. back with Mie Mie and the maid in the coach to London, and go myself in a post chaise the next morning. Adieu, my duty to my mother and love to all the rest."

Early in June Selwyn and Mie Mie left London for their short holiday at Matson.

[To MARY TOWNSHEND]

"MATSON
"Tuesday, 15th July [1777]

"I do not know the precise point of our correspondence, and whether I have not been a great while in your debt for a letter.

"We are all here very glad that your accounts of the family at Frognal are so good, and nobody more so than my poor little Mie Mie. Her allowance of wine, as you may suppose, is a very small one, but it is all drunk to improve your health. I ask pardon for having wrote to you so melancholy a letter but I could not help it, or ever shall when I think of that child be otherwise than fort triste. J'en suis sur. We propose to leave this place next Monday to lie that night at Oxford; dine next day at Ld. Boston's, lie in the neighbourhood, that is at Maidenhead Bridge, and so be in London to-morrow seven-night. You shall hear more of me from thence. I beg my duty to my mother and my love to all the rest. Miss Selwyns etc. desire to be remembered to you all also. I am ever most Affect^ly. Yours, G. S.

"I have received, in a letter from London a trait of the E. of Essex, which est bien de lui; my Lord Onslow either advanced to or borrowed for Lord Malden 1000£ for his accomodation during his being abroad, which his father has very providentially sunk 800 of for his own private amusement; I am now thinking how much and in what manner he will extract money from the Gendre who is to be."

At the end of July Selwyn is back in town, busily preparing for Mie Mie's departure to Milan.

[To Mary Townshend]

"Saturday night, 30th August [1777]

"It is so long since I have seen you or heard from you that it may be a matter of curiosity what is become of me or what I am doing. I have not stirred from town and very little from home before nine at night. I am obliged to think a great deal about the arrangements necessary for Mie Mie's journey, and am endeavouring at the same time to keep it as much off my head as possible; the two schemes are not very compatible. I tried a negotiation with the Comte Fermian, the Empress's minister and governor of Milan, and through his means to obtain a respite of this event which I have had so long a dread of, and must now in ten days take place. I am not very prevoyant, but this I never could be persuaded would not be, although I was willing to take the hopes which sometimes good nature, sometimes a foolish artifice, attempted to give me. I was desired to believe by the K. of England's minister Sir W. Lynch who was in correspondence on my account with the Comte Fermian that he should succeed, but there is now an end of the very little expectation on which I had of keeping the child with me some time longer. I must part with her, which will create a change in my way of life that will be very uncomfortable to me for some time. I should be glad to find out where I could go that I should be tolerable to myself without being intolerable to others. For a little while I propose to be near London because I must be where I can the soonest have information of what becomes of the child till she is delivered to her parents. To read their letters one would imagine that the whole state of Milan and the interest of the Catholick Church was interested in her going or being retained here. When I have assurances that she is arrived safe I must endeavour to suppose that she will at least be not so miserable as myself, and when my servants come back I will resolve upon what to do and where to go for dissipation. For a few days I could make you a visit at Frognal, but I ought not to propose or think of it. However this is my present situation. As I heard nothing to the contrary, I have concluded that you were all well, indeed I was told so by two persons who have seen you. Only somebody said that Tommy had not been well, I hope that he is so now. I beg my duty to my mother and hearty love to the rest. If you allow me to come to you it will be in the week after next, and the first day that I shall have resolution enough to leave this house, for I do not intend to stay to

see Mie Mie go out of it: I intended it as an asylum to her till I could find out a better for her. If she mends her condition in Italy, I ought not to grieve about it, but my fears very naturally encline me to doubt of it. I am ever most affectionately yours.

"I have been this evening with Lady Cornwallis whom I found in tolerable spirits. Partridge tells her she is better to-day, but he thought her not so well a few days ago. Her last letter from her son was dated the 16th, I mean her son William. It is believed that Philadelphia is taken and by some thousand Quakers. Lady Cornwallis said something about Harry Broderick, that was good. People begin to hope we shall negotiate and end this unfortunate quarrel. I am not instructed enough to say anything worth attending to upon this subject, my mind has been too much employed on another."

Count Fermian's reply to the Austrian Ambassador's appeal is printed in Jesse. "The application which you refer to me on the part of Mr Selwyn is, unfortunately, one of those demands with which it is impossible to comply. . . . Should the Marquis and Marchioness return to Milan without their daughter, the Government would have just ground for believing that it had been imposed upon. The father and mother are of advanced age; of one of the most respectable families in this city; and they await, with the utmost impatience, the return of their family, and especially of their grand-daughter, whose arrival is looked for by the whole country." This, surely, was a rhetorical exaggeration, justifying Selwyn's sneer about "the whole state of Milan and the Catholick Church." Notwithstanding the failure of all his negotiations, Selwyn still clung to the idea of keeping the child in England. He seems to have written another wild letter to Madame Fagnani; for in a reply, dated 15th August 1777, and written from Spa, Madame says: "You have decided, then, in order to secure your own happiness, to accomplish our ruin by embroiling us with our family while at the same time you destroy the reputation of the child you pretend to love. Learn, then, the result of your imprudent conduct. Our parents (more irritated than ever by your insulting offer of giving our daughter a dower, and at the same time very angry with us on account of the bad faith we have kept with them) have forbidden our writing to them again until we

have Mie Mie in our charge. . . . We do not really know, sir, what devilish idea has seized you. Was it to reward us for our good nature in leaving you Mie Mie, contrary to the advice of our parents, or because you doubted our word? In any case you were wrong. I repeat to you that Mie Mie is not an object of pity as you endeavour to make out. Thank heaven! she is in want of nothing; she belongs to a very great house; she has fortune enough to be independent of everyone; and I can assure you that no greater misfortune could befall her than that of living in a strange country separated, like a foundling, from her family; maintained by a person who does not belong to her, and in regard to whom the world would always question by what title he adopted the child." This letter evidently brought Selwyn to reason; for in September the Marchioness writes acknowledging his reply "which has given me great pleasure." By the end of August Selwyn was preparing busily for the departure of Mie Mie. He had some idea of travelling as far as Paris with her, but was induced by his friends to give it up. "It is likely only to prolong the pain of parting," wrote Lady Holland, "and put yourself out of the way of receiving comfort from those who would wish to give you all in their power on this occasion." Like many another man in trouble, Selwyn found his great distraction in work. He personally superintended all the details of the child's journey; he even made a memorandum of the inns at which she was to stay at the numerous stopping-places between London and Milan: "À Dartford, à la Couronne; à Rochester, à la Couronne, à Canterbury, aux Fontaines, à Douvre, chez Buchon, King's Head," etc. During September he found time to bring Mie Mie to Sir Joshua's studio to have her portrait painted; Gainsborough had already painted it for him two years before.[1] By the third week of that month everything was ready for Mie Mie's departure; and on the 22nd she left Cleveland Court for Dover in Selwyn's travelling carriage, accompanied by Selwyn's faithful valet, Pierre Michalin. Selwyn had run away to Frognal two or three days before; he could not bear the pang of actual parting. "I saw your little friend set off this morning, in such a state of health and spirits as indicated a pleasant journey. I went to your house a little before nine, and break-

[1] Neither of these portraits appears to survive.

fasted with her. Mrs Webb had, previous to my going there, informed her that you were gone to see your mother, who was not well, with which she seemed perfectly satisfied; and she told me that she was very glad you had gone, as 'she loved your mother.' I told her that you proposed to come to her as soon as you could leave your mother; and to this she answered that 'she hoped you would not do so till she was better, as Mrs Webb and Mr Mitchell (Michalin?) would take care of her.' This was very considerate of the child, and showed much goodness of heart." Reports reached Selwyn from various points on the outward journey. From Dover his agents had the pleasure to acquaint him that "the little lady you recommended to us sailed this morning, with very fine weather and a favourable opportunity. We provided her with a very good vessel and an exceedingly careful captain." From Paris Madame Fagnani reported Mie Mie "perfectly well; she has not suffered the least from the journey." There were notes from the young lady herself, short, but very much to the point:

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR SELWYN,—God bless you and preserve you, with all my heart, and let me see you as soon as I can. I am your MIE MIE"

Selwyn spent a melancholy winter after Mie Mie's departure. To add to his sorrows, his good old mother died (on the 6th of November) at the age of eighty-five. She died at Frognal, where she had lived with her son-in-law, Mr Thomas Townshend, for many years. Lord Carlisle advised Selwyn to "vary the scene" and invited him to Castle Howard. He reached that hospitable castle in December, and his health and spirits began immediately to improve. The society of his friends the Carlisles, including the two children, George and Caroline, kept him, in Storer's words, "from the *regno Hispaniæ et fatalibus arvis*." But another circumstance helped to make him cheerful. He had decided to visit Milan in the spring, and to make another effort with Mie Mie's parents, and still more, with her implacable grandparents, to recover possession of the child. This gave him something to look forward to during the hard and bitter winter of 1777, when the snow lay piled high on the coach-roads of England. April found both Selwyn and his

friend Carlisle ready to start upon widely different journeys: Selwyn to Milan, Carlisle to New York, as one of the commission despatched (too late) to treat with the American rebels. Selwyn's own (unpublished) letters to Miss Mary Townshend shall tell us the tale of his journey to Italy in quest of Mie Mie.

MISS MARY TOWNSHEND

FROM A PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

CHAPTER XII

A JOURNEY TO MILAN

GEORGE SELWYN left London on the 19th of April 1778, accompanied by the Rev. Dr John Warner, who comes into Selwyn's history at this point. Warner was a "creature" of Selwyn's: a typical eighteenth-century clerical toady, who cadged, and flattered, and licked the hand of his patron, and took snubs and favours with equal serenity. An amusing person, too; his letters to Selwyn are by far the most entertaining in Mr Jesse's collection. Rather overwhelming as a travelling companion, perhaps; but doubtless Selwyn could subdue him with a word. The two men travelled in Selwyn's own private carriage, taking with them many comforts for the road. The first letter to Miss Townshend is written from Calais, on the morning of the 22nd of April:

[To MARY TOWNSHEND][1]

"I embarked yesterday about four in the morning, and having but little wind, it was near ten before I could land and the vessel not being in port till the afternoon. It was not till night that my Coach could be brought on shore, or my baggage examined at the Douanne. However, I shall get as far as Abbeville to-night, and on Friday I hope to dine in Paris, where my stay will be of about ten days. It will be near a month from this time before I expect to be at Milan. My stomach and head were so out of order when I embarked that I endeavoured by going to bed on board the ship to avoid, what we imprudent people generally do, what would have done me the most good; so for fear of being sick one hour, I have been squeamish 24. This morning I am much better both in my health and spirits, and if I had more years to expect, should find myself very happy in being once more in this Country, and with this people, but as it is, I must be contented with my own country, which altho' I am told will not be long our own, yet while it is, I may be

[1] This and the following letters are from the Marsham-Townshend MSS.

permitted to have a penchant to it. I would not go yesterday to dine at Ardres with the Duc de Lausan, because I was very much indisposed, but if I had, the discourse probably would not have pleased me; so I did as well to stay here.

"I have as yet seen nothing like invasion, or even a disposition to carry hostilities further than we invite them.

"The Duchess of Kingston[1] is here, in a house which she has purchased and furnished magnificently. She has had the singular good fortune to obtain from the Government an Act of Parliament to naturalize her to a certain degree. She can now purchase and bequeath. Her ship is returning from Russia into this port, after it has been put in perfect repair at the expense of the Empress of Russia, with whom she has made a treaty offensive and defensive. She has une fort petite sante had an attack of paralysie has a fine vis a vis and four handsome dun horses—que n'a-t-elle pas? She had two characters in Calais, altho' she may have but one in her own country. Une Dame Dominicaine told me yesterday that she performed great acts of charity, and seemed to entertain a very good opinion of her. . . .

"Milady Fenoulet[2] is in all beaux cercles of Calais, painted like the stern of a ship; her daughter married to a Marquis; and another with her; a very good house; and a permission to remain in Calais. An order is come from Court that the rest of the English, who will not go to England, retire into the Country from the Coast.

"Let me hear from you before I leave Paris. Let me know often how Mrs Townshend and the rest of the family does. Give my hearty love to them, and send me yours and their directions for anything you want. My love to Lady Middleton when you see and write to her. I hope to hear that Miss Broderick has got quite well.

"Je suis tres content de mes deux compagnons de voyage. Ils sont aussi fort satisfaits . . . ils consent tout la journee traiter ensemble toutes sortes de chapitres mais ils ne disputent pas.

"I am much tempted to wish that Dr Gemm would go the whole journey with me, and stay at Milan while I remain there. I believe that my friend March will make no opposition to that, or those who are so good as to have had apprehension of my not returning. Upon what ground such an idea could have been conceived, I do not well comprehend, but, une fais ridi-

[1] The famous bigamist, Miss Chudleigh.

[2] Formerly Anne Franks, *alias* Mrs Day, mistress of Richard Edgecumbe. Her portrait was painted by Sir Joshua.

cule, on vous le croit toujours. I intend to be here with Her Grace or Lady Fenoulet, the first week in November at the furtherest, and wait for a mer tranquille to come over; and a castel ship if there should be any occasion for it; but God avert that, and all the nonsense which has brought us into such perils.

"Adieu, my dear Mary, most affectionately. Aimez moi toujours un peu, as they say here, and let me hear from you often.

"I hope six months hence, at all events, to have interest enough with the Court of England to get me a ship for my return, for I will not embark either at Ostend or Helvoetsluys, if I stay here till there is a peace.

"I forgot to tell you that the Duchess sails to Rome in October, where her faith is to be confirmed, unless she is taken by an American Privateer, in provision of which she has got Berkley's Book in Defence of the Quakers."

The travellers arrived at Paris on the 24th, and were welcomed by Madame du Deffand and her circle. About this time the Abbé Barthélemy, writing to his friend Madame de Choiseul, informed her that he had no news at all "except the journey of M. Selwin to Italy." The good Abbé's comments show how this escapade perplexed Selwyn's friends. "It is neither Rome," says he, "nor Florence, nor Naples, which attracts him. He is not concerned with pictures or statues; he goes to see a little girl whom he loves to distraction and who is only seven years old. He will pass some months with her. . . . Your 'grand-daughter' [Madame du Deffand] says this story is the beginning of a romance. She is right; I will tell it to you very briefly. . . . Madame du Deffand asked him [Selwyn] yesterday if she [Mie Mie] were pretty? 'She seems so to me,' he replied. 'Is she lively?' 'Very lively.' 'In what religion have you brought her up?' 'I was not her spiritual adviser; they taught her the morals common to all religions.' He speaks of her with tenderness, with tears in his eyes. He is, however, certain that she is not his daughter. So long as this passion continues, he will be the most unhappy man in the world. He must pass one portion of his life away from her, and the other in the fear of losing her." Selwyn spent three weeks in Paris, waiting for his medical adviser, Dr Gemm, who proposed to accompany him to Milan.

[TO MARY TOWNSHEND]

"PARIS
"Sunday 10th May 1778

"You will be surprised that I am not further advanced in my journey, but having resolved upon taking Dr Gemm with me to Italy, I have been obliged to stay on his or rather on Miss Seymour's accounts. She has had and has still a very bad fever but there is no apparent danger, and another physician being now called in, my doctor has promised to set out with me, and I shall go as far as Fontainebleau on Wednesday evening, and be at Lyons in about five days at most and in a week more I hope at Milan. I cannot well conceive why my last letter was so long in coming to your hands. It should have been carried from Calais on Wednesday the 22nd of last month, and consequently by being put that day or the next into the post at Dover might have reached you by the end of the week. But it might have been that the wind was not fair for England, or that the letter was to have been read to the Commandant at Calais by one whose education gave him that advantage over his superior. However you had, to the earliest mark which I could give you of my remembrance. Whether I shall trust this to the post or not, as I may like what it contains. Admr. Rodney goes to-day, or to-morrow, and he may take charge of it. It is said that letters are stopped, and read, God knows if that be true, or any one word that I hear as to news, the French Ministers, and everybody who knows anything of importance here is very secret and are much wiser in this, I am afraid than we are. Everybody who knows nothing is spreading his about from morning to night as will best serve their purpose. I have but five questions to ask, some you will be so good as to answer, others you cannot answer, if you would, we are at present, in regard all alike instructed. . . . But what interests me most immediately is to know how my friends do in England, and particularly your family and my nearest relations, and of that I hope that you will not fail to give me an account very frequently. I am as you may imagine in a little pain about Lady Carlisle. The accounts which have been sent in of her have given cause enough for it. I am more concerned than surprised, all the circumstances of her condition considered. La belle mère,[1] qui est à cette heure n'en moins que belle, I am in no pain about at all. She is seemingly very well and in good spirits, and I appear to be not ill with her, so she either has not been so angry with me as I was told that she was, or has thought it better to lay her displeasure aside. My accounts

[1] The Dowager Lady Carlisle.

of Lady Carlisle are from Lady Julia who corresponds with her mother, for I have had as yet no letter from her myself, which I attribute to her ill state of health. I wrote her a very long letter from Calais, which I am now sorry for, for I was then very low spirited and in those humours one cannot write as I wished to have done to her although I always desire that she should know how very tenderly I interest myself for she has as good a reputation here as in England. I will beg the favour of you, when you write again, to send into St James's place to hear of her health, and how the children do also. I was some hours last night, before I went to supper with the Dutchess of Gainsbro, et son Mari, I do not know if he is a clergyman, but I thought he was, and I expected to find a little grey parson and I found with her a gentleman in scarlet and gold embroidery, whom I understood to be Mr Pygloz. They say here that he is a good sort of man: he may be so, for anything they know, for they seem to know nothing of the English, but that they read in books, misrepresent their characters, and are employed the whole day in copying their dress and equippage of which they have made a strange mode. I wish people would confine themselves in all things to the ways of their own country which generally points out what is most convenient and ornamental, and each will have something belonging to them that is superior, but they mix them both together, that it is like the language of the refugies, a Patois, that if you understand is horrible to hear. A Frenchman told me yesterday that here, on fait plus de grace aux vices, qu'aux ridicules. Qu'en pensez vous? I really believe that they do not mean to be ridiculous, tout au contraire, nor would they be so, if they would adhere more to a maxim which they are very fond of, that is, de ne pas sortir de son etàt. But they almost all do. What you tell me of the Trident was in a letter which Miss Wilks wrote a Baron de Castile. These two people are very fond of their correspondence with one another, she is pleased that she has sent a French letter to the post which she thinks is well wrote, and he, that he has received a letter from the daughter of the celebre citoyen, which I suppose is carried in an hour after he has received it, either to Monsieur de Vergennes, or to the Lieutenant de Police. But if he has news to tell out of it, dans le cercle des dames, it is enough. They shall never have my letters to read things out of, I am resolved. . . . I shall apply myself to Italian for the next five or six months. I believe Warner is further advanced in that, than I am. Dr Gemm, is superior to us both as I imagine. I am in hopes that my poor Mie Mie has not forgot her English, I

believe that I shall apply more to that than to anything else, that is personal to myself. As soon as I come there I will write to you, and I promise you, that when I see you, which I hope will be in November, to be very true and fair in my [account].

"If I have deceived myself, I will tell you so. But come home, I will most certainly, whatever I may do hereafter, which I am very sure will be nothing that anybody can condemn. But at present I have no credit given me. That my situation is extraordinary, I grant, but that I am so, in respect to that, I do not, and I am much of Mr Helvetius's mind, who says, that when people are thought to be so, they are generally misunderstood, and their position unknown, if not, it would be found that nine times out of ten, a man has done the best thing he could for himself, in that situation. But I will say no more upon that now. . . . Pray let me know where you all go, as well as how you do, and what you do, and if you can think of anything which I can send from Italy, either for you, or the young ladies. At present I have no notion of anything they have, but Opera singers, Parmazan cheese, and Italian flowers. I have much to learn as well as to see about them. They cannot here well account for my journey to Milan, which I am not surprised at, and that I do not intend to go to Rome. The Pope's Nuncio has offered me all kind of recommendations, but it is too late. Mes poursuites ne sont pas celles de l'Antiquité."

"Lyons
"Wednesday, 20 May, 1788

"I came here on Monday to dinner and shall set out this morning for Pont Beau Voison, and so on to Turin and Milan, where I hope to be next Tuesday. I found here Lord Hinchinbroke and his family who are returning from the South to England. It is a great while since I have heard from thence, and my curiosity about it and what it contains is not diminished by distance or absence. I hope that I shall find Letters for me in plenty at Milan. I am in great fear about Lady Carlisle. The last accounts which I had sunk my spirits very much. I am got myself very well at present, and shall be glad not to give Dr Gemm the trouble of following me into Italy, which he offers to do when Miss Seymour is quite well. I have now performed two parts of my Journey, but the third I am afraid will be worse than the other two, on account of the mauvais gites et mauvaise chose. I have a Cook and a Bed, but they will not, I am apprehensive, be of so much use as I wished them to be. The Bed it is difficult to carry, and the

cook can dress nothing on the road, so how I shall do I know not; Michelet[1] assures me very well. I wish at all times to see you, and here as well as in other places. The manufactures and stuffs and embroideries are mighty pretty, le choix embarrasse. But things are monstrously cheap.

I beg my Love to all the Family. I am very impatient to hear something of you. I found Lord Hinchinbroke as uninstructed of what has passed for three months almost as I am of what is doing at present, and I am afraid they will not let my English newspapers come through France. Yours most affectionately.

"If Mr Townshend had come with me in my Coach from Paris to this place he would not have been displeased, nor could the exercise have fatigued him. My coach is the best in the world, very tolerable beds, and something or other to eat and by proper precautions what you please. Everything now begins to look Italy, houses, sky, etc. The Journey hither is really nothing if you send on anybody before for your Rooms and your Dinner, and the country delighful. I met Peas and Strawberries here for the first time. I have passed through all the vineyards and had my choice of wine, as I hardly drink any but with water. There is a very good Theatre and troupe, but the occupation of the English is choosing cloaks from morning to night because the fancy is new, and the commodity cheap. I never was before so far from home, and therefore like a Badaud de Paris 'le monde me passit bien grand,' as Mme. de Châtelet (?) said when she went to the South with the P. du Maine. Elle avait le talent de fair bien grand ce qu'elle avait trouvé fort petit. Yours most affectionately, my dear Mary.

"Pray lett me know if on my return I can bring anything which you or the girls will like particularly."

"MILAN
"Sunday, 31st May [1778]

"I gott hither last Tuesday the 26th to dinner. I was only one day at Turin. My memory is so bad that I really forgett when I wrote to you last, I only am afraid that I trouble you too often. I have received since I left Paris which was the 13th inst., but one letter and that was on Friday night from Lord March's steward, who told me many things which I was very much interested to know, and the uncertainty of which had filled my mind with much anxiety, but I am still much in

[1] His valet. The name is spelt "Michalin" in Selwyn's will.

the dark as to many others which I shall be very impatient to know and particularly how you and how the family does. Si les Absens ont tort en general, j'en n'ai plus que tous les autres, c'est que je suppose. For I feel myself quite forgot, which perhaps may not be the greatest misfortune which can happen to me and yet it would mortifie me too, to a certain degree. Whether any letters have been detained or miscarried I know not, but it has been very unplaisant to me and till Friday night I was in pain to know whether Lady Carlisle was alive or not from the account which I had of her in Paris. I was to such a degree uneasy about it, that when I had found means by great accident to gett some English newspapers and they came to me at a house while I was at dinner, I was obliged to make Pierre go into another room to read them to see if her name was mentioned in them before I could eat my dinner with satisfaction. I am now satisfied upon that point because when Ld. M[arch]'s steward called at her house she was gone out. Letters come here, or should come here, Friday and Tuesday evening and go out Tuesdays and Saturdays, and are generally upon the road fifteen or sixteen days at most. I shall stay here till I find the weather cool enough for travelling in September, for as I shall be three weeks on the road to Calais, so I shall be afraid of delays or the falling of the snow, and in regard to poor Mie Mie, I shall have done all that I could have expected or do expect to do for her benefit, or my own satisfaction and when that is over, I must leave her with the frail hopes of seeing her again in England, which perhaps, best for her sake and my own had better not happen. She is in regard to her health I think, well, but I must own that I am in constant pain for it, from the extensive liberty which is allowed her to eat or to do whatever she likes. Everybody seems very fond of her and she has always had (indeed, very luckily for herself) as I told her grandmother last night an uncommon attention and desire to please, and to be acceptable to the people she is with, especially if they behave in any manner agreeable to her. She knows and is known to every person of distinction in this place and is received and treated by them as she ought to be even to the utmost of my wishes, nor can I as yet perceive the least idea in any one person whatever of what might have contributed to have putt her upon a worse foot than she ought to be, had she stayed with us. But if you ask me if that satisfies me I will be frank to own that it does not. But I will no more complain of what is past a remedy. I am sure that her education in England would have been a good one had it been solely left and for a length of time, to me, because although I could have

not contributed to this nothing but my attention, yet, with that, which would have been indefatigable, she would have had no one person about her, but those who could have, if not improved her understanding, done her morals no harm. What her education will be here, or what the effects of it, I shall not probably live to see. I must hope and despair according to the temper I happen to be in and be satisfied that if she could not have been upon a proper foot in England (an idea I have never yet adopted) she will be upon the best here. I think that, from what I see, that is not unlikely, and that is my only comfort. She has a grandmother, the mother of her mother, Mme. la Comtesse Mellario and her grandfather-in-law. She has a grandfather the old Marquis Fagnani and his wife, who was the Maréchal Clince's sister. These are people, I see, of great rank, and living in a great style; the fondness which they express for this little girl, is more than I suppose you would have expected. They are constantly finding out amusements for her, but what she learns, or what she forgetts, except her Religion, they do not seem much to care. Their civilities to me are as great and assiduous as can be, and their remercimens also. She is, in a manner delivered up to me here, but what I can do, with the impediments I have, will signify nothing, and if it did, when I am gone will be lost. I am now aiming but at one thing, which is preserving her English, of which she has forgott more than I could have imagined, and I am in Hopes to obtain of her Mother permission to have some English maid about her and if possible one who can read it with her. They all desire this, and if this maid is a Catholick, I suppose Monsr. le Cardinal will not oppose it. But they seem to leave the trouble of it to me; if I could think anything a trouble wh. would be of use to her. I think that I have already given complete testimonies that that cannot be by the very disagreeable journey which I have taken for her sake, and if I am consistent in nothing else, I think that I may with justice expect to be thought so in regard to her.

"The House which they have taken for me is a very large one built around a Court a l'Italienne. The Venetian Resident occupies one part of it, and I the other. They are as distinct in all respects as if we were separated by two streets. The House is new, but it was a House only, not even wainstcoated when taken for me. I have it for six months beginning from March, a great number of rooms, and they are furnished partly by M. Fagnani and partly by an Upholsterer. Everything is new and clean, as much as brick floors will permitt. But I shall never be able to reconcile myself to them, although there

are no other in their finest palaces. The Houses here are indeed magnificent, and with all kinds of accomodations, every sort of Apartment, court and Garden. But there is not a workman in the town that knows how to hang a door. Their ceilings are well painted, and mine among the rest, but it is the painting of a Green House, or an Orangerie. Paintings they have without end, and some of them I believe fine, but the subjects are either uninteresting or Horrid. I have a certain number in my House which would bear a price, I suppose, at Mr Christie's, and receive from him a panegyrick. It has been with great good luck I have found a Carpet, for the Marquis happened to have sent one, and a large one, from England. My windows are directly over against Mie Mie's so I have as much of her Company as if she was in the House with me. With her French Governess she speaks French, with the other maids a Patois of the Milanese which she has learnt the quicker as all children will because it is bad, and with me it is a ragoût mêlé of them and English. But she is now so much with me, and I send her Governess away so, it may be for the present that she will recover her native language. I can never dine at Home, because I must not refuse invitations. I dine the oftenest with the Comte de Fermian, who allways sends his Upper Servant in his Coach to ask his excellence, as he calls me, and so my Dinner is allways preceded by an Ambassador. The style of their Cookery is infernal. But I can find something allways to eat which satisfies me, and the Comte Fermian has some plain boiled Chicken and fish and Rhenish, &c. which I believe are ordered for me. Warner, who has his apartment in my House is allways asked, and as Bashfullness does not stand in his way with a moderate stock of the parlez-vous, either in French or Italian, il trouve son chemin et le moyen de plaise. *I* puff off his Erudition, and *he* my Importance. But I believe Sr. W. Lynch and the Comte Belgioro together have not spared words to recommend me to the Comte Fermian's protection, and to that I am obliged. I have been presented to the Duchess of Modena, who takes no other name than the Princess Melzi. I am in as many Houses as at Paris. But I can neither count their money, tell their Hours, or know what title to give their Nobility. Mie Mie helps me al corro, to their names, and seems already to have made a pretty extensive acquaintance with the Fryars as well as the Noblesse. I shall be presented to-morrow to the Arch Duke. It is his birthday and he comes to town for that purpose and at night I am to be at his Ball and put on my new Embroidery which I made in Paris, for as yet I have

not quitted my mourning,[1] or intend to do so till I return to England. I have almost if not quite gott rid of my Cold, but am at times in such lowness of Spirits that they are to the last degree oppressive. Warner would assist me, if good ones were a specific, but they are not, at least to me. They may amuse one who is dull but not one who is unhappy. However I am in hopes that after I am once settled again at home that this will mend. I wish in the younger part of my life I had seen the other parts of Italy, but at present, I have very little inclination, otherwise it is now the time of going to the Ascension at Venice, where all Foreigners now in Italy resort, as I am told, and I am within two days of it. The Venetian Resident, my neighbour, does also offer me all kinds of conveniences for the going, but my whole mind is upon one object here, and upon many others at Home, and I had rather now to read books of travels than travel myself, although I see how much these lie in every circumstance. There is indeed no truth but in your own Experience. I was told by all who have been here that they spoke French here, and that it was like a French town ; point du tout ; many do speak it, and some very tolerably, but they are in this respect as we are in London. French is a talent which some have acquired and some have not. They do not chose to talk it, and I find I change the language as much as a foreigner would at London, and that they speak it before me because they think, and with reason enough, that my conversation in Italian would be tres bornée. As to English, Ils n'y ont pas les plus petites pretensions. The Comte Fermian has the Anglo-manie stronger than I ever knew. He seems to have a better knowledge of our History and people than most foreigners and has an exceedingly good library, which he has offerred the use of to Warner. I think that he will be of the greatest resource to me while I stay, but I must do all these Italians here the justice to say that there is as much empressement in them to be civil to me as it is possible. Mme. Castiligne, Lady Spencer's acquaintance and her sister, I like much, but a converzatione here and a cercle at Mme. du deffands are two very different things indeed. Then the shops and the shopkeepers here with whom I have, both in London and Paris, a great connection, afford me here no amusement. Three shops out of four sell nothing but saints and ornaments for the Church, and they talk a jargon to understand which if I understood Italian ever so well it would avail me nothing. I have now given you the best account I can at present of what I have seen and of my feelings and of my manner of living here. I hope

[1] For his mother.

that some of you for my Comfort will write to me, and that you will give my hearty love to them all. I do not advise Mr Townshend to extend his travels beyond Lyons, but in France, and in that part of it especially he would be amused I am sure, and no convenience of life wanting whatsoever. But that cursed Country of Savoye, and its Beggars and Goitres etc., are my detestation. Mont Cenis, which from report I had so much dreaded, was the pleasantest part of the journey, the Rocks, Cascades, and Fir trees are very beautiful indeed, but I had rather send a painter to those countries, I own, than go there myself.

"The weather will soon grow so Hott that I shall be able to stir very little out, but to dinner. But my House I can keep cooler than most others. There is a Picture done of me here, which is said by everybody to be the likest which ever was, and the painting is good with a verité that I seldom see in Pictures painted in England. It has gained the man, who is a Piedmontois, great reputation, the pains he has taken about it are infinite. The fagnanis have desired it. We shall go, I believe, next week to the Comtesse Mellario's House in the Country for a fortnight, Mie Mie and I, that is her Grandmother's, but her father and mother do not go with us, it is not far off. I hope yt. your next Letter will not be so long on the road or this either. Fourteen days is the usual time from London hither. Adieu."

"MILAN
"Saturday, 13th June, 1778

"I received yours of the 19th of last month here, yesterday evening, so it has been, I do not know by what accident, ten days longer upon the road, than it should have been. By the last post, I received letters of the 26th, and they were no more than fourteen days upon the road. The *déreglement de la poste* is one of the inconveniences of being at this distance, but if you are so good as to continue to write, I shall sooner or later probably receive all your letters. As I told Charles in my last, if he and you and Tommy took it by turns to write, I should not be so troublesome to each, but I cannot hear too often from too many of you. I did not know you had ever had any acquaintance, immediate or collateral with the poor Admiral, or I forgot it. . . . You do not tell me the names of those who copy his œconomy, but there are so many, and chiefly among my companions at Almacks, where the opportunities are so frequent of ruining themselves, and doing injustice to others, that I am never surprised at what happens. I am more concerned a great deal at

what Lady Middleton must have felt about Miss B[roderick]. It is with great pleasure that I understand that she is now getting well, pray remember me very kindly to her. What you tell me of Georgina is what I very often heard my poor mother say, and is the best symptom of a young person's mind that can be expressed. I am glad that she pleased upon her presentation; I daresay that the pleasure between her and her beholders was reciprocal. Your brother's zeal and assiduity to assist Lord Chatham's family est digne de lui.[1] His success has been very great and I suppose unexpected. It is very true that I am very well disposed towards young people, and am very apt to give them great and long credit, sometimes upon appearances only, but Lord Pitt's character very much justifies all prepossession which one can have in his favour, from what his countenance and manner makes you hope for. Lord Chatham had uncommon abilities and these were at times of singular service to his country, assisted as they were by a propensity in the people to approve and encourage all his schemes. Other Ministers, with the same abilities, as I heard him once say in the House, had they been so fortunate as to please the people, would have been more serviceable than they were. The public has expressed their sense of his use and mind in a very ample manner, and I doubt not upon very good grounds. But I only hope that hereafter a person whom we all know and admire,[2] who has also great parliamentary talent, but whose services, I am afraid, will never deserve the same recompense, may not come into administration, as he has flattered himself and others he will, with such a plenitude of power, as to persuade the House that his debts must be first paid, before he can perform all those exploits which are to restore the lost credit of his poor country, and so by recovering the order of things, anticipate his reward. As his debts are great and his moderation little, such a consequence might be dreaded. But to speak seriously, I have no fears of his ever being in that station, and I have great hopes that England will still exist, altho' we have not the abilities of that aspiring genius to help us. That great and useful men should be rewarded and encouraged is a proposition to which I cannot refuse my assent. But I hope that in future times the public will be persuaded to part with their money by argument, and not by numbers, and then Mr C[harles] F[ox]'s creditors will receive as much as I desire to give them. . . .

"Every day I stay at Milan convinces me more that if I mean to give Mie Mie every possible succour which I can give her, I did right to come. If I did right to come, I should

[1] Lord Chatham died 11th May 1778. [2] Charles James Fox.

have done very wrong to have suffered any discouragement or inconvenience or expense which I could afford to have put aside my endeavours to help her. . . . Her situation and connections here are great, and may hereafter make her happy, but Education is my favourite advantage, because it is the foundation upon which every good superstructure must be raised. I am sure that that would have been better in England than anywhere else, and all over England better with me, unless she had been the object of your care or Lady Carlisle's. You will think this presumptuous in me to say, but I know it to be true, for besides being a little of a Connoisseur myself in Education, I think no one would have equalled me in attention and assiduity, because I believe no one ever equalled me in affection. Upon that Basis all my Hopes were founded, a droit or a gauche I should have found assistance for one consideration or another, and I verily believe should have found the means of conducting her safely to an Age of discretion, if such a one there is. But if I was only right by Comparison, it was enough. Parents who would leave their daughter in a foreign country, and in such hands as they left this poor child, for six years and who would then have given her up to me, if family pride and convenience had not interven'd ; were not the persons to whom I could wish to have placed á depôt une bien si precieuse. But Justice and Honor, the Laws, and a due consideration of what might be otherwise the consequence to the child herself, forced me much against my Inclination, and almost against my opinion, to give her up upon the requisition of these parents, who had so much neglected her. I did so, and was more miserable, as I believe you know, than any human being ever was. That, and all my precedent inquietude on her account, has so shattered my nerves that I am not able to bear up against the common calamities of life with the fortitude which becomes a man to have. But I shall never be so miserable as I have been, for these reasons, that I now know the worst of everything, but what may happen to myself; and that it is not wise to wish to know, if you could. Mie Mie's condition and reception and all other circumstances are infinitely better than I expected. I might hope, and be flattered, but I could not know it, without this pilgrimage. The Parents are chacun selon son charactére, all more or less fond of her. But they now and then give me hopes that she shall come again to England to see me. L'ultima che si perde é la Speranza. I do not however build upon it, and shall acquiesce if it does not happen. But I will never refuse to receive a child I love

from the Hands of those who are willing to part with it. A certain degree of solicitude as well as much regret must be my lott for the rest of my life, and if Mie Mie had never left me I could not have been without, if I had had the tenderness for her which I believe that I should always have preserved; so that my pleasure even in its utmost perfection would have been, like all others, fort épineuse. But those which I have had have been uncommonly mixed et mes plus douce moments sont mélés de tristesse. However, in November next if you renew the subject with me, I will be free to give you my thoughts upon it, as I shall be careful not to trouble you with it, if you do not. Brisons-la pour le present. Ld. R. Bertie I did never expect to see any more, but I own that I thought that his end would be more sudden than it is likely to be. I have mentioned to Charles what my inclinations are in regard to Chicelhurst.[1] If my scheme is a practicable one, he will in proper time let me know. I only wish, that if he lets that house to a stranger, I may have the preference, by which means I should hope that he would anticipate the possession of it by being there with his tenant, but I suppose that if he does not occupy it himself yt. an arrangement will be made with his brother. I think that I can never live at Matson, and am tired of London. Four months there will satisfie me for the future, but a place near it will leave me at liberty to change my place as often as my Humour. You will think of this and how it may suit your family affairs and my inclination. I beg my hearty love to Mr Townshend. I never expected him to write. I hope that he will not put himself to so much inconvenience especially as so many of his family can give me accounts of him, which I hope will be good. That I may pass still many Hours and days with him in yt. Harmony that has now subsisted a great while, and wh. shall never receive from me any Interruption. Make my kind compliments to the rest of the family, particularly to Lady Middleton. Mie Mie and I are to go this afternoon to see a very fine procession at St Antoine, at the Marchesa Leta's. Lady B. M'Kensie saw her last night in my coach for the first time. Lady B. will tell you how finely I am lodged, if you should see her. She envies me much my house and furniture. I have 7 rooms on a floor, although not all furnished, so Ld. Middleton would not have wanted an apartment. I dine two and sometimes 3 days in a week with the Comte Fermian; the other days Mie Mie dines at my House, unless we are both asked abroad."

[1] "Farrington's," where Lord Robert Bertie then lived.

"MILAN
"Monday evening, 15th June [1778]

"I received yours of the 1st of this month, this evening, which is the 19th day from London, which is quite the regular time. I wrote to you last post to answer yours of the 19th. It is from Charles, or Tommy that I expect publick news, and from you les affaires de menage. I am glad to hear Mr Townshend finds himself better. If it is thought in the least advisable for Miss Broderick to pass her next winter in a warmer climate, I hope that she will admit no arguments to the contrary. But I shall be happy to hear that every degree of apprehension about her is removed, and that any remedy out of England is unnecessary. It will be to operate some great good indeed that I shall ever consent to go out of it, for I am grown old, and like every day more and more, les clochers de ma paroisse, and I for ever think when I am from home of the truth of what M. Bison told me formerly que l'on n'est jamais si bien que chez soi. Nothing that is new, nothing that is magnificent can make me amends for not having what I am used to of every kind, and yet I believe that I am both here and at Paris, upon as good a foot as a foreigner can be. But then I am a foreigner and that I do not like. You have now named the persons whom your prudence concealed the names of in your last letter. It matters but little to them to be left out of a letter, when there are a thousand writs out against them, and six executions in their House. Apres cela c'est le secret de la Comedie ou de la tragedie, comme il vous plaisa.

"The Holland family had infinitely better be at the point from whence they started, without sons, titles, or acquisitions. It is better never to acquire these things than to see them ruined and squandered as they are. I believe if my old friends Lord K. and Lord H[olland] could be asked the question, they would own that they might have been happier with more moderate views, and without sons, unless their education had been better. In my conscience I believe that there is one of them that has been the ruin of them all.[1] The Countess's dissipation is a story of another sort. The D. has finished as I expected, and shall ever expect when I see young people trained up as they were. It is some comfort to me that Lord C[arlisle] made his retreat in time, and I really believe will be, in a few years, one of the few of the nobility that is not in some measure undone. If that had been so, I am sure that both he and all his relations will do me the justice to own that

[1] Charles James Fox.

it would not have been my fault. Indeed they are very fair to say so. I hope that all the probable unhappiness of your family is at an end. It would he a great pity to have so uncommon an union interrupted on any account.

"Mie Mie thanks you kindly for your constant and kind remembrance of her. I must certainly be sorry to leave her, but I know the necessity of it, and must make up my mind to it, as well as I can. I know also that staying longer than this summer would be doing her no good. Nothing will effect what I desire but her being delivered entirely up to me. It is just that kind of Government that will admit of no person whatever to share, therefore I shall have prepared these people to know that when they are tired of her, I will take her; and that *may be*, and then if I love as I must always do, nobody can be surprised if I do take her. If that is not to be her lot, and my comfort, I hope a better will happen to us both, but when I was obliged to resign her, I suffered more than I can ever do again, because I knew by that act that we were both lost. But I saw no response in reason or in justice, or in regard to her, and therefore I did not listen to what my own opinion or inclination might have led me to do, for fear of injuring her happiness and my own reputation. The life at Milan is not only dull to me, but seems to be so to those who from habitude only lead it. It seems to be an established system of ennui. It is totally different either from that in France, or England, as much as the language that they speak, so that my being constantly with Mie Mie is a sacrifice of nothing, supposing myself to have any pleasure preferable to it.

"This letter will, as I imagine, find you at Margate, and you will have seen what was intended to be the delightful retreat of Mr C[harles] F[ox] from the cares of State.[1] His collection of antiquities and the statue under which his father had engraved the word 'Rascal,' because he thought the statue resembled Lord G[C.?]. Poor Lord H. need not have employed his talents building *Ruins*, when he had children who could do all that so much better. . . .

". . . Sometimes I think of the inevitable necessity of things being as they are, and that I was once afraid that they would be much worse, that many accidents may make them better, and that when I have done all I can, I ought not to make myself so unhappy when I can do no good, and may do harm by it. These reflections at times make me easy; and then at others I see such a management, or rather such a neglect of an object which I love, which I am afraid will end miserably for

[1] Kingsgate, Lord Holland's seat near Margate.

her, and then I sink again; and if all this you will say is extraordinary I grant it; that is, I allow the circumstances to be peculiar. But in all the actions of my life it is that in which I have myself been the least extraordinary and the most consistent, so that I may, if I was to write a treatise upon this subject, I might begin my Book as Dr Macleane does his Apology for his own Conduct relative to his brother and say: 'There is nothing so extraordinary in the case of the Unhappy James Maclean as its being thought so,' etc. etc. However, if I was not so unhappy and poor Mie Mie so likely to be so afterwards from the want of a good education, I should not much care how extraordinary my case was thought to be. In things of this sort the qu'en-dira-t-on is a matter of no moment to me. It is surprising to me that I am still to ask whether we shall go to war with France, but if I do I do not suppose my question can be yet resolved.[1] I wish that if occasion offer you will ask somebody that is likely to know in case of a war how I am to come from Calais, for I do from hence protest against returning either from Helvoetsluys or Ostend. I intend to go to Condé, that is the D. de Croz's house near St Omer, till I am informed of an easy passage, for the sea-sickness is so intolerable to me if it lasts any time que les Roués ne peuvent souffrir autant.

"There has been here Mr York, the eldest son of C. York; he is now gone in to Switzerland with his travelling governor, but returns here the beginning of August, when the new theatre is opened; I propose then to desire that he will now and then dine with me. He seems a very modest, sensible young man, but has a melancholy cast of countenance, his sister was a friend of Mie Mie's at Mrs Terry's. The M'Kenzies have gone to the Boromoean Islands, and to be in England in August. Mrs A. Pitt[2] goes first to Aix la Chapelle. I suppose that I shall be abused for seeing in Italy nothing but Milan, and in Milan nothing but the Child, which will be very near the case, but I cannot help it. I believe if Rome was but the journey of one day, I should not go there, so little curiousity have I left. My only object of satisfaction is to get some little house either in the neighbourhood of Windsor, or in yours, as a Boudoir, ou je ne bouderois pas, car a l'heure qu'il est je n'ai des Bouderies que pour le monde. It is for that reason why I should like to have the option of Chicelhurst, or if I cannot have that, to find something like (?) Lady Holland's.

"These are the thoughts I amuse myself with, by which you

[1] In fact England and France were then at war, following upon the Treaty between France and America, signed May 1778.

[2] Sister of Lord Chatham.

will see that I have no thought of taking up my residence here, how long I should stay if any good would be obtained by it, I do not know, or would answer for. I hope that Lady M[idleton] has not been made to believe by Mr W[alpole] that they will poison me. Of all the ideas which ever come into a man's head, who knew the world, and me, I think that was the most absurd ; upon any supposition which could have been the foundation of it. But his historic doubts, and his historic certainties, have always appeared to me to have something more singular in them than those of any other person. But the fact is, il ne paroit s'en douter desire, il n'y point de secret impenetrable pour lui. Yours most affectionately."

"GERNETTO
"That is the Comte Mellario's country house 14 miles from Milan.

"Saturday m., July 5th, 1778

"I received here this morning yours of the 18th of last month. It came to Milan last night. I am here and alone with Mie Mie and her grandmother Me. la Comtesse. It is quite a babel such a jargon of Milannois Italian, French and English. Poor Robert walks about and has not a person who can understand him, but his fellow servt. Me. la Comtesse does not speak French well and poor Mie Mie rings the changes upon the three languages, in defiance of every part of speech. There are a great many of the clergy in the neighbourhood, but they speak no other language but Italian and that of this country only. The houses convince me as well as many other things that I am far from England or even from France, but the country otherwise is very English : the verdure is very good and the enclosures the same, the trees are chiefly mulberry trees which they are too apt to strip for the use of the silk worms, but about this place are planted a great many chesnuts, hornbeam and oak. I wish that they approached the house nearer than they do. However this is kept very cool, it is a very large one, exceeding good apartments and in the Italian manner well fitted up. I think that the Comte told me his improvements as he calls them cost him £25,000 English and so I should imagine. I wish that our countryman Mr Brown[1] had been consulted and that we had a cook from Frognal. It is one of my misfortunes at present to have lost my appetite but if I had not I should be much embarrassed how to gratify it. A poor miserable small boiled chicken is as regularly placed on my side at dinner as my couvert ; with that,

[1] "Capability" Brown ; died 1783.

an egg and a few cherries, I am kept alive. Mie Mie mange de tout et rien ne lui déplait; elle est en cela, pour le moment, moins à plaindre que moi. Her mother was here a week but has left us. Warner s'ennuye beaucoup. Je n'en suis pas surpris. I have at present fixed the beginning of September for my return, if ye weather should be then tolerably cool and towards the end of it, I hope that you will hear of me at Calais, waiting, and not long, for a conveyance to England. You will be so good before that time as to lett me know where you will then be for I shall be very happy to see you and to find you all well. I have had three letters from you besides that which I've received to-day, in all I am much obliged to you for them. They are a great relief to me. I hope never to stand any more in the same need of giving you so much trouble. For it is not my intention ever more to be at so great a distance from home. How my wishes will be hereafter accomplished without it I do not know. I must trust to the chapter of accidents. Every expectation with which I could have been furnished by reasons of humanity or propriety have failed me. But I have done what I think was right for me to do, and it will now be as right for me to be resigned to what is not at my disposal. This post has brought me oblique accounts of the Commissioners. I hear that their passage was a very favourable one, and that they are likely to meet with more success than has been predicted. You may easily conceive on how many accounts I am happy at this prospect; I hope that whatever satisfaction my own life is deprived of, I shall never be insensible to the feelings of my friends. I am assured that Lady C[arlisle] is out of danger, but there is still left an ugly complaint, the entire cure of which Mrs Potts is afraid will be tedious. I beg you not to suffer any part of your pleasure in contemplating the views between Margate and Dartford to be diminished by comparisons which have no foundation. I do assure you that you must travel many days elsewhere to see what on every account is so agreeable as to the security in which you live, perhaps that may be more owing to poverty than police. In lodging houses at publick places I do not conceive that there are great prizes to be found. But the civility and *officimente* with which you are served is pleasing lett the motive be what it will. I believe in most cases of that sort we had better avoid for our own comfort too nice a scrutiny. The situation of our fleets do certainly give a prospect of war, but my correspondents assure me that of peace is the most probable. However I hope that a safe passage will be provided for me to my own country the first week of October. An invasion is what I

have long dreaded in my own mind as a great phantom, and I have been authorised to think so from the soberest people among those who should invade us. But camps and regiments etc., may not have been without their use. I beg my love to all the family, and tell Lady Middleton that I drank her health with Warner last Monday. I hope that the next post will bring me a letter from Charles."

[To CHARLES TOWNSHEND]

"MILAN
"28th July

"I do not know very well at present how the account stands between us in regard to letters nor with your sister Mary either, but I suppose that will not signify while the ballce. of trade in respect to correspondence must be so much of your side, that I have everything to learn from you and nothing to inform you. I am to wait for the event of the two fleets and to know if there is any account and what of the Commissioners. I hope that I shall have an éclaircissement on both these points in about a week, or ten days, and that there is no truth in the Spaniards having added to the strength of the French fleet or that Sr. H. Clinton has mett with a rebuff in America or Lord Cornwallis who was detached by him, for both these things are brought to us here as news in the Berne Gazette as an article from Paris, furnished as I suppose by Franklin.[1] The Stocks I see rather rise and the American ships are arrived, so far so good. Here it is too hot to hold au pied de la lettre. I have no hope but in a storm of thunder and lightning because they are accompanied with rain and this remedy cannot be worse than the disease because they can only procure me a more sudden dissolution. I have done inquiring about the degrees of heat, for it surpasses all common barometers. I am in a constant sweat which they tell me is wholesome. Warner eats notwithstanding comme quatre. I beg my kind compts. to Mr Townshend and tell him that I saw the other day a letter from the Professor of Modern Languages at Cambridge to the Comte Fermian, and of three French words in the superscription of his letter he contrives to spell two of them wrong. He says that the place he holds is one which the son of the first nobleman in the land might have accepted of. It is all in what he calls English and is full of such slip slop as a laundry maid would be ashamed of. It would have diverted me much if I had not seen it in the hands of a foreign Minister. Lady Townshend's

[1] Benjamin Franklin. Clinton evacuated Philadelphia in June 1778.

quarrel and pursuit of her own tenant is admirable. I do not believe there is an Italian character like her.[1] It is quite the growth of our country. The reconciliation between Lord T. and his son I take it for granted is only a patched up peace. I have no dependence on its duration. My love to Mary. I shall write to her by the next post. I must be wrote to here till after the first Tuesday or Friday in September and then to Paris for there I shall be the latter end of that month. Mie Mie thanks you for your kind mention of her and so do I. What is to become of us? Are we to have war? if we have will it last long? What is to be the state of our funds? What changes are there to be in Administration? These are my chief points of enquiry. Bankruptcy and separations etc. may come in by way of episodes. Miss L. Selwyn condoled with me on the loss of Lady Holland.[2] I am afraid that her condolence was only premature for I have not yet heard that she is dead, and since that have had a letter from Lady Ossory but by that I find that it is a very desperate case. Remember me to your brother and to all his family. He says that he should like to be at Milan. If he was all I can say is that la graisse seroit bien tot fondue. Such a heat I never felt but I am well notwithstanding and most affectionately yours. Pray write to me often in this critical time of news."

[To Mary Townshend]

"Milan
"Saturday, August 1st

"Yesterday brought me a letter from Charles which I shall not acknowledge by this post, because I wrote to him the last, and it is your turn to be tormented next. I take it for granted that this will find you returned from Frognal, and I hope all of you much better for your expedition. Miss L. Selwyn wrote to me and gave me one day more in the month of June than that month ever contained, and condoled with me on the loss of Lady Holld. who is as yet alive, but that is as much as I believe can with truth be said. I continue well, but cannot stir from my couch till the evening from the excessive heat. But then Mie Mie and I go out airing, and we have a kind of Vauxhall now for her amusement, which is about as good as Marybone. But they admire it, and think it quite à l'angloise. There is musick, Rafraichissement. and marionettes, and the Archduke walks abt. like the D. of York, so I say that with a prince or two more, it would be as good as Marybone.

[1] Audrey, Lady Townshend, died 1788.

[2] Lady Holland died on the 6th October.

Warner leaves me in a day or two to go to Venice, and will be gone about twelve days, he says. I could not say anything to discourage him; for I really think it would be unreasonable, and being quite well, my divine is of no use to me. Dr Gemm was prevented from coming to me by a feaver which he contracted after his attendance on Miss Seymour. My letters of yesterday carry an air of peace, I hope in God that I shall not be kept a prisoner in Paris. I must be there about a fortnight, but no more, so in the middle of October I am in hopes to see you in Burlington Street. I am in the utmost impatience to hear of the Brest Fleets, the Spanish Negociation, Destains fleet, and of the Commissioners; poor Lady Holland I quite despair of. I agree with you that I did the best thing which I could do for Mie Mie, in giving her up for I do not see that I could safely do else. But it is by no means a prevailing opinion here, even among her own relations, that it was the best thing which could have been done for her, and had they known what they know now, they would not I believe have sent for her so soon, but I hope that before I go, something will be settled in regard to her education which will putt it on a better foot than it now is. There is some difference upon other points, among her relations, about which I hope that they will agree, and if they do, I shall, I fancy, find no difficulty in having my plan adopted, although La Neutralità fra due donné che ci sono equalemente amiche quantunque si un disjustate fra di esse per affari nei quati non abbiamo alenna partes é un punto difficile.

"There is some Italian for you. I think that it will be in the second week of next month that I shall leave this place, so your last letter may be wrote in the last week of this. I shall be about the 20th of September at Lyons, and in Paris the 26th or 27th. I dread my journey through Savoye more than anything. Who is the lady who intended to hang herself for Lord Tyrconnel? What Beauclerk is it who is gone off? How many more are undone? When shall you return to town? Is there to be a change of administration? Will the Americans treat? Will the Stocks arise? Can you answer any of these questions? I beg my love to the family and my compliments to your neighbour Mrs Beevers. If I can do anything for you in Paris pray let me know. I hope that you forgive my troubling you with such frequent and such long letters.

"I hope never more to write to you at so great a distance. If I take a trip at some other time, as far as Paris, yt. I shall engage you to go with me, but that does not appear probable or indeed reasonable to hope for. Mie Mie desires to be

remembered, elle parle son retour comme d'une chose certaine je serais bien aise qu'elle fut douteuse. Yours most truly, and most affectionately."

"MILAN
[Sept. 1778]

"I take my leave of the A. Duke and Arch Duchess to-morrow night, where there will be a drawing room, and a Baisemains, for great people here: it is her fête. The Dutchess of Parma has been here to whom I was presented, and with whom I afterwards dined, and her brother the Arch D. and Arch Dse. at Comte Fermian's. She received me with the greatest affability imaginable and seems a very sensible woman, with some singularity of dress, and amusement. She is tall and well shaped but seemed to be big with child, so I could not very well judge of that. She is very genteel, but as to her head, notwithstanding her high forehead, she had her hair combed back flatt and a great many diamonds upon that, and an old fashioned cap and pinners pinned up. She is very fair, beaucoup de charactère une Phisionomie spirituelle, an air of activity: and one of her favourite passions is for horses. She speaks French, and Italian extremely well, and without that German accent which her brother the Arch D. has. She is very like him and the Emperor, and indeed the whole family. She invited me to come to Parma, and seemed much surprised, that I had been so long in Italy, and that I had seen no other town than Milan. I could not explain that to her R. Highness although I do not doubt but others have: and with all my heart. I like her so well that if I could have staid longer in Italy, I would certainly have gone to Parma. I like Princes very well, if they know the necessité de plaire. Les moyens n'en content beaucoup aux personnes de leur Rang. Before she went away, she was to see all that Milan could show her, and when she was at the Opera she went into the Rooms of the Ridotto, before the Opera began; I had leave to carry Mie Mie there, and Mme. Crevelli, one of the dames d'honneur, presented her to the Dutchess. The Arch Dutchess spied her out first, and said je ferai venir ma belle sœur pour lui parler; she did so, and it gave me great pleasure to see how well the child acquitted herself. She spoke to her in french sans confusion, et avec beaucoup de grace, then in Italian to some of the Ladies who asked me if she spoke English as well. I said pas le moins. They were mightily pleased with her, and the Cardinal Dorini, whose Mother is Mie Mie's great Aunt, by her father's side, talked to her a great deal, I assured his eminence

que pour avoir été six ans en Angleterre elle n'en était pas moins bonne Chatolique. Oh, je le crois bien, Monsieur me dit-il, et mille fois plus spirituelle, j'en suis persuadé ; la réponse fut jolie et honnête. I like that Cardinal much, but on account of some coolness in the family, altho' I was then at Gennetto, but four miles from him, I could not continue to improve our acquaintance, and Mme. Mellario, Mie Mie's G. Mother, carried us there but once.

"The affairs in Bohemia go very ill for the Queen, the G. Duke and Dutchesse are gone from Florence to pass the Winter at Vienna, to comfort the old lady. What Princesse have we to comfort us? I hear the Duke of G[loucester?] goes to the K[ing] of P[russia]. I do not approve that measure. But why will he not take the D. of C[umberland?] with him, or is not that his Element? If T. Cov. has Mrs Eth.'s Estate in Kent or anywhere else, my friend the Peer will be disappointed. I wish, for my part, that he would leave it to the prodigal son—on certain Conditions and under certain restrictions. But if N. Cray should be to be lett, will Tommy have it? Or Hall place, for I suppose, that will come to Market soon.

"I long for some House out of town, and if these are not to be had, or upon too high terms for me, I must have a less: but the best, and the cheapest thing for me is to be as much out of London as I can. You know too well, among my other foibles, my ungovernable passion for play, and I want to put an entire end to it, for many reasons, if more than one was necessary. Here I have been very discreet, for altho' in these Ridotto rooms, there were no less than twelve Pharo tables, each covered with 1200 sequins, and this every night, and all night I believe, I have ventured but one Guinea since I have been here, and for a few times at Paris with the Pope's Nuncio at Loto—which is a game not very likely to tempt, or to ruin me. In short, I hope to do at least what a great many do, which is to die corrigé, if not before. It is a pity that we are all so mistaken as to the period, and defer acquiring any prudence till it becomes almost of no use to us. You see for want of news how I am obliged to preach, without thinking, that when you have nothing to say there is still an easier as well as a meilleur parti à prendre. But you must lett me apologise for my scribbling, and would ever make me believe that my letters were agreable to you. I hope that they are so, for the only reason for which they can be so and that you believe me to be what I really am, most affectionately yours. My kind compliments to all, and many thanks to Charles. Mie Mie desires me to say everything for her which she wishes to say and

write for herself, and which I wish as much as she can do, that she may!"
"MIE MIE"[1]

"We can do no better as yet, because when I came here, the first principle of education which I heard advanced, was, that a child should learn nothing till it was ten years old, I am tempted to wish que cela fût possible."

"GERNETTO
"Wednesday m., 8th [Sept. 1778]

"Our Voyage here finishes on Saturday. I went to Milan on Monday to dine with Comte Fermian, and to receive my Letters, among others I had the pleasure of your last, which was a kind of Postcript to the former one, which I answered last week: this goes on Saturday; indeed I cannot complain of you, no more in the circumstance of writing, than on any other account, you and your Brothers have been very kind in that respect; and it is what I am too reasonable to expect from Mr Townshend. It is enough for me that I know that he is well; and that I am likely to pass a great many more days with him: which will allways give me much satisfaction. But at this distance, one is more inquisitive after persons, and things, than when we are at home; and upon my first coming into this Country, I was very much without Intelligence. Now I am not perhaps in a greater certainty of what is likely to happen, but those are inconveniences which I must share in common with others. I hope, as the declaration of War has not yet happened, it will at least be deferred till I gett safe into my own House, which I hope will be very early in October. The prospect of peace is pleasant, and it is with prospects, and hopes, that I must be satisfied, and these I cannot allways have neither. I have reason to think that L. Carlisle is gott safe to N. York. I am told that the Commissioners will have some people to treat with them. But who, or upon what terms, I am yet to learn. However, so far so good. Ly. C. is also out of Danger, I hope, and the only disorder left not likely to have any serious Consequences. All these things, about which I was ignorant, added to a weight which I have now and then upon my Spirits, made me very unhappy, when I came into this Country first. I am better now, because as my mind is more informed of everything, I know better what I may hope for, and what I must despair of, and by that means may be better able to secure to myself some degree of tranquillity, which I ought to seek for when I have done my

[1] In "Mie Mie's" handwriting.

utmost, and which I hope that I shall find; But that must be in my own Country; I am sure that it cannot be here. Mie Mie and her Grandmother and I have been chiefly together at this place about three weeks; and I have had some very interesting Conversations with the old Lady on the subject of her Grand-daughter, whom she seems really to love, and whose wellfare she would be happy to procure. We are much more agreed upon the Nature of the disease than about the Remedy. I believe that if I was a Catholick, there would be no difficulty in obtaining what I desire; and even that might be remov'd, if it was not for the obstinacy of those whose Religion I am as yet to learn, as well as everything else which can be of use to poor Mie Mie, all the rest of her Parents and friends seem to have conceived so good an opinion of me, from my care of her; and seem to confess that what I wish is so reasonable, that if I had not an opposition from one quarter I might, by giving Satisfaction in regard to their Chatolicité, have the Direction of her in all other points; and in that I do not desire it. Je ne finirai pas la vie avec le metier de Convertisseur, ni je ne me chargerai pas non plus du Salut de personne; le principal de ce que je voudrais procurer pour Mie Mie, serait la morale, et les bonnes mœurs—and from a Parent one should expect to find no Obstacle. But it will be to that, that she will owe all the misfortunes of her life, and I may quote to you what I saw wrote under a Picture at Turin, which was a Passion: Chi n'e stato la Cagione, meno si pente. However, before I leave Milan, I shall have settled, or not settled, something concerning her Education, with those of her family, who are the most reasonable and then I will endeavour to make up my mind to what may be the issue of it. On Sunday Me. la Comtesse, Mie Mie and I dined in a Convent of Benedictines a few miles from hence, two of the religieuses are sisters to la Comtesse. It was the best dinner I have had since I came into Italy, for it was the least nasty. We dined in a large salon, which is a kind of parlour near the Grille, on the other side dined the nuns, waited upon by the sœurs converses. Mie Mie not being seven years old, had permission to run in and out the Convent the whole day. Before dinner we sate upon the landing place of a large stone stair case and the great doors of the Convent were open. One side of the threshold sate the Abbesse, and some of the nuns, on the other Me. la Comtesse and I. I received a great many compliments on Mie Mie's account, some of which were really more due to her than to myself. On lui trouva une infinité des graces dans ses manières, which she always had, aussi l'honnêtete lui est fait naturelle, lorsque cette humeur lui prend. They

made her a present of a basket of all kinds of toys, and sweet meats made in the Convent and she was very happy the whole day. The heat was excessive. It was 23 degrees by Reaumur's Thermométre, as I have been told, and we have half a degree more to expect. After dinner I went into an appartement which is for the use of the Cardinal Archevêcque upon his visitation, and lay down on his Eminency's bed till the cool of the evening and it was time to return home. The Q. of Hungary, I hear, is making up matters with the K. of Prussia. Will Spain assist us with her mediation? How long shall you stay at Margate? My last letter was directed to you there. I beg my compliments to Mrs Terry but it is to Mrs Webb that I acknowledge my greater obligation. Your situation and feelings about Miss Broderick are so natural, and easy to be conceived that I cannot but share your anxiety about her, which I hope, however, to hear, is at an end. It is no part of my intention nor is it my disposition to love or be anxious about Mie Mie so exclusively that I cannot interest myself in what concerns persons so nearly related to me, and for whom I shall ever preserve the tenderest regard. But you will allow infelicity to be a little peculiar that sans être, ou père ou mère, j'en aurais toute l'inquietude, et rien que cela. You tell me that L[ord] R[obert] B[ertie] is better. I therefore must be thought to have been very premature in what I have said upon a supposition that it might have been otherwise. I think still that between you and I, there is no life so little to be depended upon and at no time should I be surprised to hear of wt. seems at present postponed. I am sure that Charles and I have neither of us a desire that such an event should not be as late as he can wish, but if it does happen, I have told you wt. I wished to have known, that is to you, and to Charles. But if I had any other smaller place which was an agreable one in your neighbourhood, I think I could go there in the fine weather and pass more time there agreably, than at Matson. I must determine between one of these, and the neighbourhood of Windsor before next Spring. However I will talk this matter over with you on my return.

"Lady Holland's place at Kingsgate must have amused you much more than it would have done me. I was disposed to be grave at many things I saw there were in his life time; there is nothing can now bring him to my mind and poor Lady Holland, but brings very melancholy thoughts at the same time. I see your news of the stocks confirmed by the papers, the least rise gives me some kind of hopes, not of my being rich, but of my country being less poor and undone. I was very unlucky in my visit to Lord Ossory's last November. Had I stayed a

few days longer in town I should have sold my stock upon a rise of 2½ and it is now fallen 10½ below what the price was when I bought it. But there it must now remain till better times. I believe if it ever rises to the half of what it was, I shall sell out and try a mortgage. Lady Middleton is a better manager of money than I am and for the future I shall ask her advice. You ask me about the poor Rena,[1] which looks as if you was more sentimental than I am. That I cannot allow although I know que vous avez le cœur trés bon : no, I have not seen her, nor made any enquiries after her. Have I not had assez de separations? assez de regrets? assez de congés? desormais il me faudra plutôt des detachments, que de nouvelles occasions de renouveller des liaisons qui ne peuvent me procure que du chagrin ou du ridicule. The last thing I heard of her was that she was well, e Ricca, ma molto invecciata ; jugez donc du reste. I am mighty happy to find that you think my friend Lord C[arlisle] is likely to return avec le meilleur des tous. I shall be glad that he returns safe, and that he finds all his family as he left it. I am convinced that he will have done all that could have been expected, and I think that his good intentions will do him honour, and I hope, by that, and his future discretion he will extricate himself and his children out of those distresses which those of other people of his acquaintances are exposed to by their vanity and dissipation. He has certainly a right to be well spoke of, and considered upon this account. But I am afraid that it had like to have been purchased with the life of poor Lady C. which would have been paying a great deal too dear for any advantage which he will derive from it. The accounts which I have of Lady Holland differ, but all unite in saying [they] had better pass next winter abroad. I hope that no such remedies will be deemed necessary for Miss B. If they were and Lady M. were to go to Nice I should go to Genova, and in a Felouque go from thence to Nice to meet her and not pass through Savoie on my return home. The next post I flatter myself will bring a letter from Charles. He is a better nouvelliste than any of the family, although some of his intelligence comes to him through a very corrupted channel. With a piece of English news more than is to be seen in the common papers gives me a very good air at the Comte Fermian's table. He is the best English man of any foreigner that I have known and I seem to be extremely in his good graces. Adieu for the present with my best and kindest compliments to all the family, I keep the rest of my paper for any occasion which I may have to add more before Saturday evening."

[1] Lord March's old mistress.

Selwyn left Milan on 17th September, travelling homewards by way of Genoa, Nice and Aix. He was somewhat consoled at parting from Mie Mie by the understanding that, in the following year, she was to return to Paris to be educated; and Selwyn had hopes that she might even be allowed to come to England.

[To Charles Townshend]

"Milan
"Wednesday, 16th Sept. 1778

"I received no letters by yesterday's post, nor do I now expect to receive any more here or will, I suppose, any more be wrote, or directed to me in Italy. However I cannot go away without thanking you for all which I have received from you, and for your kindness and attention to me on all occasions. I was to have sett out this morning, and all my goods come packed up of every kind, but I received a message from the Arch Duke which has obliged me to stay one day more. I am to go to-morrow only twenty miles to the house of a Comte Trotti, which he has offered me for my accomodation on the road at Pavia, and there I shall stay all to-morrow, and from thence to the English Consul's at Genoa, there I shall stay till I embark, which will depend upon the weather, I hope not above two days. I intend to land at Nice or Antibes, and to gett to Paris in the first week of next month. If I do not hear some news of England at Genoa, I shall hear more that I can depend upon till I shall be in Paris, where my chief dependance will be upon you. I have had a slight degree of fever this week, I suppose arising partly from the change of weather, and partly from the agitation de mon depart. But I am now well; and perfectly satisfied with everybody here, as they profess to have been with me. I have obtained the points I wanted to carry, in the only mode which reason could well fortify, and those who of all reasonable beings seemed the most perverse, have at last acted by me and by those for whom I interest myself, in a manner that I am sure nobody will ever disapprove. I shall leave the country without being either poisonned, or pillaged; all those from whom good treatment could be expected, I have experienced as much as possible. So, whatever disagreeable feelings I may find for the moment, upon leaving Mie Mie, things are now in so good a tract both for her and for my own peace of mind, that I am quite at ease, hoping that no accidents will happen, which it is not my temper to anticipate

unnecessarily by imagination. I beg my love to all the family. I suppose that my time of coming will be with the first wood cock, for as I conceive the sea will be calmed, when the frosty weather begins, so it will be about that time that I shall be, in all probability at Calais. I have one more favour to ask of you, which is that you will present my best respects to Lady Cornwallis. I allways took very kindly of her, her concern about me in respect to the child. She may be assured that at this moment there is nothing to fear for either of us, more than for what no one can foresee and to which all mankind is liable, and that I am now not without hopes of bringing her once more to pay her respects to her, if her Ladyship permitts it. I am dear Charles, most affectionately yours."

"AIX-EN-PROVENCE
"Sunday, 27th September

"This letter has travelled in my pocket book from Milan. I stay'd at Genoa till Monday morning and landed at Antibes, but till Thursday evening I was putting in at all the Italian towns in the Genoese State on the coast. Sometimes I thought that [there] was too much wind and that I should be sick, that there was none at all, so we were to go à la rames. The towns from the coast were pretty beyond description, but very poor ones when you came into them, and in one [of] them I was reduced to beg a night's lodging for myself and my servants, in a Convent of Franciscans del'Annunciata, where I was suffocated as much as if I had lived in Falstaff's basket. The Convents at each town shewed me all the attention the place admitted. The orchards were full of Lemon trees, and these loaded with lemons, down to the ground, like our apple orchards in Gloucestershire. Warner thought that their being gathered so fresh, made his punch so much better, that I thought I should never have gott him out of the country. I shall stay to repose myself here to-day. I have received a slight hurt in my leg. All the English have been sent from home, and there are here but a few prisoners taken in a Privatur, I have sent Warner twice, with what succour I can afford them. I am affectionately."

Selwyn, like Horace Walpole, and the rest of his circle, was a great admirer of Madame de Sévigné. On his way home through Provence he could not resist the temptation to visit Grignan, where he wrote the following letter:—

[To Mary Townshend]

"Á Grignan
"Friday, 2 Oct. 1778

"If you were of opinion that I could not leave Italy sentimentally without going to Florence, which I could not do with any propriety, and to which I was also repugnant, par le sentiment même, I am sure that you will think it a great heresy if I should have passed through Provence, without coming to the shrine that is in the Sanctuary here; and I thought also that you would not forgive me if being here I had not wrote a letter from this place. I was going to write to my Lady Ossory, who is as well as yourself a professed admirer of Me. de Sévigné, but when I reflected upon her kind of devotion and yours, I thought that besides les droits de Parenté, je pouvois entre voir dans votre spiritualité, comme dans celle de Me. Guion, plus de quietisme pour ainsi dire, que dans la sienne et qui mérite, à mon estime, la preference. I finished a letter to Charles when I was at Aix and which I had begun at Milan. I reserved writing to you till I should come here. I went from Aix to Nismes, where I saw des morceaux d'antiquités which pleased me much. I stopped on the road at St Rema where there were a triumphal arch and a Mausolee, as it is call'd both said to be erected by C. Marius after his defeat of the Cimbri in that place. They are both beautifull. I saw at Nismes the Amphitheatre, the Temple of Diana and the Maison quarrièe (?) which pleased me the most. I passed by the Pont du gard, another great object of curiosity and came the day before yesterday to Avignon, which had no one thing to recommend it and where I was almost suffocated with dirt and stink. I both dined and supped by choice at the Table d'Hôte which was in the Inn where I lodged, and the Company was as curiously sorted as it could be. We had French officers, chanoines, women who were travelling like myself, and two gentlemen belonging to the revolted Colonies, one going to Virginia and the other to Philadelphia. From Avignon I came here. I dined at a house belonging to the Bishop of Avignon, within a few leagues of Grignan, with Monsieur le Curé, and another Ecclesiastique, whom they called le Doyen, and had an excellent dinner. It was there that l'esprit de Me. de Sévigné began to influence, for I was received with as much civility by these two divines, and the servants had as much émpressement to gett me everything I wanted as if Me. de Sévigné herself had been with me. I did not get to the Chateau till within half an hour of its growing dark, but I was time enough to admire the belle terrasse and to see the principal appartments.

My cook was the person whom I sent on before, so although there was no body here but the Intendant, I found every thing as ready for my reception as if I had been expected a twelve month, and an order had been left by the proprietor of the Chateau, that I should be treated in the manner I have been. Since neither le Comte de Grignan, Madame le Comtesse nor Me. de Sévigné herself were here to do the honours, it was impossible to expect so much attention. I can never get it out of my mind that by some incomprehensible interposition she has not influenced on this occasion. The Château, instead of being in the ruinous condition and without furniture as I expected is in the greatest repair and perfectly well furnished. Monsieur de Grignan's furniture after his death or his son's was sold for the use of his creditors and bought by Jews who have dispersed it. But the Maréchal de Mai, who died two years ago in that horrible manner which you heard of, laid out abt. quarante mille ecus in the repairs and furniture. The estate was purchased by his father and now belongs to his nephew Monsieur d'Olivry (?). I should as you will imagine have been as well pleased if the old furniture had been here, but however there is enough. Here are pictures and very good ones of the Grignans and Adhémars without end. But of furniture I could find nothing but a little black cabinet which they tell me was in Me. Sévigné's appartment and which M. Pincé was so good as to offer me. It is more respectable than Portatif, so for the present I will leave it here. In the room where I lay and in which Me. de Sévigné expired and from whence I write you this letter is a picture of her, it is a half length but I do not like it so well as my own. I found the original of mine at Aix. . . . It is with the other family pictures at Me. de Viner's whose husband was the grandson of Pauline. The Collegiate Church is under the terrasse in the sanctuary; there is M. de S. buried. Monsieur de Mai has erected a monument to her although not related to the family. I shall make my visit there when I have breakfasted and give you another time an account of it. Most things, especially recommended in the manner this has been fall short of your expectation, but this Chateau has much exceeded it. The view from the terrasse is the finest I ever saw, the meadows under it of the finest verdure, and the prospect the most varied, and surmounted by mountains like the Alps. The rooms are spacious, and a great many very well distributed. In short, it has paid me very well for the trouble which I gave myself in going so far out of my way. I shall be, I hope at Lyons if not to-morrow night, on Sunday and on Tuesday I will proceed to Paris. I must stay there at least a fortnight

and shall then gett to England as soon as I can. I hope to receive some letters at Lyons and more at Paris. What is the present situation of our affairs, I am in perfect ignorance of and am afraid of being better informed. I am in pain about other things as you may imagine and for Lady Holland in particular. I am made easy at present about Mie Mie, and I hope that when I renew the subject with you, you will not disapprove of what I have done. I do assure you that when I came away the mother talked as reasonably to me about it as it was possible and with perfect disinterestedness. The rest of the family and others at Milan are satisfied with what I have proposed and so we parted perfect friends. I hope that you will not think me less reasonable than I hope that I have been. I am persuaded that I have your good wishes and that you will give me the best advice which can be administered to one who is on the verge into which my affections have betrayed me. I will take of it what I can, and what I cannot may not perhaps be the least wholesome, but il ne faut pas me confier dans le vif; I can never part with her till I know that she will be in better hands than my own, which is all that I can now say. I hope that I shall hear from you before I leave Paris. I think whatever apology my other letters may want, you will excuse this being broke to you from this place from whence I do not believe you expected ever to receive a letter, if you did it must have been from me. The answer to it you will make immediately if not to myself and before you have read it out you will say—Il fait convenir, mon cher Oncle, que vous avez poussé vos extravagances et votre enthousiasme aussi loin que cela peut aller. J'y souviens. However it must be allowed also that where reason fails you, you may be sure of precedent. I thought indeed before I came here that Lady M. Coke had been the only possedée who had been upon this pilgrimage and to be sure whoever has a mind to be singular is sure in her of an example. On ne peut segarer sur les traces d'Alcide. But they tell me here that her Ladyship was not by many the first who came upon this enquiry, and that it is a mania peculiar to the English, the more peculiar because they are English. Now I release you, remember me kindly to all the family. I hope to find Mr Townshend very well at my return and that I shall be able to amuse him with an account of my pranks. Yours most affectionately."

To this letter Miss Townshend replied: "I am much flattered and obliged by your thinking me worthy of a letter from Grignan. When I heard of you in Provence I thought it im-

possible that you should not make some détour to see the habitation of the Adhémars ; and it is a great satisfaction to me to hear that it is not in ruins, as I had been told. . . . Do not the French read Madame de Sévigné with the admiration that some of us do ; or does their religion surfeit them with visiting shrines and relics? . . . I envy you seeing the family pictures, as I should like to put faces to my friends of that *coterie.*" [1]

"Á Lyons
"Sunday, 5th October [1778]

"My last letter to you was from Grignan, and I have been ever since dans le plus profound recueillement. What I saw there after I was drest in the morning shall be the subject of another letter, or of our conversation. I found upon information that Lady Mary [Coke] had stayed there two days. The Duchess of Leinster was contented with one. Le Chapitre ne se lasse pas de parier de leur precieux dépot.

"Monsieur le Bouilli has made me a present of a little ebony cabinet, le dernier des meubles qui restait, which was in Mme. de Sev.'s appartment, and where, he says, she kept her bijouterie. It was preserv'd by an old man who waited on her, and as he pretended, qui taillent ses plumes. Mais c'est un pais de superstition, et de l'egotisme de sorte que tout m'est suspect et apocriphe.

"But if there should be any historical doubt about it, Horry [2] shall clear it up for us. I could not get here till the day before yesterday, the road grew heavy with the rains which have fallen, and the post is si mal servie, that I am comme une tortue qui courrit en poste. I go part of my way to day, but I do not expect to be in Paris till this day seven-night. I hope that I shall have some news there. I have received no letters here. When does the Parliament in America permit our Congress to meet for the *despatch* of Business? I wish that I had met with a Letter here from Charles. But he has supposed me further on my Road to Paris. I wish that I was there, all I meet now on the Road give me such news, faites á leur fantaisie que j'en suis en desespoir ; mais ils m'assurent en meme temps que l'on travaille à la pain apres avoir travaille pour nous perdre et avec trop de success. They write me word from Milan that Mie Mie has been since I left her sage, comme l'enfant prodigue,

[1] Jesse, vol. iii. p. 328.
[2] Horace Walpole.

c'est a dire jusques a l' [?] il faut l'en croire sur leur paroles, mais les exces me font toujours suspect. If she is once in proper hands je serai tranquille sur le reste. My kind compliments to all, Charles desires me to bring him peace. I could have stuffed my Coach with olive Branches if that would have done. Shall we have peace? and upon what terms? Have you bought your Piece of Ground for your potatoes? How has the family at Matson fared, have you heard of them? Who is to inhabit North Cray? Will Hall Place be to let? I dread to know what is become of poor Ly. Holl[d.] I am not, as you may imagine, without anxiety on Lord Carlisle's account. I shall meet the dowager in Paris, or at Chaillot. The sight of our Countrymen prisoners at Aix, me fit faire mauvais sang, and the wound in my leg is but just healed, I would have no Chirurgien, and so I had no help but from one I found with them. Adieu. Warner does not return to England. He has been very busy in reading the provençal and wanted to find Books wrote in the Languedoisen, wh. they tell me is a better language. He has as many different patois's as the Workmen at Babel. I have bought one Provençal Book, but wether it will entertain you I know not. Their accent did not me, I know, it was horrible, and lasted till I came here. But from Sienna to Chalons sur Marne, there is really neither french or Italian, that does not more or less offend your ears among the common people. I shall myself be contented with that de ma propre paroisse."

Selwyn arrived in Paris early in October, with his "cabinet d'ébène," and duly reported himself at the Convent St Joseph. Mme. du Deffand, writing to Walpole on 24th October, said: "I have not told you that he [Selwyn] has visited Grignan on his journey, and was received at the chateau by a kind of steward, or concierge, who gave him the room to sleep in where Mme. de Sévigné died. He has also seen her portrait, also that of Mme. de Grignan, and those of all the Grignans of whom she speaks in her letters. Further, he made him a present of a small ebony cabinet, which belonged to Madame; it will arrive here immediately."

"PARIS
"14th October [1778]

"I came here on Monday last, and have this afternoon received your letter of the 4th of this month, I sent to the Post House at Lyons, but found no letters for me there whatsoever,

in regard to some upon business, I was so disappointed that I conclude there must have been some mistake or neglect about them. Those which I have received to-day have brought me an account of poor Lady Holland's death, which has so much dispirited me that I believe that you will quit this time for a very short letter. I had really so little hopes myself that although by those letters which I found on my arrival here, there seemed to be a great alteration for the better, as they called it, I never allowed myself to rejoice at it; no one I believe ever yet recovered from the state in which she was represented to be. I hear also that the D. of Queensberry is extremely ill, so there may be a revolution in the affairs of my friend March. I am told that you expect peace in England, to tell you the truth, my hopes of that have diminished much since I came here. In short I am to-day quite out of sorts. I find my friend Me. du Deffands declining and we know how rapid changes are after fourscore. Lady Carlisle hopes, and expects her husband home very shortly, as she writes me word. His lawyer or steward however, expresses great anxiety about him, and has inspired me with it . . . I am now plagued with Abbesse's. Those who are people of distinction, have a mixture of all the nonsense, pride, commesage, bavardise &c., and the devil knows what, that they exercise my patience beyond conception. They seemed to have carried into their convents all the imperfections of the world, and dressed them up in the habits and delusions of their religion, and if I was not too old to be so tartuffi'd by them I should never gett out of them one word of truth. But they are the heifers that I am to plough with (as the phrase is), so I must submitt. Mr Boone has been here and placed his daughter in the Abbayé of Panthement, where I want to place Mie Mie, that is the convent which I shall recommend, if she is not placed with our English nunns. The family must determine upon the accounts which I shall give them of both. They will have till the spring to consider of it. I hope that when Charles returns to town he will send me some news, my love to him, and to the rest of the family. Yours most affectionately."

"PARIS
"Friday morn., 30th Oct. 1778

"The last post brought me very little publick news, but the account of an event very interesting to me which is March's succession.[1] He tells me that the D. of Q. has left him

[1] The third Duke of Queensberry died 22nd October 1778.

everything but a few legacies. I will not disguise the satisfaction it gives me, I did not wish him to be a duke nor to have so large an estate and I wished less the D. of Q.'s death, but I think his Grace's will marks so strongly his friendship, affection and confidence in my friend, that it gives me great pleasure. I should think, but nobody has told me so, that Mr Douglas was disappointed, which it is my opinion that he would not have been if the Duchess had been the survivor. I don't know how that is, but I think that he has no reason to complain. La fortune a dèja assez fait pour son Mignon. I have little more than a fortnight to stay here but you may, perhaps, hear of me for some time at Calais. I must have calm weather, or a la sua excellenz aura pausa, vi sara per me troppo di movimento, as the Captain of the Felouque told me, and I must enquire when I intend only to go to Parliament if I may not be carried to congress. I wish some news was come of the commissioners by my last letters, I should think that they would stay at N. York the whole winter. Yet Lady C. in her letter to me says that Ld. C. will be in England about the same time as myself. I should certainly not have done as Mr Boone has done, because my system of education would not send me to schools and convents for my daughter's education, if I had any. But Mie Mie is in less danger from my friend the Abbesse de Panthement, than from any other. She seems too much attached to the manners of the world to think of converting. She is a very sensible woman, trés décente, avec des manières très distinguées. I am at present happy enough that I shall gett Mie Mie out of Italy et de mauvaise Campagnie, till she grows up, for she must have had *that* in or out of an Italian Convent. Here, it will be my fault if that happens. I have had sad complaints of our English nuns at Pontoise, the La Superieure, I don't know her name, is I believe une fort plate dame. I was told the other day by a person who went to her upon business, that they met one of the Pensionnaires out in the town, walking with Abbés and I don't know who. Mie Mie will have liberty to come to me or to Me. de la Vanpalien, who is a great friend of mine, the Maréchal Berasch's grand-daughter and our relation. But I hope no where else . . . Me. de la V. has two daughters of her own, but she brings them up at home and very well. She has desired me to lett her have the care of Mie Mie while she is in France; I will ask for no other protection for her here. For I did not mean to bring her from her parents to be repandue dans le monde either in London or Paris. She says that she likes Matson better than any other place.

If she persists in that I hope to be able to indulge her in it. I must own that London has lost its charms to me, in a great measure and that is why I wish for a place near it, because it may be more convenient than to be at a great distance, especially in the beginning of the spring or summer. Je me trouve blazé sur trop de choses, à vous dire la verité. I have been often told there are some pleasures for every season of life. I wish I could find out what I had now to choose out of. I only know at present what I have lost. But I will make the experiment if Mie Mie comes to me; and if she does not I shall be plus endeffant que jamais. I am very unfortunate to have placed my happiness so much upon one bottom. But it is as you may say a scrape, a labyrinth, out of which I may perhaps find my way, but I have gone a great way to search it. Lady Rivers came here yesterday I hear, she was once an acquaintance of Me. du Deffand's, but she is now so deaf that I do not see how with their two infirmities, or rather deprivation of organs, their conversation can be carried on. . . . I do not find here, that they have the least idea of Spain's being false to us. I am sure if they had that I should hear it. No, I hear now and then of peace being in a state of negotiation. I hope that it is true. Why should it not be so, when so many of both countries wish it? What an extraordinary situation to be negotiating a peace before there is a declaration of war. Me. de Sévigné, Cabinet d'Ebène, is arrived and deposited dans la communauté de St Joseph. . . .

[Endorsed on wrapper:]

"You may gett your leg of pork and pease-pudden ready by the 29th of next month."

"PARIS
"Thursday, 19th Nov. [1778]

"The Courier did not arrive here till yesterday at 10 o'clock. He gott into one vessel and putt his valise on board another, he sailed for Calais and all my letters for Ostende. This delay makes my arrival in London now more uncertain than ever. However I will go after dinner as far as Chantilly and I propose to be at Calais on Sunday and politiquer avec M. le duc de Croz till I have a favourable wind.

"The D. of Q. has offered me his house in your neighbourhood and for a reason that I should be nearer by our family; nothing can be so kind and obliging as his letters to me are. I have refused it, because ma premiere regle est de ne pas sortir de

mon etat et to adhere to and be contented with what I have and as to being near you I am and allways shall be so where-ever I lodge, or in whatever country I may chance to reside. I hope that I shall never be again at a great distance from you or any of the family. I will never lose the memory of what my mother wished and I hoped, believed, and that was to cultivate Mr Townshend and his children. I daresay that you think me sincere and that love and respect for her will ever be ineffaceable and every thing she wished is my own inclination also. I hope to dine with you the latter end of next week. I will lett you know when I come what detained me here this last week."

[Endorsed: "On m'arrache ma lettre . . ."]

During the winter of 1778-1779, Selwyn was very much exercised in his mind as to whether he should really see Mie Mie in Paris in the following spring. Would her parents keep their half-promise or not? "Soyez sûr," Madame wrote, "que vous aurez ce printemps notre chére Mie Mie, et qu'elle se porte bien." But Selwyn could not trust Madame. However, a second daughter was born to that lady in December, which perhaps made her more willing to part with her first. At all events, Mie Mie was despatched to Paris in April, and Selwyn hurried there to meet her. When he arrived he found that the Fagnanis expected him to go as far as Lyons.

[To Mary Townshend]

"Paris
"Monday, 17th April [1779]

"You will be surprised, my dear Mary, that I have not wrote to you before. I intended to have wrote many letters this morning which I must now postpone.

"I am obliged to sett out for Lyons this morning, and shall not be returned hither before the end of next week. Two mails were thrown over board coming in one of our packets from Ostende the 7th of this month. There were letters in them both for me which might have saved me this nouvel embarras qui me met en desespoir; mes deux pauvres femmes en sont en desespoir aussi. But I found now that I should have gone to Lyons, the child will be there to-day, and I shall be there on Friday and bring her I hope myself to Paris. I should have said many more things to you, if I had had time, ces arrangemens ou dérangemens me tracassent infiniment. But there is

no remedy that will not be to me worse than any disease which I can have in this world. I shall be impatient to hear from you. This letter will not probably go till Thursday next, so it will be this day seven night before it reaches you, that will be the 26th inst. I shall then, I hope, be setting out again for Paris. This is living en courier, et je ne me croyais pas fait pour cela. I was very well established here for some time, all mes soupers were arranged for ten days to come. Le ménage était monté, tout est démonté pour le moment. I beg my love to all the family. Pray lett me hear often from one or other of you when I come back from Lyons. I have had a pleasant journey here. My passage over the sea was but of three hours from one port to the other. Mes ennemis m'ont reçu à ici bras ouverts, et au Palais royal sur tout, qu'aperçoient pas faire de plus mes amis. Je suis à cette heure cosmopolite de pure necessité."

"PARIS
"April [1779]

[The first portion of this letter is taken up with a long account of an escapade of the Dowager Lady Carlisle's, which is not of importance.]

" . . . Poor Lord Cornwallis, I wish anything may divert him from the thoughts of his calamity, and I wish Lady Middleton may be comforted for the loss of her son by the hopes and the fair prospect which there is of his future advantage. I desire my love to her and to all her children. The condemnation of the lace, which I hear from Warner, gives me concern on all accounts. I wish I had not advised or had had trusted solely to my care. I have not been a great, but I have been a very successful smuggler. As to peace or war, that is a tendre ground for me to walk upon here as a correspondent: I dined at the Duc du Chatélet Saturday. He told me when I had spoke my mind to his brother-in-law Monsieur de Rochenart and to Monsieur de Chabannes, vous defendez une cause qui est perdue, we were speaking of America. The Marquis de Dumas—qui plaisante sur tout, harped perpetually upon the quantity of Prizes we had taken and said, mais mon dieu, vous autres Anglais, vous aimez diablement du sucre, vous nous avez ôté tout notre sucre. That is almost true, but cela ne nous adoucit pas. They asked me if the K. would make peace, suppose Spain was to join them. I assured them, if it did, Peace would be at a greater distance than ever. M. de Rochenart totally condemned the part they had taken in regard to our Colonies."

On the 18th April Selwyn had written to Carlisle: "This afternoon I find tous mes projects pour le présent sont suspendus. I am obliged to set out to-morrow for Lyons. It is so unexpected that it is by much the greatest *embarras* I ever felt, and a monstrous exercise of expense to me. Mie Mie will be there to-morrow. . . . God knows how much further I would go to conduct her safely. . . . Ma patience *et ma persévérance sont inépuisables sur ce qui regarde Mie Mie*."[1] And Madame du Deffand wrote to Walpole on the same date: "I believe if they refuse Lindor his Mimie, he will kill himself: it is a folly without precedent." On the next day she writes: "Lindor received a letter from Italy yesterday which necessitates him starting this morning for Lyons with his two women servants, to seek the little girl there. . . . The head of this poor man is turned; his economy yields to the passion which he has for this *Marmotte*; but there is sorrow in this, too."

Selwyn duly travelled to Lyons, found Mie Mie awaiting him, and returned with her to Paris on 29th April, "drunken with joy," wrote Madame du Deffand, "but his drunkenness is very sad. . . . Lindor is waiting to know his [the Marquis Fagnani's] wishes in the matter. I have no doubt he will permit him to bring her to England; I will see him go without much regret. You remember the definition you gave of him: *une bête inspirée*; well, the inspirations are wanting; I believe he is bored to death." He was not perhaps so bored as Madame imagined. But he was engaged in the harassing occupation of finding a school for a small child.

[To MARY TOWNSHEND]

"PARIS
"Tuesday, 4th May [1779]

"I received yours last night, and was sorry to find that when you wrote it mine was not come to hand. I deferred, it is true, writing to you longer than I intended, but it was owing to a great deal of business which I did not expect, coming upon me, and as unexpected a journey which I found myself obliged to take, as far as Lyons, with Mrs Webb and Nanny. I did not expect when I left England to have gone farther than Paris, and M. Fagnani would himself have saved me any sort of trouble or expense he could. But he is in a

[1] Carlisle MSS. Hist. MSS. Commission, p. 423.

bad state of health, and his wife, from a tenderness which will appear to you incredible and inconsistent, desired me to meet him at Lyons, [?] mi con lei per il vesto del oraggio. So I did, notwithstanding his letter. As to herself, I had very little reason to expect that I should see her, till a letter of the 7th of last month made me expect to find her at Loyns; but it was either never her intention, or she changed it. There is no danger of seeing her in England, and very little in Paris as yet. I perfectly agree with you that the History of Mie Mie, and Yan Yan, as she used to call me when she began to speak, is an extraordinary one, et j'avoue aussi que j'y fais un Personage assez singulier, but, as I have told you before, and it is very true, that of all the Characters in this Drama, which is both tragical and comical, the singularity which perhaps in other respects may make a part of my Composition, will not appear in this to those who are acquainted with all the circumstances of it. Vous avez l'esprit assez tendre, mais la Connoissance que chacun a de cette Affaire ne peut qu'etre fort bornée. I think that I know the fait and the foible of it. But I do not desire either to write or to talk of it. I wish only to breed up Mie Mie in such a manner as to make her beloved and respected, and to supply the want of feeling in other people. It would have been unfortunate enough for me, if I had had only the usual degree of sensibility on such an occasion, but to have added to that la tendresse de père, et les entrailles de mère, is an insupportable burthen to my mind, and at my age. But I have endeavoured as yet with so much perseverance and patience to get out of this labyrinth, or what you properly call a scrape, I have had so much more success than I expected that I still flatter myself that I shall at last succeed. But I have fairly and candidly told you my motive and the source of this misfortune, which if it should prove to be only one to me, I shall be contented, as to suffer every degree of ridicule provided yet the poor child puisse en profiter par le suite. We are now in my Hotel at Paris, but Mie Mie will go this week to her Convent, and I to my Boudoir pour me remettre de tout le deplaisir que j'en resentirai. However, it is a faire le faut, as they call it. I hope it is reculer pour mieux sauter. Mme. l'Abbesse and I are in pretty good humour with one another, and she will humour me, who am much more an enfant gâtè than Mie Mie. So I am to have her here to dine, and to read English with Mrs Webb, as often as I send my coach for her. We were in the Parlor last night for the first time. Mie Mie's physiognimie, son charactere d'esprit, et ses manieres, et ses graces, strike

everybody as well as her being able to express herself so well in different languages. She has so much penetratron that elle vendra Mme. l'Abesse et toutes ses religieuses en fort peu detours. But that I cannot help. With me, I should present to her objects of esteem, par preference, and not de faire une Comedie; Mme. l'Abesse la joue en perfection. I am indeed greatly and most sensibly obliged by the manner in which you express your anxiety to know in what state this matter is, as to giving up the child to me. She is certainly so, as much as words and writing can do it. But I know the restrictions at the same time, and inclinations of her family, and to gratify *my own* feelings, will do nothing to prejudice ***her*** interest, either now or in future times. My return to England therefore is uncertain, for I will not venture to carry Mie Mie from hence without the consent of her parents, and when I shall obtain that, I do not know. Mr F. is not here, I left him at Lyons. He had sent his daughter on to me, whom he thought to be at Paris, sur la route des Bourbonnais, so that I was obliged to make near 15 postes before I could overtake her and change the administration. To change yours in England is a work of some time, as you perceive. However, je l'ai retiree des plus mauvaises mains auquelles il fut possible de la confier, et je ferai, aussi tout mon possible pour me rendre maitre de son sort, et pour le reste de sapre.

"This letter does not go till Thursday, and my eyes will not permit of my writing any more to-day. . . .

"My love to Mr Townshend, and to your brothers.

"Mie Mie desires to be remembered to you all most kindly. I am, for my part, endeavouring to make her remember and forgett, but to do both c'est un ouvrage."

"PARIS
"Thursday M., 20th May [1779]

"This writing an hour after the post is gone out seems odd, but if I do not write when my eyes do not pain me, I shall have no power to write at all. It is one of my grievances, which I am afraid that time will not assist. I will consult an oculist when I return to England, but it is everybody's interest here to blind me. I am here l'ennemi tout court, I am the only English person they see, and last night, when they were talking of their expeditions and hostilities they asked me if I would acquaint the Government of England with anything which I heard in their company. There was a ready answer to that. Our Government I hope wants no instructions from me, and I was

not sent here as a spy. Indeed I am nothing less than suspected, and I pass my time at least as well among them, as in a profound peace. I have no news from England at all, which they attribute to consummate prudence in my correspondents, or in me. I can account for that otherwise, but do not account for it to them at all. I do not chose, in short to own here, what a very insignificant person I am. But there is a Mr M'Kintosh here who wants much to be acquainted with me and has so many important things to tell me, as, if I listened to them, would send me to the Bastile. But my door is forbid to him, and to everybody, but to Dr Gemm, and to Sr. J. Lambert. This M'Kintosh threatens to complain of me to the ministers in England that I won't interest myself in the concerns of my country, and give him admittance. Mr Colbrook has threatened me with an irreconcilable rupture because he is obliged to come to the door three times a day and cannot gett admittance. That he does not want to borrow money of me, but only desired that I would advance him 40 Louis for a draught upon Mr Woodhouse, who had a great deal of money to account to him for. I believe the account is clearer to Mr Woodhouse than to him. I have refused positively to see him, he tells me in his letter that he wants 40 Louis only for a respectable woman who loves him, and says such behaviour in a man of my sense, has astonished him more than anything which ever happened to him, that he has been respected, loved and countenanced as much as I have, except by a few north Britons, he means, I suppose, March and Lord Bute. Poor Roger, Tom Broderick's friend, complains that I won't see him, because I think that he has been in a plot with the Jesuites and the Secretary of State's office is full of information against him. A Swiss and two mastifs are hardly sufficient to lett me at peace. But je suis cloitré partout, Mie Mie, Mrs Webb and I, and my Doctor. Me l'Abbesse commence à radoter mais elle est très contente de moi, because I do not mean to take Mie Mie home le jour de la Pentecôte. Mie Mie is the most tractable little creature in the world. She gains herself and me reputation every day, for they see that she is not spoiled. She is going on with her reading, both in French and English, but her Anglomanie, her desire to return to England, and to go to Matson is prodigious, in that we are very much of a mind; but I have no certainty as yet: ni j'ai à quoi m'en tenir. I must trouble Lord Middleton, if he will be so good as to give me leave; It is to recommend my Irish Affairs to a Banker, and a good importunate hard-hearted attorney to worry Mr R^d. Gore, and his rascally agent, for the payment of my annuity,

there is half a year due, and almost another.[1] He wrote me a letter, before I left England to tell me that he should order the immediate payment of this half year due at Xmas last, so Mr Nesbit advanced the money. I drew upon him for it, and my Bills are returned protested. I have wrote to Mr Woodcock about it this morning, but I am thought out of reach, and am out of their mind, so my affairs will all go à l'eau if I have to stay here, and yet I may be obliged to do that a great while for anything I can tell. J'ai donné à Mie Mie une promesse solemnelle de ne pas la laisser ici, c'est à dire de ne pas l'abandonner; for it would be that. She need not fear it.

"Monsieur le Marquis de la Fayette talks to me much of Lord Cornwallis, and of the esteem which he has for him. I have promised through your means to make his compliments. I talked to him also of another young Hero, qui est attache au cher de l'autre; I beg my love to him. I am glad to hear that Mr Townshend continues well. When Warner calls upon you, which he says he does now and then, tell him what news you think fit to communicate. I was in hopes that your patriots had done with us; but I find the Opposition to our measures continues. When does the Parliament rise? are there to be any new arrangements? . . . I cannot tell you how near you are all to your destruction. But you deserve it; and I could tell you why! For I can talk politics if I will, although C. Fox and the Duc de Croz say I know nothing of the matter. To be sure the Duc's head and Charles's conduct together, is en dessus de ma porte, but I have a little code of my own, however, which I keep a secret. Charles, I mean my nephew, has forsaken me; my love to him, I beg, and to the whole family in Cleveland Court. I would send my compliments to Lady Cornwallis, and to Mrs Cooper but I recollect that you will be at Frognal so I will then beg you to make them for me to Mrs Beesen, to Miss Beesen, and to Mr Wollaston. I have done thinking of a country house near London, while my foreign negotiations go on, and till I can force people to pay the shot they owe me, which no-one will do, if they can help it. I must retire to the sabine farm, and be as frugally blessed there, as any of my ancestors. I can really reconcile myself at present to no other sort of life; and my succession of suppers here are [worse] to me than the vue de le plus affreux would be. While I have Mie Mie with me I do very well. Her accounts of Me. l'Abbesse, des Religieuses, des pensionnaires, and of all is very entertaining. They are all very fond of her

[1] See Chapter XV.

The Abbesse carries her with her to all the offices of the Church, and her account of them too is fort edifiante.

"Your essays on various subjects I have given to the Duc de Chartres's Abbé to be translated into French. He admires them much. I cannot read so easily as I can write; I am only afraid that that may be your case in regard to my letters. I know it is a most terrible griffonage and perhaps they may think at the post-office here that I write in cypher."

"Monday, May 24 [1779]

"I received yours with the account of poor Mrs Cooper's death yesterday. I will answer by the next post. I am glad to hear that Mr Wollaston is still living. Me. de Sévigné says truly: les vielles Lettres radotent. I should not have wrote what I have if I had not received yours first, but I cannot revise it. My Love to the family. Pray recommend the case of my banker to Lord Middleton with my kind compliments to him and to Lady M. Mére et Bru."

"Sunday M., 30th May [1779]

"I have already in part anticipated my answer to your last letter, and in part acknowledged the receipt of it. I have only in this to thank you for your consideration of Mie Mie and myself. She is in her Convent, and contented there, upon the terms I have obtained for her, which have as much reason in them as gratification to myself. As Mrs W[ebb] cannot go into the Convent so Mie Mie is permitted to come to us three days in the week on which days she reads, dances and perfects herself in her English with us. The other days she reads and talks French and writes. They are all very fond of her, and more surprised at her. She has infinitely more reason and information than are usual dans l'enceinte de ces murailles. She sings them Italian songs and diverts them. She says that I lett her do anything. But that Mrs W. controlls her in every thing, which is exactly true, and as I intended it. To act a part which you are not fitt for you will act ill and be of no use. So I give it quite over to Mrs W. I never interfere in the least thing. The child is the most tractable in the world, there is not the least trouble with her, either in the Convent or in my house. Dr Gemm who is physician there, as well as with me, is of infinite use to me, but he can only help things here, he can do nothing towards conducting this machine any further. Mme. F.'s caprice, ill humour and deceit are the torments of my life.

She contrives even at the distance of 300 leagues to disgust me. For lett me do what I will, I know that she will never be satisfied, but I will not come to any with her, if I can help it. Wether M. le Marquis is in Lyons in the hands of his surgeon or returned to Milan, it is impossible to guess. I have had a letter from Lyons, but the post mark is Turin. I had much flattered myself, and poor Mie Mie too that I should pass this summer with her in England at my house, but I see no likely hood of it. I will do nothing to please myself, which may be felt in its consequences by the child, and so I must content myself with the environs of Paris. Me. la Maréchale de Luxembourg, whose house is at the distance of Eltham, Montmorency, has invited me, and Me. du Deffands goes there to supper and returns about two or three in the morning, and I have an engagement to the Pss. to Beauvenir and Me. du Deffands goes with me. The R. family go to Compiègne and the military may be to Frognal.[1] What is to become of poor Miss Lucy Townshend?"

It is clear from other evidence that "Madame F.'s caprice" during these months was causing Selwyn great unhappiness. "He neither sleeps nor eats," wrote Madame du Deffand to Walpole, "he will fall ill, or go astray in the mind. I really think this, and I am very sorry for him. . . . I shall offer to do what I can for him, give him news of her [Mie Mie]—to send Wiart or my nephew to Panthemont to see her; but I can't promise to visit her myself, I don't like children." Selwyn's torments were ended in June, however, by receiving permission from the Fagnanis to bring Mie Mie to England. As soon as the letter from Italy arrived, "without losing an instant," wrote Mme. du Deffand, "he hastened to me and asked me to obtain a passport for him. It came on Tuesday morning [15th June] and the same evening he was to sleep at Chantilly." One may notice here that Selwyn had little sympathy from Madame on the subject of Mie Mie. That lady "did not like" children, and privately thought "Lindor" a great fool. "However," she admitted graciously to Walpole, "he loves; and although it is

[1] "I have no objection to the royal family being toujours qui at Compiegne," wrote Miss Townshead in reply; "but I will excuse the military from visiting us at Frognal. However, the appearance of the Middlesex militia company in Foot's Cray at a tallow chandler's shop . . . has cured me of all fears of the *Mounseers*." Jesse, vol. iv. 182.

only a doll, that is better than having an empty soul." Madame was a good judge of empty souls.

Selwyn, after all these excursions and alarms, brought Mie Mie to Matson early in July. His troubles with reference to the young lady were nearly over. Thenceforward until his death he never parted from her, although he had periodical panics on the subject; that dreadful "Madame F." haunted him in his dreams.

For nearly twelve years Mie Mie lived under George Selwyn's care, at Matson, in London, at Richmond. We get many glimpses of her in the Carlisle correspondence, and in other letters from and to Selwyn.

[To Mary Townshend]

"Tunbridge Wells
"Friday, 14 July [1780]

"I am much obliged to you for your letter, as well as Mie Mie who is so kindly made the chief subject of it. I am in hopes that the worst part of the worst disorder is over, and that her cough will now grow less violent, and less painfull to her every day. I have been assured that there was no appearance of its having any bad consequences, and I am disposed to hope, that by the efforts made to discharge the Bile, her constitution may be mended. As to my own case, I can only say, that it is like everything which ever happened to me, very extraordinary, to have the hooping cough, which I have tres decidément at 61. Seems as now, as if I had been seized with the Gum fever, and the Rickets, or was cutting my teeth for the third time. I shall not despair of appearing next winter with a Coral and an Anodyne Necklace. It is a most horrible disorder. I lose my senses with it some times for a minute, and dropt this morning in the Child's Room, which frightened her excessively, but what diverts me is their calling it a bastard hooping cough. To judge of it by its effects, Je pourrais repondre de sa Legitimité. Mie Mie, as the people who are about her tell me, has not had it so violent as other children generally have. We are here more for the air than anything else, and therefore might as well be where we should pay no Rent as hire a Band Box at eight guineas a week. I think, that when our Lease is expired which will be in less than three weeks, we shall change the air again. The little Pony is our chief resource and amusement. His Honour and family are come down, but ma Societé est si contagieuse que l'on ne veut pas celui avec moi en conversation, as

yet, all the Houses here engaged, because it is to be a place of great resort, but there is no prospect of it at present. I have not been once at the rooms, and but once at the Camp. Jones does very well, and I dare say will answer all my expectations. I shall answer hers, unless she expects more from me than from those who are the model upon which I found my domestic economy. I have told her that I desire to refuse my family no indulgence which they would have in a reasonable family, and that as much as my circumstances would allow it, and in proportion to the number, I should wish it regulated in point of expense and management, by what she saw in yours. Pierre who has rather more enlarged notions of expense, does not seem to think I chose a bad model. I saw once wrote up in my Lord Mayor's kitchen, upon one door *Waste not*, on another *Spare not*, and these two adages I would adopt. The Cook which was so much commended by Mr Woodly left me, just as I was setting out for this place. She was returned by the Report of the family six months gone with child, and a thief, voilà tout, so there is still one part of my administration to fill up. I ask Lady Middleton's pardon for my recollections, but I can no more help those records than the old woman at Bealy. I do assure you, that upon my own account, I am not sorry, that it is now forty-nine years since a certain lady who is to be soon a Grandmother was lieing across my knees with a red face and in a red mantle, and about as long as the pen which I have in my hand. I beg my love to her and to all the family. I propose to go to Matson in about a month, and perhaps shall meet your Brothers at Luggershall in about six weeks after that. This is all which I know of my motions. I do not, from what I heard you say of yours hope to see you till the beginning of November, but I shall be happy, in the meantime to hear often from you. Mie Mie is extremely sensible of your kind concern for her, as well as myself, who am dear Mary, ever most truly, and ever affectionately yours."

"It never occurred to me," wrote Miss Townshend in reply,[1] "that you were in danger of catching the hooping-cough, any more than the other disorders you mention. Growing interested in enumerating the ills we escape by advancing in life, I have reckoned proneness to take infection one, and that the hooping-cough, once over, never returned, but I find I am out in this calculation, as I have been in many others."

In the following year Selwyn tells Carlisle that he is "much

[1] Jesse, iv. 353.

too happy," with Mie Mie, "but not one word comes to me from her Italian parents, and the silence is terrible to me, because it is so unnatural. Could I have assurance that it proceeded from a total abandoning her to my care, I should be happy, but that seems incredible, and so I live in a constant dread of some change in that in which now all my happiness is placed." Brighter days come. He takes Mie Mie to see her first play. "It was *Dissipation*, and Robinson Crusoe, the farce; two such performances and such performers I never saw. It was twelve years since I had been to the playhouse." There is a New Year's party where young George Howard was King, Mie Mie Miss Hoyden, "and I," writes Selwyn, "Sir Tunbelly Clumsy. Miss Townshend dined with us and cut the cake, and they have been playing at whist, so that they are all as happy as possible." Everybody in the Selwyn circle was kind to Mie Mie. Dr John Warner, that faithful henchman, would address affectionate notes to his "sweet little queen," signed "your loving Snail." It was a great occasion when Mie Mie was presented at court. She was aged seventeen then, and was beginning to be called "Miss Fagnani." She was "very splendid," Anthony Storer informed Lord Auckland; "but George was most magnificent and *new* in every article of dress." This was the occasion upon which a Great Personage was pleased to remark that he was surprised Selwyn did not wait to see the making of a new knight, "it was so like an execution." It must have been about this time that Romney painted Mie Mie's portrait, which shows her as a pretty girl of seventeen or eighteen, with dark hair and eyes. This is a charming picture, full of lightness and grace, and with that effect of having been blown upon the canvas, rather than painted, of which only Romney had the secret. Mie Mie was popular in the Regent's circle, which is more than can be said for Selwyn. One day she and Selwyn were sitting at dinner in Cleveland Court with the windows up, when, says Selwyn, "H.R.H. passed by in his chaise, and made a most gracious bow to Mie Mie, and if he could have been sure of my not being in the room it may be he would have stopped to have told how much he liked Castle Howard." That vivid little picture seems to bring both Selwyn and Mie Mie nearer to us, does it not? The summer afternoon in St James's, with Prince Florizel driving along in his chaise, and bowing as he

passes to the foreign-looking girl who is dining by the open window.

The later history of Mie Mie is hardly to be told here. Her first (and surely her best) romance ended with Selwyn's death in 1791. She was then twenty years of age, and perhaps unspoiled by all the love that had been lavished upon her. It would seem better to leave her at that point, with all the fragrance of youth about her, and the recent memory of Selwyn's devotion. Others may relate her subsequent history in detail: it does not interest me; and it hardly comes within the scope of this book. The bare facts of it are well known too; many writers have seen to that. She became a great heiress at Selwyn's death (if £33,000 will justify the phrase); a greater heiress still at the death of "old Q." in 1810; married Lord Yarmouth, afterwards third Marquis of Hertford, in 1798; separated from him, and (it is said) travelled on the Continent with the Marshal Androche; was possibly the mother of Sir Richard Wallace (he speaks of her, however, in an unpublished letter as "my dearest friend"); lived into our own time, and died in 1856. Her husband was the Marquis of Steyne in "Vanity Fair"—that is an accepted tradition now; and it is interesting to endeavour to trace in the character of the Marchioness of Steyne (a Catholic, and brought up at a Convent) some resemblance to Maria Fagnani. But is it not, on the whole, better to think of Selwyn's Mie Mie than of the Marchioness of Hertford, or of her prototype in the novel? In her old age the Marchioness burnt all her private letters and family papers, resolved that none should know her history, so far as she could prevent it. The few pages of that history given here are of an earlier time, upon which she must often have looked back with longing and perhaps regret.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND SELWYN CIRCLE

THE history of George Selwyn's friendships would in itself form a substantial volume. He knew everybody in his day who was worth knowing, and many people also who were not worth knowing. You can hardly take up a book of memoirs or a volume of letters of the Georgian period without finding Selwyn's name mentioned, perhaps more than once, in its pages. This person has met him at dinner, and duly records a *bon-mot*; that one has seen him at court; a third has spoken with him at White's or Brooks's. This at least establishes his position as a man of the world, with innumerable acquaintances. But on the inner circle of friendship his record is no less emphatic. Most men contrive to drift apart from the friends of their youth, and fail conspicuously to replace them with friends of middle age. The tragedy of this position is that men do not recognise it for what it is; they are quite content with it, and look upon isolation as the norm of human life. Selwyn was made of different stuff. He kept the friends of his youth—Lord March, Horace Walpole, Gilly Williams—so far as death permitted, and he added to them, as the years went on, new friends of a younger generation. That fact, in relation to Selwyn's character, speaks for itself.

What one has called the "Second Selwyn Circle" began to be formed about 1760. Selwyn was then a man of forty. He was well known at the clubs as a gossip and a wit: just the kind of man with whom young men fresh from the universities would wish to become acquainted. Accordingly we find that, between 1760 and 1770, Selwyn added considerably to his friends and correspondents. This second circle was an ample one, containing as it did men like Charles James Fox, Frederick, fifth Earl of Carlisle, Anthony Morris Storer, Richard Fitzpatrick, James Hare, and Frederick, Lord Bolingbroke. This list is not exhaustive. There were many outside it who called Selwyn "George," and who might fairly claim friendship with

him. But it is a representative list. Historically the most important name upon it is, of course, Charles James Fox; but to us it is not the most important name. Fox must give place for a moment to his young friend Carlisle, whose intimacy with Selwyn was much closer and more lasting than that of Fox. To Carlisle, George Selwyn was a father-confessor, a person of experience and worldly wisdom to whom at all times he could turn for counsel and advice. Selwyn, on his part, had a real affection for Carlisle and his family, not perhaps unmingled with the feeling that it was very pleasant to be father-confessor to a peer of the wealth and social standing of the Earl of Carlisle. But we must not be too censorious. The Selwyn-Carlisle friendship is an interesting thing. Selwyn wrote hundreds of letters to his young friend (invariably beginning "My dear Lord"); and his young friend reciprocated by writing not quite so many letters to Selwyn. Both series of letters do their writers—in the good old eighteenth-century phrase—"infinite credit." Further, Selwyn made Lord Carlisle one of his executors. Fortunately for us Carlisle omitted a very important executorial duty: the getting possession of the deceased's private letters and papers, perhaps because in this case they were hidden away at the Office of Woods. But for this happy omission we should not (*inter alia*) have those sprightly letters from Carlisle to Selwyn which have long adorned the collection of Mr Jesse. With their help we can easily trace the history of the most sincere of George Selwyn's later friendships.

The letters begin in 1767, when Frederick Howard was only nineteen years of age. He had just left Cambridge, and was about to make the tour of Europe with his Eton friends Charles James Fox and Lord Fitzwilliam. It was probably Fox who introduced Carlisle to Selwyn; we have no record, however, of their first meeting. Carlisle was a sentimental youth. At this time he was flirting with Lady Sarah Bunbury (who could help being fond of that charming woman?), and was consequently in no haste to scamper about Europe with Charles Fox. Lord Holland, Fox's father, crystallised the situation in a rendering of Horace's Ode "Lydia, dic per omnes," which he addressed to Lady Sarah, and forwarded to George Selwyn for approval:

GEORGE SELWYN AND FREDERICK, FIFTH EARL OF CARLISLE

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

"Sally, Sally, don't deny
But for God's sake tell me why
You have flirted so, to spoil
That once lively youth, Carlisle?
He used to mount when it was dark
Now he lies in bed till noon;
And you not meeting in the Park
Thinks that he got up too soon.

Manly exercise and sport,
Hunting and the tennis-court
And riding school no more divert
Newmarket does, for there you flirt!
But why does he no longer dream,
Of yellow Tyber and its shore;
Of his friend Charles's favourite scheme
On waking, think no more?"

Lady Sarah was quite pleased with Lord Holland's ode, but George Selwyn was decidedly the reverse. It was against his principles that a peer of ancient lineage should have his young affections referred to so flippantly, even by a brother peer: even by so old a friend as Lord Holland. To Selwyn a lord was a lord, whose most trifling flirtations were to be spoken of with respect. But Carlisle at length was able to tear himself away from Lady Sarah, or perhaps it was Lady Sarah who was torn away from him. At all events he writes to Selwyn from Brussels, in September (1767), confessing that he has been in love with an unmarried girl; and what is worse, with a German princess. . . . "Excuse all my follies, my dear George," writes the ingenuous youth; "it is better having them at this age than twenty years hence." By November Carlisle had reached Paris, where he met Fox. From Paris the two young men travelled to Nice; and from Nice Carlisle journeyed along the Riviera—not then much resorted to by the English, though Smollett had just been advertising it in his "Travels"—and by the Col di Tenda to Turin. After Turin he made the usual Italian tour—Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice, and so home by way of Strasburg. Throughout his journey he faithfully reported progress to Selwyn in a voluminous correspondence, which has been praised by no less a man than Thackeray. Carlisle's letters certainly

have merit; they are natural and easy in style, and full of a sort of placid good nature: the unforced utterance of a generous youth without any particular parts. His observations on scenery and on people are quite conventional; but he says what he thinks, and says it very agreeably. During his absence the Order of the Thistle was conferred upon him, and the insignia of the order were sent to him at Turin, where he was invested by the King of Sardinia. This little matter of the "green ribband" gave both Carlisle and Selwyn considerable trouble. Carlisle wished that the ribband should be despatched from England by a proper courier, and also that the investment should be carried out with all the pomp and circumstance befitting so important an occasion. Selwyn gave the precious packet to Lord Clive, who was to bring it as far as Paris. A special courier, he explained, would cost too much. This news saddened young Carlisle. "By Lord Clive!" he exclaims (in a letter to Selwyn). "It might as well be sent by a Chelsea pensioner. . . . The sending this Order by the first invalid who is going to Naples—or who perhaps may die by the way and my ribband travel back to England with a hearse and undertakers—will not raise very much the dignity of it in the eyes of the people here." The ingenuous youth of twenty considers himself insulted because his precious ribband is being fetched by the hand of—Robert Clive! He need not have excited himself. The "Chelsea pensioner" brought the order only so far as Paris; thence to Turin it was more worthily borne by a messenger from the British Embassy. The curious thing is that Selwyn seemed to admit that there was some justice in Carlisle's criticism of Clive. "It was never intended," says he apologetically, "that this [Order] should have been entrusted to undertakers or Chelsea pensioners." Such was the England of 1768, when the man who won India for us had to be apologised for to a titled boy of twenty. But all was well that ended well. In a few weeks Carlisle was able proudly to announce that he was now "a Knight Companion of the Ancient Order of the Thistle. The ceremony was performed this morning in the King's Cabinet; the Royal Family and all the principal officers of the Court being present." At Rome Carlisle has the usual creditable emotions. "The profusion of the finest marble," he says, "the glorious size of the palaces, the scattered remains

in every street of the finest ancient sculpture, the magnificence of the fountains—and to consider these things but as the débris of Rome—gives one feelings that are not to be felt but upon the spot": which was no doubt quite true. He visits the Coliseum by moonlight, and assures Selwyn that no idea which he could form of it "will be adequate to the grandeur that these remains of antiquity appeared in at that moment." In a word, with all respect to the critic who found in Carlisle's letters a similarity in style "to that of his near and illustrious relative, Lord Byron," these letters are perfectly conventional records of travel. But fifty years afterwards the "illustrious relative" also journeyed in Italy and made full amends in poetry for his cousin's deficiencies in prose. One note of interest may be made upon these travel-letters of Carlisle's. The word "bore," in its modern colloquial sense of "fatigue," had just then been introduced into the English language, or at least into the tongue spoken in Mayfair; and Carlisle uses it freely in his correspondence, always underlined, and with a certain proud consciousness that he was applying correctly the latest society catch-word. Selwyn also uses the word occasionally, but spells it, unashamedly, "boar."

The friendship between these two men grew more intimate as the years went on. Carlisle married at the early age of twenty-two; but his marriage made no difference in his relations with George Selwyn, who was always a welcome visitor at Castle Howard. If Carlisle were in the country and Selwyn in town, no day would pass without a long letter from Selwyn, containing the latest social and political gossip; balls, routs, parties; debates in Parliament; ministerial changes; society scandals; all the tittle-tattle of St James's Street. Carlisle's letters to Selwyn were rather in the nature of requests for advice and counsel, in circumstances both ordinary and extraordinary: whether it would be better to come to town or remain in the country; the best method of saving money; information concerning gambling losses, and philosophical reflections upon the same. The correspondence ripples on, with its youthful self-revelation, its easy confidence, and placid good humour. At times the reader is inclined to regard Carlisle as just an ordinary young fool; at other times sound good sense peeps through the written word, and a certain

fineness of temper. "Reading without books of reference," he says once, "is like looking out of a prison window; you just see the prospect and taste the air, enough to make you feel more sensibly your confinement." That is true—when you remember that what Carlisle meant by "books of reference" was "one's own books to refer to," and it is well said. The fineness of temper appears in such a passage as this: "It is now a good many years since our friendship began, and I am certain that no one ever experienced so many real essential proofs of kindness as I have done from you; I love to think of it, and love to acknowledge it." But at other times Carlisle most emphatically plays the fool. Thus in 1776, when already in debt, and struggling hard to adjust his income to his expenditure, he gambles away £10,000 in one evening, and writes this letter to Selwyn: "I have undone myself, and it is to no purpose to conceal from you my abominable madness and folly, though perhaps the particulars may not be known to the rest of the world. I never lost so much in nine times as I have done to-night, and am in debt to the house for the whole. You may be sure I do not tell you this with an idea that you can be of the least assistance to me: it is a great deal more than your abilities are equal to. Let me see you, though I shall be ashamed to look at you after your goodness to me." Carlisle was writing to a man who had himself lost heavily at play many times: what man of that period had not done so? But in Carlisle's letters one seems to discern a tendency to dissipation, not for dissipation's sake, not because the young man liked it, but because the other fellows did it. And after the dissipation is over—the money lost, the bills of honour due—the loser finds it difficult to conceal his complacency, as of one who has at all events done the right thing. In this, however, Carlisle was hardly more idiotic than other men of his age and class. One must also add that Lord Carlisle proved the stuff he was made of by giving up the gaming-table before he was thirty and settling down to a life of public usefulness and honour.

We need not trace the history of the Selwyn-Carlisle friendship through the interminable correspondence of twenty years. Let it stand on record that Selwyn was adviser-in-chief to the Earl; a sort of elder brother to the Countess; and a benevolent uncle to the children of the house. These relations lasted

unchanged until Selwyn's death in 1791. Carlisle filled a good many positions under Government—positions which, for the most part, are generally given to men of mediocre abilities whom the Government do not wish to offend by neglect. Thus he was Treasurer of the Household in 1777, a Lord of Trade and Plantations in 1719, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1780 (an office which he filled with considerable success), Lord Steward of the Household and Lord Privy Seal in 1783. His most important appointment, however, was that of principal member of the commission which went to America in 1778 to reason with the rebels; an unfortunate and ludicrous commission, from which posterity finds it difficult to withhold its laughter. No circumstance connected with this commission was as it should have been. It started years too late; its orders were not explicit; policies were adopted and changed behind its back; its members seem never to have grasped the desperate nature of the position in America. From beginning to end the embassy was a failure. But Lord Carlisle appears to have acted all through with dignity and courage. It was he who drew up the "last dying speech and confession" of the commission before leaving America, in which the commissioners sternly intimated that the limits of human endurance had been reached, and that henceforth no mercy would be shown to the rebels. Having posted this proclamation, Lord Carlisle and his friends rather hurriedly sailed away to England, perhaps to escape the annoying laughter of the rebels.

We have here nothing to do with Carlisle's connection with Lord Byron, yet it is that episode, or series of episodes, which invests the Earl with a certain permanent literary interest. Perhaps this is a cruel thing to say, for Carlisle himself wrote poetry, which he fondly imagined the world would not willingly allow to perish. He began in his schoolboy days, when he celebrated his schoolfellows—Charles James Fox and others—in stirring verse:

> "How will my Fox alone by strength of parts
> Shake the loud Senate, animate the hearts
> Of fearful Statesmen! While around you stand
> Both peers and commons listening your command!"

Accurate prophecy this, whatever we may think of the poetry. Carlisle, however, could write better verse than that. His "Ode on the Death of Gray" is imitative, and of the dead poet, but not unpleasing:

"The listening Dryad, with attention still
On tiptoe oft would near the poet steal;
To hear him sing upon the lonely hill,
Of all the wonders of the expanded vale;
The distant hamlet, and the winding stream,
The steeple shaded by the friendly yew;
Sunk in the wood the sun's departing gleam,
The grey-robed landscape stealing from the view."

There is a suggestion of Matthew Arnold in these lines, written sixty years before Arnold was born. Carlisle was, indeed, better at this kind of verse than at the melodramatic tragical vein which he attempted subsequently. His tragedies, *The Father's Revenge*, and *The Stepmother*, "have a great deal of merit," as Horace Walpole said, "perhaps more than your Lordship [Strafford] would expect." This is exactly right. Carlisle's tragedies have more merit "than you would expect." They are full of the kind of writing which was both in the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth, and which is now, in the twentieth century, so generally mistaken for poetry: the easy, vowelled line; the conventional thought; the flux of sonorous words. Yet we should be gentle with Carlisle, if only because the Great Cham of Literature himself praised him. Readers of Boswell remember how Johnson's opinion on Carlisle's tragedy was extracted by Mrs Chapone. "Of the sentiments," wrote Johnson, "I remember not one that I wished omitted . . . with the characters, either as conceived or presented,[1] I have no fault to find. . . . The catastrophe is affecting." With such non-committal phrases did the doctor discharge the task that was imposed upon him: a task which he "could not decently refuse." Again should we be gentle with Carlisle, because, though he was not a poet, he was a peer, and the British nation always accords a certain respectful sympathy to a peer's

[1] This is the reading in the Hist. MSS. Report, printed from the original. Boswell printed "preserved," which is obviously wrong.

incursions into literature. The British critic, too, has a canon for peer-poetry different from the ordinary canon for commoners; both critic and public arguing (and with some force), that after all, the peer might be engaged in other and worse pursuits. Besides, you cannot help liking this young Lord Carlisle, whose impulses were all towards good and comely things, but whom fate threw into the midst of a set of people as frivolous and as unmoral as any you read of in history.

Carlisle has already been castigated sufficiently for his literary follies by a peer-poet who has no need of our sympathy or our tolerance: Lord Byron. Carlisle was Byron's kinsman and guardian; and during the early years of his guardianship appears to have acted not unkindly towards his young relative. But Byron had a mother, and this mother proved too much for Carlisle's patience. He withdrew from his active duties as guardian, and seems also to have transferred some of his dislike from the mother to the child. When Byron published his "Hours of Idleness" he dedicated it to Carlisle, sent him a copy, and received in reply a "tolerably handsome letter." This reply, however, must have been more tolerable than handsome, for Byron adds: "If he is the least insolent I shall enrol him with Butler and the other worthies. . . . He said he had not time to read the contents, but thought it necessary to acknowledge the receipt of the volume immediately. Perhaps the Earl 'bears no brother near the throne,'—if so, I will make *his sceptre totter in his hands*." Brave talk this for a youth of nineteen. Unfortunately the youth meant, and was quite capable of doing, what he said. Was Carlisle jealous of Byron? It is not at all improbable. Poets are a jealous race; and when a poet of sixty, whose work has been much admired by society, and praised by the greatest of all critics, finds that a young relative of nineteen has also been perpetrating poetry, he may be forgiven if he feel certain jealous pangs. But the relations between the two men were not strained to breaking point at that time, for two years afterwards Byron inserted in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" an elegant compliment to his guardian:

> "On one alone Apollo deigns to smile
> And crowns a new Roscommon in Carlisle."

So ran the manuscript. But unfortunately, before the manuscript was printed, Byron found a serious matter for quarrel with his guardian. The young poet had come of age, and wished to take his seat in the House of Lords. He wrote and asked Lord Carlisle to introduce him. In reply he received a cold and formal letter, "acquainting him with the technical mode of proceeding on such occasions," but making no effort to introduce him personally to the House of Lords. Byron was deeply offended, and he was a very ill man to offend. He rushed to his manuscript, deleted the "Roscommon" compliment, and inserted in its place the following stinging invective:

> "No Muse will cheer with renovating smile,
> The paralytic puling of Carlisle.
> The puny schoolboy and his early lay
> Men pardon, if his follies pass away;
> But who forgives the senior's ceaseless verse
> Whose hairs grow hoary as his rhymes grow worse?
> What heterogeneous honours deck the peer?
> Lord, rhymester, petit-maître, pamphleteer!"

Such was Byron's revenge. His provocation was great. It is difficult indeed to excuse Carlisle's conduct upon this occasion. A word from him would have saved Byron from much suffering, and he did not speak that word. Alone, unhappy, highly sensitive, the young poet was compelled to make his first appearance in the House of Lords without, as Mr Thomas Moore said, "a single individual of his own class either to take him by the hand as friend or acknowledge him as acquaintance." What Carlisle thought of his punishment we do not know. It was no light punishment: "paralytic puling" was, as criticism, absolutely deadly. But it is pleasant to think that Byron in after years considered that he might have been a little unjust to Carlisle, and with his generous nature made an honourable amends in "Childe Harold," where he praised the "gallant young Howard," Lord Carlisle's youngest son, who fell at Waterloo:

> "Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
> Partly because they blend me with his line,
> *And partly that I did his sire some wrong.*"

So much, then, for George Selwyn's friend, the fifth Earl of Carlisle. Let us think of him as he was when Selwyn knew him: a generous, open-hearted youth; a firm friend; impulsive and foolish at times, but never wicked; pathetically anxious to do his duty in his high station as well as he knew how. "Forced into luxury," says Thackeray in "The Four Georges," "and obliged to be a great lord and a great idler, he yielded to some temptations, and paid for them a bitter penalty of manly remorse; from some others he fled wisely, and ended by conquering them nobly. But he always had the good wife and children in his mind and they saved him. 'I am very glad you did not come to me the morning I left London,' he writes to George Selwyn, as he is embarking for America. 'I can only say I never knew till that moment of parting what grief was!' There is no parting now, where they are." And is not the remainder of Thackeray's tribute applicable at the present day? "The faithful wife, the kind generous gentleman, have left a noble race behind them, an inheritor of his name and titles, who is beloved as widely as he is known; a man most kind, accomplished, gentle, friendly and pure; and female descendants occupying high stations and embellishing great names; some renowned for beauty, and all for spotless lives, and pious matronly virtues."

After Lord Carlisle we must speak of Charles James Fox. Nobody, however, can either speak or write about Fox in an entirely unbiassed frame of mind. He is one of those men whom you must either hate or love; you cannot feel tepidly about him. You must be a Foxite or nothing; and if you are a Foxite, hardly any praise of your idol will seem extravagant. Now George Selwyn was for long an intimate friend of Fox, despite the great difference of thirty years in their ages. But the curious thing about Selwyn in his relation to Fox was that he began by being a Foxite, and ended by being an anti-Foxite. This was so strange an evolution that one doubts whether Selwyn was ever a genuine Foxite; he must, one imagines, have joined the brotherhood on false pretences; and indeed it is questionable whether Selwyn, with all his capacity for friendship, had sufficient breadth of nature really to appreciate Charles Fox. It may of course be pointed out that

Burke himself turned against Fox (who can ever forget that tremendous "Yes, yes! There is a loss of friendship!"): to which the Foxite can only reply, "the less Burke he." Selwyn's apostasy from Fox, however, was a much slower and more deliberate process than Burke's. We have been speaking of Lord Carlisle, and it is interesting to remember that the rift in Selwyn's friendship with Fox began through Selwyn's zeal for the welfare of that nobleman. Fox had lost money heavily at cards; he had induced Carlisle to join him in a bond of indemnity for the amount; and afterwards, Fox-like, he had treated the whole matter in an airy, irresponsible way—much too airy and irresponsible, Selwyn thought jealously. This was the beginning of it. Then Fox, still airy and irresponsible, took up the pernicious principles of the Opposition, nay, himself became the head and the front of the Opposition. This was too much for George Selwyn, the King's friend. But we must look a little more closely into the story of Fox's relations with Selwyn.

George Selwyn was an old friend of the Holland family. With Henry Fox, the first Lord Holland, he kept up for many years a considerable correspondence. Opinions have always differed, and differed very acutely, concerning Henry Fox's character; but his letters to George Selwyn show him to have been at least a man of affectionate nature, kind to his friends, sensitive to criticism, even to the point of morbidness. He was neither a very happy nor a very successful man, and he ought to have been both happy and successful. He married a charming woman, Lady Caroline Lennox, who was a good wife to him, and whom he loved intensely. He had great gifts and splendid opportunities. He filled high offices in the State. He helped to make and to unmake ministries. Yet, at the end of it all, he was a disappointed man. Through all he said or wrote ran a curious vein of bitterness: the black humour of one who conceives that the world has not given him his due. But the world distrusted him: there was the root of the whole matter. The people trusted Pitt; they did not trust Fox. This man held a lucrative post—that of Paymaster of the Forces—for some years, and was considered to have enriched himself illegitimately at the expense of the State. "The public defaulter of unaccounted millions": that fatal phrase pursued

him until his death. Was the world right, and did Henry Fox rob the country to build up his own private fortune? Posterity can only answer that this was a case where the maxim *securus judicat* would seem to apply: the world cannot have been wholly wrong. We know that Henry Fox was fond, perhaps inordinately fond, of money, and had no very fine feeling as to how he made it. Further than this we need not go, particularly as Fox's conduct brought its own punishment with it. His letters to Selwyn are proof enough of that, apart from other evidence. "I cannot help sometimes asking myself, dear Selwyn, why I am in such disgrace with the King? Have I deserved it? I am now the only mark left of irrevocable displeasure, and I vow to God I cannot guess why." And again: "There is one question, which, I hope, will not be asked: 'Has life no sourness drawn so near its end?' Indeed it has; yet I guard against it as much as possible," and the "sourness" was mitigated somewhat by the affection of many friends, Selwyn among them. "Adieu! my dear Selwyn," he writes. "When I come, be for ever at Holland House. It will shew great good-nature, of which I have reason to think nobody has more." And again: "I have lost too many friendships, which I had spent my life in deserving, to fling away one that, without my having ever deserved it, is so sincere and valuable as yours." Say what you will about the Foxes, they had the rare secret of personal charm.

George Selwyn, then, was "always at Holland House"; he belonged to that pleasant Whiggish society, though he was not himself in any real sense a Whig; and perhaps when Selwyn first visited Holland House that mansion was not so Whiggish as it afterwards became. He watched the early triumphs of Charles James Fox with almost as much pride as Lord Holland, mixed, perhaps, with some little jealousy and some cynicism. But long before Charles had begun to dazzle the House of Commons he had been on terms of close friendship with George Selwyn. His earliest letters to Selwyn are written from various places on the Continent, where he was travelling with his father and with Lord Carlisle; he was then only nineteen years of age. These letters are not characteristic—Charles Fox was no letter-writer—but they show that Selwyn's friendship with Lord Holland was continued with

Lord Holland's son. "I have not yet been to Herculaneum," writes Fox. "I will certainly steal something from thence to send you, if I cannot come by it honestly. I will enquire about the false dice, and if I can possibly get them or one of them, I will certainly give it to you to make a present of to White's." A year or so later he is boasting to Madame du Deffand in Paris that he was "already under the tutelage of M. Selwyn." Soon afterwards he writes a long letter to Selwyn from Paris (he affected that city almost as much as Selwyn himself) explaining exactly what "une jolie figure" meant according to the best authorities. In the next year (1771) he tells Selwyn that he is reading Clarendon, "but scarcely get on faster than you did with your Charles the Fifth. I think the style bad, and that he has a good deal of the old woman in his way of thinking, but hates the opposition party so much that it gives one a kind of partiality for him." "This," says a commentator, "is a very curious passage from the pen of Charles Fox!" But it was not "very curious" on the part of the Charles Fox of 1771, who had not yet found his political salvation. In the previous year his speeches in support of Lord North's government must have rejoiced the heart of Selwyn. We know they did, because Selwyn wrote a "panegyric" upon Charles to Lord Holland at Nice: "so kind to me and Charles," said Holland. And in that very same year of 1771, did not Charles please Selwyn immensely by his anti-popular attitude during the Onslow riots? Colonel Onslow had moved in the House to commit the printers of certain parliamentary reports, and a mob from the city had marched to Westminster to protest. A newspaper of the day refers to "the indecent and most shocking behaviour of Mr Charles Fox" on this occasion. "This youth for about half an hour was leaning out of a coffee-house window in Palace Yard, shaking his fist at the people, and provoking them by all the reproach- [illegible]rds and menacing gestures that he could invent. George [illegible] stood behind encouraging him and clapping him on [illegible], as if he was a dirty ruffian going to fight in the [illegible] Fox, however, was not to retain for much longer [illegible]proval of his political conduct.

[illegible]as Fox's private conduct which offended George [illegible]he first instance. Towards the end of the year

one w.
But the
matter.
This man
Forces—for
himself illegit
defaulter of u

1773, Fox had lost heavily at cards (nothing new for Charles Fox, even at that early age of twenty-four), and had induced his friend Lord Carlisle to join him in a bond for £14,000 as security for money raised. In this transaction Carlisle was of course the man of substance, and Fox the man of straw. Further, Carlisle appears not to have been indebted for any portion of this £14,000 ; it was money raised entirely for Fox's use, to pay his gambling debts. Shortly after the bond was executed, Fox received £50,000 from some quarter or other, and paid (or gambled) it all away again without regard to Carlisle's engagement on his behalf. It was these two transactions which first alienated from him the regard of George Selwyn. I think that Selwyn was a little over-virtuous in this matter. His letters to Carlisle, angry and bitter as they are, smack something of the Pharisee. What! Had Selwyn never lost money at cards when he was young? Did he know nothing of bonds and mortgages, and temporary "accommodations"? Of course he did. It may be that Charles Fox was too careless of his friend Carlisle's own difficulties, that he took advantage of his good nature, and laid a heavy obligation upon him with a light heart. Or again it may be that much of this carelessness and lightness was assumed, and that Fox was just as concerned as Selwyn that Carlisle should come out of the transaction scathless. But Selwyn had no mercy upon Fox, or upon his family. In a score of letters to Carlisle he waxes sarcastic at Charles's expense, and at the expense of all his relatives. Lord Holland was ill, dying, as it happened ; but Selwyn can write : "Till he was in his shroud, I would write either to him or to Lady Holland, representing the state to which the confidence you have placed in their son has reduced you. . . . I am apt to think that he will *comprehend* what you say very well. It is not my judgment only, but I have heard it said, that a great deal of his inattention upon this occasion has been affected, and that if the same money was to be received and not to be paid, our faculties would then improve." Selwyn called this "thinking aloud." They were not kind thoughts to have of a man who was practically upon his deathbed (he died a few months afterwards), and who was never anything but kind to Selwyn. Carlisle took Selwyn's advice and wrote to Lady Holland, politely urging his claim to indemnity on the bond which he

had given to Charles. At the end of the story it seems that Carlisle escaped from this entanglement without loss. "It appears to me," wrote Selwyn to him, "that you may finally be no loser by the transaction." This was no doubt largely due to Selwyn's strenuous exertions on his behalf. But we may be quite sure that neither Charles Fox nor his family intended to leave Carlisle in the lurch, though we may also be quite sure that Charles's "intentions" were not always or necessarily worth much in the money market. Yet in this matter of the bond Selwyn was, in zeal for his young friend, more royalist than the king. Carlisle never once spoke bitterly of Charles Fox throughout the whole transaction, nor did it in the least impair the friendship between the two men. On the contrary, Carlisle remained a Foxite to the end of his days. He was of Charles's faction; watched with pleasure the rise of that young statesman; took office under him during the ill-fated coalition; and was excluded from office with him for all those arid years of William Pitt's supremacy in English politics.

Far otherwise was it with George Selwyn. The "bond" incident was with him the parting of ways: it marked the beginning of his defection from Charles Fox. It is, however, with many qualms of conscience that he ruptures this old friendship. "I am free to own," he writes to Carlisle, "that in speaking to you of Charles who was perhaps your first and warmest friend, who, I believe, now loves you, that is, as he loves Lord and Lady Holland, *à sa façon*, that I suffer a great deal of perplexity. I have lived, notwithstanding the disparity of our years, in great friendship and intimacy with him. His behaviour to me has always been kind and obliging. I have professed a regard to him, and have had it." "I am naturally disposed to love him," he says elsewhere. But henceforward George Selwyn dissembled his love for Charles very successfully. In that long series of letters to Lord Carlisle, beginning in 1773 and ending in 1790, we have many, many glimpses of Charles James Fox; we have, indeed, a perfect portrait of him as he appeared to a former friend, who was opposed to him in politics, who had a kind of freakish jealousy of him, but who found it extremely difficult to withstand Fox's almost irresistible charm. Let us note some of these pen-and-ink sketches of Fox by Selwyn. "I saw Charles to-day," he writes, "in a new hat,

frock, waistcoat, shirt and stockings; he was clean and smug as a gentleman, and upon perceiving my surprise, he told me that it was from the Pharo Bank. He then talked of the thousands it had lost, which I told him only proved its substance, and the advantage of the trade. He smiled and seemed perfectly satisfied with that which he had taken up; he was in such a sort of humour that I should have liked to have dined with him." That, however, was a frequent humour with Charles Fox. A little later the bailiffs arrive: "You must know that for these two days past all passengers in St James's Street have been amused with seeing two carts at Charles's door filling by the Jews, with his goods, clothes, books and pictures. . . . Such furniture I never saw. Betty and Jack Manners are perpetually in a survey of this operation, and Charles with all Brooks's on his behalf in the highest spirits." Why should Charles care? He and Dick Fitzpatrick and James Hare are holding the Pharo bank at Brooks's, dealing by turns and winning thousands (£40,000 Jack Manners says, but Jack exaggerates), while the Jews are kindly removing Charles's dirty furniture. "The Vestal fire is perpetually set up," says Storer, "and they, like Salamanders, owe their existence to and flourish in the flame." "This Pharo bank," Selwyn says virtuously, "is held in a manner which being so exposed to public view, bids defiance to all decency and police. The whole town as it passes views the dealer and the punters, by means of the candles, and the windows being levelled with the ground." Next time you pass down St James's Street, observe the red-brick building which is Brooks's club, redolent, as to its architecture, of the eighteenth century and of the brothers Adam. Look at the windows "levelled with the ground," and imagine that you see within them Charles James Fox at the faro table. He sits there with his great black eyebrows, and his jolly round bibulous face, dealing out the cards with many a jest and many a loud guffaw. George Selwyn looks in from the pavement beside you, and shakes his head virtuously, as he crosses the street to White's, where he himself is running a faro bank, but not at the open window. Is he jealous of Charles's success, I wonder? Storer says that the Selwyn bank at White's is a failure. "It is hardly worth mentioning," says he. "He knows nothing about the game, does not even comprehend the

terms, and if there was any other competition at White's he would soon be deposed from his throne, which his small abilities render him so unfit for."

On another occasion Selwyn calls at Brooks's and hints to Charles that he has a "suit to prefer." "He guessed what it was, and begged that I would not just then speak to him about money, he was in the right. I meant to have dunned him for yours [Carlisle's]. What pleases me," Selwyn confessed, "is that I may say anything to him, and he takes nothing ill, and by that and some other things he does in a great measure disarm me, and I can never abuse him heartily, but when I don't see him for some time." It is indeed amusing to watch Selwyn's efforts to dislike and break away from Charles, and Charles's cunning recoveries. Fox is a "field preacher," a "desperate rantipole vagabond," and (after his accession to office) "the late Charles, now Mr Fox (for I think that the other name has begun to sound obsolete already even at Brooks's) . . . I had no conversation with him [Selwyn continues] or probably shall the rest of my life. . . . I cannot gainsay, unthink, or repent, of any one charge I ever brought against him." Of course not; and Selwyn nurses his resentment against the Secretary of State for as long as possible. "Last night at supper with Charles, but not one syllable passed between us. . . . No one admires more or thinks more justly of his abilities than I do; no one could have loved him more if he had deserved it; what his behaviour has been to the public, to his friends and to his family is notorious. Facts are too stubborn, and to these I appeal, and not to the testimonies of ignorant and profligate people. Hereafter, if you can reconcile yourself to him and to his behaviour towards you, I will forgive him, and although I desire to lay myself under no obligation to him, I will remember only that he is the child of those whom I loved, without interest or any return." But Charles was invincible. Through all that difficult time, when he was flouting the King and his ministers, and bragging about the fine government he was on the point of constructing, Selwyn never entirely broke with him. He could not do it. "Charles, with all his insolence towards the King, is very good-humoured towards me." "I saw Charles last night," says Selwyn in another letter, "and by accident was alone with him; he stretched out his hand to me

with great good humour." How like Charles Fox that was! It is pleasant to think that in spite of Selwyn's peevishness, Fox insisted upon remaining friends with him to the end, so that long afterwards Selwyn was "still disposed to love" Charles, and to "mount the rostrum in his favour."

Imagine an evening at White's, with George Selwyn sitting among the old fellows by the fire, grumbling at the insolence of the younger generation. Charles comes into the room, with Fitzpatrick, and Hare, and other patriots. He sees Selwyn at the fire, and whispers to Fitzpatrick that "old George" is there, and in a deuce of a humour. "But observe," says he, "how I shall bring him round." He goes up to Selwyn, slaps him on the back, insists on shaking hands with him. George resists at first, keeps his sour looks for a while, but thaws gradually under Charles's good humour. So they sit gossiping till midnight, and separate after an "infinitely agreeable" time, as Selwyn grudgingly admits next day to Carlisle.

It would be easy to allow one's pen to stray at large among the members of White's and Brooks's who were also members of the second Selwyn circle: there are so many candidates for portraiture among the fine gentlemen of that time. There was Anthony Morris Storer, for example. Storer was at Eton with Carlisle and Charles Fox, and, like them, afterwards came under Selwyn's influence. There is something very attractive about Anthony Storer's character. He was a clever man, a critic of life and art, a lover of music, a Latinist, a politician. Mr Nichols (of "Literary Anecdotes" fame) considers that he "deserved, in a high degree, if anyone ever did since the days of Crichton, the epithet of *Admirable.* He was the best dancer, the best skater of his time, and beat all his competitors in gymnastic honours." But he was more than all this. He was the best of good fellows. He lived at Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields; and to his rooms in that unfashionable locality came his friends, Carlisle, and Fox, and George Selwyn; they came when they chose, and dined informally with their host, and were always sure of a welcome. Nichols remarks that "if at any time he was rude, insolent, or overbearing, some allowance ought to be made for a state of health highly bilious, which influenced the man at times, and gave a yellow tinge and a saturnine hue to

his character." But there is nothing bilious about his letters to Lord Carlisle or to George Selwyn; they are very good-natured letters, if not so brilliant as one might expect from the Admirable Storer. Letters are revealing things. Thus if a man has a reputation for scholarship, for wit, for originality of mind or of character, a perusal of his correspondence—of his intimate correspondence—shall quickly show us whether that reputation be well or ill founded. No man can keep himself entirely outside the letters which he writes to his friends. So it happens that the publication of such letters almost invariably brings their writer up for final judgment before the bar of the world's opinion. The letters of Anthony Storer, like those of a good many other people of his time, disappoint. He uses Latin tags freely, as most Georgian gentlemen did; gossips conventionally enough about politics and society; and has some acute remarks to make upon what appears to have been his real interest—pictures—as, for example, when he discusses with Selwyn whether a picture at Castle Howard of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was painted by Holbein as an original, or as a copy. He is happiest, however, when he is giving Selwyn the tittle-tattle of Bath, which city Storer affected a great deal. "Mrs Miller gives her fancy-ball next Tuesday," he writes, "but I have made my excuses. Their next subject is upon Trifles and Triflers. If you have a mind *nugis addere pondus*, you may try your hand at an ode, and I do not doubt but that you will be crowned with myrtle for your performance." This, of course, was the famous Mrs Miller of Batheaston, the heroine of the *bouts-rimés*. "They hold a Parnassus-fair every Thursday," wrote Walpole, "give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes. A Roman vase, dressed with pink ribbons and myrtles, receives the poetry which is drawn out every festival; six judges of these Olympic games retire and select the brightest composition, which the respective successful acknowledge, kneel to Mrs Calliope Miller, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned by it with myrtle, with—I do not know what. . . . Yes, by my faith, there are *bouts-rimés* on a buttered muffin, made by her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland; receipts to make them by Corydon the Venerable, alias George Pitt; others very pretty by Lord Palmerston; some by Lord Carlisle." Stout old Dr

Johnson had no patience with such tomfooleries. "*Bouts-rimés*," said he, "is a mere conceit, and an old conceit; I wonder how people were persuaded to write in that manner for this lady!" I named (says Boswell) a gentleman of his acquaintance who wrote for the vase. *Johnson*: "He was a blockhead for his pains!" *Boswell*: "The Duchess of Northumberland wrote." *Johnson*: "Sir, the Duchess of Northumberland may do what she pleases; nobody will say anything to a lady of her high rank; but I should be apt to throw ——'s verses in his face." It is hardly probable that George Selwyn responded to Storer's invitation to contribute to the lady's vase: *bouts-rimés* were not in George's line.

One could speak again, of James Hare, most vivacious and imperturbable of men, who kept Selwyn supplied with news during the latter's absence in Milan; of "Dick" Fitzpatrick, Charles Fox's great friend, with whom George Selwyn played many a game at hazard; of "Fish" Crawford, Madame du Deffand's admirer, whom we may call the butt of the Selwyn circle; of Topham Beauclerk, perhaps the most attractive figure in the fashionable life of his time, who links Selwyn's circle to a circle far more important and distinguished: that of Dr Samuel Johnson. The pen of the politican, again, might linger upon the name of Mr Thomas Townshend (afterwards Lord Sydney), George Selwyn's nephew, generally called and immortalised by Goldsmith under the name of "Tommy" Townshend. Yet Tommy seems to me to have been a most desperately uninteresting person: an energetic, pushing, and entirely commonplace politician, who lived for place and power, and was never quite happy away from St Stephen's. But to treat adequately of these men would require a volume; much indeed could be written about the society of St James's Street when George III. was king, about that astonishing crowd of rollicking gamesters who frequented Almack's and Brooks's and White's with Charles Fox as leader. George Selwyn, as we have seen, mixed with them, but was not quite of them. He was older than they, graver, more responsible; he must often have been the death's head at the banquet. Selwyn the middle-aged seems out of place in St James's Street, which was then (whatever it be now) a place for young men. It is true that he lingered there until near the end: a peevish and

melancholy figure, it must be said. One finds him more at home farther west: at Q.'s house in Piccadilly; or still farther, at Holland House, talking politics with Henry Fox, chatting with "dear Lady Mary," or pacing the terrace between Charles and his young friend Lord Carlisle.

CHAPTER XIV

CLUBS AND GAMING

THE founding of Almack's in 1764 was an important event for George Selwyn and his friends. Almack was a Scotsman, whose real name is said to have been Macall. He kept for some time the Thatched House Tavern in St James's Street, whence he migrated to Pall Mall, where Almack's was first established. The club was founded almost solely for the purpose of gaming, and had twenty-seven original members, including the Duke of Roxburgh, the Duke of Portland, Lord Strathmore, and Mr Crewe. George Selwyn was not an original member; but he was elected in the same year, on the introduction of Mr Crewe, afterwards Lord Crewe. This was not Selwyn's first acquaintance, however, with Mr Almack, for in the previous year Lord March engaged to dine with him at "Old Almack's": but this must have been at the Thatched House Tavern. Selwyn cannot have patronised the club much in 1764: he was in Paris most of that year and the next. Gilly Williams reports to him: "The Dutchman (Hans Sloane Cadogan) is at the Almack House every night. You have no loss, as Quinze is everything, no Hazard." Later he writes: "There is now opened at Almack's, in three very elegant new built rooms, a ten-guinea subscription, for which you have a ball and supper once a week for twelve weeks. You may imagine by the sum, the company is chosen; though, refined as it is, it will be scarce able to put old Soho [Mrs Cornelys', in Soho Square] out of countenance." These rooms, however, were in King Street, St James's; the gambling club still continued in Pall Mall. At King Street both sexes were admitted members, the ladies nominating the gentlemen, and *vice versa*. "Our female Almack's flourishes beyond description," writes Gilly Williams to Selwyn. "If you had such a thing at Paris, you would fill half a quire of flourished paper with the description of it. Almack's Scotch face, in a bag-wig, waiting at supper, would divert you, as would his lady in a

sack, making tea, and curtseying to the duchesses." But it was the Pall Mall institution which interested Selwyn. "The deep play is removed to Almack's," Rigby writes to him, "where you will certainly follow it." When Selwyn returned to England, he certainly did follow it, and spent a good deal of time at the club in Pall Mall. Almack's was a kind of rival to White's, and obtained many of its members from the Young Club. "The Macaronis have demolished Young White's," wrote Mary Townshend to George Selwyn early in 1765, "by admitting almost the whole Club, and are themselves in danger of being deserted in their turn by their members being chosen into the Old Club." The Old Club, indeed, was the only one for which a member of Almack's could stand. "Any member of this Society" said the rule, "who shall become a candidate for any other club (Old White's excepted) shall be *ipso facto* excluded and his name struck out of the book." The gaming rules at Almack's were very strict. "Every person playing at the new guinea table do keep fifty guineas before him"; "every person playing at the twenty guinea table do not keep less than twenty guineas before him." Generally, indeed, there was as much as £10,000 in specie on the table. Almack's was not solely a gaming club: many eminent men who were not gamesters were members. But gaming was the chief interest; the rooms were full of players upon any night of the London season. "The gamesters began by pulling off their embroidered clothes; they put on frieze greatcoats, or turned their coats inside out for luck." Leather protectors were also worn, to save their lace ruffles, and high-crowned straw hats with broad brims. Each player had a stand beside him, to hold his tea, and a wooden bowl for his guineas. Yet even so great a man as Edward Gibbon found life at Almack's very good. "The style of living" says he, "though somewhat expensive, is exceedingly pleasant, and notwithstanding the rage of play, I have found more entertainment and rational society than in any other club to which I belong." But Gibbon, to be sure, liked to be considered a man of the world.

Miss Townshend mentions the Macaronis, who were an esoteric company of Almack's. George Selwyn was no Macaroni: he was not youthful enough for that. The Macaronis burst upon the town as early as 1764; but they

attained their zenith about eight years afterwards. These young gentlemen were distinguished by their immense and glorious extravagances of dress and fashion. They wore great chignons of artificial hair, with very small cocked hats; carried enormous walking-sticks with long tassels; and had their jackets, waistcoats, and breeches, cut close to the figure. Sometimes they varied the fashion: dressed their hair high, or blossomed out with enormous nosegays in their bosoms. The world likes audacity, and the splendid audacity of the Macaronis carried everything before it. For a year or two London lived à la Macaroni. The shops were full of Macaroni articles. In the streets were to be met clerical Macaronis, Macaroni M.P.'s, turf Macaronis, Macaroni artists, Macaroni actors, for aught one knows, Macaroni chairmen and Macaroni link-boys. But the Macaroni fashion soon died out. It was never, indeed, taken seriously by the more responsible members of the British public, or even by the more responsible members of Almack's.

Almack's was soon taken over by one Brookes, a wine merchant and moneylender, who moved the club in 1778 to St James's Street, where the brothers Adam built for him a fine new club house. The premises in Pall Mall, by the way, were occupied after this date by Goosetree's, Mr Pitt's favourite club. Brookes's did not prosper at first, despite its popularity; and Brookes himself (a great scamp, if we are to believe Selwyn) retired from the club soon after it was built, and died poor in 1782. Brooks's (to give it the modern spelling) began its new career with a brilliant list of members—more brilliant perhaps than that of any other club in the whole history of clubs, The Club, of course, excepted. Burke, Fox, Gibbon, Reynolds, Garrick, and Hume: to equal that list you must have gone to the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, where you would have found a company of men even more distinguished (if only because Samuel Johnson was among them); drawn together, too, not by love of hazard and faro, but by love of good talk, and literature, and the conflict of superior mind with superior mind.

George Selwyn was a constant patron of Almack's before it finally merged into Brooks's. He frequently dined and wrote his letters there (he called it his "bureau") and played at quinze, and faro, and hazard, much more than was good for him.

"Quinze goes on vigorously at Almack's," he tells Carlisle in 1768. "Lady S[arah Bunbury] says that you have fixed your coming of age as an *époque* for leaving off that and all kind of play whatsoever. My dear Lord *vive hodie*; don't nurse any passion that gathers strength by time, and may be easier broke off at first." George was speaking out of the fulness of his own experience. "Lady S[arah] is in town," he says in another place, "and I suppose very happy with the thoughts of a Mascarade which we are to have at Almack's next Monday sevennight, unless in the interim some violent opposition comes from the bishops." This, of course, was at the King Street Almack's. On another night he writes to Carlisle from "Almack's, in the Hazard Room alone, to write *tout à mon aise*." He passes two evenings with Charles Fox at supper there, "and never was anybody more agreeable and the more so for his having no pretensions to it." After 1778 Selwyn cultivated Brooks's for a few years with some regularity, though White's remained his favourite club. It is not quite clear why he did so, for the politics at Brooks's were not to his taste, and the play was rather high for a poor man. "I have quite relinquished *nasty Brooks's*, as Lady C[arlisle] calls it," he writes once. "I am with the sexaginary at White's, et de cette manière je passe le tems assez tranquillement." But Selwyn soon came back again. The truth probably was that Brooks's was a "young" place, and very much alive, whereas White's at this time was, as Selwyn hinted, sexagenarian: "un asyle toujours pour les caducs, et pour ceux qui n'ont pas une passion décidée pour le jeu." "Brooks's" he says again, "is a precipice of perdition, upon which I have long stood: and now for fear that I should be *abimé* in it, I shall, I believe, strike my name immediately out of it." It was mostly at Brooks's that Selwyn met Fox, Fitzpatrick, and Hare: the celebrated faro bank of these gentlemen at the club provided Selwyn with an enormous amount of "copy" for his letters. "Supped last night at Brooks's with Lord Ossory, and chiefly on his account. There was a large company besides: the Dukes of Queensberry and of Devonshire, Percy Wyndham, Charles Fox, Hare etc. I stayed very late with Charles and Ossory, and I liked my evening very much. A great deal of the political system from Charles, which he expatiated upon in such a manner as gave me great entertain-

ment." This was only one of many pleasant suppers at Brooks's which Selwyn enjoyed in the year 1781. In the following spring Lord North's government tottered to its fall, and Brooks's became a centre of feverish Opposition activity. Such an atmosphere was very antipathetic to George Selwyn; yet a sort of fascination brought him again and again to the place. "Went last night to Brooks's and stayed with them all after supper, on purpose to hear their discourse, which is with as little reserve before me as if I was one of their friends." "I own that to see Charles closeted every instant at Brooks's by one or the other, that he can neither punt or deal for a quarter of an hour but he is obliged to give an audience, while Hare is whispering and standing behind him, like Jack Robinson, with a pencil and paper for memo, is to me a scene la plus parfaitement comique que l'on puisse imaginer." "I called in at Brooks's last night but avoided all conversation, and will for the future with anyone belonging to the party. Their insolence, vanity and folly and the satisfaction expressed in their countenances upon fancying themselves ministers . . . is no object to me now of mirth."

"Stayed at Brooks's this morning till between two and three and then Charles was giving audiences in every corner of the room, and that idiot Lord D[erby] telling aloud whom he should turn out, how civil he intended to be to the P[rince] and how rude to the K[ing]." It was no wonder that Selwyn retreated more and more to White's. "I like the Society better here," he said. And he draws more than one picture of the "old fellows around the fire" at that club. "The Pharo table had cards on it," says he once, "and four hundred guineas, but not a punter to be found; such old birds are not to be caught with chaff." No, no! We shall leave play and politics to the youngsters, and sit at the fire, and cough, and tell stories.

Almack's, Brooks's, and White's, were three of the most notorious gaming clubs in London, at a time when gaming haunted London society like a passion. There were giants of play in those days. Consider, for example, the classical instance of Charles James Fox, the most desperate gambler in that age of desperate gambling. Fox played so recklessly and with such an absolute disregard of ways and means as almost to suggest doubts of his sanity. The memoirs and letters of

the time are full of his exploits at the gaming-table—exploits which are so familiar to us as scarcely to need repetition. But here is his record for three nights, as preserved by Horace Walpole. Walpole is explaining that Fox did not shine in a certain debate upon the Thirty-Nine Articles in the House of Commons; "nor could it," says he, "be wondered at. He had sat up playing at hazard at Almack's from Tuesday evening the 4th, till 5 in the afternoon of Wednesday 5th. An hour before he had recovered £12,000 that he had lost, and by dinner, which was at five o'clock, he had ended losing £11,000. On the Thursday, he spoke in the above debate, went to dinner at past eleven at night; from thence to White's, where he drank till seven next morning; thence to Almack's where he won £6000; and between three and four in the afternoon he set out for Newmarket. His brother Stephen lost £11,000 two nights after, and Charles £10,000 more on the 13th, so that in three nights, the two brothers, the eldest not twenty-five, lost £32,000." This is the sort of thing that happened to Fox many times in his gaming career. He was, however, a splendid loser. After a disastrous night he would be found by Topham Beauclerk at an early hour of the morning studying Herodotus ("What would you have me do? I have lost my last shilling"), or talking to Horace Walpole at his coach window about the Marriage Act, or venturing a theological opinion in the congenial atmosphere of the House of Commons.

Fox was easily first amongst the gamesters of Selwyn's set and time. But there were others of almost equal fame. There was Sir John Bland, who shot himself in 1755, having lost his entire fortune at hazard. In one night he lost, and won back again, £32,000. There was Lord Mountford, whose history was very similar. Having lost large sums of money at play, "he consulted several persons, indirectly at first, afterwards pretty directly—on the easiest method of finishing life; invited a dinner-party for the day after, supped at White's and played at whist till one o'clock of the New Year's morning. Lord Robert Bertie drank to him 'a happy New Year': he clapped his hand strangely to his eyes. In the morning he sent for a lawyer and three witnesses, executed his will, made them read it twice over, paragraph by paragraph, asked the lawyer if that will would stand good though a man were to shoot himself.

Being assured that it would, he said, 'Pray stay while I step into the next room'—went into the next room and shot himself." The Georgian gamesters were not all so unfortunate. General Scott, a contemporary of Selwyn's, made a fortune of £200,000 at cards, and kept it. But he was a whist player, the best of his time, and rarely touched faro, or threw a main at hazard. Equally wise was Lord Robert Spencer, who made £100,000 by lucky play, and thereupon abandoned the gaming-table for ever. But it was no uncommon thing, as Walpole tells us, for the young men of that age to lose ten, fifteen, twenty thousand pounds in a single evening. "Lord Stavordale not one-and-twenty, lost £11,000 there [at Almack's] last Tuesday but recovered it by one great hand at hazard. He swore an oath, 'Lord, if I had been playing *deep*, I might have won millions.'"

We talk casually about the thousands lost and won at play in Selwyn's time, and wonder, perhaps, where the money came from; but we seldom think of the social condition of England in that heroic age. Yet the contrast between the affluence of St James's Street and the poverty of the country was very striking, and well merits a moment's consideration. In St James's Street the Foxes and the Stavordales were tossing guineas about by the hundred thousand; in the country men, women, and children were dying for want of the ordinary necessaries of life. There is still a contrast between wealth and poverty in this country: it is a commonplace of politicians of all parties, who will perhaps remedy it in another hundred years or so, if we are patient. But in the eighteenth century the contrast was even more striking than it is to-day. The wealth of England was in comparatively few hands. The society of the rich was a small society, and it was also, for a very obvious reason, a select society. Broadly speaking, agriculture was the staple industry of the time; the industrial revolution had not yet begun; and the prosperous classes were the classes who either owned or cultivated land. The gentlemen of England were the landlords of England, the owners of an enormously valuable natural monopoly. The guineas squandered at White's and Brooks's were not profits of trade: they were rents from the fertile English farms. Now the gentlemen "who did us the honour to govern us" were in a strong posi-

tion. They owned the land of the country upon which grew the food of the country, and they took precious good care rigidly to exclude by means of a high tariff the importation of food from abroad. On the other hand, and even in seasons of scarcity, there was a large *exportation* of food to foreign countries, because when people are continually fighting—as they were on the Continent—they have no time to grow corn; they must import it, and give good prices for it, too. Hence the extraordinary wealth of the English patricians of the eighteenth century. They were the agricultural interest, and the agricultural interest was the moneyed interest. All this was excellent business for the governing classes, but it was often a very sad business indeed for the governed (except perhaps the farmers). Take the year 1772 for example. In that year the distress in England was widespread and terrible. Wheat was 72s. the quarter—not by any means the highest price touched in the century (the price is 28s. or so now). The newspapers of the time—which, by the way, are excellent, as they give the news in small compass, and are printed with clear type upon good paper—are full of references to the prevailing distress, and of suggestions for its relief. Thus an advertisement appears in several newspapers for "subscribers for reducing the high price of provisions": an example of charitable, but quixotic, private enterprise. A correspondent of *The Public Advertiser* for 16th April 1772 was of opinion, however, "that the subscription for reducing the present high price of provisions will prove abortive. To remedy so great and obvious an Evil requires great Labour, Penetration, and Patience. The Promoters and Patrons of this laudable Undertaking, he is afraid, will find an insuperable Difficulty in persuading the Farmer, the Grazier, the Salesman, and the Butcher, to lessen their various Profits so long as Property shall in this country be held sacred. A narrow, contracted, selfish Spirit is predominant throughout the Kingdom. The Landholder, the Merchant, and the Trader, are equally rapacious with those above mentioned; are equally zealous to make the most of their property; and equally callous to the general Necessities and Sufferings of the Poor, as those very Men who are at present so much execrated. In a free and commercial Country, when Individuals lose sight of Honour, Liberality,

and Humanity, in their Mutual Dealings with one another, numberless Evils are introduced into the State, which, by Degrees, become almost insupportable; and to add to the Affliction, cannot be redressed without unhinging the very pillars of our excellent Constitution. If it is not in the Power of the Legislature to remove the Evil so strongly and justly complained of there is little Reason to expect Relief or Redress from any other Interposition."

Certain efforts were made even in the Legislature to remedy the evil. On the 16th of April in the same year a "bill for regulating the Importation and Exportation of Corn" was presented and read a first time. This was apparently only a "sliding scale" Bill. But another Bill for "Allowing the free importation of Wheat, Rice, Rye, etc." was also presented on that day and read a first time: the daring experiment of some free trader born out of due season. Needless to say the Bill went no further. "Whilst the lower classes" (said the *Advertiser*) "of People are almost starving for the Common Necessaries of Life, and some humane and generous Individuals are striving to alleviate their grievous Distresses, the Ministry look with a careless Eye on such Concerns, being fully employed in stretching the Prerogative of the Crown, and making their Court to the King, in order to keep their Places, and wallow in the Wealth of the Community. The Ministry may indeed be truly said to be themselves the greatest of Engrossers,[1] as they have engrossed all the Places, and all the Riches of the Public; and therefore it cannot be expected they should take any effectual Measures for preventing the Wicked proceedings of the Lesser. They will not allow the Importation of American Wheat, though the Cries of the Poor are, at this Time, so loud, and their Oppression so very pinching, that there is too much Reason for apprehending the greatest Distractions are at hand. 'But Gallio careth for none of these things.'" . . .

"Surely a Man who exports a Sheep to France while his Fellow Subjects are starving deserves a capital punishment."

Opposition journals like the *Advertiser* were not slow to contrast the poverty of the country with the luxury of London society. "The present luxury of the times," said that journal in its issue of 6th May 1772, "may be easily estimated from the

[1] As we should say now, Trust magnates.

Masquerade of last Thursday evening. Two Thousand persons at two guineas each make four thousand guineas, and if we rate the price of all the various Dresses at three guineas each [the money demanded at Tavistock Street for the use only of a domino] we shall immediately see that ten thousand guineas, besides the expense of chair and coach hire, were lavished on the entertainment of a single night, while our Poor are absolutely perishing for bread in various parts of the Kingdom."

The point might be emphasised by many examples from the gaming world. It was in this year that the Fox brothers lost £32,000 in two nights. In this year also, as we find from the books of Almack's, a Mr Thynne, "having won only 12,000 guineas during the last two months, retired in disgust. March 21st, 1772." So we might go on for long enough, underlining the moral; but we must hasten back to Mr George Selwyn, who lived and died before it was fashionable to regard the Condition-of-the-people question as acute.

Selwyn has the reputation of having been one of the most reckless of gamesters of his time; but here again a little healthy scepticism is permissible. As a matter of fact he was never really a "deep" player, and cannot be considered as having been in what we may call the first rank of Georgian gamesters: the rank of Charles Fox and his friends. For most of his life, it is true, he was a steady patron of the gaming-table, and was in consequence frequently in financial difficulties; but his gains and losses at play were not considerable, as gains and losses went in those days. For this there were many reasons. In the first place, Selwyn was a "duffer" at the principal gambling games—hazard, quinze and faro. He was a tolerable whist player, like Charles Fox, and like him could have made a fair income from cards if he had confined his attention to that game. But again, George Selwyn was a poor man. At the best of times his income was probably well under three thousand a year; often it was much less. Now it is quite true that poverty was no bar to the Georgian gamester. He was a sporting man, who played for a win; and if he lost, mysterious bonds and other legal documents made their appearance (generally in company with persons of the Hebrew race), and tided the loser over until the next win. But here the second reason for Selwyn's comparative moderation at the

gaming-table begins to operate. George Selwyn came of a family noted for its shrewdness and carefulness in all matters relating to money. His father, John Selwyn, was reckoned extremely thrifty and careful, and his mother had something of the same reputation. George inherited a share at least of this family virtue. He never lost his head at cards, or plunged wildly on the turf, or booked extravagant and impossible wagers. Behind all his "passion for play" was a shrewd and serious estimate of ways and means; a calculated finance; a nice knowledge of the imperative limit. Thus, through all the insensate gaming of the Georgian period, Selwyn arrived at a comparatively unembarrassed old age. But he had his experiences. "I am very sorry to hear," writes Lord March to him in 1765, "that you are still *throwing out* as well as me. I fear if luck does not come soon, it will only find us at five pound stakes." "Throwing-out" refers, of course, to hazard, described as "the most gambling of all games of chance." At hazard the player selects a "main" on the dice, and calls it aloud. If he throws it, he "nicks" it and wins; if he throws another number that number becomes his "chance," and the player takes another throw. If he throws his "chance" again, he wins, and goes on "throwing-in." Bnt if he "throws out" three times, the box passes to the next player. Hazard and faro—both games of pure chance—were the most popular games at the clubs in Selwyn's time. Faro (or pharo) was a card game, easy to learn and quiet: "certainly the most bewitching game that is played with dice; for when a man begins to play he knows not when to leave off." Faro tables were freely kept both at Brooks's and White's by members: the expense of a faro bank amounted, it was said, to £1000 a year; but the profits were sometimes enormous. Thus the bank operated at Brooks's by Lord Robert Spencer and Richard Fitzpatrick brought both men large fortunes. Lord Robert was said to have pocketed as his share £100,000, after which, like a wise man, he gave up play and retired into private life.

But to continue the experiences of George Selwyn. In the same year (1765) March writes again: "When I came home last night I found your letter on my table. So you have lost a thousand pounds, which you have done twenty times in your life-time, and won it again as often, and why should

not the same thing happen again? I make no doubt that it will. I am sorry, however, that you have lost your money: it is unpleasant. In the meantime, what the devil signify *le fable de Paris* or the nonsense of White's? You may be sure they will be glad you have lost your money: not because they dislike you but because they like to laugh. . . . All that signifies nothing: the disagreeable part is having lost your money; Almack's or White's will bring all back again." This £1000 seems to have been lost at Paris, but in the same year Mr I. Shafto duns him for the same amount. "I intended to have spoke to you last night . . . in regard to the one thousand pounds you owe me. . . . I hope it will not be inconvenient to you to leave the money for me at White's either to-morrow or next day." Selwyn paid Mr Shafto with money borrowed from Lord March. Lenders were not all so accommodating as March. Richard Fitzpatrick, applied to for assistance, is "heartily sorry for your *malheur*, though it is some satisfaction to me to find the resolutions of others are not more binding than my own." He promises to speak to Stephen Fox, and can give Selwyn "no other hopes." In an unpublished letter (now in Sir John Rotton's possession) a certain "Drummond" (one of the banking Drummonds, perhaps) is "heartily sorry I cannot comply with your request, having determined to lend no money on personal security, and hope therefore you will excuse, sir, your most obedient humble servant." Selwyn must often have been hardly pressed. The Earl of Derby writes him in or about the year 1776: "Nothing can equal what I feel at troubling you with this disagreeable note: but, having lost a very monstrous sum of money last night, I find myself under the necessity of entreating your goodness to excuse the liberty I am taking now of applying to you for assistance. If it is not very inconvenient to you I should be glad of the money you owe me. If it is, I must pay what I can, and desire Brookes to trust me for the remainder. I repeat again my apologies, to which I shall beg leave to add how very sincerely I have the honour to be, my dear Sir, your most obedient humble servant, Derby." Was ever a loser dunned in a more gentlemanly manner? Of course there were many ways of raising money besides that of borrowing from friends. Thus, so early as the year 1758, George

Selwyn had mortgaged the parsonage of Whitchurch in Hampshire (part of the family property) to one John Blake, for £500; he paid it off again in 1761.[1] This was in all probability to pay a gambling debt. He had other mortgages of which we know nothing. But in 1782 Selwyn had a grand financial clearing up. "I have told you that my affairs are *en régie*," he writes to Carlisle, "that is, I have borrowed money of Coutts to pay all my debts of every kind, but a mortgage of £2000, but that comes at the rear of the rest, and I am to take from him for my own provision, two hundred guineas a month, that is, £2520 a year. Moyennant cet arrangement, all my encumbrances will end with the next year . . . and then excepting age and infirmities I shall be *rectus in curia*. . . . I remember when one half satisfied all my occasions, even *mes fantasies*, play excluded, and now the double of the sum seems a restraint."

Did Selwyn ever completely abandon the gaming-table? He certainly made many efforts, between 1770 and 1780, to limit his play to reasonable amounts. Friends like Lord Holland and Lord Carlisle were continually giving him advice upon the subject. "Leave off play!" wrote the former. "You are a fool at it!" "Much obliged to you for your hint about hazard," Selwyn writes to Carlisle, a little stiffly; and on another occasion asks him to "give me no flings about it." In response, however, to Carlisle's "flings," Selwyn did consent to what he called a "tie"—that is, an arrangement by which he agreed not to risk more than a certain amount at play, on pain of forfeit. Some of his friends were angry, and Hare said it was the "damned'st thing to do at this time in the world." The "tie," however, did not long subsist. In the following year (1775) Selwyn is apologising to Carlisle for his lapses, and allowing that the comparison of him to "Arlequin" was "just." Undeterred, Arlequin makes a new proposal: "What I propose is to receive a guinea or two guineas and to pay twenty for every ten which I shall lose in the same day above fifty at any game of chance. I reserve the fifty for an unexpected necessity of playing in the country or elsewhere, with women. . . . If you tie me up, I beg my forfeiture may go to the children, and then perhaps I may forfeit for their sakes, you'll say." These childish expedients were probably of little effect. But as Selwyn

[1] Close Rolls, 1 Geo. III. Pt. XI.

approached the age of sixty and found his household cares and anxieties increase he appears gradually to have given up the gaming-table. So late as 1780, however, Mr William Wilberforce saw him keeping bank at faro at Brooks's, and has left a striking little portrait of him in that capacity. "The first time I was at Brookes's," says Wilberforce, "scarcely knowing anyone, I joined from mere shyness, in play at the faro table, where George Selwyn kept bank. A friend, who knew my inexperience and regarded me as a victim decked out for the sacrifice called to me, 'What, Wilberforce! is that you?' Selwyn quite resented the interference, and turning to him said in his most expressive tone, 'Oh, sir! don't interrupt Mr Wilberforce, he could not be better employed.'" Selwyn's faro bank at White's in 1781 was probably his last extensive venture in play, and it was not successful. He had become quite virtuous in 1782. "I hear of no news," he says, writing to Carlisle. "The gaming world would afford a great deal, but," he adds piously, "I hope it will never any more be interesting to either of us." And again he writes: "Pharaon (faro) s'empare de tous les quartiers de la ville. It may approach me under any guise it pleases but it will never succeed with me for any time. . . . It is time in my sixty-third year to know what I am worth and can count upon." According to an obituary notice which appeared in the *Annual Register* in 1791, Selwyn entirely gave up play before his death, except for trifling sums. "It was one of the greatest consumers," he said, "of time, fortune, constitution, and thinking." An admirable sentiment this, smacking somewhat of the aged sinner virtuous by the necessity of his years.

CHAPTER XV

LATER YEARS

WE have already dealt with the later years of George Selwyn so far as they covered the life that he lived in public: at Paris, in politics, the clubs, and society, and have now only to glance, very briefly, at his more intimate and personal life during the same period.

The family mansion in Cleveland Court was for many years Selwyn's headquarters in London. But it was probably much too large for a single gentleman; and accordingly, in or about the year 1768, Selwyn let it to his nephew, "Tommy" Townshend, who had a family, and acquired for himself the lease of a house in Chesterfield Street, Mayfair.[1] This was his London residence for the next twelve or thirteen years. Chesterfield Street is one of the quietest streets in Mayfair, and is to-day not very different in appearance from what it was when Selwyn knew it. About 1781 he returned to Cleveland Court, and the house in Chesterfield Street remained empty for a time. Lady Macartney wished to hire it, but Selwyn was resolved "not to let it to an acquaintance." Nevertheless he did apparently afterwards let it to an acquaintance, Isabella, Countess of Carlisle, the mother of his friend. Whether he sold it to her or not does not appear. He must have disposed of it before his death, as it is not mentioned in his will, and it was not, like Matson and Cleveland Court, settled property. Meanwhile Selwyn was glad to come back to Cleveland Court when the Townshends left it.

[To MARY TOWNSHEND][2]

"HOUSE OF COMMONS
"Thursday Night [*circ.* 1781]

"I did certainly desire the favour of you to settle in any manner which you judged to be right, the account between your brother and me relative to the house in Cleveland Court, and

[1] This may have been the house "near Mayfair Chappel," left to him in his father's will.

[2] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

I am still desirous that it may be concluded as speedily as possible, by the mode which you will think the most reasonable. I know your exactness and am sure that your judgment will have no biass but to what my affection as well as your own will naturally direct it. . . . The house is, as I am told now, thoroughly repaired. If I live a certain number of years I shall receive the benefit of it. If I do not, I hope that your brother and his family will have the longest enjoyment of it possible. I was by no means impatient to take possession of it, and should perhaps never have thought of it, if the number of my family was not necessarily increased. I would have taken another house with all my heart as I told your brother if either he or Mrs Townshend had had any reluctance to go out. But as he chose to settle in that in which he was to stay for some time, as soon as he could and as I could not resolve to make a perpetual renunciation of it, so it was determined, I hope, according to his own inclination and that the time of leaving it, is so also. I did not expect it to be at soonest till the very end of the year.

"When I happened to fall upon this subject with Mr Woodcock, as I did some time ago he seemed to have the most equitable idea of what was to be done and in that I should acquiesce, if you was of his mind. He is a man of business, but he is a gentleman also, and . . . he knows more perfectly than anybody how much it is my disposition to act in everything whereby nearest relations are concerned, as much by the dictates of affection as my present circumstances will possibly allow. I am, dear Mary, most affectionately yours, G. SELWYN"

During this time Selwyn alternated between London and Matson, with occasional visits to Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Like a sensible man, he had a high opinion of Tunbridge Wells. It was, he said, "for a little time in the summer, with a family, and for people who do not find a great deal of occupation at their country houses, one of the prettiest places in the world. The houses are so many bijouzs made up for the occasion, so near the place, so *agreste*, and the whole an air of such simplicity, that I am delighted with it, as much as when my amusements were, as they were formerly, at the Rooms and upon the Pantiles, which are now to me detestable." This was in 1774. Dr John Warner praised Tunbridge also, its "people of quality, fine clothes, and music"; "but after all," he adds, "how much more charming is Matson!" Selwyn usually spent a few weeks at Matson in the autumn, not because he

thought it charming, but because of his position as M.P. for the city. He was a J.P. also, and sometimes sat on the local Bench "acting Trapolin with a vengeance" as Gilly Williams said. When Mie Mie returned to England in 1779 he went more gladly to Gloucester, as it was good for the child's health. It was surely almost worth the banishment to receive such amusing letters as Dr Warner sent to him and to Mie Mie at this time. "My sweet little Queen!" exclaims the doctor once, "I shall be au désespoir if I have not a letter from you and Miss Selwyn on Monday morning. An ugly, envious cloud hid the moon from me last night at 9 o'clock. I hope for better luck to-night. You, perhaps, might see the moon, as the sky looked clear toward your quarter, but you could not see your poor Snail, as he was under a cloud. Matson House, you know, bears directly S.W. from Scrivelsby Parsonage; or if you don't know it, you presently may, if our best friend will get you a pretty plaything, which will amuse you into the knowledge of the geography of your native country. We always drink your health at Scrivelsby. I am, your loving SNAIL"

This jolly worldling of a parson had no hesitation in revealing himself in his letters to his patron. "I have been preaching this morning," says he, "and am going to dine—where?—in the afternoon. We shall bolt the door—and (but hush! softly! let me whisper it, for it is a violent secret and I shall be blown to the devil if I blab, as in this house we are 'Noah and his precise family') and play at cards . . . oh how I long to see you all! My sweet little Queen, and the dear lady whom you used so ill and aspersed. My little Queen, rejoice to see your Snail (as he will to see his little Queen) and let your eye be herald to your heart." Once he grows lyrical on the subject of food. "Three John-Dories and a stewed ox-cheek! Stop sir! Never leave a place where you can get such eating! Stay oh stay, and let me come to you." About this time Selwyn pulled down an old house which stood close to Matson and built stables with the stones, and Doctor Warner provided him with the following inscription :—

"AEDIFICIUM VETUSTATE COLLAPSUM
RESTITUIT G. A. SELWYN
1780"

The stables remain, but there is no sign of Dr Warner's inscription.

Selwyn never had any other house in London besides the two in Chesterfield Street and Cleveland Court respectively. But in 1773 he had great hopes of obtaining a charming residence in the Green Park, which went with the Deputy-Rangership of Hyde and St James's Parks. Selwyn was not, however, to be Deputy-Ranger, as Lord March makes clear in a letter to his friend. "Orford has had many applications for the Deputy-Rangership," he writes, "and one from the Duke of Gloucester. But he intends to give it to Shirley, which he has told his Royal Highness: so far that is settled; but you do not know what is likewise settled, which is, that you are to have the house, provided his Majesty approves of it, which I am sure he will. I imagine that Orford means that you should give Shirley a hundred; by that means Orford gives him two hundred a year which will be very convenient to him or he is quite undone. You cannot think how happy I am that you are to have a house and so pretty a one, so very near to mine: —it is, you know, what we have both wished so much." Lord Orford was Ranger of St James's and Hyde Parks at this time; and the house referred to stood within the Green Park, almost opposite to "Q.'s" house in Piccadilly—now Nos. 138 and 139. After all, Selwyn did not obtain the house, probably very much to the disappointment both of himself and of "Q." It was pulled down in 1843, its last tenant being Lady William Gordon.

When Mie Mie began to grow up, Selwyn greatly wished to have a villa somewhere near London, to which he could retire in the summer and autumn months. He wanted the fresh country air for Mie Mie; but, for his own comfort, it must not be too far from the "flags of Piccadilly." Matson was out of the world; besides, his aversion from Gloucester became more pronounced after the election of 1780. "I shall undoubtedly take the first agreeable house I can find," he tells Carlisle, " . . . my thoughts are upon Chiswick, or on the road to the Oaks." At another time he thought of Streatham, where the Duchess of Bedford offered him a house. Indeed, he stayed there for six weeks in 1781, and made use of the opportunity to look out for "a country house for next year, and perhaps

the Duke of Q. may do the same, for from that distance to about ten miles further we have agreed is the best to answer our purpose. We must necessarily have two houses that purity and impurity may not occasionally meet." In the end both Purity and Impurity took houses at Richmond. So early as 1775 Selwyn had spent a few weeks there in the summer with the infant Mie Mie; it was a favourite pleasure spot of his. But no doubt it was the Duke of Queensberry who finally brought Selwyn to Richmond. That nobleman purchased his famous villa at Richmond in 1780, and forthwith—if we are to believe "Q.'s" biographers—began to celebrate most unholy orgies by the banks of the Thames. Contemporary letters, however, hardly bear out these allegations. Some of Q.'s dinner parties seem to have been most quiet and respectable, the guests including members of Parliament, bishops, and other serious people. In 1782 Selwyn took a villa somewhere near his friend, and thenceforth until his death spent much of his time at Richmond. In one of his letters to Carlisle he draws an agreeable picture of his life there: "I have no thought myself," says he, "of settling in London, nor am I desirous of it, while the Thames can be kept in due bounds. At present it is subdued, and all above is clear after a certain hour, and my house is the warmest and most comfortable of any; and when I came here to dinner on Saturday last, having given my servants a day's law, everything was in as much order, as if I had never left it. The Duke dines with me when he is here a little after four, and when we have drunk our wine, we resort to his Great Hall, *bien éclairée*, *bien échauffée*, to drink our coffee, and hear Quintettos. The hall is hung round with the Vandyke pictures (as they are called) and they have a good effect. But I wish that there had been another room or gallery for them, that the hall might have been without any other ornament but its own proportions." A pleasant sketch, is it not? Purity and Impurity in their old age, drinking coffee, and listening to quintettos, and criticising works of art: not quite lurid enough for the moralist, perhaps, who would prefer a peep at the diversions of the *corps di ballet*, with which I am sorry we cannot oblige him.

Let us interrupt the narrative for a moment to tell of a little legal and financial trouble which happened to Selwyn at this time. His correspondence with Carlisle contains many refer-

ences to an Irish lawsuit in which he was concerned. "My connections with Ireland," he writes once, "which I wish to God were at an end. There is one indeed which will plague me while I live, and that is an annuity upon Mr Gore's Estate which I must sue for as regularly as it becomes due." In another letter he mentions "that scoundrel Gore," and relates how he has instituted a suit in the Dublin Courts against this gentleman. The facts appear from a Bill filed in the Chancery Courts of Ireland in 1787: George Augustus Selwyn *v.* The Earl of Arran, Richard Gore, Sir R. Steele, etc., etc.,[1] the recital to which throws an interesting light upon the composition of George Selwyn's income. It tells how James, Lord Tyrawly, was seized of certain lands, salmon, trout, and eel fisheries, at "Beeleak," on the River Moy, and in various Irish counties. Upon these lands, etc., Lord Tyrawly granted John Selwyn ("father of suppliant") three annuities of £100 per annum each, to be paid quarterly during John Selwyn's life and during the life of "suppliant"—his son, George Augustus Selwyn. In 1751 Lord Tyrawly sold the lands, with the annuities still charged upon them, to the Earl of Arran, then Sir Arthur Gore. The annuities were paid regularly until 1780, when Mr Richard Gore (upon whose lands in Mayo the annuities were then charged) began to make default. In 1783 three years' arrears were due, and George Selwyn applied in Chancery for an order for payment of £900, and for the appointment of a receiver of Gore's lands in Mayo. The court thereupon appointed a receiver who was to pay Selwyn his £900, and the succeeding annuity sums. But in the same year a private Act of Parliament vested the lands in question in the Right Hon. Barry Yelverton and others, still, apparently, with the annuities attached. In consequence of this Act the receiver was discharged when only £343 had been paid to George Selwyn. Payments continued to be made irregularly; but in 1787 suppliant alleges that £1739, 1s. 11d. Irish is due to him, "and the Defendants refuse to pay or give information." The defendants in their reply admit most of the facts; but Mr Richard Gore alleges that the receiver appointed in 1783 paid Mr Selwyn all that was due to him, and denies that there is any necessity to appoint a new receiver. There is no decree attached to the

[1] Irish Chancery Records.

bill, so that we cannot say how this protracted litigation ended. But it certainly plagued Selwyn a good deal during his declining years.

Richmond must have been a pleasant little town in those days, when the Walpoles and the Queensberrys and the Selwyns gathered there, and dined at each other's houses, and spent afternoons on the river and the hill. Such card-parties, dinners, balls, assemblies, as there were, not to speak of the theatre, in which Lord Barrymore played to admiring audiences. George Selwyn seems thoroughly to have enjoyed his last few years at Richmond, despite indifferent health, and other anxieties. Mie Mie was now old enough to be a companion to him. She appears to have returned his affection, and always to have treated him with kindness and consideration. When he was ill she nursed him; she was a "good nurse," he said. We get many glimpses of their Richmond life both in the letters of Horace Walpole and in Selwyn's own letters to the Carlisles. "Richmond is in the first request this summer," writes Walpole in 1789. "Mrs Bouverie is settled there with a large court. The Sheridans are there, too, and the Bunburys. I have been once with the first; with the others I am not acquainted. I go once or twice a week to George Selwyn late in the evening, when he comes in from walking." Another time he goes to see "the Duke of Queensberry's palace at Richmond, under the conduct of George Selwyn, the *concierge*. You cannot imagine how noble it looks." But Selwyn himself gives many sketches of his Richmond life in his letters to Lady Carlisle. "Caroline [Lady Carlisle's daughter, married to Mr Campbell, and living at Isleworth] is perfectly well . . . I have not seen her to-day. . . . At present I only know that about 12 o'clock last night she eat plumb cake and drank wine and water in my parlour—she, Mr Campbell and Mie Mie, and who besides I have not yet asked. I was in bed when she came; it was an *heure perdue*, but not lost upon me, for I was not asleep, nor could sleep till I heard that those two girls were come home safe. From what, in the name of God? you will say. From seeing that *étourdi* Lord Barrymore play the fool in three or four different characters upon our Richmond Theatre. Well, but what did that signify? Nothing to me! let him expose himself on as many stages as he pleases . . . but he comes

here and assembles as many people ten miles around as can squeeze into the Booth. . . . I did not expect them to be clear of the House till near twelve, so went into my room, and soon after to bed, but I slept well, for I had heard of them. They were all, I tell you, before twelve in my parlour, eating cake and chattering, talking the whole farce over, *comme à la grille du couvent.*" Another time Selwyn reflects with satisfaction upon an intimacy which he had struck up with his own fireside, "to which perhaps in the course of the winter I may admit that very popular man, Mr Thomas Jones"—under the patronage of Mr Henry Fielding, we may guess. He also proposed to read "Dr White's Bampton Lectures which they say contains the most agreeable account imaginable of our Religion compared with that of Mahomet . . . I have a design upon Botany Bay and Cibber's Apology for his own life, which everybody has read, and which I should have read myself forty years ago if I had not preferred the reading of men so much to that of books." Selwyn was becoming quite a literary critic in his old age.

[To Mary Townshend][1]

"Richmond
"September 17th, 1787

"I am much obliged to you and Lady Middleton that you have ever had it in contemplation to make me a visit at Matson. I cannot expect it but when it happens to be convenient to you. If I had my choice of the time I must own that I had rather the voyage were in a more agreeable season for all things considered and known to you, who have been there. I think you would find less inconvenience in the summer than now. But we will talk of that when I shall have the pleasure to see you next, and I will endeavour to enjoy you and your sister's company at Matson in imagination till the party shall actually take place, against which time I may perhaps provide some accommodation which you and I agreed were very necessary when I was to receive visits from the Ladies. We live now in an improved age and in some respects at least are more delicate than those who preceded us, and what they could dispense with we cannot. Now we can have a patent for every lower convenience of life. I intend myself to go to Matson the latter

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

end of this month for about a fortnight or three weeks more or less as the weather encourages us to stay or drives us from the place. Mie Mie seems very well pleased to change the scene and very soon relinquished the idea of going to a place near the sea upon finding that I thought that there was no real occasion for it. I believe her temptation was to pass a month with a lady and her little boy who were to go to some bathing place, and this was Mrs Saltren. How or why she has become such a favourite I cannot guess, and it would be to no purpose to censure what I believe has no foundation but Caprice. However, although I have no objection to the Lady, and have for her sister an infinite respect and esteem, I mean Mrs Meadows, yet I cannot say that I am pleased with warm confidential friendships between young ladies however innocently they are formed, they are seldom of any use in the beginning of life and when we grow older we are sufficiently convinced how few are attended with any solid benefit. But Mrs S., whom I do not mean to describe as a young person, has taken a part which will be more amusing to herself and gone with Mr Hamilton and his family to the baths, so we are left to ourselves, which is what I wished. I am afraid that as I cannot have your company we must be content to try, by the contrast, how agreeable we can make a retreat from this place, which is too much rather in the other extreme. I should have hoped for Mrs Fr. Selwyn's company, but Louise is, I am afraid, too ill to be left or to go anywhere from home. On our return hither from Matson we shall stay here till about the 20th November, and then our plan is to go to Castle H[oward] till after Christmas. I am there satisfied with every circumstance of life. I have company enough, quiet enough for myself, and for Mie Mie a system of life which I am sure is the best that can be. All that family is now set out and will not return, I believe, until the Parliament meets. When I get there I may perhaps choose for my reading the book you mention; I have heard much of it. If the author abuses B[ishop] Burnet and with wit, I shall like it; if with Truth, I shall be informed; but without one or the other it will make no impression upon me. I have no desire as you imagine to have the Bishop more abused than he deserves. I am willing to suppose that he was an honest, well-meaning man, in some things well instructed, in others as much imposed upon. The main of what he means to tell is true in some parts, unless he has been misled and on purpose. He was, I believe, what Dr Paulet said of B[ishop] Atterbury, a meddling priest, and deserved some animadversions on that account from those of

the Opposite Party and had better luck than some who get hanged for nothing but because they were foolishly eager in the pursuit of being too important. Your favourite Prince, King William, is a favourite of mine also, and I think he who abdicated, if for no other reason, one of the weakest men that ever lived, with some very bad qualities besides. But born in a monarchical Government, and in a very early period of my life, a witness of the respect which was paid to the Person on the throne and to his Royal family by all honest persons, as well as by my own relations who had such great obligations to them, I have imbibed for monarchy and those who represent it a sort of reverence that neither Mr Wilkes, Mr Fox, Mr Burke, Parson Horne, or even the Marquis of Rockingham can obliterate. Oliver Cromwell was a man with some abilities and strength of mind, but, as his little descendant[1] does not hear me, I will be free to say un des plus grands scelerats qui fut jamais, and yet he may have been the Progenitor of an amiable offspring. He was, besides, himself not without some drops of Royal blood, as you, by his pedigree, may see. But that was so corrupted in him that the King's Evil was substituted in the room of it. Your little charge has in her veins some other blood, that of my father's, and if I live to see her in any of her qualities resemble him I will forgive her being a descendant of the man who called himself our Protector; so de ce cote là je l'embrasse et je desire qu'elle aille au Paradis sur la fin de mon Pere, you remember the passage in Mme. de Sévigné's letter, and in the meantime she shall have my blessing if, unconsecrated, it can be of any use to her. . . . Most affectionately yours."

Selwyn moved from Richmond to Cleveland Court for some weeks in the winter, so that Mie Mie might have all the advantages of life in town. Once he gave a "Drum" at his house, which was not altogether a success. "I had a Drum," he tells Carlisle, "and that began early; I was to prepare for it, I was to be served in *ambigu*, and it was to be the easiest most agreeable, best understood thing in the world. It was my apprehension the very *antipode* of this. I do not know how my company felt, but I was not at my ease a moment. I had a Commerce table, and one of Whist. My company were Middletons,

[1] Who the "little descendant" was is doubtful: probably (from the context) one of the Midleton children. Lady Midleton was George Selwyn's niece.

Bostons, Townshends and Selwyns. March came to the door at eleven, but hearing that supper was served, and almost over, and perhaps hearing of the company too, he went away; they were all good kind of people, and who I daresay had conversation enough in their own families, but although we were all related, we had not one word to say to one another . . . the cook, the housekeeper, and Maître Jacques all exerted themselves, and did their parts tolerably well, but *rien n'a pu me mettre a mon aise*, and the more I tried to be at home the more I was *desorienté*; so I believe I shall try some other kind of party for the future." Selwyn's visits to Matson were at this time few and far between, but he did usually contrive to spend a week or two there in the autumn, as much for Mie Mie's sake as for his own. In July of 1788, however, he was practically compelled to go down to Matson, since his Gracious Majesty, King George III., who was staying at Cheltenham, had intimated that he would honour Mr Selwyn with a visit. On 9th July 1788 Horace Walpole writes to Lady Ossory: "Mr Selwyn has been confined in town by a fever, and I have not seen him since the royal progress was intended. I do hope his Matson will be illustrated again, as it was at the siege of Gloucester. How happy he would be to have the present Prince of Wales and Duke of York leave their names with a pen knife on his window, as the sons of Charles I. did, though, unless some of the personages end as unfortunately, he will never be so fond of them." Selwyn alludes both to the fever mentioned by Walpole and to the "Royal progress" in the following letter to Mary Townshend.[1]

"Tuesday [July 1788]

"I thank you, and Charles; I go out, it is true, but I return home soon, and I go to Bed soon, and I am sparing in my Diet. All these are symptoms of my not feeling myself quite well; but having a great mind to be so. And it is true, for altho' I cannot help my friends leaving me, and when they do no one regrets them more, yet I have no mind to leave them, while I can live with them cheerfully, and that cannot be either in pain or without perfect Health. I have had a slight fever, which I thought was going away with my last fee to Dr G. Baker, but point du tout. It pretended to take Leave and then had encore

[1] Marsham-Townshend MSS.

un petit mot a l'oreille, and so came back et menace encore, but I think will pass, and without young Duchesses, young Lords and young ministers, to which I might add young Tricks of my own, I may do well and boast on a few years longer, and even without much Labour and sorrow. I propose to go to Matson on Sunday, a petite journée, but Ly. Carlisle, who does not wish to lose me, advises me rather to stay for fear of a Relapse and not go where I may not have so many Resources as here. I do not fear now a relapse, and if I had one I shall be as well satisfied in the Hands of my Gloucester friends as here. I am persuaded that there is nothing in my case, either of Body or Mind, that will require much skill to judge of it. Experiments I have always held to be dangerous in both cases. Mrs Fr. Selwyn goes with us, and Ld. Carlisle's family will be at Cheltenham, as soon as their Majesties going away will leave Room for them. I am told that I shall have a visit from that Quarter, which I do not think quite possible. But as Curiosity more than friendship will bring that Illustrious Party to Matson, so I hope that Curiosity will be gratified before I come. I shall be contented to learn from my Gardner what Reflections are made upon that old Mansion. Of the Situation, there can be but one Opinion. Poor Matson was built under an odd Planet *at once the Monarch's and the Muses' Seat*, for so Warner has contrived to make it by divulging those foolish verses about me, which I supplicated him to suppress.

"But, if it be otherwise, and Mie Mie and I should be surprised by a Royal visitation we must do our best. And if H. M. should take it into his head to go up into the Gallery and see the Bust of that unfortunately murdered King, murdered by his own subjects, giving to their Horrid act the form of Law, what shall I say to him? Tell me. Shall I say as Card. Fleury did to the Dauphin: 'la visite de sa mort.' Que Je suis fache de lui presenter un si triste spectacle, mais que Je crois qu'il n'est pas [lése-majesté?] de propos qu'un grand Prince vit etc. etc.

"I believe with Princes and their Ministers the fewest words are best, and as Lord Clarendon says of the Earl of Northumberland, the fewer idle words we have to answer for the better, so I shall say only trop d'honneur, sire, et en demeurer là.

"Be so good as to make my best compliments to Lord Cornwallis when you write to him, and thank him for the kindness, which at my request he has shown to Mr Perreau. I should not have taken that liberty, but that I thought myself justified not only by compassion for an innocent youth but my having heard from all hands that he was a very deserving young man, and

I am glad to hear that Ld. C. has found my report of him to have been true.

"When I return from Gloucestershire, if I do not, instead of coming to London go across the country to C[astle] Howard, I shall go to Richmond, and from there will make you a visit at Chislehurst for a couple of days. If I should hear that you are without company, and our coming will not be inconvenient; but of that hereafter.

"W. Broderick dined with me yesterday. He is a very good-humoured agreeable young man. I was in hopes to have heard confirmed a piece of news concerning his Brother Tom qui a du merite aussi. He knows nothing of it. Your most affectly."

Selwyn's references to the royal visit do not ring quite true. He was suspiciously anxious to get to Matson, notwithstanding his fever. Walpole was nearer the truth when he wrote: "Mr Selwyn, I do not doubt, is superlatively happy. I am curious to know what relics he had gleaned from the royal visit, that he can *bottle* up, and place in his *sanctum sanctorum*." We shall hardly be far wrong in thinking that Selwyn was prodigiously delighted with his sovereign's condescension in visiting his humble roof. The visit took place on 30th July 1788. *The London Packet, or New Lloyd's Evening Post* of that date says:

"Cheltenham

"The King and Queen and Princess Royal were at the Wells this morning at half after five, and continued until eight. At ten their Majesties took an airing on a visit to George Augustus Selwyn Esquire, about two miles from Gloucester, where they partook of a cold collation, and received the compliments of the neighbouring gentry. After taking a view of his elegant park and mansion, their Majesties returned to Cheltenham at four."

The Bath Chronicle of 7th August gives a slightly different account:

"Gloucester, August 4. Tuesday: their Majesties passed again through this city, on their way to the seat of George Augustus Selwyn Esquire at Matson, where they were entertained in the first style of elegance. Their Majesties were delighted with the beauty of the scenery from Matson garden, and walked up Robin Hood's Hill, through the groves lately improved by Mr Selwyn."

The *Chronicle* also gives us some information about the residence of their Majesties at Cheltenham worthy of a modern society journal.

"In the economy of the Royal family at Cheltenham, we are informed that Her Majesty has particulary forbidden the use of white bread at her own table, not from any parsimonious principle, but from conviction of its being less healthy than brown."

It is to be hoped that she allowed her ladies-in-waiting to have white if they wanted it.

This visit took place one hundred and twenty years ago; yet it was seen by a man who lived well into our own time. Charles Gibbs, who was born in 1783, and was Clerk of Matson from 1835 until his death in 1881, told the present Rector of Matson that he well remembered the arrival of George III. at Matson. Gibbs said that he climbed an elm-tree near the church, and from that coign of vantage watched their Majesties drive up the road to Matson House. "I was only a little *marchant* then," he said, using a quaint Gallicism common in Gloucestershire.

Selwyn remained at Matson for some weeks after the King's visit, returning to Richmond in October. The following letter to Charles Townshend is probably of this year:—

"MATSON
"8th September [1788]

"I once more return you a great many thanks for the trouble which you have been so good as to give yourself in favour of Bishop Blaize for my sake.

"I have the satisfaction to find by Monseigneur's Letter that if he is disappointed he is nevertheless persuaded of my zeal to serve him. I hope that he will also as I do, see the reason and equity of Lord Sydney's refusal and be at last convinced that if the Queen has not interest enough to change the prudent and necessary measures of Government much less can I expect it. I received your brother's[1] letter before I left London and thanked him for it. I hope that he is persuaded that it is with great reluctance that I give him any trouble, and I never should have done so, but in a case of this nature. Blake writes me

[1] Lord Sydney.

word that he is to be at Luggershall the 3rd of next month. I should be infinitely happy if you who will probably be there or at Whitchurch at the same time, could so far extend your excursion from London as to make me a visit: valde cupio quod parum spero. I did intend, when I wrote to you last to have gone to make a visit to Lord and Lady Carlisle at Down Place near Windsor for a fortnight, but hearing that they had company I had laid aside the thoughts of it, and I do not think now that I shall leave Matson till the 12th of October or be in London before the 23rd.

"Miss L. Selwyn is at Cheltenham but I expect her to return here the end of next week. I have seen no company besides my neighbours except Mr Andr. Steuart, who came from Cheltenham to dine with me, and I have nothing to inform you of but of the events of this obscure parish, which I presume would not be very interesting to you, so I will trouble you with no more than to assure you that I am very truly and affectionately yours. G. S."

On the 19th of October Walpole writes to Lady Ossory: "George is returned to Richmond, and diverted me prodigiously. I had foretold that he would bottle up some relict of the royal visit, but, as he has more wit than I have prophetic spirit, his label to a certain *patera* of *La Reine boit* far outwent my imagination; I suppose he told it to Lord Ossory, or showed it to him." George's label was apparently not to be quoted in a letter to a lady.

Selwyn, then, came back to Richmond in October 1788. On 2nd November he is writing to Lady Carlisle to wish her "many happy returns of the day." He does it very prettily. "It must seem, my dear Lady Carlisle, very shabby that on this day I do not afford a sheet of gilt paper for my letter to you, but it is to no purpose giving any other reason when I have that to give of having none by me. But truth on plain paper is better than compliment without sincerity, with all the *vignettes* which could be found to adorn it, and nothing can be truer than that I rejoice at the return of this day, which gave birth to what I have on so many accounts reason to value and esteem."

Later on in the year he is very much agitated over the insanity of the King. "It is a sad time indeed," said this King's man, who had no intention of transferring his affection

to the Regent. It was a sad time for Selwyn in other respects. He was in poor health, and the record of his life for the next two years is a record of constant suffering. But in fact he had been more or less of an invalid for many years. In 1780 we find him reporting to Carlisle: "I cannot say that I am much better, I am only not worse. I have now changed my medicines. . . . I had three violent fits, as usual, but am this morning much easier." He appears to have suffered from gout, and also from dropsy; and, like the rest of humanity, was continually subject to coughs and colds. In 1788 these grew more frequent and troublesome. "My cough must be attended to, or it will increase, and perhaps destroy me." In the following year his health improved, and he led a somewhat busy life. "My present state of health requires attention and regularity of living," he writes in November 1789. "If these are observed, I am assured that after a time I shall be well and that my lease for ten or twenty years seems as yet a good one. As for the *labour and sorrow* which His Majesty K. D. speaks of, I know of no age that is quite exempt from them." Meanwhile he had plenty of society at Richmond. "It is no solitude, this place" he said. The French emigrants were there in large numbers. "If this winter does not make a perfect Frenchman of me, I shall give it up." Once his garden "was as full as it could hold of foreigners and their children,—Warenzow's boy and girl, and the Marquis de Cinque Minutes [Selwyn "could not tell Lady Carlisle why" the young gentleman had this name] who of all the infants I ever saw, is the most completely spoiled for the present. His roars and screams if he has not everything which he wants and in an instant, are enough to split your head. His menace is 'Maman, je veux être bien méchant ce soir, je vous le promets.'"

The curious thing is that, with all his ailments, Selwyn seems never to have lived the life of an invalid; he kept his place in society up to the end. It was Wilberforce who said that he continued in it "till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse." Thus in one week in August 1790—five months before his death—he dines with the Duke of Queensberry at Richmond, travels to Fulham "and from thence to London," dines with the Duke of Devonshire at Devonshire House ("to meet Mme. de Roncherolles"), returns to Richmond

"with the Duke of Q. in his coach," and dines at Richmond Castle with Madame La Comtesse Balbé and her French friends. But soon after this there is a change. In November he writes a pathetic letter to Lady Carlisle with an account of his troubles. He is perishing with cold "and the reason is plain. . . . I have no clothes; my stockings are of a fine thin thread, half of them full of holes; I have no flannel waistcoat, which everybody else wears; in short I have been shivering in the warmest room *sans sçavoir pourquoi.* But yesterday there was a committee at the Duke's upon my drapery, and to-day a tailor is sent for. I am to be flannelled and cottoned and kept alive if possible; but if that cannot be done, I must be embalmed, with my face, mummy-like, only bare, to converse through my cerements. . . . It is amazing to what a degree I am become helpless; nothing can account for it but extreme dotage, or extreme infancy." The last letter in the Carlisle correspondence is significant. "Sir L. Pepys was with me in the morning and thought my pulse very quiet, which could only have been from the fatigue of the day before—juste Dieu! fatigue of going eight or nine miles, my legs on the foreseat and reposing my head on Jones's shoulder. . . . Sir Lucas pronounced no immediate end of myself, but that I should continue the bark, with hemlock. I'll do anything for some time longer, but my patience will, I see, after a certain time be exhausted." This was on 9th December 1790. Selwyn returned to London shortly before Christmas, in a very serious condition of health. On 25th January Walpole writes to Miss Berry: "I am on the point of losing or have lost, my oldest acquaintance and friend, George Selwyn, who was yesterday at the extremity . . . him I really loved, not only for his infinite wit, but for a thousand good qualities." In fact this was the day of Selwyn's death. He died at his house in Cleveland Court on 25th January 1791, in his seventy-second year, and was buried in the family vault at Matson. Curiously enough, no tablet or monument of any kind has been erected to his memory.

The newspapers and periodicals of the day contain characteristic notices of George Selwyn's death. On 26th January *The Morning Chronicle* said: "Yesterday died at his house, St James's Place, George Augustus Selwyn, Esq., of facetious

memory. His estates with his diminished interest in the borough of Ludgershall devolve on the Right Hon. Lord Sydney. His personalities, and a very large sum of money, he has left to a natural daughter, whom he had by the Italian singer, Signora Faniani. The places of Surveyor of Crown Lands, Surveyor of the Meltings and Clerk of the Irons at the Mint etc., are vacant by Mr Selwyn's death, to which might be added the post of Receiver-General of Weft [*i.e.* waif] and Stray Jokes." On the next day the *Chronicle* hastened to correct its reference to Mie Mie. "The lady to whom the late George Selwyn has left nearly £100,000 is the daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness de Faniani, one of the most respectable families in Milan." It also amplifies its obituary notice in the following manner:—"The late George Selwyn of facetious memory, besides possessing real and personal property to a considerable amount, and several very valuable places under government, was Lord of the Manor of Bon Mot, to whom the right of all Waifs and Strays belonged. We do not find that any notice is taken of this Manor in his Will; but he has been heard to say: *Detur digniori.*" It would not, perhaps, have been difficult to find a *dignior* person for this particular lordship. Notices similar to that of the *Chronicle* appeared in *The Public Advertiser*, *The London Chronicle* and *The St James's Chronicle*, and the "Waif and Stray" joke was repeated faithfully by them all, for that was an age when journalists wrote the same paragraph for many journals, somewhat in the manner of the modern news syndicate. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for January 1791 records Selwyn's death very much in the words of the *Chronicle*, but adds a considerable wealth of detail. "He was highly qualified for this sphere ["fashionable circles"] being possessed of much classical knowledge, a brilliant wit, good humour, and a considerable share of observation. He therefore was soon noticed as a wit and a bon vivant, and divided with the late Lord Chesterfield most of the good things of their times. Mr Selwyn took care not to be ruined by his wit (as has been the case with others) he had 'pudding as well as praise,' being in possession of several advantageous places, which he enjoyed under several administrations, without the least hindrance. . . . His places being mostly sinecures, which enabled him to enjoy the *otium*

cum dignitate, which he did with singular advantage to himself and his friends. Amongst the latter he will be long lamented as the centre of good humour, wit and conviviality." The same thought was perhaps more elegantly expressed in one of the newspapers. "Among the good things of George Selwyn," says this writer, "may be reckoned several places which he enjoyed under Government. In order to contribute to public entertainment it no doubt is of advantage to consult private comfort. Of wit as well as of love it may be remarked, *sine Baccho et cerere friget*." The *Gentleman's*, however, goes on: "He died very much in the bosom of the church, having the Bible read to him constantly during the whole of his illness. For some years past he had been afflicted with the gout and dropsy, the usual disorders of *bon vivants*; and about this time last year he had so severe an attack that his life was despaired of by the faculty, and his death was several times announced in the public papers. After his recovery from that illness he was remarkably well for some months, and had as few infirmities as most men of his years: but in the autumn his complaint returned, and when he was brought to town a few days before Christmas Day, he expressed his belief that this would be fatal to him."

Mr Jesse's gloss upon this account of Selwyn's last days is that he "died penitent." This is a little hard upon that most religious of wits. In fact George was an attached member of the Church of England, and his theological views, if not quite orthodox, were at least eminently characteristic of the British layman. Once he commended a certain Dr M'Clean for his answer to an atheistical work by Mr Soame Jenyns. "Nothing struck me in my cursory view of it," Selwyn wrote, "but his judgment in not proposing the mediatorial scheme as one to be proved by demonstration, but submitting the reasonableness of the proposition to the candour of the world"; a criticism which Matthew Arnold himself might have signed. "The endeavour to prove too much has made more Atheists than any book wrote on purpose to establish Infidelity. . . . I wish a man to satisfy me about his morals, without which his talking of his honour is a jest. When his morals are unimpeached, I will take his Religion as I find it." There is fundamental good sense in this, whether we entirely agree with

it or not. But Selwyn said one wise thing about religion with which we can all agree. Speaking of young Frederick Howard, he said: "I hope he will, besides being a very moral and honourable man, be a good Christian, but not a solemn one, qui rendroit sa piété suspecte." It is in casual remarks of this kind, rather than in traditional and hackneyed witticisms, that one discerns the native good sense of George Selwyn.

After some extracts from Selwyn's will, the *Gentleman's* notice continues: "But who will be the heir of all the stray wit about town, hitherto said to be his, we cannot so readily decide. Many good things he did say, and many he was capable of saying; but the number of good, bad, or indifferent things attributed to him as bon mots for the last thirty years of his life was sufficient to stock a Foundling Hospital for Wit." Then we have a long account of Selwyn's alleged fondness for executions, an account vigorously replied to in the April number of the *Magazine* by (as is probable) Dr John Warner. Both these articles have been dealt with in a previous chapter. The April number contains a verse upon Selwyn, probably also from Warner's prolific pen:

"If this gay favourite lost, they yet can live,
A tear to Selwyn let the Graces give!
With rapid kindness teach Oblivion's pall
O'er the sunk foibles of the man to fall;
And fondly dictate to a faithful Muse
The prime distinctness of the friend they lose.
'Twas social wit, which, never kindling strife,
Blazed in the small, sweet, courtesies of life.
These little sapphires round the diamond shone,
Lending soft radiance to the richer stone."

Reference has been made to George Selwyn's will, which is dated 11th June 1788, and which was proved on the 12th February 1791, by the Earl of Carlisle and Mr Elborough Woodcock (Selwyn's solicitor), the other executor, the Marquis of Stafford, not administering. Selwyn left to "Maria Ffagnani, daughter of the Marquis and Marchioness Ffagnani," for her absolute use at the age of twenty-one, or on her marriage with consent before that age, "the sum of £10,000 in 4 per cent. annuities"; but if she married without consent before that age, she was only to

have the interest paid to her and not the capital. In addition to this, Miss Ffagnani was to receive £20,000 from Selwyn's personal estate, at twenty-one or marriage; and a sum of £3000 was to be paid to her at the age of eighteen, if she were then in England. On failure of these gifts they were to go to the younger children of Lord Carlisle, and the Duke of Queensberry was made general residuary legatee. There were three codicils to the will, the first leaving an annuity to Mrs Webb, Mie Mie's nurse, the second confirming Ludgershall to Lord Sydney, and the third giving an annuity of £50 a year to Pierre Michalin, Selwyn's valet, who appears to have predeceased him. The leasehold house at Richmond was directed to be let or sold; the house in Cleveland Court and the Matson estate were both, of course, settled property, and are not mentioned in the will.

CHAPTER XVI

GEORGE SELWYN AND HIS TIMES

THE late Mr Abraham Hayward, in his agreeable essay upon George Selwyn, contrasts the manners and morals of the eighteenth century with those of his own time, very much to the disadvantage of the eighteenth century. "The comparison," says he, with that inimitable air of complacency so easily assumed by early-Victorian writers, "is highly satisfactory. . . . No Prime Minister escorts a woman of the town through the Crush room of the Opera; no first lord of the Admiralty permits his mistress to do the honours of his house, or weeps over her in the columns of *The Morning Post*; no Lord of the Bedchamber starts for Newmarket with a *danseuse* in his carriage, and her whole family in his train; our parliamentary leaders do not dissipate their best energies at the gaming-table; our privy councillors do not attend cock fights; and, among the many calumnies levelled at our public men, they have not been accused (as General Burgoyne was by Junius) of lying in wait for inexperienced lads to plunder at play." And so on, and so on. "The improvement in the female aristocracy is not less certain." The "female aristocracy" of Mr Hayward's day, it appears, were nothing like so naughty as the ladies whom Selwyn knew; the "practice of gambling" ("fraught with the worst consequences to the finest feelings and best qualities of the sex") was not so prevalent, nor could any early-Victorian Walpole fill his letters with allusions to "matrimonial infidelity." Thus the good Hayward wagged his head virtuously at the misdeeds of English society in the time of Mr Selwyn, and thanked his gods that things were so much better, and brighter, and nobler, and purer, in his own year of grace.

And was Mr Hayward wrong? asks somebody. Was there no improvement in the manners and morals of English society between the year 1791, when Selwyn died, and the year 1845, when Hayward wrote his essay? Well, that question is not,

as lawyers say when writing their opinions, entirely free from difficulty; but we must hope that Mr Hayward was right in the main, and that there was really and truly an improvement in society manners and morals in that half century. But comparisons of the Hayward kind are very fallacious, and very Pharisaical, too (only we must forgive the Pharisaism when we remember that it was the custom of early-Victorian writers and orators and statesmen to declare that never before was England so prosperous, pure, perfect, etc., as she was in that golden time). But they are fallacious. It is true, for example, that Court life under Queen Victoria was purer and cleaner than Court life under George II.; but it was hardly purer and cleaner than Court life under George III., who was a somewhat stern moralist. Again, Mr Hayward refers to the Duke of Grafton and Nancy Parsons, but he must have known that the action of the Duke in bringing Miss Parsons to the opera was very much reprobated at the time, and gave great offence at Court. The Sandwiches, Weymouths and Rigbys were no doubt a most disreputable crew; but then they were considered a most disreputable crew by their contemporaries. If we come to examine the matter, have we ever had a more ascetic Prime Minister than Mr Pitt, a more upright statesman than Mr Burke, a finer gentleman at the head of affairs than the Marquis of Rockingham? In short, society in the time of Mr Selwyn was good, and bad, and indifferent, just as it was in the time of Mr Hayward, and just as it is to-day. The only thing we can affirm is that public opinion—which hardly existed in the eighteenth century—is now strong enough to keep the bad man out of public life—unless he carefully conceals his badness. And I think we can also say that in certain directions we have improved upon our forefathers. We do not drink so much; our play at cards is not quite so reckless; we have a somewhat sensitive social conscience. But let us say this in all humility, and not in the manner of Mr Hayward. Are we quite sure that we are so very much better than the Georgian people? Ask the President of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division what he thinks about it; the undefended lists in his court have been remarkably heavy of late. None of us has probably ever seen either hazard, or faro, or quinze played in this country; but we have

all heard astonishing stories of losses at bridge; and Monte Carlo is quite a modern institution. We cannot discuss the interesting question suggested by the Grafton-Parsons anecdote; yet are we credibly informed and believe that ladies of the type of Miss Nancy Parsons still exist, and are sometimes to be encountered within the sacred frontiers of what is called "smart" society. Let us admit ungrudgingly, however, and without mental reservation of any sort or kind, that our public life at least is pure, and that a Grafton, a Sandwich, or a Rigby, would be absolutely impossible to-day. So much has been accomplished by—shall we say?—the School Board and the ballot-box. Again, are we quite sure that, supposing for a moment we have gained in some directions, we have not lost in others? We are apt to forget the good of the past, and to remember only the evil. For, after all, humanity finds it difficult to make a general ethical advance in line. Here a brigade marches boldly forward, and plants a flag upon some prominence hitherto unoccupied; but there another brigade wavers, is broken, falls back in confusion to the old position, and even yields that to the enemy. Thus, to make a little comparison of our own (and to escape from our military metaphor, which is handled with some civilian awkwardness), if we no longer tolerate open licence, we are compelled to tolerate the vulgarity of excessive wealth shamefully acquired; if a faro bank in St James's Street is no longer considered a gentleman-like method of earning a living, there is no such objection lodged against the promotion of doubtful companies in the city. And what are our losses? Were there no graces and virtues in that old patrician society of the eighteenth century which vanished with it? Of course there were. In fact there have been found persons bold enough to say that England has never seen a society so distinguished, so pleasant, so brilliant and witty and cheerful, as that which flourished in this country in the earlier part of the reign of George III. Granted that it was aristocratic, limited, inelastic; that it frowned upon genius, unless it appeared wrapped in purple; still, within these limits, you had (say these bold persons) an almost ideal society. "Without any disparagement," observes Mr Thomas Moore, "of the many and useful talents which are at present nowhere more conspicuous than in the upper ranks of society, it may be owned that

for wit, social powers, and literary accomplishments, the political men of the period under consideration [1780] formed such an assemblage as it would be flattery to say that our own times can parallel. The natural tendency of the French Revolution was to produce in the higher classes of England an increased reserve of manner, and of course a proportionate restraint on all within their circle, which have been fatal to conviviality and humour, and not very propitious to wit—subduing both manners and conversation to a sort of polished level, to rise above which is often thought almost as vulgar as to sink below it." In other words, the early Victorians were dull dogs compared with their fathers the Georgians. That is the opinion of Thomas Moore, who was only, however, a literary man. But here is Lady Susan O'Brien (that heroine of a runaway match) writing in 1818—only twenty years or so before Mr Hayward—and complaining, not that society was growing better, but that it was growing worse; and Lady Susan knew what she was writing about. She is comparing 1760 with 1818. "*Theatres* . . . were well regulated . . . every lady went to her box without interruption or offence, and returned equally safe, whether attended or otherwise. . . . *Now* ladies of character can't go to the Play without gentlemen to take care of them, to guard them . . . people are liable to see and hear very improper things . . . *Manners*. Great civility was general in all ranks. . . . *Now* there is a certain rudeness and carelessness of manners affected both by men and women. . . . *Character*—a woman of doubtful character was shy'd; if bad, decidedly avoided. *Now*, the very worst are countenanced by many. It is difficult to say where any line is drawn," etc. etc. So much for the differences of opinion about society in the early nineteenth century. And if we should carry on the story to the early twentieth century, we should have the same differences of opinion; we should have our Haywards to declare that we are vastly more moral and respectable than our ancestors, and our Lady Susan O'Briens to declare that we are a sadly degenerate race; and both, perhaps, would be right. But in which society would you prefer to move: in a society such as that of Selwyn's day, in which you might meet men like Pitt and Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Gibbon, Reynolds, George Selwyn and Horace Walpole, or in the society of to-day, in which you would

certainly meet—well, a number of very interesting and worthy men and women? The answer to that question is not conclusive as to the goodness or badness of the two societies; but it has some bearing upon the claims of the present to an absolute superiority over the past.

Society, then, may be better or worse than it was in the time of George Selwyn; we can reach no sound conclusion in the matter (though we may trust the larger hope); nor is it of any great importance that we should. Essentially society is the same as it always was: that is to say, it is composed of men and women who have leisure, money, birth perhaps, education perhaps, and whose principal object in life is to enjoy it. For this reason Selwyn would probably find himself very much at home if he could revisit his haunts in Mayfair. We still have society; but have we a George Selwyn to entertain it withal, to dine with it and wine with it, to fabricate its jests, and carry them when fabricated from booth to booth? The answer must clearly be in the negative. We have no George Selwyn, nor are we likely to have. In the first place, society is too big. In Selwyn's day it was a small and exclusive corporation, in which everybody knew everybody else. You could not have bought your way into that corporation; you must have been born into it. Remember the story of Selwyn and the self-made man. "Sir," said this person, stopping Selwyn in St James's Street, "do you not know me?" "I do not, sir," replied Selwyn contemptuously. "Well, Mr Selwyn, you knew me at Bath." "I daresay, sir, and when I meet you in Bath again I shall be pleased to resume the acquaintance. In the meantime I have the honour to wish you good-morning." Wealth without birth knocked in vain at those sacred portals. And being a small corporation, society cherished the wit of one of its members as a family cherishes the wit of a younger son: not for the intrinsic value of the wit, but because it is the production of Bobby or Tommy. But now society is a monstrous thing; a multitude whom no man can number; a vast and undefined territory, over the boundaries of which adventurers from unknown lands are constantly making their way. It is obviously impossible for one man to dominate such a region. Famous at the circumference, he might be frowned upon at the centre; welcomed boisterously in one circle, he might be asked

to show his card in another. In such an environment the finest wit will evaporate, even as the humour and the literature of a great dramatist evaporate when presented upon a stage too large by half for the play.

But we have no Selwyn now, nor have we had for over a hundred years. In fact Selwyn was the last of the wits, the last of his race. You cannot put a later wit, such as Sydney Smith, in quite the same class with Selwyn. Smith was a cleric and a man of letters; he spoke to a wider audience than the other. And so with Lamb, Hood, Douglas Jerrold and the rest of the literary wits of the early nineteenth century. These men moved in a different world from Selwyn's: the world of Bohemia, which was separated by an unfathomable gulf from the world of Mayfair. I am not aware that Selwyn ever crossed that gulf, as Topham Beauclerk did, except when he visited Sir Joshua Reynolds's studio in St Martin's Lane or Leicester Fields. But in any case, the Victorian wits were not the true successors of George Selwyn. Elijah dropped his mantle, but no Elisha picked it up. With the coming of the nineteenth century, and the decline and fall of the patricians, the office of Society Jester, like that of Court Jester in older days, seems entirely to have disappeared. One reason for its disappearance has already been advanced. We are also told by some authorities that its disappearance is due to our more liberal culture and education. We have no society wits now, it is said, because the society wit of the eighteenth century was a small, poor, thing. Our forefathers were not difficult to please in the matter of humour; they cannot have been, if they laughed at George Selwyn's jokes. But since then the schoolmaster has been abroad in the land. Thanks—say these modern Haywards—to the spread of education, to the dissemination of classical literature by means of that mighty instrument of progress, the printing press, and to the inestimable privileges of free institutions, we have at length evolved in our modern society a genuine sense of humour: we really do know what to laugh at, and what to refrain from laughing at.

But this argument will not bear examination for a moment. If our ancestors laughed at the witticisms of George Selwyn, it must have been because there was something to laugh at, even if it were only a trick of expression or of speech. Far from

being deficient in the comic sense the society of the eighteenth century possessed it in a high degree. They ought to have done so, because the conditions laid down by Mr Meredith for the existence of the comic spirit were fulfilled: it was a small, cultivated society, in which women moved on an entire equality with men. But the best way of convincing ourselves that we have not improved upon the eighteenth century in respect of humour is to compare the comedies of that century with the comedies of to-day, the letters of that century with the letters of to-day, or even the literature of that century (I speak more particularly of Sterne) with the literature of to-day. In a word, if we have no society wits in the twentieth century it is not because we have a finer sense of humour than our fathers had: it is because there has been some organic change in society. Or we may put the matter on quite simple and inexpugnable ground by affirming that we have no George Selwyn to-day for the same reason that we have no Shakespeare, no Keats, no Dickens, no Thackeray, no Tennyson: because such men are not being born; Nature is busy producing other types.

But it is true that Selwyn was not in any high degree a wit: neither was he a man of letters. Like another fine gentleman, Mr Horace Walpole, he despised the trade: but, unlike Walpole, he would not himself have made a respectable tradesman. He never wrote a line for publication in his life. Only one published verse has been attributed to him, and that is trivial, besides being too indelicate for modern ears. His letters, as we have seen, entirely lack the literary touch. Selwyn was not really interested in literature and, during most of his life, read, as he observed, men rather than books. "I have been years without looking in a book, and God knows in my long life how few I have read." Rollin was the first author he read by choice. "I had scarce ever read three pages of any book, besides my school book, when that work was put into my hands for my amusement. I read it three times over by choice." Judging other authors by Rollin, he found them sadly wanting. At the age of sixty-two he made a fresh plunge into literature and bought Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." "I repent of it already," he says, "but I have read but one, which is Prior's. There are few anecdotes, and those not well authenticated: his criticisms on his poems, false and absurd, and the prettiest things which

he has wrote passed over in silence." Only one genuine literary enthusiasm Selwyn seems to have had, that for the letters of Madame de Sévigné. How far this was an attachment to literature and how far a mere following of the fashion of the time (it was an age of Sévigné worship) one can hardly now tell; no doubt the peculiar gifts of the French writer—her shrewd common-sense, her vivacity, her worldly wisdom—appealed to Selwyn. It is to be remarked that this most unliterary wit dared to dogmatise about style. "Parsons, University men, and Templars," said he, "*renvoyent bien loin la simplicité*, and when they would talk agreeably or write to obtain approbation, give you such a hash of all their reading and such quaint compliments as make me sick"; and elsewhere he enlarges again upon the virtue of simplicity. Well, simplicity in style is certainly a virtue; but it is the simplicity of art—of the careful and deliberate, but not too deliberate, choice of words—which is a virtue, and not the natural simplicity of the man who writes down, as Selwyn did, the first thing that comes into his head.

Selwyn, again, was no scholar; his career at Oxford was not the best preparation for scholarship; but, again following a fashion of the time, he had at least a bowing acquaintance with the classics. For the eighteenth-century fine gentleman, with all his love for wine, women, and cards, had a profound respect for the great writers of antiquity. His education was not complete until he had learned by heart a few of the principal passages in Horace and Virgil, which he could himself declaim in an occasional speech in the House of Commons, or recognise when declaimed in a speech by Mr Pitt or Mr Burke. This honest devotion to something which he very imperfectly understood, but the value of which he recognised dimly, was a very pleasing feature in the character of the fine gentleman. Selwyn had it quite unmistakably. How he picked up his knowledge of the classics one hardly knows; it may have been at Eton; it was certainly not at Oxford. He was sufficiently interested, however, in classical learning to carry on a controversy with Lord Bolingbroke as to the virtue and the vice prevalent among the Romans. "Lord Bolingbroke believes Mr Selwyn will allow there was some degree of vice among the Romans during that period so wonderful for its virtues. If he will look

into lib. XL. cap. 43 of Livy, he will there see that, between the first and the end of the second Punic War, the practice of poisoning was so common, that during part of a season a praetor punished capitally for that crime above three thousand persons in one part of Italy, and found informations of this sort multiplying upon him. In lib. VIII. cap. 18 of Livy, Mr Selwyn will find a similar, or rather worse, instance in the more early times of that virtuous commonwealth. So depraved in private life were that people whom in their histories we are taught so much to admire! Do not these facts seem to denote vice enough at that period for me to doubt a little the propriety of your observation—*That so great was the virtue and so trifling the vice of it as to make the history of that age appear fabulous*?" It was indeed a difficult thesis to sustain. But it is a charming picture: George "looking into" Livy (lib. VIII. cap. 18) for the purpose of finding a flaw in the argument of his friend "Bully." The only thing to be said is that we cannot imagine a modern George and Bully carrying on this admirable discussion; our young men are not equipped for it. Selwyn knew enough Latin in his old age to "read a little Latin poem upon a Mouse Trap, with which I was most highly delighted; wrote near a century ago, by a Mr Holdsworth." But when Mr Sylvanus Urban states that Selwyn was "possessed of much classical knowledge" we must respectfully beg for once to differ from that eminent authority.

Not wit, not scholarship, but a vigorous shrewd sense was George Selwyn's dominant personal characteristic. This was an inherited quality with Selwyn; but he improved and sharpened it by living much in society and in the world. He was emphatically a man who "warmed both hands at the fire of life," and even remained at the fireside until the ashes were cold. But he knew men, cities, manners, customs, morals; he gathered a rare harvest of worldly wisdom in his pilgrimage of seventy years. His wisdom and his shrewdness he placed freely at the disposal of his friends; hence, perhaps, the number and variety of his friendships. As you may measure the greatness of Johnson by the fact that Edmund Burke was proud to know and to serve him, and again, as you may measure the greatness of Burke by the fact that he was the only man in that time of great men of whom Johnson always spoke with respect and

even with reverence, so you may measure the real worth of George Selwyn by the fact that so many men of widely differing types competed for his friendship. Men of affairs, like Lord Holland, of pleasure, like the Duke of Queensberry, of literature and taste, like Horace Walpole, of society, like the Earl of Carlisle, they were all proud to call Selwyn friend. And not for his wit and wisdom only; they recognised his essential goodness of heart and kindness of disposition. His genuine love for children is a final and convincing proof that he possessed these qualities. If they were crossed by a certain sombreness, by a strain of peevish melancholy, which gave rise to the foolish fable of his "fondness for executions," that must be put down in part, at least, to indifferent health. That there was nothing essentially evil in George Selwyn is again proved absolutely by the fact that he loved, and was loved by, little children.

Whatever were the qualities of George Selwyn—and it is not claimed that he was very much more than a perfectly normal and ordinary Englishman (if such a being has ever existed)—he remains at least a figure entirely typical of his time and of his class. He was first and always a patrician, with the pride and the prejudices of the patricians strongly developed. His virtues and his vices were the virtues and the vices of his class; he never strayed far outside the boundaries of St James's; his place is with the others in Vanity Fair. Sometimes, in wandering through those sacred streets and squares in the west, one comes upon an ancient Georgian house, with its warm mellow brick-work, fronted by dingy iron railings, upon which are the stands where the flares were put, and the cups in which the link-boys extinguished their torches. With but little imagination you can picture such a house filled with company, as it must often have been filled, on an evening when George III. was King: the ladies in their extravagant flowered gowns and high-dressed hair, the gentlemen in their velvet coats, lace ruffles, satin breeches and stockings, wigs and swords. After a night of cards and scandal and wine, the company breaks up, crowding to the door; link-boys light their torches, and run hither and thither; sedan chairmen waken from their slumbers, expectant of vails; flunkeys shout for carriages; there is a general uproar and

confusion. In the midst of it all there is a cry of "Mr Selwyn's carriage!" and from the crowd of revellers at the door a man emerges and comes slowly down the steps: a man with a parchment face, and grey hair showing under his bob-wig. He enters the carriage, waves his hand to the people at the door, who are laughing heartily at something which he has just been saying, and drives off into the night. We cannot follow him; he disappears in the darkness; and, even as we linger, the whole scene shifts and changes. The crowd melts away before our eyes; the fine ladies and gentlemen, the torches, link-boys, chairmen, flunkeys, vanish utterly: nothing is left but an old shabby house in a shabby street. Yet, pondering on those days, which still touch with romance the London brick and mortar, we remember that among the men and women who belonged to them, and who come out of the shadows at our call, few personalities are more attractive, and none is more typical, than that of George Selwyn, the Last of the Wits.

INDEX

ADAM, the brothers, 293
Addison, Joseph, 1, 111
Almack's, afterwards Brooks's. *See* Brooks's
America, Commissioners to, 275
American War, 237, 257
Annual Register, 304
"Apology" (Colley Cibber), 312

BALMERINO, sixth Baron, trial and execution of, 131-134
Barthélemy, l'Abbé, 188, 219
Bath Chronicle, quoted, 317, 318
Batheaston, 288
Beauclerk, Topham, 189, 289
Bettenson, Richard, 13, 15
Bolingbroke, Lord (Frederick St John), 269
— Lord (Henry St John), 1, 112
"Bore," first use of, 273
Boufflers, Madame de, 189
Brooks's, 285, 286, 287, 289, 291-295, 301
Budgell, Eustace, 111
Bunbury, Lady Sarah, 108, 195, 270, 271, 294
Burke, Edmund, 170, 173, 280, 293
Burnet, Gilbert, 313
Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 273, 275, 277-278; "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," 277; "Hours of Idleness," 277; quarrel with Lord Carlisle, 277-278; "Childe Harold," 278

CARLISLE, Frederick, fifth Earl of, Selwyn's executor, vii., 324; letters to, 171, 172, 303, 304; in Paris, 192; his children, 203, 215, 325; Treasurer of the Household, 210; Commissioner to America, 216, 242, 245, 275; his friendship with Selwyn, 270, 273, 274; "Ode on Death of Gray," 276; *The Stepmother*, 276; *The Father's Revenge*, 276; quarrel with Byron, 277-278; mentioned, 66, 232, 280, 281, 283, 284, 287, 288
— Lady, 220, 221, 222, 224, 236, 242, 245
— Isabella, Countess of, 305
Caroline of Anspach, 16
Castle Howard, Walpole at, 104; Selwyn at, 215
"Castle of Otranto, The" (Horace Walpole), 101
Charles I. at Matson, 21
Charles II. at Matson, 21
Chatham, first Earl of, 1, 173, 229
Chesterfield, fourth Earl of, 1, 112-113
"Childe Harold" (Byron), 278
Chislehurst, birthplace of Selwyn, 11
Choiseul, Duchesse de, 187, 195
Cibber, Colley, 63, 64; "Apology," 312
Cleveland Court, Selwyn's town house in, 11, 17, 305, 306, 314
Clive, Robert, Baron, 272
Clubs in eighteenth century, 61, 62, 291-304
Combe, W., "The Diaboliad," 142
Congreve, William, 1
Corn, price of, 298, 299
Cornelys, Mrs, 291
Cornwallis, Lord, 257
Coventry, Lady Anne, 74-76, 203
— Barbara, Countess of, 74-76
— sixth Earl of, 75, 76
— Maria, Countess of, 74
Crawford, James ("Fish"), 192, 193, 289
Cromarty, third Earl of, his trial, 131-132
Cromwell, Oliver, 314

DAMIENS, execution of, 125-128
Deffand, Madame du, and Walpole, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195; her opinion of Selwyn, 193, 201, 202, 204; her friendship with Selwyn, 195, 196; death, 202; mentioned, 101, 102, 103, 106, 184, 185-189, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 219, 252, 253, 258, 264
"Diaboliad, The" (W. Combe), 142-144
Dodd, Dr William, execution of, 139-141
D'Olbach, Baron, 184

EDGECUMBE, Richard, 73, 84-86; friendship with Selwyn, 85, 86
England in the eighteenth century, 2-4, 5-10; economic condition, 297-300; morals, 326-336

"English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" (Bryon), 277
Eton, Selwyn at, 23-25
Executions in the eighteenth century, 135-136

FAGNANI, Marchioness (mother of "Mie Mie"), 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 213, 214, 225, 263, 264
— Maria ("Mie Mie"), Selwyn's affection for, 203, 204, 264, 267; adopted by Selwyn, 204-206; parentage, 204-206; education in London, 207; return to parents, 207-209, 212-215; at Milan, 224-246 *passim*; returns to Selwyn, 256, 258; education in Paris, 259, 260, 262, 263; at Richmond, 265-267, 308-314 *passim*; portrait by Romney, 267; marriage, 268; later life, 268; mentioned, 157, 159, 163, 211, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 261, 307, 322, 324, 325
— Marquis, 225, 264
"Farrington's," 11
Farrington, General, 15
— Theodosia, 12, 15
Father's Revenge (Earl of Carlisle), 276
Fermian, Count, 212, 213, 226, 227, 245
Fielding, Henry, 1; "Tom Jones," 5, 312; "Joseph Andrews," 6
Fitzgerald, Edward, quoted, 7-8
Fitzgerald, Lord Edward, quoted, 9
Fitzpatrick, "Dick," 289
"Four Georges, The" (Thackeray), 4, 279
Fox, Charles James, wit of, 110; friendship with Selwyn, 279-287; mentioned, 173, 196, 232 and note, 233, 262, 269, 270, 293, 294, 295, 296
Fox, Henry, *See* Holland, first Baron
— Stephen, 296, 302
Frognal, 19

GAINSBOROUGH, Duchess of, 221
— Thomas, 214
Gambling, 59-60, 291-304
Garrick, David, 293
Gay, John, 111
Gentleman's Magazine, quoted, 125, 126, 127, 138, 322-323, 324
Geoffrin, Madame, 184, 185, 191, 196
George III., *bon-mot* of, 125; at Matson, 317-318; insanity of, 319; mentioned, 315, 316
"George Selwyn and His Contemporaries" (J. H. Jesse), vii.
"George Selwyn: His Letters and His Life" (Roscoe and Clergue), ix.
Gibbon, Edward, 191, 292, 293
Gloucester, elections at, 152-161; Selwyn member for, 152-161; Selwyn's quarrel with Council of, 161-162
Gordon, Lord George, member for Ludgershall, 162
Grafton, third Duke of, 170, 326, 327, 328
Gray, Thomas, 1, 23, 24
Grignan, Selwyn at, 247, 248, 249, 252
Grimm, Baron von, quoted, 127, 128

HACKMAN, Rev. James, murderer of Miss Ray, 128, 129, 130
Hare, James, 289
Hayward, Abraham, Essay on George Selwyn, 326, 327
Heidegger, John James, 68, 69
Helvetius, 184
Hénault, Charles François, 186, 196, 197
Hinchinbroke, Lord, 222, 223
"Historic Doubts on Richard the Third" (Horace Walpole), 104
Hogarth, William, pictures of, 4, 5
Holland, first Baron, 87, 124, 189, 190, 232, 233, 244, 270, 271, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 303
— Lady, wife of first Baron Holland, 283, 284
— Lady, wife of Stephen, second Baron Holland, 214, 238 and note, 245, 252, 253
Holland House, 281
"Hours of Idleness" (Byron), 277
Howard, Frederick, death of, 278; mentioned, 324
Hume, David, controversy with Rousseau, 194; mentioned, 179, 191, 293

JAMES II. at Matson, 21
Jesse, J. H., Selwyn's letters published by, vii.
Johnson, Samuel, 1, 31, 189, 190, 276 (quoted), 289, 293
"Joseph Andrews" (Fielding), 6

KENNEDY, Matthew and Patrick, trial of, 136-139
Kilmarnock, fourth Earl of, his trial and execution, 130-134
Kingsgate, Lord Holland's seat at, 233 and note, 244
Kingston, Duchess of, 218, 219

LA CONDAMINE, anecdotes of, 127-128
"Lady Rose's Daughter" (Mrs H. Ward), 188
La Fayette, Marquis de, 262
Lennox, Lady Caroline, 87, 280, 281

L'Espinasse, Julie de, 187-188
"Literary Anecdotes" (John Nichols), 287
London Packet, quoted, 317
Louis XV., Court of, 180-182, 183
Lovat, Lord, execution of, 134
Ludgershall, borough of, 146, 147, 148, 162, 164-168, 325
Luynes, Duc de, 181, 182

MACARONIS, the, 292, 293
Macaulay on Horace Walpole, 93-94
March, third Earl of. *See* Queensberry, fourth Duke of
Marie Leczczynski, wife of Louis XV., 182-184
Marmontel, Jean François, 188
Mason, William, 26 and note
Matson, country seat of the Selwyns, 11; account of, 19-22; Walpole at, 104-105; George III. at, 317-318
Mellario, Count, 235
— Countess, 225, 228, 235
"Mie Mie." *See* Fagnani, Maria
Milan, Selwyn at, 223, 225-247
Miller, Mrs, of Batheaston, 288
Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, quoted, 13
Moore, Thomas, quoted, 328-329
Moritz, Rev. Karl, account of the House of Commons, 150, 151
Morning Chronicle, quoted, 174, 321, 322

NEWCASTLE, first Duke of, 149-150
Newspapers in the eighteenth century, 298
Newton, Rev. Richard, 32-33, 46, 47
Nichols, John, "Literary Anecdotes," 287
North, Lord, 170, 171, 172, 173, 282, 295
North Carolina, land owned by Selwyn in, 56, 57

O'BRIEN, Lady Susan, quoted, 329
"Ode on the Death of Gray" (Earl of Carlisle), 276
Onslow riots, 282
Orleans, Duke of, 186
"Out-of-town party," 73, 98-99
Oxford in the eighteenth century, 25-32; Selwyn at, 25, 32-34, 36; expelled from, 36-47

PARIS, Selwyn in, 179-202, 258-265; Walpole in, 101-103, 106
Parliament in the eighteenth century, 145, 149-151
Parma, Duchess of, 240
Parsons, Nancy, 327
Pitt, John, 151-153
— William, the elder. *See* Chatham, first Earl of
— William, the younger, becomes Premier, 173, 174; mentioned, 284
Pocket boroughs, 146-147
Pompadour, Madame de, 181
Pont de Veyle, 188, 189
Pope, Alexander, 1, 111
Prior, Matthew, 111
Public Advertiser, quoted, 298, 299, 300

QUEENSBERRY, third Duke of, 253 and note, 254
— fourth Duke of, his reputation, 76-81, 83-84; friendship with Selwyn, 81-83; old age, 83-84; death, 84; in Paris, 189, 190, 191; interest in Mie Mie, 204, 205, 206, 207, 268; mentioned, 72, 73, 255, 269, 301, 302, 308, 309, 325

RÂTON (Selwyn's dog), 66, 103
Ray, Martha, murder of, 128, 130
Reynal, Abbé, 208 and note, 209
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 49, 85, 86, 214, 293
Richardson, Samuel, 1
Richmond, Selywn at, 309-314, 318, 320, 321
Ridottos, 68
Rigby, Richard, 67, 87
Romney, George, 267
Roscoe, E. S., Selwyn's Letters edited by, ix.
Rousseau, J. J., controversy with Hume, 194

SALONS, French, 184, 185
Sandwich, fourth Earl of, 128, 129
Selwyn, Albinia (grandmother), 13-14
— Albinia (sister: afterwards Townshend), 18-19
— Charles Jasper, 13
— Edward, 12
— George Augustus, posts held by, vii., 54-55, 57-59, 170, 174; discovery of his private papers, vii.; correspondence, vii.-x.; literary style, ix.; birth, 1, 11; relation to his age, 2, 3; at Eton, 23-25; at Oxford, 25, 32-34, 36; expelled, 36-47; money difficulties, 33-36; travels, 34-36; personal appearance, 48; portraits, 48-50; quarrel with his father, 50-51; early life in London, 50-52, 66-69; estates of, 55-57; lands in North Carolina, 56, 57; at White's, 63, 65, 66, 285; his friends, 70, 71, 72, 73, 87, 269, 289; friendship with

Selwyn, George Augustus—*continued*
the Earl of March, 81-83; with Edgecumbe, 85, 86; with Sir Charles Williams, 91-92; with Walpole, 94-107; with the Earl of Carlisle, 270-279; with Charles James Fox, 279-287; his character, 71-72, 331-336; in Walpole's letters, 94-95; Walpole's letters to, 100; as a wit, 108-109, 113-121; morbid tastes, 122-144; execution of Damiens, 125-128; murder of Miss Ray, 129, 130; at trial and execution of rebel lords, 130-134; at execution of Lord Lovat, 134; interest in Kennedy case, 136-139; in Paris, 129, 179-202, 258-265; in Parliament, 145-178; member for Ludgershall, 146, 162, 164-168; member for Gloucester, 152-161, 307; alderman of Gloucester, 161, 162; quarrel with Gloucester, 161-162; his politics, 168-174; Madame du Deffand's opinion of, 193, 201, 202, 204; estrangement from Madame du Deffand, 195, 196; love of children, 203; affection for Mie Mie, 203, 204, 264, 267; adoption of Mie Mie, 204-206; at Milan, 223, 225-247; at Grignan, 247, 248, 249, 252; illnesses, 265, 315, 320, 321; quarrel with Fox, 284, 286; moderation in play, 300-301; in Chesterfield Street, 305; at Richmond, 309, 311-314, 318, 320; Irish lawsuit, 310; at Matson, 315; visited by George III., 317-318; death, 321; obituary notices, 321-323, 324; religious views, 323, 324; will, 324-325; Hayward's essay on, 326, 327.
Selwyn, George Augustus (Bishop of New Zealand), 13
— Jasper, 11-12, 19, 20
— John (father), 11, 14, 15, 33, 34, 95, 146, 151, 152
— John (brother), 18
— Mary (mother), 11, 15-18, 215
— William (son of Jasper Selwyn), 12
— William, K.C., 12
— William ("Nisi Prius"), 12
— William (Canon of Ely), 12
— William (grandfather), 13
Sévigné, Madame de, 247, 248, 249, 251
Shenstone, William, 30
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, election to Brooks's, 120-121
Sinecures, 52-54
Smollet, Tobias, novels of, 5; quoted, 179, 180
Stanislaus, King of Poland, 182, 183
Steele, Richard, 111
Stepmother, The (Earl of Carlisle), 276
Sterne, Laurence, 1, 5, 180
Storer, Anthony, letter from, 125; quoted, 140, 285, 286; account of, 287-288
Strawberry Hill, 93, 97-100
Swift, Jonathan, 1, 111
Sydney, first Viscount (nephew), 18, 19, 164 and note, 165, 167, 172, 289, 305, 325

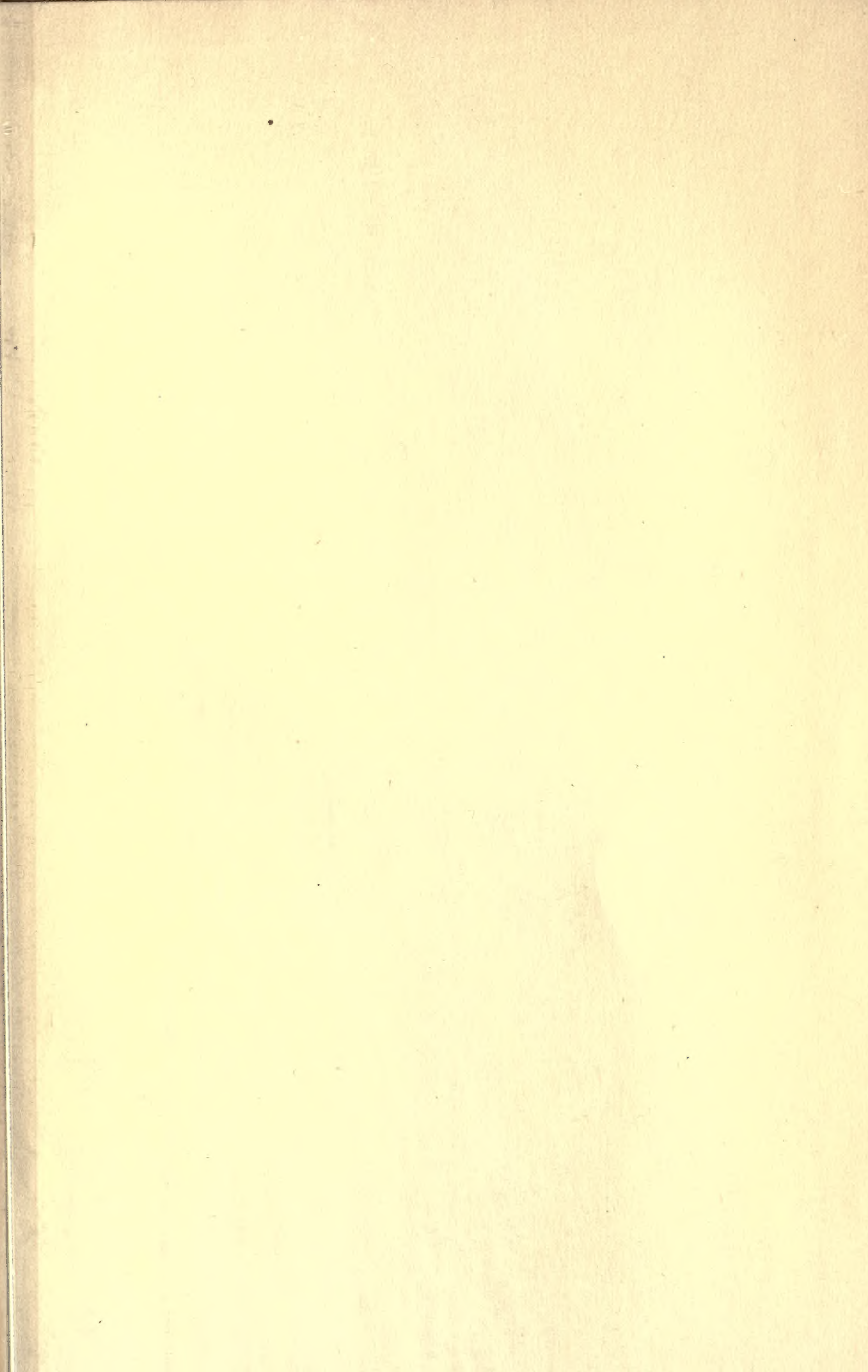
THACKERAY, W. M., "The Four Georges," 4, 279; "The Virginians," 7, 65, 69; "Vanity Fair," 268; quoted, 271
Tickell, Thomas, 111
"Tom Jones" (Henry Fielding), 5, 312
Townshend, George, first Marquis, 124
— second Viscount, 17
— Charles (nephew), letters to, 156-159, 161, 164-166, 237-238, 246-247, 318-319; mentioned, 160, 163, 164
— Mary, letter to, 9; letters of Selwyn to, 19, 130, 163-164, 198, 200, 205, 208-213, 217, 220-246, 248-266, 305-306, 312-315, 315-317
— Thomas (brother-in-law), 50, 51
— Thomas (nephew). *See* Sydney, first Viscount
Tunbridge Wells, 306
Turk's Head, The, 293

"VANITY FAIR" (Thackeray), 268
"Virginians, The" (Thackeray), 7, 69
Voltaire, 186, 198

WALPOLE, Horace, letters of, 4-5; to Selwyn, 100, 101-102; at Eton, 23, 24; friendship with Edgecumbe, 85, 86; Macaulay on, 93-94; friendship with Selwyn, 94-107; "The Castle of Otranto," 101; in Paris, 101-103, 106; "Historic Doubts on Richard the Third," 104; at Castle Howard, 104; at Matson, 104-105; old age, 106-107; on death of Selwyn, 107; on Selwyn's morbid tastes, 123; on the execution of the rebel lords, 131-134; at Gloucester election, 156; friendship with Madame du Deffand, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195; opinion of Selwyn, 193; quoted, 21, 84, 85, 86, 96-97, 99, 276, 288, 296, 311, 315, 319, 321
Walpole, Sir Robert, 1, 17
Ward, Mrs Humphrey, "Lady Rose's Daughter," 188

Warner, Dr John, quoted, 91; letter to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 141; letters to Mie Mie, 267, 307; mentioned, 217
Warton, Thomas, 25
— Thomas, junior, 27
Wesley, Charles, 31, 32
— John, 7-8, 31
White, Dr Joseph, 312
Whitefield, George, 31-32
White's, 60, 61, 62-67, 285, 286, 287, 289, 294, 301
Wilberforce, William, 81, 304
William III., 314
Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury, 87-92; friendship with Selwyn, 91-92
Williams, George James ("Gilly"), 65, 72-76, 124, 180, 189, 190, 191, 269, 291
Wit and humour, 108-111; Selwyn on, 110
Wits of the eighteenth century, 111-114
Wraxall, Nathaniel, quoted, 21, 84, 115, 120, 126, 177; member for Ludgershall, 162

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED, EDINBURGH



DA 512 S4K4

Kerr, S. Parnell
George Selwyn and the wits

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY