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THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

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NOVELS

A MAN FROM THE NORTH
ANNA OF THE FIVE TOWNS
LEONORA
A GREAT MAN
SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE
WHOM GOD HATH JOINED
BURIED ALIVE
THE OLD WIVES' TALE
THE GLIMPSE
THE PRICE OF LOVE
HELEN WITH THE HIGH HAND
CLAYHANGER
THE LION'S SHARE
HILDA LESSWAYS
THE CARD
THESE TWAIN
THE REGENT
THE ROLL-CALL
THE PRETTY LADY

FANTASIAS

THE GRAND BABYLON HOTEL
THE GATES OF WRATH
TERESA OF WATLING STREET
THE LOOT OF CITIES
HUGO
THE GHOST
THE CITY OF PLEASURE

SHORT STORIES

TALES OF THE FIVE TOWNS
THE GRIM SMILE OF THE FIVE TOWNS
THE MATADOR OF THE FIVE TOWNS

BELLES-LETTRES

JOURNALISM FOR WOMEN
FAME AND FICTION
HOW TO BECOME AN AUTHOR
THE TRUTH ABOUT AN AUTHOR
MENTAL EFFICIENCY
HOW TO LIVE ON TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY
THE HUMAN MACHINE
LITERARY TASTE
FRIENDSHIP AND HAPPINESS
THOSE UNITED STATES
PARIS NIGHTS

MARRIED LIFE
LIBERTY
OVER THERE: WAR SCENES
THE AUTHOR'S CRAFT
BOOKS AND PERSONS
SELF AND SELF-MANAGEMENT
FROM THE LOG OF THE "VELSA"
OUR WOMEN

DRAMA

POLITE FARCES
CUPID AND COMMON SENSE
WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS
THE HONEYMOON
THE TITLE
THE GREAT ADVENTURE
MILESTONES (In Collaboration with Edward Knoblock)
JUDITH
SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE

In Collaboration with Eden Phillpotts

THE SINEWS OF WAR: A ROMANCE
THE STATUE: A ROMANCE

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

BY

ARNOLD BENNETT

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS

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NOTE

Chronological order has not been followed in the arrangement of this book; but in every case where it seemed advisable to date an item, the date has been added.

In 1906 and 1907 I printed privately and issued to friends two small volumes of unpublished matter entitled respectively *Things that Interested Me* and *Things which have Interested Me*. Neither of them contains anything which is included in the present work.

CONTENTS

THINGS THAT HAVE INTERESTED ME

OPERATIC PERFORMANCES

I HAVE never seen a reasonably good all-round performance of grand opera. Nevertheless, though not a melomaniac, I am extremely fond of grand opera, and have seen it in the following cities: Antwerp, Brussels, Florence, Ghent, Hanley, Lisbon, London, Milan, New York, Paris, Ostend, Philadelphia, Rome, San Remo, and others which I cannot recall. If operatic performances succeed in several particulars, as they sometimes do—though rarely in more than one—they always fail in at least one particular, generally in several, sometimes in all. The best show I ever saw anywhere on the operatic stage was a performance of *Le Mariage de Figaro* in English at Drury Lane under Sir Thomas Beecham. The production had been superintended by Nigel Playfair. The translation was quite neat, and often very witty indeed. The acting was good. There was an ensemble. The scenery was not really good, but it was so immensely better than ordinary scenery in world-renowned opera-houses that it gave the illusion of being good. I was as well satisfied by this affair as by a faulty performance of Strauss's absolutely enchanting *Rosenkavalier* at Covent Garden: which is saying a great deal. It would be impossible for me to decide which was the worst show I ever saw—the choice would be too embarrassing. But it occurred certainly in either Paris, Milan, or London. I know that after a performance of *Siegfried*, at the Paris Opera House I took an oath never again to enter the Paris Opera House. It was all bad, but especially the scenery and the "production" were horrible. I broke my oath, because the Russian ballet chose to begin its West-European career at the Paris Opera House, and I attended. After a pre-war performance of *Parsifal* at Covent Garden I took an oath never again to enter Covent Garden. The flower-maidens' garden and the costumes and antics of the flower-maidens must count among the foulest and most ghastly artistic outrages in the history of music. I had to close my eyes; I slept. I broke my Covent Garden oath because of Strauss. All the standard operas ought to be re-"produced," and their stage traditions entirely demolished, by somebody fairly abreast of the craft of modern play-producing. They ought properly to be re-"produced" by the creative producers who have made the Russian ballet; but one must not ask for too much.

The methods of the Russian ballet appear as yet to have had no influence at all on French, English, American, or Italian productions. Imagine what the Russian ballet people might do with *Tannhäuser*, *Don Juan*, *Faust*, *Tristan*! Operatic performances frequently give ravishing pleasure to the ear, but they always, always, always offend the eye; and they offend the reason. Operatic scenery, for instance, is more than ugly; it is ridiculous. When architecture is given, the architecture is manifestly impossible. No architecture could conceivably exist with the plans and elevations of the palaces, cottages, and cabarets of the operatic stage. The same with gardens, forests, rocky crags, and desert places. There is no technical excuse for this. Nor is there any technical excuse for the operatic mismanagement of lighting and grouping. The truth is that operatic mismanagers are obsessed by the music, and they leave everything else to people who are either dead and have forgotten to get themselves buried, or who don't know the elements of their job. I do not underestimate the tremendous difficulties of operatic production, but I do assert that the importing of common sense, comeliness, and logic into operatic production would lessen and not magnify those difficulties.

There is one difficulty, however, that only the progress of medical science can remove. Either a predisposition to obesity goes with vocal capacity, or singing has a marked and frightful tendency to produce obesity in singers. I do not know which. The whole question is very mysterious. The obesity of male singers can be borne by the opera-goer with relative equanimity, but the obesity of women on the stage is a real affliction for the sensitive opera-goer. Much discretion is needed for the discussion of this subject. Stout sopranos are not criminals, though I know opera-goers who would violently refer to them as such. They are victims, who fight in vain against their unkind fate. Nothing can at present be done, for to put all obesity out of business in opera would be nearly to annihilate the profession. Yet in some cases licence is carried too far. Last night I saw a vast woman, a highly accomplished singer with a long and honourable career behind her, in a part which demanded grace and physical charm. As the beloved of a very young and very slight creature she had constantly to say things which in the most cruel manner rendered her grotesque, and the climax came when she had to disguise herself and be mistaken for a mere girl. Many members of the audience, screened in darkness, smiled and laughed to one another. Every scene in which she appeared, and especially the scenes of comedy, took on a

horrid humour which nobody intended. The opera was ruined. If this lady accepted a mere offer of the rôle, then both she and the mismanagers were to blame. If the rôle was forced upon her, then the mismanagers were solely to blame. Anyhow, the result was excruciating to the sensitive. Of course, the case was extremely exceptional. But all cases of obesity are gravely regrettable. Does one Venus in twenty look the part, even from the distance of the farthest gallery? I think I have only seen one really slim Venus in my life; and what a marvellous difference she made to *Tannhäuser*!

JERRY OXFORD

A pronounced Jew type; aged about sixty. He had been living alone in the hotel for months. He said he had made nearly thirty voyages to distant colonies, and two voyages round the world, and that he had visited every civilised country. Then he spoke of his younger sons at Eton and Harrow, and of his various clubs. "Money was no object to me at one time," he said, not conceitedly, but rather naïvely, attractively. He must be naïve. He is convinced that Carnegie gave a million pounds to the Liberal Party funds, and that this money had enabled the Party to win general elections. Yes, I think his chief characteristic must be naïveté; he would be very startled if I told him I thought so. He mentioned his book, *A Dish of Chesnuts: by one who has gathered them*, begun a quarter of a century ago and never finished. His friends are constantly stopping him to inquire: "Jerry ['My name is Gerald, but everyone calls me Jerry'], when is that book of yours coming out?" His excuse for the delay over the book is that he can't write. He says he can talk. To make a speech is no trouble to him. He has no nerves. To speechify, impromptu, on any topic, for any given length of time, is as easy to him as walking across a room.

He proceeds: "I am a good speaker. I have no difficulty because I am a good raconteur, and a very good mimic. Then I have invention. I tell you a tale now. You hear me tell that tale in a fortnight and you wouldn't recognise it." He says all this quite simply and naturally, with an air of perfect impartiality. He talks in a mild voice, very correctly and fluently, using all sorts of clichés with a certain elegance. The truth is that he is tedious, but you do not realise it at the moment owing to his excellent delivery and the variety of his experiences. He will invent apropos incidents, and assert that they really happened and even that he has just witnessed them. We went to an orchestral concert together—he is unquestionably fond of music—and there was a break-down. He instantly told us that the first violin was a friend of his and had confided to him that the conductor could not read music and that a break-down was bound to occur. He went further and told us that at the moment of the break-down the first violin signed to him, as if to say: "You see. It *has* happened." Quite probably he does know the first violin.

Talking about the baronial X family, he said that the previous Lord X had every happiness and that he (Jerry) had envied him for years. Then Lord X's boys, one after the other, were dismissed from Eton ["where my son was"] for stealing. Jerry then saw that nobody was to be envied, and recalled his old father's tale to the effect that once upon a time every man was ordered to hang his trouble on a line, and then every man was ordered to chose *any* trouble from the line, and then every man took back his own. And so on in this vein.

Years later he met the present Lord X and walked in the Park with him. The next day a friend stopped him and said: "Hello, Jerry! You choose your friends well. Saw you walking yesterday with that damned thief X."

"Damned thief?"

"Well, wasn't he expelled from Eton for stealing a fiver?"

It appears that after the second X boy was dismissed the headmaster called the school together and explained the reason for the dismissal. A lady present with me protested against this act of the headmaster's. Then Jerry:

"A schoolmaster must know much better than anybody else—I say it with the greatest respect [here a faint coarse smile]—even than you, how to treat boys."

Here was an instance of the coarseness which sometimes pierces through his bland urbanity. My theory is that he fairly successfully imposed the urbanity on himself many years ago.

He told me a funny story about two Jews. "Husband and wife of the Hebrew persuasion," he said condescendingly, just as if I was incapable of perceiving that he has Jew written all over him.

He urged me to go to his favourite Colony. Fine climate! And a great deal to be done there in the way of fiction! Brisk demand for literature! "I may tell you that as a literary man you would be received with special attention. I should be happy to give you introductions, and my daughter and her husband would look after you, see you were all right everywhere." Then he offered me his card, which was gilt-edged. He was equally naïve about medicine. He said to me with pitying condescension: "Do you still take bicarbonate of soda for indigestion? I've got about twelve pounds I can give you. I used to take it in spoonfuls. Now I take homoglobin, two after each meal. You must try homoglobin. In a few days you'll be able to eat what you like. Wonderful thing! Wonderful!" He was apparently convinced that homoglobin would furnish me with a new stomach. He gave me a lot of homoglobin. He said with genuine glee that the retail price was a shilling a dozen, but that he got them from the manufacturers at 1s. 3d. per gross. He was notably polite.

THE OLD FELLOWS AND THE NEW

I WAS walking along the road from Cascaes to Mont Estoril when an Englishman passing in the opposite direction called out to me, with a wave of the hand heavenwards: "Rather like a Bonington sky, that, don't you think?" A nice kind of greeting to get in Portugal! I had spoken to this Englishman only once before. I knew nothing whatever of him, except that, having questioned me about something curious in my sketching-case, he was interested in water-colour apparatus and was probably an amateur himself. I stopped, and in two seconds he told me that he was the possessor of a couple of Boningtons. I marched close up to him and said in an intimate tone: "Do you mean to say that you've got two Boningtons?" That I was impressed delighted him. I demanded how long he had had them, where he bought them, and even what he paid for them. He answered quite freely, and gave me a tip about a certain dealer.

"And what's more," he said, "I think Bonington's the finest English landscape artist, bar none. Better than de Wint, better than Girtin, better than Turner."

"But what about Crome?"

The suggestion shook him.

"Ah! I meant water-colourists."

Unfortunately I never thought to put him to the test of Cotman.

However, he could scarcely have belonged to the secret society of Cotmanists, or he would not have placed Bonington first. I once went into an artist's studio and said casually, indicating a sepia sketch on the distant opposite wall: "Is that a Cotman?" It was. I needed no further credential. A bond was created. (Similarly will a bond be created if you ask a man where is the finest modern English prose and he replies: "In *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*.") To my taste, finer water-colours by Cotman are hidden in portfolios upstairs in the British Museum than any that Turner did in his glittering maturity. I cannot forget my corroding disappointment when I first saw at Agnew's a collection of the more celebrated Turner pieces, such as "The Red Righi." True, Turner's water-colours are a proof of the absurdity of the maxim that a good water-colour is an accident; but they are far too virtuous—in the sense of virtuosity. They amount to a circus. Delicate as they are, they bang everything with such a prodigious bang that after seeing them you feel the need of aspirin and repose. Now even Turner did not know more perfectly and profoundly what he was doing with brushes and tints on a bit of damp paper than Cotman. Cotman puts the washes on once for all—and such washes—but it does not occur to him to give a "performance." Cotmans are dear; they will be dearer; I have a hope that buyers of Turners for the rise will drop money.

My friend on the road held, and I agreed, that Copley Fielding would soon be coming a cropper in the sale-rooms. He recounted how a Copley Fielding had recently fetched twelve hundred guineas at Christie's and immediately been resold on the spot for fifteen hundred. I remember buying a good average Copley Fielding in Brighton for five pounds. A pleasing thing, but extravagantly accomplished. Copley Fielding grew into a performer, like Turner, though *qua* performer he must not be mentioned in the same breath with the mysterious man who acknowledged a superior in Girtin. It was fortunate for Turner that Girtin died early. He might have knocked spots off Turner. And while I am about the matter, I may as well say that I doubt whether Turner was well-advised in having his big oil-paintings hung alongside of Claude's in the National Gallery. The ordeal was the least in the world too severe for them. Still, I would not deny that Turner was a very great person. Bits of the foregoing came into my conversation with the man on the road. He was a collector. "I go in for all these old fellows." We catalogued most of the big British names in water-colour, threading them rapidly on a string of appreciation. In three minutes we had esteemed the old fellows, and we went on our ways full of an obscure and naïve pleasure in the encounter. Hobbyists are very simple-minded. I did not know his name, nor whether he was an opponent of the "insidious policy of mine nationalisation," nor whether his own sketches were worse even than mine, nor anything about him except that he was a great prophet of Bonington in Portugal. As such he had

established himself in my heart.

Nevertheless there was also a worm in my heart. He "went in for all those old fellows"; but I had not dared to ask him about the new fellows, who were painting and expecting customers at the very moment of our conversation. Was he equally enthusiastic for the new fellows? Or did he imitate in the graphic arts Mr. Augustine Birrell's confessed practice of marking the publication of a new book by reading an old one? Would he have bought Boningtons while Bonington was alive and innovating? I was afraid to risk the test. Not that I would have tried him too hard—with the newest names and the most impudent processes. No, I would have been content to mention stars already fixed. But suppose I had asked him about Cezanne's water-colours (though I am not mad for them), and he had replied that he seemed to have heard the name? Suppose I had asked him about Rodin's water-colours, and he had lowered the portcullis of his collector's face? He might have disapproved of Wilson Steer's water-colours, though they are as sure of immortality as any Bonington that was ever collected. He might have ruined our fragile acquaintance by declaring that Brabazon was a passing fad of certain professional painters who wanted a foil and a toy. I could not have borne that.

Brabazon in his old age became the prince of sketchers-from-nature; but sketchers-from-nature were characteristically slow in perceiving this. For years, despite the grim and august praise of Mr. John Sargent, Brabazon's sketches could be bought anywhere for twenty guineas. I do believe that I was the last man to buy a Brabazon at that price. The transaction occurred a few days before the first appearance of Brabazons at Christie's. About a dozen sketches were catalogued together in a sale. Dealers protested that they had no idea what the stuff might fetch. The stuff might fetch anything or nothing. It had never had an "official" price. I commissioned a dealer to go up to twenty guineas apiece on my behalf. The stuff went for fifties and sixties; and, like a good many other people, I was both delighted and disappointed. I wanted Brabazons to rise; but I wanted Brabazons. Brabazon should be the model to all sketchers-from-nature. He didn't formally "paint"; he sketched. His aim was the general effect. In my opinion his "Taj Mahal" is the finest water-colour *sketch* ever done. He probably did it in about a quarter of an hour. It is a marvel of simplification, and simplification is what Mr. Clement K. Shorter, if he sketched, would undoubtedly term "the great desideratum" of the sketcher-from-nature. It is the most difficult thing in that world. It is the kill-joy of my existence. The captain of a passenger ship which had called at Oporto once told me that he was summoned in the night to a raving passenger. This passenger had been visiting the incredible "wine-lodges" of the district during the day. He lay in an upper berth kicking the ceiling and exclaiming in an agonised voice: "Millions of bottles! Millions of bottles!" Similarly, but with more decency and perhaps still more divine despair, may I be heard crying in the night, after a day of inglorious sketching: "Simplification! Simplification!"

IN CALAIS HARBOUR DURING MOBILISATION

WHEN, on Sunday at noon, we threw a rope to a loafer on the outer quay of the smack-basin in Calais harbour, the loafer, as soon as he had made it fast and assured us that we were in a good position and received a franc, climbed down the iron rungs of the ladder in the wall, so as to be closer to us, and said:

"That is going badly, the war."

Prone by nature and training to reject all rumours of a startling kind, I replied that I hoped that "that" would arrange itself.

"Nevertheless," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "the general mobilisation has begun."

This was real news to me. I had had none since the early editions of Saturday afternoon. I had waited all Saturday in Dover harbour, which was full of men-of-war, for some sort of reasonable weather to allow me to move on towards Cowes, whither I was bound. And it had been a gloomy day, in spite of the sunshine and in spite of the bright crowds and the band on the esplanade. It seemed to be monstrous, then, that the glory of Cowes Regatta should be even impaired by fears of war. (That the Regatta might be wiped entirely off the Calendar did not occur to me, because it was unthinkable.) Soldiers and sailors had a peculiar air of importance and busy-ness. A group of officers and men manoeuvring the immense iron booms for closing the eastern entrance to the harbour might have been a hierarchy rearranging the swing of the solar universe. Another group of officers went out of the harbour on a harbour-tug, and cruised to and fro—and me after them in a dinghy!—and returned with great mystery; and what they were doing on a harbour-tug none could say. A royal train came on the pier and debarked mysterious personages. Whom? I guessed that the train bore the Empress Dowager of Russia, and I was right; but at the time one was more inclined to believe in the dispatch of another special peace envoy. One instinctively related every phenomenon observed to the theory of the chances of war. If one saw a soldier with a girl, one said: "There can't be any real fear of war or he wouldn't be gallivanting with that girl." And instantly afterwards one said: "War is a certainty—he's taking leave of her."

This absurd rationality had coloured the whole of one's secret mental life. At Dover a harbour clock striking at night had had the very ring of destiny; and as for a tramp steamer suddenly blowing off steam—its effect on the nerves was appalling. So that, although convinced that there would be no general European war, I had determined on Saturday at midnight that, wherever I spent Sunday, I would not spend it in Dover harbour.

In response to the perhaps justifiable curiosity of the Dover harbour-official on watch as to my destination, I had stated as we passed out on Sunday morning that I did not know my destination. Our hope was to reach towards the French coast and then beat up towards Dungeness; failing that, to make Boulogne; failing Boulogne, Calais. My skipper had shown hesitations about entering any foreign country, but I had reassured him.

The sequel was Calais, and in a gale of wind! We could not possibly have made Boulogne. And then, after the risk of being smashed against one of the piers on entering, to be told that the general mobilisation had begun! Moreover, the high wind was carrying the dust and litter from all the streets of Calais and depositing it on my decks. And straw hats, pursued by men, were travelling at terrific speeds along the quays. I thought: "I may be weather-bound here for a week." Two years ago I had been weather-bound at Boulogne for a week in the height of summer. The fact is, the Channel is no place for yachting.

Then the health officers came aboard, climbing gingerly down the ladder. One was about forty-five and the other about thirty, and both were serious, respectable, urbane men. I invited them into the saloon to transact business. With all their calm they were much more exciting than the shore-loafer. In the space of about a minute they told me that a German paper-factory in the town had closed down and its manager fled; that no newspapers whatever were to be had in Calais; that the French packets were to be at once suppressed; that there was a train service only to Paris—and that very

restricted; that all foreign money had ceased to circulate, except English; that English and French torpedo boats had performed evolutions in company outside the harbour; that mines were to be laid; that fishing had almost stopped; that pilotage was stopped; that the customs officers had gone; that the German and Russian armies were in contact; and that a ship entering Calais harbour on the previous day had been commandeered (*confisqué*, they said) by the Government.

I said I hoped they would not commandeer me.

The older one said:

"Oh no! You are too small. You are useless."

Then he most amiably took half a crown instead of three francs for dues, no doubt in order to prove that English money still circulated.

We began to talk about the causes of the war. These two excellent and sensible men seemed to symbolise the absolute innocence of France in the affair. They had no desire nor enthusiasm for a war. They were whole-hearted in their condemnation of German diplomacy (so much so that it would have been futile for me to state my views), but they were by no means whole-hearted in their condemnation of the German character. Indeed, they at once put a limit to a rather hasty generalisation of mine framed to soothe them. When I said that the British Fleet would certainly be placed at the disposal of France (I was not at all certain of it, but one talks at random and sentimentally in these international conversations), they were obviously reassured; but when I softly predicted success for France, the elder one only said gravely: "I hope you may be right." Nobody could have been less Chauvinistic than these two. In the afternoon, friendship having been established, they came to see me again, and to assure me that their receipt for dues gave me the right to depart whenever I chose. However, I relied less on their receipt than on the blue ensign of the British Naval Reserve, which I was entitled to fly, and which I kept flying all night, monstrously contrary to the etiquette of yachts.

After lunch I went ashore and walked about in the wind and the dust. Fragments of the "Marseillaise" came down on the wind. Baggage carts abounded; also motor-cars. I read the proclamations on the walls. The mobilisation order, with its coloured flags, was fairly comprehensive; it included all *liable* men not already with the colours. There was further a patriotic outburst by the Mayor of Calais, neatly turned in its grandiloquence; and, more disturbing, an announcement to foreigners ordering them to go instantly and report themselves to the Mayor, and from him to obtain permission either to clear out or to remain. Personally, I ignored this, relying on my blue ensign. Finally, there was an instruction to horse-owners to bring all liable horses to the centre of the town on Monday morning.

Save for a few uncomfortable submarines, the harbour and basins were quite quiet. I was getting too close to the submarines when a sentry politely asked me to remove myself. I did so, and went to the station. At the station there was everything except trains and newspapers. The two middle-aged dames at the bookstall told me with firmness and pride that newspapers existed not for the present in Calais. Many soldiers were preparing to entrain; scarcely a woman could be seen.

I went thence to the enormous beach where the Casino and the cabins are, and the distressing monument to the victims of the *Pluviose*. Two operatic performances were billed for that day at the Casino, but I could see no sign of them. Nearly all the scores of cabins were locked up; all the bathing-vans were deserted. People wandered vaguely along the planks at the top of the beach—here and there an elegant, too elegant, woman. The high wind swept violently across the huge expanse of sand, carrying sand along in interminable undulating lines that looked like yellow vapour. A very curious spectacle! A priest came down in charge of a school of boys. They took off their shoes and stockings, and against each shoe the wind immediately raised a hillock of sand. The priest took off his shoes and stockings and tucked up his skirts. As he entered the water he carefully washed his feet; it was a wise action.

Then I went into the town dominated by the jangle of car-bells. Calais is a picturesque city; it is the southernmost outpost of Flemish architecture on that coast; the people, too, are a little Flemish. The cafés were not full—about half full; here

and there a waiter was serving in military uniform. The populace was interested and talkative, but neither gay nor gloomy. On the faces of only two women did I see an expression of positive sorrow. The cafés-chantants were functioning.

Towards nightfall the wind and the dust dropped. The town grew noisier. The "Marseillaise" was multiplied in the air. My skipper and cook went ashore, and returned with the news that in the town they had received an ovation as British tars.

The next morning it rained heavily. We crept out to sea at 4.30, with vitality at its lowest ebb. Apparently, no one had noticed us, but at the mouth of the harbour two submarines were uncomfortably in waiting, as though for ourselves. "What a fool I was to come here!" I thought. "They may refuse to let us go." But they didn't. We exchanged salutes, and I was free. Winds and tides favouring, we made a magnificent passage to Brightlingsea in exactly ten hours. Once, near the Edinborough Lightship, we were hailed by a British torpedo boat, who demanded the yacht's name. Because he couldn't hear our reply he bore right down on us. We held up a white life-belt with the yacht's name thereon in black, and the torpedo boat, sheering off, gave an august consent to our continuance. The whole coast was patrolled. Brightlingsea was precisely as gay as it always is on every August Bank Holiday. Not a sign of war. But we had not dropped anchor ten minutes before my cook, who belongs to the Naval Reserve, received official notice that he was "wanted." Such organisation struck me as being rather good.

"What pay do you get?" I asked the cook.

"Well, sir," he said, "I don't exactly know. We get a guinea a week drill money, but we shan't get so much now we're called up."

"Then what about your wife and family?"

"I don't know, sir."

He was moved. Much as I admired the organisation of the State, I was confirmed in my ancient conviction that the Government has still something to learn as an employer.

A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

In the ballroom of the Casino, Mrs. V., after discussing the amount of freedom that ought to be allowed to her girls, and continuously disagreeing with me, said: "Writers like you and Mr. Wells have a great responsibility, a very great responsibility. It is you who are really the teachers."

I said: "You don't suppose that when I sit down to write I think to myself: 'Now you have a very great responsibility to the nation and to the younger generation'?"

She admitted that she supposed not, and asked what my attitude of mind was on such occasions. I said that my only reason for writing a given thing was that I felt like writing it.

"Ah!" she said. "Some of your books have been household words in our house for years. *The Human Machine* and *Literary Taste*, and so on. But there are others—well——"

I said that I knew all about her implications, and that some of my books had got me into dreadful trouble; but I couldn't help what some people thought, and it didn't influence me.

"But surely you wouldn't care to make vice attractive!"

I almost answered that my aim was to show grandeur and beauty in everything, but I had mercy on her simplicity, and mumbled I forget what. Whereupon she remarked with surprising intelligence:

"But of course you wouldn't consider its attractiveness or the reverse was any affair of yours. You only want to put down the truth as you see it. Still, it's a great responsibility. Many people have thought that you were playing down to the public taste."

"It never pays—in England," I said grimly.

She said: "Oh! I always thought it did!"

"You are quite wrong," I said. "At least, it only pays to play down to the public in one way—that is, by being sentimental. If you're sentimental you may be as vicious as you please. But if you can't be sentimental don't touch the forbidden subjects unless you want to be up against the strongest force in England and Scotland."

"What's that?"

"Hypocrisy, of course. English hypocrisy is bad enough. Scotch is worse."

She concurred, but with her lips only.

Later she said: "A friend of ours came to see me one morning and said: 'I was reading a pitiable book of Arnold Bennett's last night.'" (I knew without her telling me that the reference was to *The Pretty Lady*.) "He was very distressed indeed. You see, some of your books have given us intense pleasure, the most intense pleasure. 'Yes,' he said, 'a pitiable book! *I read it because I felt it was my duty to read it.*'" (My italics. He would probably read *Justine* and *L'Education de Laure* from a sense of duty.)

I said: "He didn't understand the book."

She demurred: "Oh! I think he understood it. *I'm sure he did. He's a very high literary authority in Edinburgh.*"

The lady was beginning to exhaust my strength, so I merely retorted that I should go on writing whatever I wanted to write, and people would have to stick it. "I mean to write a book next year that will make you sit up. You needn't read it, of course, but of course you will."

"Ah!" she said. "You're angry with Britain. You're resentful, and you want to punish us. It's a very great responsibility. But I'm so glad to have had this talk with you."

Of all which the lesson is that the artist must suffer the righteous gladly.

WOMEN AT WAR-WORK

THERE is much talk of man-power, but strangely little of woman-power. The shortage of military nurses is serious. Adequate nursing means quicker recovery of the wounded. Nurses therefore mean soldiers. For a year past the authorities have been worried by this shortage, which has now become acute, if not alarming. Last week a new 700-bed hospital in London was ready—except that it entirely lacked nurses. The exportation of both nurses and doctors has been frowned upon for a long time. To-day it is absolutely forbidden, as those war-charity committees who occupy themselves with allied countries are learning to their dismay. The War Office, of course, cannot directly control by ukase the movements of women, or of doctors over military age, but it can and does achieve its end by refusing passports. The causes of the shortage are two. Nurses and V.A.D. women have been, and are, shockingly overworked; sometimes very badly treated. Many of them have retired in collapse. Others have retired in resentment. And the tales told have impeded recruitment to the thinned ranks—ranks at best extremely inadequate. Women-workers in every branch of activity have met with injustice. They are underpaid in the War Office, and thousands of them are underpaid in the munition factories. Also they are underpaid by private employers. For example, I know cases of competent girls who enthusiastically went to London as drivers of motor-vans in order to liberate men. I could name two girls who were employed by two wealthy and prominent firms in the West End. They worked from 8.30 a.m. to 8, 9, and 10 p.m., and earned 28s. a week. Van-driving in Central London may be deemed to be skilled labour. The price of a male chauffeur in London is now 60s. a week. In a few months these girls were worn out. One of them, when she gave notice, was offered a rise of 2s. a week! The offer did not change her resolve. After a one-roomed miserable existence in London they returned to country houses and spread the glorious news of the metropolitan labour-market.

The other cause of the shortage is that women who might have volunteered have not volunteered. While many women have left the idleness of comfortable houses in town and country for war-work, many women without ties have not. I am personally acquainted with instances, especially in the country, which I unhesitatingly call scandalous. Again, there are women who plunge furiously into war-work—and tire of it for no reason save that a ridiculous upbringing has deprived them of the necessary moral stamina. I talked at length to one such woman the other night. She was rich, and had done six months' hard in a Government office for 35s. a week. The feat was enormous for her. She went back with a terrific rebound into private life. She had seen *Watch your Step* forty-two times and *The Bing Boys* are Here sixteen times. She said: "It isn't that I enjoy these things after about the third time, but people ask you to dinner and 'to go to the theatre afterwards.' You don't know beforehand where you are going to. So what is one to do?" Sidelight on British war-manners! *Cf.* the strictures of the elect on the cinema craze in the East End!

Then there are the women who from the first have deemed it their most sacred duty to give officers on leave a good time. In this connection one is entitled to comment upon the marvellous silence which the Press has maintained about the raiding by the police of the establishment where the art of giving officers on leave a good time is practised in its highest and costliest perfection. Yet the event had immense possibilities as "copy." I am informed that a policeman, entering, raised his hand, and, in the grandeur of the moment forgetting his grammar, proclaimed: "In the name of the law, everybody is forbidden to touch their glasses." The defiance of the liquor regulations in this resort (and in others) has been open and notorious for months, and for weeks frequenters had been betting among themselves about the chances of a police-raid. Britain is not a country where there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. Certainly not! But it is a country where the swiftness of the law is in inverse ratio to the wealth and prestige of the person who defies it.

4 *November* 1916.

"FUNNY STORIES"

IT was in the half-forgotten days when there were horse-omnibuses, driven and conducted by men, and wit flourished in the thoroughfares. A bus-horse, checked too late, knocked his nose against a policeman's arm. The policeman, very ugly in face, cursed heartily. The wise driver said naught, but just listened and listened to the imprecations. As he was moving off, he gazed inoffensively curious at the policeman's features, and remarked with gentle melancholy: "You never sent me that photograph as you promised me." And then, at a later day, when motor-buses had begun seriously to compete with horse-omnibuses, a motor-bus was trying ineffectually to start, and making those gramophonic noises which we all remember. The conductor of the horse-omnibus just in front, taking down the way-bill from its pocket, threw over his shoulder: "Try another record, Bill."

Which reminds me of conductors in general, and especially of English conductors, though it is said that there are none. A certain English conductor is noted among orchestras for the beauty of his language at rehearsals. In fact, his remarks have been recorded *verbatim* by an orchestral player interested in literature. He said to the orchestra, in the way of guidance: "Sigh and die." He said: "Don't handicap the crescendo." He said: "I want a savage staccato." He said: "All this passage must be nice and manifold." He said to a particular player: "Weep, Mr. Parker, weep. [Mr. Parker makes his instrument weep.] That's jolly. That's jolly." He said, persistent in getting an effect: "Sorry to tease you, gentlemen." He said: "Now, side-drums, assert yourself." He said: "I want it mostly music." He asked for: "That regular tum-tum which you do so ideally." He said: "Now I want a sudden exquisite hush." He said: "Everybody must be shadowy together." He said: "Let the pizzicato act as a sort of springboard to the passage." He demanded: "Can't we court that better?" And he said: "Gentlemen of the first fiddles, this isn't a bees' wedding; it's something elemental."

Which reminds me that I was once talking to a celebrated Hungarian pianist about English conductors, and I mentioned an English conductor renowned for his terrific energy. Although I authoritatively informed the pianist that the methods of the conductor in question at rehearsals were so conducive to perspiration that on the days preceding musical festivals he regularly changed all his clothes three times a day, the pianist would not admit that he was a conductor at all. "I will tell you why," said the pianist, very serious and very convinced. "He always stands with his legs together while conducting. You cannot *conduct* if you always stand with your legs together. It is physically impossible."

Which reminds me somehow of music. I once went to a Philharmonic concert, and it was not so very long ago either—as music goes. Precisely, it was in November 1912. Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* was in the programme. Now, *Also sprach Zarathustra* was composed about 1896, and first performed in England, at the Crystal Palace, in 1897. But the Philharmonic programme in 1912 said: "First time at these concerts." And the very characters of the printing seemed to show a British pride in that dignified delay of sixteen years.

Music is a vast subject, and I recall all sorts of things about it. I remember meeting an orchestral player lugging his violoncello one night late in the streets of London. "Hello!" I said in the vernacular. "Where you been?" "Where I been?" he replied. "I been with a few pals to play at Virginia Water. There's a lunatic asylum there. There was a ball for the lunatics, with an interval in the middle. We were the interval." And still speaking of music, a certain fervent professor of the piano, pointing to a passage in a Beethoven sonata, said: "You can see him writing a passage like that and shaking his hair." "Yes," brightly observed the girl-pupil, "he *had* rather long hair, hadn't he?" Even sonatas, though but a branch, are a vast subject in themselves. I am reminded that a young lady went into a music shop and said: "I want a piece called 'Sonata.'" Shopman, after hesitating: "Which one, miss?" Young lady: "I'll take the one in the window."

A similar incident occurred on the very same day. A wealthy lady remarked to a friend of mine: "I bought quite a batch of six-shilling novels the other day for ninepence each, as good as new." "Really!" exclaimed my friend. "What were they? Who are the authors?" Said the lady: "Oh! I don't know. But the shop-girl assured me that she had read them herself and they were all very good." Which inevitably reminds me, and must remind all readers, of the British attitude towards the arts. At the very Philharmonic concert referred to above, I heard one musical *dilettante* say to another, after the Strauss: "Pity that a man with so much talent should prostitute himself in that way, isn't it?"

And I remember being at a picture-show at the Grafton Galleries when entered a large woman of the ruling caste with a large voice and a lorgnette. She smiled her self-satisfaction all over the place, revelling in the opportunity which such shows give to a leisured class of feeling artistically superior. She went straight to a Cézanne and said loudly: "Now no one will persuade me that the man who painted that was serious. He was just pulling our legs." She said it to the whole room. She said it to me. "Madam," I nearly, but not quite, answered, "a leg like yours must want some pulling." Which reminds me that I have lived intimately with painters, and that one of them in Paris, who had discovered that he could mix better colours than he could buy, once said to me: "I still go on with my colour-mixing. I get up rather late, paint until lunch, paint after lunch till it's dark, and then till dinner I mix my colours. It makes you feel virtuous. It makes you feel like an old master. Goodness knows, it's the only time when you do feel like an old master." And that reminds me of a group of provincial old masters of the British art of football, who, after a final cup-tie at the Crystal Palace, and an evening at the Empire, turned into their hotel just at closing-time on a Saturday night. They were seven. Said the oldest master of them all, glancing about him and counting: "Seven. A round each. Waiter, bring forty-nine whiskies-and-sodas. Then you can go to bed." And I was once—years ago—discussing English history with a young athletic friend. I pointed out that no battles, except civil scraps, had been fought on British soil for centuries. "Yes," he said, "all our fixtures have been away."

GRIMNESS AND OPTIMISM

THE Roumanian helter-skelter is said to have caused a "wave of depression" to run through the country. And there are pulse-feelers who regularly every week register—by a gauge of their own—the state of public opinion in regard to the war. According to them the fluctuations, especially in London, are continual and very appreciable. For myself, I have never been able to appreciate them. I find that British mankind is steadily divided into three main classes, and that nothing but an extremely great and striking event will shift individuals out of one class into another class. The first class consists of optimistic persons—and military officers are well represented in it. These persons have remained optimistic through everything, and for them the war is always going to end in about three months. They do not reason; they feel. The second class consists of grim, obstinate persons; it is the largest class. Speculation as to the end of the war rather bores them. They drive on, and on, and on. They are inclined to ignore both the pros and the cons. They do not reason; they feel. The third class consists of pessimistic persons. They were pessimistic after Mons and through Gallipoli; they were pessimistic when Douaumont was taken by the Germans, and equally pessimistic when it was taken from the Germans. They do not reason; they feel. Their haunting fear is that civilisation is doomed. This fear seems to keep them awake at nights, and they reflect in the dark upon previous disasters to civilisation.

I do not profess history, but I will venture the view that the great historical collapses have been made possible by one thing, namely, the corrupt growth of privilege. This was the real cause, for example, of the Roman collapse, of the Carlovingian collapse, and of the Bourbon collapse. Indeed, history is quite monotonous in this respect. I will also venture the view that the collapses have steadily decreased in intensity. Even the Northern tribes were anxious, indeed pathetically anxious, to preserve Roman institutions. As for the French revolution, it was immediately followed by a system decidedly superior to that which had been destroyed. Now, I do not see any sign of the corrupt extension of privilege—either at present or in recent times. I see the reverse. (True, a vast deal of privilege still survives—but it is a survival.) Nor can I find any reason whatever why civilisation should collapse. The war is terrific compared with previous wars, but our resources are terrific compared with the resources of our ancestors. I take little notice of the boastings of the prominent. That which will count is not what people say, however sincerely, but what lies at the bottom of men's minds. To wit, the instinct of self-preservation. This instinct acts in one way at the beginning of a row; but it acts in another way towards the end of a row. Long before civilisation is really endangered, this master instinct—far stronger even than conceit in the great mass of mankind—will come into play.

Meanwhile a good proof of the prevalence of grimness and optimism is the fullness of London. A director of the leading hotel company told me last week that London had never—during or before the war—been so full as it is to-day. The offices of flat agents have been thronged. I say "thronged." Hotels are turning away old customers because they are literally and physically full—not merely full in the commercial sense. More, they have increased their prices. They were well justified in doing so. For two years of the war the principal expensive hotels kept their prices reduced by about 50 per cent. They ignored the increase of costs. They gave nothing to their shareholders and very little to their debenture-holders. But they saved the hotel habit alive. They are now getting a bit—only a bit—of their own back. The causes of the fullness of London, I am informed by those whose perspicuity I respect, are five: 1, the Somme advance; 2, the destruction of Zeppelins; 3, soldiers' relatives from the Colonies; 4, British soldiers' relatives who come to London to see soldiers off and are kept there because soldiers seldom know when they are going off; 5 (and chiefly), restlessness of people immobilised in the country who cannot abide the country any longer and must have a change. Of course, town houses are closed. But town houses are being opened too. I know of a magnate who has chosen this moment to re-fit a big West End mansion. The regulations of the Ministry of Munitions prevent him from doing anything really noble in the structural line, but he is managing to spend over £2000 in curtains. It is true that the police are very strict about exposed lights! And, you see, Mr. M'Kenna was so ill-advised as to state publicly his opinion that the country would stand the financial strain to the end. Still, the year's expenditure will probably exceed his estimate by over a hundred millions.

11 *November* 1916.

THE APPEAL TO PROVIDENCE

The air raid of Monday reminds me of an incident in the last air raid over the Midlands. A man, whom I will call Mr. Bigsby, was staying in a house inhabited by five women. In the noise and excitement one of the women dropped on to her knees on the hearthrug and began to pray. She appealed to Providence, with great apparent sincerity, for some time, and then she suddenly jumped up, crying: "Oh, dear! This is no good. I'm going to fetch Mr. Bigsby!" and ran out of the room.

2 *December* 1916.

THE ROSENKAVALIER

I WAS at the first performance of *The Rosenkavalier*, and the description in the next day's newspapers of the enthusiastic applause after each act astonished me, journalist though I have been and am. The first act of this enchanting work was received with complete apathy by the stalls, grand circle, and boxes, and not much applause seemed to come from the amphitheatre and gallery—that fount of enthusiasm. The same applies to the second act. After the third act there was the usual ovation, and a sort of explosive shout from upstairs when Sir Thomas Beecham appeared between the curtains. And that was all. It is untrue that *The Rosenkavalier* was liked by the Covent Garden public. It was not. Its success was a success of snobbishness. The first accounts of the opera from Germany, and the fantastic fatuity of the Censor in substituting a sofa for a bed at the beginning of the first act, created a prejudice against the mere book. The following is an overheard italic conversation between two women at a performance:—A: "Well, *what* do you *think* of the Opera?" B: "Well, you see, my dear, I've been trying to dissociate it from the *stage*. I've been trying to listen to the music and to forget the *grossness* of the *libretto*." A: "But it is very *fascinating*, isn't it, really?" B: "No, I don't think it is. Of course it is very difficult to take in one without the other. One ought to wear *blinkers*."

Now the libretto is not gross—neither sensual, nor perverse, nor depraved. It is the simple story—arranged with consummate skill for the operatic stage—of a young man providing a tragedy for an ageing woman by ceasing to love her, and an ecstatic joy for a young woman by beginning to love her. And the main theme is treated with gravity and serene beauty. The trio in which the two women and the young man express themselves together is no more gross than the second act of *Tristan*, and quite as celestial. But thirty years ago *Tristan* was gross in this country. Happily Wagner, a serpent of wisdom, had the wit to keep his princesses from having breakfast in bed, and so was ultimately saved. To return to the point—at all the Strauss performances which I attended, the major part of the audience was either inimical or brutishly indifferent, so much so that one was humiliated—one felt that one ought to apologise to the artistes. (The exception was the amphitheatre and gallery. But then Covent Garden amphitheatre and gallery—together with the floor of the Promenade Concerts—constitute the most genuine musical public in London. The real future of English music lies undeciphered in their hearts. And here is hope.)

TRANSLATING LITERATURE INTO LIFE

Lo, a parable! A certain man, having bought a large, elaborate, and complete manual of carpentry, studied it daily with much diligence and regularity. Now there were no cupboards in his house; his dining-table consisted of an arrangement of orange-boxes, and he had scarcely a chair that was not a menace to the existence of the person who sat down upon it. When asked why he did not set to work, and, by applying the principles of the manual, endeavour to improve the conditions of his life and of the lives of his wife and children, he replied that he was a student, and he plunged more deeply than ever into the manual of carpentry. His friends at length definitely came to the conclusion that, though he was an industrious student, he was also a hopeless fool.

By which I wish to indicate that there is no virtue in study by itself. Study is not an end, but a means. I should blush to write down such a platitude, did I not know by experience that the majority of readers constantly ignore it. The man who pores over a manual of carpentry and does naught else is a fool. But every book is a manual of carpentry, and every man who pores over any book whatever and does naught else with it is deserving of an abusive epithet. What is the object of reading unless something definite comes of it? You would be better advised to play billiards. Where is the sense of reading history if you do not obtain from it a clearer insight into actual politics and render yourself less liable to be duped by the rhetoric of party propaganda? Where is the sense of reading philosophy if your own attitude towards the phenomena of the universe does not become more philosophical? Where is the sense of reading morals unless your own are improved? Where is the sense of reading biography unless it is going to affect what people will say about *you* after your funeral? Where is the sense of reading poetry or fiction unless you see more beauty, more passion, more scope for your sympathy, than you saw before?

If you boldly answer: "I only read for pleasure," then I retort that the man who drinks whisky might with force say: "I only drink whisky for pleasure." And I respectfully request you not to plume yourself on your reading, nor expect to acquire merit thereby. But should you answer: "I do try to translate literature into life," then I will ask you to take down any book at random from your shelves and conduct in your own mind an honest inquiry as to what has been the effect of that particular book on your actual living. If you can put your hand on any subsequent period, or fractional moment, of your life, and say: "I acted more wisely then, I wasn't such a dupe then, I perceived more clearly then, I felt more deeply then, I saw more beauty then, I was kinder then, I was more joyous then, I was happier then—than I should have been if I had not read that book"—if you can honestly say this, then your reading of that book has not been utterly futile. But if you cannot say this, then the chances are that your reading of that book has been utterly futile. The chances are that you have been studying a manual of carpentry while continuing to sit on a three-legged chair and to dine off an orange-box.

You say: "I know all that. But it is not so easy to translate literature into life." And I admit freely that when I think of the time I have wasted in reading masterpieces, I stand aghast. The explanation is simple. Idleness, intellectual sloth, is the explanation. If you were invited to meet a great writer, you would brace yourself to the occasion. You would say to yourself: "I must keep my ears open, and my brain wide-awake, so as to miss nothing." You would tingle with your own bracing of yourself. But you—I mean we—will sit down to a great book as though we were sitting down to a ham sandwich. No sense of personal inferiority in us! No mood of resolve! No tuning up of the intellectual apparatus! But just a casual, easy air, as if saying to the book: "Well, come along, let's have a look at you!" What is the matter with our reading is casualness, languor, preoccupation. We don't give the book a chance. We don't put ourselves at the disposal of the book. It is impossible to read properly without using all one's engine-power. If we are not tired after reading, common sense is not in us. How should one grapple with a superior and not be out of breath?

But even if we read with the whole force of our brain, and do nothing else, common sense is still not in us, while sublime conceit is. For we are assuming that, without further trouble, we can possess, co-ordinate, and assimilate all the ideas and sensations rapidly offered to us by a mind greater than our own. The assumption has only to be stated in order to appear in its monstrous absurdity. Hence it follows that something remains to be done. This something is the act of reflection. Reading without subsequent reflection is ridiculous; it is a proof equally of folly and of vanity. Further, it is a sign of undue self-esteem to suppose that we can grasp the full import of an author's message at a single reading. I would not say that every book worth reading once is worth reading twice over. But I would say that no book of great and established reputation is read till it is read at least twice. You can easily test the truth of this by reading again any classic.

AFTER ASQUITH

In the thick of the crisis I had some opportunities of discovering what has been the moderate conservative City opinion on events. I do not mean the kind of City opinion represented at the meeting of Lord Beresford, which responsible persons seem to regard as a circus over-staffed with clowns. There was some feeling against the Navy. It is held that though warnings did not lack, no preparations whatever had been made at the beginning of the war against the first or minor submarine campaign, and that the success in defeating it was due not to policy but to vigorous inventive resource at the moment. Further, that though again warnings did not lack, no proper preparations had been made at the beginning of the second or major submarine campaign. Both Mr. Runciman and Mr. M'Kenna had the confidence of this moderate City opinion, the former in a very high degree. Lord Grey was esteemed a masterly writer of dispatches and admirable in his dealings with America, but otherwise very faulty. It was held that three times the Foreign Office has lost the chance of winning the war in the Balkans, and that the greatest of all our mistakes in the Balkans have been Foreign Office mistakes. It was held that Lord Grey still stands for the old Foreign Office system, and that no attempt whatever has been made to reform it. The serious City now openly admits that our public school and university education, despite its admirable results in the hunting-field, wants a little altering. In this connection it is worth while to note the accomplishment of our highly educated Ministers in the use of the key-language of Europe. Mr. Balfour speaks no French. Lord Grey speaks a French disgraceful on the lips of a Foreign Secretary. Mr. Asquith's French is excessively bad. Mr. Runciman speaks fair French. Mr. M'Kenna speaks excellent, fluent, conversational (though no colloquial) French. But then Mr. M'Kenna never went to one of our great public schools.

City opinion wanted a change, but it was timorous about Mr. Lloyd George, and it emphatically did not wish to lose Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister. That is certain. Still, the best that these people would say about Mr. Asquith was that he was less objectionable in the post than anybody else. Over an unfresh fourpenny egg at the realistic hour of breakfast, with all the bad news between us in the open newspaper, a prominent banker said gloomily to me: "It is discouraging, though, when for Prime Minister we have to be content with a mere manipulator of men." I replied: "But hasn't a Prime Minister just got to be chiefly a manipulator of men?" The banker saw something in this idea. The fact is, that the real complaint against the new Prime Minister is that he does not manipulate men sufficiently, but rather leaves them alone, with a resulting delay and failure to co-ordinate. The fact is, also, that what the supporters of Mr. Lloyd George, when they praise him, specially lay stress on, is precisely his skill in manipulating men. Of course, they phrase the faculty differently. It is remarkable how even the canniest brains may be at the mercy of a phrase. "Manipulator of men" sounds bad, and the alliteration intensifies its subtle abusiveness.

What the public cannot appreciate too clearly is that Ministers are tired. They are very tired. The best of them were rather tired before the war began. I have never seen Cabinet Ministers at work, but I have seen them in repose. Go to lunch at the house of a Cabinet Minister, and the Minister will come in at a quarter to two, and at half-past two he will be gone again, slipping quietly away with scarcely a word, unless among his guests are foreign strangers necessitating ceremony. Go to dinner, and you are bidden for 8.30, and the meal may with luck begin at 8.45, and even then the Minister will as like as not appear in morning dress, having had no time to change. This kind of thing goes on continuously month after month and year after year, until a severe cold, influenza, or a complete breakdown interrupts the endless sequence. What saves Ministers is the brief week-end—to which certain newspapers invariably refer in sarcastic terms. The charge of lethargy is comic. The principal Ministers are engaged in hard constructive or critical thinking all day for five and a half days a week at least. Some work more than others, and among the former are those with an aptitude for departmental detail. Neither Mr. Lloyd George nor Mr. Balfour has this aptitude. In my view, the unsatisfactoriness of the late Government was due wholly to inevitable fatigue and inevitable coalition, and to nothing else save the universal imperfection of human nature. To expect forthright decisions from a Coalition is childish.

9 *December* 1916.

MORE EFFICIENT HOUSEKEEPING

THE domestic life of the middle classes has now settled down, and the servant question is solved—so far as it will be solved. (Servants, by the way, are ever so slightly easier to get than they were six months ago.) The charwoman has solved it, as she has solved every similar difficulty in the past. But the definition of "charwoman" must be enlarged in order to include any female domestic servant who "sleeps out" in a home of her own. While ordinary domestic servants are rare, these women are not rare. They can be got. There are at the present time in London thousands of homes of which the household income runs up to £400 or £500 a year whence the ordinary domestic servant has vanished. The mistress does most of the work, and she is assisted by a charwoman, and by the children if there are any. One result I can judge for myself: houses are appreciably cleaner, and meals are better cooked and more promptly served. Incidentally, mistresses have acquired a new interest in existence, and they try to take pride in roughened hands and in their evening fatigue. The other principal result is, I am told, a really immense economy. When I was personally interested in housekeeping and kept my own household accounts, twenty years ago, the efficient thing was not to let household expenses exceed 10s. per head per week. It could be done, and with a plenteous menu. That well-known domestic expert, Mrs. C. S. Peel, since turned novelist, once wrote a book with the strange title, *10s. a Head per Week for House-Books*. I am informed, and believe, that to-day it is possible to do for 15s. 6d. what in those days was done for 10s., and that without servants the figure can be considerably reduced. It doubtless can. Necessity is the great miracle-worker.

16 *December* 1916.

THE BARBER

I WAS staying in an agreeable English village. And my hair grew as usual. I asked an acquaintance of mine, a chauffeur, for information about local barbers. He replied that there was a good barber in the county town twelve and a half miles off, and that there was no other. Discouraged, I put the inconvenient matter aside, hoping, as one does of an inconvenient matter, that in some mysterious way time would purge it of its inconvenience. But my hair kept on inexorably growing, growing. No shutting of my eyes, no determination not to be inconvenienced, would stop it. My hair was as irresistible as an avalanche or as the evolution of a society. I foresaw the danger of being mistaken on the high road for a genius, and I spoke to the chauffeur again. He repeated what he had said. "But," I protested, "there are fifteen hundred people living within a couple of miles of this spot. Surely they don't all travel twelve and a half miles to get their hair cut!" He smiled. Oh no! A barber's shop existed in the hinterland of the village. "But it would be quite impossible for you, sir. Quite impossible!" His tone was convinced. An experienced gardener confirmed his judgment with equal conviction. I accepted it. The chasms which separate one human being from another are often unsuspected and terrible. Did the chauffeur submit himself to the village barber? He did not. The gardener did, but not the chauffeur. The chauffeur, I learnt, went to the principal barber's at X, a seaside resort about four miles off. Being a practically uneducated man, incapable even of cutting my own hair, and thus painfully dependent on superiors in skill, I was bound to yield somehow in the end, and I compromised. Travel twelve and a half miles for so simple an affair I would not. But I would travel four. "Couldn't I go to the barber's at X?" I asked. The chauffeur, having reflected, admitted that perhaps I might. And after a few moments he stated that the place was clean, and indeed rather smart.

X is a very select resort, and in part residential. It has a renowned golf-links, many red detached houses with tennis lawns, many habitable bathing-cabins, two frigid and virtuous hotels, and no pier or band. In summer it is alive with the gawky elegance of upper-class Englishwomen, athletic or maternal. But this happened in the middle of winter. The principal barber's was in the broad main street, and the front shop was devoted to tobacco. I passed into the back shop, a very small room. The barber was shaving another customer. He did not greet me, nor show by any sign that my arrival had reached his senses. A small sturdy boy in knickers, with a dirty white apron too large for him, grinned at me amicably. When I asked him: "Is it you who are going to operate on me?" he grinned still more and shook his head. I was relieved. The shabby room, though small, was very cold. A tiny fire burned in the grate; and the grate, in this quite modern back shop, was such as one finds in servants' bedrooms—when servants' bedrooms have any grate at all. Clean white curtains partially screened a chilly French window that gave on to a backyard. The whiteness of these curtains and of three marble wash-basins gave to the room an aspect of cleanliness which had deceived the chauffeur's simplicity. The room was not clean. Thick dust lay on the opaline gas-shades, and the corners were full of cobwebs. A dirty apron and a cap hung on a nail in one corner. In another was a fitment containing about fifteen heavy mugs and shaving-brushes, numbered. The hair-brushes were poor. The floor was of unpolished dirty planks, perhaps deal. There was no sign of any antiseptic apparatus. I cannot say that I was surprised, because in England I already knew of towns of thirty-five to forty thousand inhabitants, not to mention vast metropolitan suburbs, without a single barber's shop that is not slatternly, dirty, and inadequate in everything except the sharpness of the razors. But I was disappointed in the chauffeur, whom I had deemed to be a bit of a connoisseur. The truth was that the chauffeur had imposed himself on me as a grenadier on a nurse girl. However, I now knew that chauffeurs are not necessarily what they seem.

I stood as close as I could with my back to the tiny fire, and glanced through the pages of the *Daily Mirror*. And while I waited I thought of all the barbers in my career. I am interested in barbers. I esteem hair-cutting a very delicate and intimate experience, and one, like going out to dinner, not to be undertaken lightly. I said once to a barber in Guernsey: "That's the first time I've ever been shaved!" I was proud of my sangfroid. He answered grimly: "I thought so, sir." He silenced me; but the fellow had no imagination. I bring the same charge against most New York barbers, who, rendered callous by the harsh and complex splendour of their catacombs, take hold of your head as if it was your foot, or perhaps a detachable wooden sphere. I like Denmark because there some of the barber's shops have a thin ascending jet of water whose summit just caresses the bent chin, which, after shaving, is thus laved without either the repugnant British sponge

or the clumsy splashing practised in France and Italy. French barbers are far better than English. They greet you kindly when you enter their establishments and invariably create in you the illusion that you will not have to wait. I knew well a fashionable barber in Paris, and in his shop I reclined generally between a Count and a Marquis. This prevalence of the nobility amazed and pleased me until one day the barber addressed me as Monsieur le Marquis. He made a peer, but lost a customer. For years I knew very well indeed the sole barber of a small French village. This man was in his excellent shop fourteen hours a day seven days a week. He had one day's holiday every year, Easter Monday, when he went to Paris for the day. He was never ill and always placid. Then came the Weekly Repose Act, and the barber was compelled to close his shop one day a week. He chose Monday, and on Mondays he went fishing. He had been a barber; he was now a king; his gorgeous satisfaction in life impregnated the whole village like ozone. Not every Act of Parliament is ineffective.

Italian barbers are greater than French, both in quality and in numbers. Every Italian village has several big barbers; and in some of the more withdrawn towns, festering in their own history, the barber's seems to be the only industry that is left. On a certain afternoon I walked up and down the short and narrow Via Umberto Primo in that surpassingly monumental port, Civita Vecchia, and there were at least ten seductive barber's shops in the street, and they were all very busy, so that I entered none of them, though boys in white ran out at intervals and begged me to enter. These small boys in white are indispensable to the ceremonial of a good Italian barber's shop. After you are shaved they approach you reverently, bearing a large silver or brass bowl of water high in their raised hands, and you deign to rinse. In that industrial purgatory, Piombino, I found an admirable shop with three such acolytes, brothers, all tiny. The disadvantage of them, however, is grave; when you reflect that they work ninety hours a week your pleasure is spoilt. There are wondrous barbers in Rome, artists who comprehend that a living head is entitled to respect, and whose affectionate scissors create while destroying. Unnecessary to say to these men: "Please remember that the whole of my livelihood and stock-in-trade is between your hands." But the finest artist I know or have known is nevertheless in Paris. His life has the austerity of a monk's. I once saw him in the street; he struck me as out of place there, and he seemed to apologise for having quitted even for an instant his priest-like task. Whenever I visit him he asks me where I last had my hair cut. His criticisms of the previous barber are brief and unanswerable. But once, when I had come from Rome, he murmured, with negligent approval: "*C'est assez bien coupé.*"

The principal barber at X signed to me to take the chair. The chair was very uncomfortable because it was too high in the seat. I mildly commented on this. The barber answered:

"It's not high enough for me as it is. I always have to stoop."

He was a rather tall man.

Abashed, I suggested that a footstool might be provided for customers.

He answered with quiet indifference:

"I believe that they do have them in some places."

He was a decent, sad, disappointed man, aged about thirty-five; and very badly shaved. No vice in him; but probably a touch of mysticism; assuredly a fatalist. I felt a certain sympathy with him, and I asked if business was good. No, it was not. X was nothing of a place. The season was far too short; in fact, it scarcely existed. Constant "improvements" involved high rates—twelve shillings in the pound—and there were too few ratepayers, because most of the houses stood in large gardens. The owners of these gardens enjoyed the "improvements" on the sea-front, which he paid for. His rent was too heavy—fifty pounds a year—and he was rated at thirty-two. Such was his conspectus of X, in which everything was wrong except his chairs—and even they were too low for him. He had been at Z with his uncle. Now Z *was* a town! But he could not set up against his uncle, so he had come to X.

Two young men entered the front shop. The barber immediately left me to attend to them. But as he reached the door between the two shops he startled me by turning round and muttering:

"Excuse me, sir."

Mollified by this unexpected urbanity, I waited cheerfully with my hair wet some time while he discussed at length with the two young men the repairing of a damaged tobacco-pipe. When he came back he parted my hair on the wrong side—sure sign of an inefficient barber. He had been barbering for probably twenty years and had not learnt that a barber ought to notice the disposition of a customer's hair before touching it. He was incapable, but not a bad sort. He took my money with kindly gloom, and wished me an amicable good-day, and I walked up the street away from the principal barber's hurriedly in order to get warm. The man's crass and sublime ignorance of himself was touching. He had not suspected his own incapacity. Above all, he had not guessed that he was the very incarnation of the spirit of British small retail commerce. Soon he and about ten thousand other barbers just like him will be discovering that something is wrong with the barber world, and, full of a grievance against the public, they will try to set it right by combining to raise prices.

SACKING

Do you suppose that the existence of a serious crisis in the war and in the history of civilisation will make the slightest difference to the attitude of the typical departmental servant (who may be yourself or myself) to the new Minister who has been summoned in from extra-departmental wilds? The leading idea in the mind of the typical departmental servant on that ticklish first morning of introductions and hollow politenesses must inevitably be: "My rights! My habits! My susceptibilities!. . . You have everything to learn, while I know all. I can foresee just where you will stumble. You possess authority, but unreal and fleeting. You intrude. I was here long before you, and I shall be here long after you. I am eternal. So look out for yourself." And think of the wary business man, on that same morning, weighing individualities, divining trouble, and keeping his thoughts to himself! The greater his experience of the world, the swifter will be his realisation of the complexity and vastness and traditional momentum of the dangerous machine into which he has plunged with his fragile reputation that he cherishes so. Tell a man of organising genius to co-ordinate and control the huge traffic of a city of seven millions, undisturbed for generations, and he will set about it and do it. But tell him also that he must accomplish the work with a staff not one member of which he is at liberty to sack, and he will laugh at you. The foregoing is an exercise in realism perhaps unpleasant, but not without a useful value if we are to be just to Ministers and to avoid illusions and therefore disillusions.

Sack a Civil Servant! Shove a high Staff Officer back into the struggling ruck! Unthinkable! Why unthinkable? The idea should only be unthinkable to a nation of bureaucrats. (In certain other nations bureaucracy has been sackable in its entirety.) The charwoman of the Ministerial offices can be sacked. The Minister himself can be sacked—notoriously *is* sacked. Everybody is sackable except the intermediate grades of State servants. It may be right or it may not be. I believe that a general suspicion that it is not right is responsible for the half-hearted combing-out arrangements in the Indian Civil. We do move, after all. I do not assert that the question is in the least simple, or that it is the greatest of all questions.

23 *December* 1916.

BICARBONATE OF SODA

For our drive along the savage coast west and north of Mont Estoril, we had a fine pair of horses and a fine coachman, who spoke a little French. He was old, but we never decided how old, and of course we did not ask his age. He had a pocket-book crammed with Portuguese paper money; it was about an inch and a half thick and contained nothing but notes. No doubt some of them were worth only an English penny; nevertheless, they gave him a considerable air of substance. He had dignity, manners, a fine smile; and though his French vocabulary was very limited he used it with an excellent accent. We saw a solitary fisherman fishing with a long rod from a dark rock that overlooked what might fitly have been called a seething cauldron of waters; on that coast there are always breakers and flying spray. We saw a lighthouse-keeper tinkering at his house just like a suburban dweller. Later we saw the lighthouse-keeper's children, a little girl and a less boy, meandering along the exposed road. Both were in rags and the boy was barefooted. After a while we turned the carriage back because I had seen two subjects for sketches. It began to rain. We saw the solitary fisherman walking home forlorn in the rain; and he proved to be a very old man with a face nearly black from exposure and mixed blood, and strange toes sticking out of straw shoes. We saw the two children hurrying home, also forlorn in the rain, and the boy's head and face were all enfolded in the little girl's arm. Then I stopped the carriage to look at a view; we were well sheltered under the raised hood. The coachman got down. He had put on a large lined coat which made him seem suddenly very old and fragile indeed; it took away all his neat slimness. He ferreted under his seat, and produced a linen bag holding a bottle, a glass, and some white powder in a paper, and made himself a potion. This act was too much for my curiosity. He answered the inquisitive question: "Bicarbonate of soda, sir. I have a malady of the stomach." He spoke with extreme and almost despairing sadness. The usually benign climate counted for nothing; his worldly courtesy counted for nothing. He was a sick old man, very sorry for himself. Quite apart from the realisation which it gave of the universality of bicarbonate of soda, this incident of the aged coachman descending from his box in order to mix himself some medicine in the rain on that wild and beautiful coast had importance for me, for somehow it was one of the most impressive and tragic that I remember for years.

THE CASINO BALL

The hotel-resident who took us by storm in the matter of buying tickets for the Shrove Tuesday dance at the Casino answered our objection that we did not dance by the argument that the affair was for charity. And she boasted of the number of tickets she had already sold and the number she would sell before Pancake Day. She mentioned some young women upon whom she had planted tickets, and when we pointed out that as all male residents in all the hotels were middle-aged or old the aforesaid young women would never get partners, she said that she had promised to get native partners for them and that her knowledge of the whole district would enable her to do so. Then she made the thing romantic for us by stating that every purchaser of a ticket had to be vouched for, on account of the Orientalism of the local husbands, who feared that undesirable persons might obtain admittance to the ball. She said that only on Shrove Tuesday were the indigenous ladies permitted to attend a public dance, and she added that some of them might possibly be masked. The tickets said clearly enough that masks would be forbidden; but she insisted that the regulation applied only to men. Hence we went to the dance excited by anticipations of mysterious beauties, fierce husbands, and the chance of undesirable persons. And sure enough when we presented our cards they were taken by old and beflowered heavy swells who inspected them carefully (after the manner of passport officials), searched for our names on long lists of names, and ticked off our names on the list, and then, apparently reassured, invited us with bows and smiles to go forward into Paradise.

The band and the lights were embedded in fresh blossoms. The centre of the floor was quite empty, and round about it seats with rather high backs were arranged in very straight rows, so that they resembled church pews. And the place was as solemn as a church, and as an English church, and the occupants of the pews were almost exclusively naïve English and Scotch girls with their equally naïve mammas. There were no masked native beauties, there were no native beauties at all. There was not the slightest mystery about the origin and past of any of these fair simple creatures in their best hotel frocks. We knew them from A to Z. A number of young and youngish men gradually congregated round the door, and they were without doubt native; but they were acquainted with none of the English, and the ticket-seller was invisible, and no M.C. arrived to perform introductions. Presently a middle-aged English bachelor from one of the hotels came along and respectfully asked one of the girls for the pleasure of a dance, which pleasure she at once gave him. That noble public-spirited fellow had resolved to go through as many of the girls as time would permit, and he manfully did so, and each time he solicited a dance he marvellously contrived by his tone to indicate that it was he and not the lady who was receiving the favour. Soon girls were to be seen dancing together. A honeymoon couple danced dance after dance. . . . Every fifteen minutes seemed like two hours. The girls smiled and chatted courageously, but from those with whom we had achieved some intimacy we learned that furious discontent reigned and that curses were floating off in hundreds to damn the still invisible ticker-seller with her false promises of partners. Assuredly the romance of the country had been for ever dissipated, and in spite of its poetical climate the town was shown up in its true prosaic quality—as being no better than Bournemouth, indeed not so good.

The next day the ticket-seller told us of the great success of the ball and of the fact that she had sold sixty-two tickets and paid in the money to the account of charity. We expressed our surprise that she still lived, and warned her of a widespread demand on the part of naïve British girls for her blood.

DINNER OF THE SYNDICATE OF LITERARY CRITICS, PARIS

A WIDE, long table. Very bare. No ornaments at all. A piano in the room. Soup, fish, fowl, vegetables, beef, ice, wines, mineral water, champagne *frappé*, cheese, dessert, coffee, cognac, cloakroom, tips. Inclusive, 4 francs 75 centimes. There were thirty or thirty-five men and six women. A red-robed lady from the provinces, and something the matter with her corsage behind. A rich young woman who was said to pay for the production of her own play. Also a daughter of a well-known translator, in pale blue; a bad-mannered young Jew (who took my ice with glee) tried to *tutoyer* her. Also an American *poseuse* who talked to Marcel Ballot, of *Le Figaro*, at the end of the table. M. Ballot looked fatigued. M. Henri Duvernois, opposite me, was preoccupied. M. Chantavoine presided. He had a neat sardonic air. Drooping eyelids, and quick, light gestures. No age. The official of the Education Department, who sat by his side and looked fairly old had been his pupil. A friend described M. Chantavoine as "a true Athenian."

After the ice, he made a speech—neat and bright, full of genuine culture, but full also of the usual stuff about sympathy, *chers confrères*, etc., exactly as in England, and punctuated by fervent "Hear, hears!" from the company on the slightest excuse. Also the usual cliché stuff about the surpassing devotion of the Secretary; but the latter may very well have been true in this case; the Secretary, a big, stout man, with the air of a foreman, had an attractive and serious face. Afterwards in the cloakroom, when I offered to assist the President with his overcoat, he energetically refused. "*Jamais*," he said, with decision. "*Toutes mes excuses*," I said ironically. "*Je les accepte*," he said ironically. Lakes of mud outside, but the rain had just ceased. Clouds drove across the sky. A crowd stood waiting for a tramcar at the corner of the Boulevards St. Denis and Sebastopol. Among this crowd was the Athenian President. To contrast this brilliant and erudite man's worldly position with that of the newspaper proprietor in his motor-car, etc., was inevitable. As for me, I took the Underground.

GOING DOWN A COAL-PIT

A SMALL party of us, men and women, went down the Sneyd pit. First of all, we had to dress for the part. Then our matches were taken from us. The cage descended at the maximum speed, 72 feet per second, but there was scarcely any feeling of motion. Dust everywhere, and black dust, and the coquettish whitewash came to an end within a few yards of the main gallery. The running traction cable overhead, with biggish guiding wheels whizzing at intervals, gave an uncanny sensation, which the electric light did not mitigate in the least. We were shown a prize pony. *C'était très touchant.* Perhaps it ought not to have been, but it was. The miners wore ragged vests or were naked to the waist. The "going" was hard. The temperature steadily rose. We were told to make the motion of swallowing in order to relieve the pressure of the air on the ear-drums. The women bore up bravely, each secretly saying to herself: "If the others can stand it, I can." Long ago we had passed the little office where the lamps were tested. At last we reached the coalface, amid a forest of wooden pillars. It was "snapping time" (or as some people who live on the earth's surface might say, "time for a snack"). In the heavy dusk of the mine, the men were seated in a row, eating. Contrast of the white bread against the black hands. The heat was now intense; we all visibly perspired. Except for the calm and cheerful faces of the miners, it was like a foretaste of the seventh hell.

This was a model pit, and the conditions were appalling. The men absolutely insisted, with a certain childish insistence, that I should "get" a bit of coal—part of the visiting ritual, to omit which would offend. So I "got" about a pound. On the previous Wednesday 2000 tons had been got by 1400 men. One thousand seven hundred were employed in and above the pit. On the return journey, the timekeeper, a taciturn, shrewd, fattish man of fifty, had a talk with the mighty managing director and panjandrum about the proposed new situation of a telephone. The timekeeper said curtly: "*I* shall keep it where it is for the present," as if he alone were the deity of the pit. I noticed a noise like that of escaping steam from some conduits, but it was compressed air, not steam, that fizzled. Strange, when the cage whizzed upwards there was a very violent *upward* draught of air that travelled much faster than the cage.

Encased in layers of dirt, we inspected the huge engine-house. One man, seated in a chair, directed everything. The winding wheel was colossal. Little indicators showed the exact position of each cage as it moved up or down the shaft, and another indicator, locked in a glass case like a captive gnome, recorded in ink all the windings and stoppings all day and every day. We were informed with pride that the electric plant and ventilating machinery were actuated by the exhaust steam. Yes, this was a highly up-to-date pit. Luxury was increasing everywhere. The masters had "powerful and luxurious" motor-cars, and splendid residences in unspoilt rural surroundings. The miners had the latest appliances for saving their lives. Something agreeably ironic about this.

SELF-CONTROL

A MAN once went up in my esteem under the following circumstances. He was a very celebrated novelist and a very intimate friend of mine. Speaking of a certain critic whom many creative artists, while admitting that he has frequently been on the side of the angels, refer to with disdain, I said that what I objected to in him was that his necktie was always crooked. When I went upstairs before dinner I noticed that my own necktie was conspicuously crooked. My friend had not mentioned the fact, or even hinted at it. He knew that I was bound to discover it for myself. An example of masterly self-control.

RATIONING PETROL

The creation of the Petrol Rations office in Berkeley Street offers a superlative example of how not to create an office. The petrol multitude—numbering some hundreds, perhaps five—occupied, and occupies, a building of seven floors. Half the floors and half the multitude would certainly have been more efficient. The following is an actual authentic sample of the dialogues which used to take place between aspirant young ladies and the incarnation of the official mind at the Petrol Office: "Have you had any experience?" "I'm afraid I haven't." "Have you any qualifications?" "I'm afraid I haven't." "Will you take twenty-two shillings a week?" "Oh yes." "Well, then, you are engaged." No doubt such labour was held to be cheap. The hours were from 9 to 4, Saturdays included. One can imagine the whites of the eyes of the Tory press if young ladies engaged in a different kind of war-work in the East End were allotted a 9-to-4 day. But, you see, seven hours (with an hour off for luncheon) was the official "Civil Service day." However, there was overtime. The beneficent device of overtime came into operation at 4 p.m., and lady clerks might raise their week to a maximum of seventy hours, at 7d. per hour for overtime. A war bonus of 2s. a week was also added. Later, the wages had to be increased to 25s., but if you had come in at 22s. you had to remain at 22s., even if your job consisted in supervising the work of newcomers at 25s. The inexperienced and the incompetent tumbled over each other for many weeks at Berkeley Street, with consequences profoundly understood by, for instance, country doctors; and the official mind floated blandly immanent in the noisy chaos. As late as October replies to appealing letters written in August were being sternly held back for re-copying, because the date had not been written in the right official place on the notepaper.

6 *January* 1917.

DURAND RUEL

I WENT to see the historic Durand Ruel collection of pictures. The furniture of the abode was startlingly different in quality and taste from the pictures. All the furniture might have been bought at the Bon Marché. The table in the dining-room was covered with the chequered cloth so prevalent in small French households. (In this room was a still-life by Monet.) The doors, however, were all very ably painted in panels. Aged and young domestics moved about. There was a peculiar close smell—no, not peculiar, because it permeates thousands of Paris homes. From the front windows was seen a fine view of St. Lazare station, with whiffs of steam transpiring from the vast edifice. The visitors while I was there included two Englishmen, one very well-dressed, though his socks were behind the times and he had rouged his nostrils; some Americans, and four doll-like Japanese. Certainly the chief languages spoken were American and Japanese. The "great" Renoir (the man and woman in the box of a theatre) hung in the study. It was rather thrilling to see this illustrious work for the first time, as it were, in the flesh. There were Monets of all periods, and the latest period was not the best. A magnificent Cézanne landscape and a few other Cézannes. Manet, Dégas, Sisley, Boudin—all notable. Yes, a collection very limited in scope, but fully worthy of its reputation. Only it wants hanging. It simply hasn't a chance where it is. The place is far too small, and the contrast between the pictures and the furniture altogether far too disconcerting. Still, the pictures exist, and they are a proof that a man can possess marvellous taste in a fine art, while remaining quite insensitive in an applied art.

Afterwards I called on a painter in Montmartre, and learnt to my astonishment that it was precisely he who had painted Durand Ruel's doors. Seventy doors had been ordered, and whenever Durand Ruel found the painter painting anything else, he would say: "But my doors." The painter told me how Durand Ruel had bought Renoirs for twenty years without selling. The "great" Renoir had been sold at Angers for 400 francs, after a commissioning amateur had refused to give Renoir 1500 francs for it. The amateur had said: "Yes, it's very good, of course, but it isn't what I expected from you." (They always talk like that—these commissioning amateurs.) Then Durand Ruel bought it. And now he has refused 125,000 francs for it. In my friend's studio I was told how dealers who specialise in modern pictures really make their money. A "lord" wants to dispose of, say, a Rubens on the quiet. It comes mysteriously to the dealer, who puts it in a private room, and shows it only to a very few favoured young painters, who pronounce upon it. Soon afterwards it disappears for an unknown destination; the dealer is vastly enriched, and he goes on specialising in modern pictures.

FOOTBALL MATCH

THE ticket-takers were strangely polite, for the Five Towns. I thought for a moment that manners were changing there. The Leek players and partisans made a mass of yellow and white. They had a dog, with a curious fringe of hair under his belly, who carried the Leek favours. They had also a trumpet. But the concerted music of inspiration was supplied by the Leek Temperance Silver Prize Band. The musicians wore new uniforms. Their instruments, taken out of costly cases, lay superb on the grass. The big drum had a new strap, and was thus engraved: "*Arte favente nil desperandum.*" In fact this Easter Monday Final was a great occasion. I noticed with apprehension that the Grand Stand showed signs of splitting, and that the various officials and others crouching in the crypt beneath it stood a chance of being crushed under many tons of splintered wood and human bodies. A linesman trotted out on to the ground with a bag of medical and surgical remedies and some cordial. Soon after the beginning of the match a man was hurt; to all appearances he was mortally wounded, but he seemed to recover very quickly. However, after a few minutes he retired to the crypt. In another ten minutes he returned and resumed play. Almost immediately he was hurt again. Then there was true pandemonium; screeching outcries; a battle of shrieking between rival partisans. Girls swore terribly. I heard them swearing. The hurt man lay on his back, ignored by the crowd, which was interested solely in the question whether or not his damage was due to a foul. Amid the enormous din the poles of electric tram-cars could be seen swimming silently across the high horizon made by the hoardings at the end of the ground, and the advertisements of Quakerish chocolates in front of the Grand Stand continued their silent effective appeal. Some, with an eye on the central and supreme figure in the field, suddenly yelled: "Referee's gen [given] it!" The yelling replies were: "I should b——y well think he had gen it." "Dirtiest b—— in all Staffs," etc. The hurt man got up, and the crowd had the amiable idea of cheering him. At half-time the Leek Temperance Silver Prize Band did a walk round in review order, with the trombone and another big instrument in front. Pigeons were let off, and after very slight hesitation departed in the direction of their newspaper offices. Nothing else struck me, except the arguments of a Football Company Director, who was also a Wesleyan and a teetotaller, in favour of football. This gentleman was not blind to the significance of certain phenomena of crowd-psychology which we had witnessed during the afternoon. He would have been a convinced opponent of the institution of football, but for one quality of it: football matches keep people out of public-houses!

PSYCHOLOGY OF RUSSIA

A GREAT deal of the talk in the Press of all countries about pro-Germanism in Russia is nearly as loose as the talk in the Northcliffe Press and its imitators about pro-Germanism in England. According to my conclusions, there is much less pro-Germanism in Russia than is generally supposed. Take the Court, and look at the facts, remembering always that their Majesties are closely united. The Empress exerts a real influence over the Emperor in family affairs. Why should she not? (But the ruling of Russia is a family affair.) When she went to Russia in 1894 to be married she was full of English ideas and ideals, and her early enthusiasm for these things did nothing to lessen the difficulties inherent in her position. Her first business, like the first business of every Empress, was to bear a son. She bore daughters in 1895, 1897, 1899, and 1901. Imagine her profound disappointment! Imagine, also, the effect upon an admittedly very sensitive woman of the tremendous disaster which attended the Imperial Coronation in 1896! Then, in 1904, after ten years (less three months) of marriage, when she had given up hope, she bore a son. It was inevitable that the Tsarevitch should become everything to her,—more than everything! The Tsarevitch fell ill. Rasputin said he could help the Tsarevitch. The Tsarevitch got better. Again, Rasputin being exiled, foretold a disaster to the Court. The Tsarevitch fell ill. Rasputin was recalled. The Tsarevitch got better. The position of Rasputin grew unassailable. The Empress has often been called superstitious. She may be. But how many British mothers, in similar circumstances, would not have displayed an equal superstition?

The justifiable passion of the Empress for the Tsarevitch, coupled with her influence over her husband, changed utterly the orientation of the Court. The Empress regarded all political phenomena from one quite simple point of view. How would they affect the future of the Tsarevitch? If they tended to diminish the power and the glory which were his by inheritance, they were bad. If they tended to conserve that power and glory, they were good. All this strikes me as very natural. The motive ideal of the Empress is not pro-Germanism but pro-Tsarevitchism. Similarly the motive ideal of the majority of the reactionary Russians is obviously not pro-Germanism but pro-Russianism and anti-democratism. In justice these "isms" ought not to be confused. Russia is an anti-democratic country. She necessarily regards England with the reserve with which an anti-democratic country would regard a democratic country. Further, it is, I am convinced, an immense mistake for us to conceive Russia as a country consisting of 90 per cent. of enlightened democratic martyrs and 10 per cent. of reactionary anti-democratic profiteers. Russia is homogeneous, and she has the bureaucracy which her characteristics ensured for her. Russians admire English common sense, but they disdain English ingenuousness. The profoundest intellectual Russian quality is cynicism. This is certain.

As in Britain, so in Russia, common sense is unequally distributed. In some people the triumph of reason over instinct is less complete than in others. The wiser long ago perceived that autocracy was inefficient, and was bound to be so at the present stage of social evolution. The war has made the fact glaring. The intelligent now admit that Russia cannot play her full part in the war unless autocracy accepts the co-operation of democracy. Autocracy, in Russia, as elsewhere, hates the notion of accepting the co-operation of democracy. No doubt it also hates the notion of a German triumph, but it sees in a German defeat the defeat of its own ideals. It is in a very awkward position, a position which must extort the sympathy of the judicial-minded. It is on the fence, hesitant and afraid. Part of the autocratic organism comes down on one side of the fence, part on the other: which must be rather trying for the organism. The military chiefs, for example, are not democratic. Military chiefs seldom are. But the military chiefs had taken on a job, and their professional pride was at stake. They said to the rest of the organism: "We want to win this war, and we will. You are inefficient. Reform yourselves in the only possible way—democratisation." The Duma scene, in which a military chief publicly congratulated a courageous attacker of privilege and reaction, was a marvellous exhibition of the victory of reason over instinct. Stürmer fell. The outlook for efficiency brightened. The Empress, with her maternal obsession of the future prestige of the Tsarevitch, was far away at the moment of crisis, and (it is generally believed) was held up by a railway block. After twenty-four hours Her Majesty got through. The outlook for efficiency darkened. Trepoff, another reactionary, took the place of Stürmer, and to-day Protopopoff, once an extreme Liberal but now an ardent convert to the Empress and the mystic doctrines of pro-Tsarevitchism, is Minister of the Interior, the plain opponent of efficiency in

food distribution, and one of the most unpopular men in Russia.

13 *January* 1917.

RAILWAY ACCIDENT AT MANTES

THERE had already been a breakdown in a tunnel. Officials said that a *rotule* of an *attache* had got broken. It was repaired, and we jolted onwards at, I should say, about 30 or 35 kilometres an hour. Then just after we passed Mantes station there was a really terrific jolting. I knew after four or five jolts that one coach at any rate had left the metals. I was in a sort of large Pulmanesque compartment at the back of the first-class coach, two or three coaches from the engine. The windows broke. The corridor door sailed into the compartment. My stick flew out of the rack. The table smashed itself. I clung hard to the arms of my seat, but fell against an arm-chair in front of me. There was a noise of splintering, and there were various other noises. An old woman lay on the floor crying. I wondered: Shall I remain unharmed until the thing stops? Extreme tension of waiting for the final stoppage! Equilibrium at last, and I was unhurt! I couldn't get out at first. Then someone opened the door. I soothed the old woman. I took my eye-glasses off and put them in their case. I found my hat (under some débris), and my stick. My bag had remained in the rack. I left the train with my belongings, but I had forgotten all about the book I was reading, *L'Eve Future*. This book was all that I lost. Two wounded women were already lying out on the grass at the side of the track. Up above, from the street bordering the cutting, crowds of people were gazing curiously as at a show. One woman asked if she could do anything, and someone said: "A doctor." I walked round to the other side of the train, and a minor official asked me and others to go back. "*Ce n'est pas pour vous commander, mais*. . ." We obeyed. Two coaches lay on their sides. One of them was unwheeled and partly sticking in the ground. No sound came from an overturned second-class coach, though there were people in it. Presently some men began lifting helpless passengers on to cushions which had been laid on the ground. I had no desire of any sort to help. I argued uncompassionately that it was the incompetent railway company's affair. I held my bag and stick and I looked around. I didn't want to see any more wounded nor to be any more *impressioné* than I could help. I had to get to Paris. I certainly didn't observe things very accurately nor take in details well. My recollection of appearances quickly became vague. I remember that the face of one wounded woman was covered with coal-dust. We had shaved a short goods train standing on the next line, and the tender of the train was against our coach. A young American said that it was sticking into our coach, but I don't think that it was. He said that the front part of our coach was entirely telescoped; but it wasn't entirely telescoped. It was, however, all smashed up. My chief impression is of a total wreck brought about in a few seconds.

I walked off up the line towards the station, and met various groups of employees running towards the train. At last two came with a stretcher or ambulance. I passed out of the station into the *place*, and a collector feebly asked me for my ticket, which I didn't give. I went straight to a garage and demanded an auto for Paris. But all autos had been taken off to the scene of the accident. Having been promised one in due course, I waited some time, and then had a wash and took tea. I couldn't help eating and drinking quickly. Then I was told that two Americans wanted an auto. I said that they might share the one promised to me. Agreed. At last my auto came. The price was 100 francs. A Frenchman came up who wanted to get to Paris quickly (he had not been in the accident). I gave him a place for 20 francs, making a mistake in dividing 100 by 4. This detail shows how I really was under my superficial calmness. We went off at 5.50. The two Americans, aunt and nephew, chatted freely the whole time, with no sign of nerves, except that the aunt said she never felt comfortable in an auto. Nothing had happened to her, yet the gun-metal clasp of her handbag was all bent. She discovered this in the auto, and the discovery made a sensation. We reached Paris before 8 o'clock. Travelling by the P.L.M. Railway later in the evening I had a fright each time the crude brakes worked bumpily on stopping at Melun, Bois le Roi, and Fontainebleau.

THE PAPER-SHORTAGE

TOUCHING the Stunt Press, the recent daily manifestoes of the *Times* as to its own circulation do indeed demonstrate the genius which Lord Northcliffe's admirers claim for him—and most of his foes admit. During the whole of the present week the *Times* has openly threatened its readers with reprisals if a certain proportion of them do not cease buying the *Times*. It has said in effect: "We tried 1½d. No result. We now try 2d. If there is still no result we shall go to 3d., and if necessary we "shall not hesitate" to go even to the old price of 7d. At any risk of increasing our profits we mean to reduce our circulation. . . ." Nay, it announces that the public's patriotic duty is to help to reduce the circulation of the *Times*. These manifestoes reach the summit of originality, and also they rank high among stunts.

17 *February* 1917.

THE PATRIOT'S REWARD

SIDELIGHT on the great Voluntary National Service regulation:—A prosperous journalist in the South of England, with a wife and two daughters, went into the army. He also went to the Front. He came back from the Front a physical wreck. The medical authorities quickly decided that he would no longer be of any use to the army, whereupon he was turned out of hospital and left to recover as best he could, of course at his own expense. He now walks with a crutch; but he is a handy man, and prepared to do anything. As a proof of his intelligence and resource I may note that when a doctor told him that country air was absolutely essential for the restoration of nerves, he set out to walk, with his crutch and with two shillings in his pockets, from London to Birmingham. He safely arrived in Birmingham, having kept himself throughout the journey by odd jobs of various kinds. Within the last few days a friend tried to find him a situation worthy of his qualities. This friend was instantly met by the adamantine fact that no firm in the proscribed trades and vocations may now add to its staff any male between the ages of eighteen and sixty-one. Thus the once prosperous journalist, with a wife and two daughters dependent upon him, wrecked and ruined by his own patriotism, is forced, if he is to live, into the humiliations of the Labour Exchange, with a glorious chance of snatching twenty-five shillings a week out of the national machine. I wonder whether Mr. Neville Chamberlain, in framing his wonderful contrivance for the total destruction of industrial liberty, ever thought of such a case as I have truthfully described? And I wonder whether, if he did think of such a case, he deliberately decided that discharged soldiers from the Front deserved no better treatment than the ruck of us?

17 *March* 1917.

STYLE

"The King and Queen were present at a first night in a London theatre last evening for the initial time in their reign." I take this from the dramatic criticism, not of a provincial, but of a London daily. It is quite a first-rate example of bad English. The culprit, whose name is well known to myself and other members of the London literary police force, evidently thought that it would be inelegant to use the same word twice in two lines; so he substituted "initial" for "first" in the second line. The affair must have cost him considerable cerebration, and no doubt he was rather pleased with the elegance of the result. Perhaps he had never reflected that words express ideas, and that therefore, if a precise idea recurs, the precise word for that idea ought to recur. The idea expressed by the word "first" is precise enough, and no other English word means what "first" means. Certainly "initial" does not mean "first." Still, the man meant well. His misfortune was that, having picked up a good notion without examining it, he imagined that repetition was inelegant in itself. Repetition is only wrong when it is unintentional, and when, being horrid to the ear, it is reasonably and honestly avoidable. On the other hand, repetition, used with tact and courage, may achieve not merely elegance but positive brilliance. What a phrase—"the initial time"!

FINISHING BOOKS

To a novelist who specialises in cases of crime I happened to mention Albert Bataille's *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines* (18 vols. Paris, 1881-98). She became enthusiastic about them, and said they were the finest example of criminal reporting in the world. So they are. There is not a star reporter in England or America who could study Bataille's methods without profit. As for novelists, all novelists ought to read reports of trials. Many novelists do. Better than anything else in print that I know of, honest detailed reports of trials teach you how people actually live their daily lives. My friend mentioned two trials as being of special interest. I had not read them. I was then reading, in bed at nights, Stendhal's *Rome, Florence, Naples*, one of the finest studies of manners in existence—for those who have understood Stendhal's unique mind. That night I put Stendhal aside for Albert Bataille, and for several nights I read and re-read trials. It might have been the end of Stendhal's book for me if *Rome, Florence, Naples*, were not a really first-rate work. A test of a first-rate work, and a test of your sincerity in calling it a first-rate work, is that you finish it. All of us can remember instances of books which we have been enthusiastic about, and which we have never finished. The enthusiasm must have been in some degree factitious—probably induced by exterior suggestion. Such books are, for us, either dull or tiresome. All dull books are bad, and all tiresome books are either bad or maladroit or both. If we have "stuck" in a book, or if we have simply forgotten to go on with it, we ought to have the courage of our personal experience, and never be enthusiastic about that book again. For us there is something vitally wrong about that book, whatever its reputation. So doing, we should perform a useful sanitary function in literature. Many dead books remain unburied and offend the air simply because we dishonestly pretend that they are alive and kicking. Make no mistake. I duly finished the Stendhal. I finished it with keen regret. I lingered over the last pages, hating to reach the last page of all. And I comforted myself with the thought: "Well, in three years I shall have forgotten it enough to be able to read it again." This is just about the highest praise that can be given to a book.

POLITICS AND MORALS

MUCH talking with politicians, amateur and professional, and with political journalists. A strange delusion seems to be very rife among such people—namely, that characters are in the main divided into white and black, and that those who think as you think are white, and those who don't think as you think are black. Yet it is absolutely platitudinous to point out that the great majority of characters are neither white nor black, but grey. To attempt to divide mankind into white sheep and black sheep, or into sheep and goats, is infantile. It is made ridiculous by the personal experience of nearly everybody. Nor can one assert that a special honesty or dishonesty is connected with any brand of political opinion. Nevertheless, I am constantly meeting men otherwise apparently intelligent, sometimes very intelligent, whose whole attitude towards politics is falsified by this truly singular delusion. All their conversation implies that the best and the straightest men are on their side and the crookedest and least competent men are on the opposing side. Of course they make exceptions, but in making exceptions they only emphasise their delusion. Thus they will say of an opponent: "*He's* an honest chap," thereby indicating that in their opinion the rest emphatically are not. To be thus deluded surely proves that one has fundamentally failed to see human nature as it is, and therefore that one's judgment in affairs is not worth more than about twopence halfpenny. Nevertheless, some victims of the delusion will go about to lecture the whole world, and are indeed taken quite seriously by very large sections of the community. I admit that they may have nearly all the qualifications of a first-rate publicist; they lack merely the chief qualification—impartial common sense.

The cure for the delusion is office. Even if you are but a member of Parliament you generally soon begin to lose it, because you have to mix with the individuals whom you have been classifying as monsters of iniquity, ineptitude, and incompetence. You are bound to realise that the bulk of them are curiously like yourself and your friends, neither better nor worse. Many political journalists attain high position without freeing themselves of the delusion. A few politicians of marked integrity and enormous experience never get rid of it. These persons are dangerous to the state and tedious in drawing-rooms. And they are almost invariably conceited. If you told them that one set of political opinions is just about as "good" as the other—that one makes for progress while the other makes for stability, both aims being perfectly laudable—they would freeze you with a righteous disdain, and in their hearts accuse you of wanting the best of both worlds. There is only one world.

FLAG-DAYS

I DOUBT whether recent gestures of the British Government have done much to diminish the sinister effect in Petrograd of Northcliffe articles and Ministerial utterances in favour of the ex-Tsar and all the too-chivalrous silences in favour of the ex-Tsaritsa. In Petrograd England is regarded as loving royalism for its own august sake. The impression is, of course, false of the nation as a whole, but true of some influential coteries in London. There is shortly to be another Russian flag-day. Now under the Russian *régime* the executive *personnel* of the Russian flag-day in London was the last word of social elegance. It will be interesting to see whether the old West End enthusiasm has survived the Revolution. From what I have heard it will survive, if it does survive, with difficulty; and I foresee a diminution of zeal on the part of those ladies without whose names no London war-charity can be called truly *chic*. Hence, for myself, I will buy a dozen flags on the Russian day.

At the same time, my objection to flag-days is increasing. There can be no doubt that the institution of the flag-day is abused. I had hoped that after the Queen's flag-day last week we should have repose in Piccadilly, but when I returned to town on Wednesday there was yet another. One is conscious of an irrational and unchristian resentment against the beautiful and very modish vendors, who are quite innocent and indeed deserve sympathy and laudation. I have found a way of nullifying flag-days. It is quite simple, and consists in walking slowly past the flag-sellers, with a kind paternal or fraternal smile and a dignified deprecatory wave of the hand. Many men assert that this feat cannot be done. It can, but naturally it needs a little practice in order to attain perfection. I have known it fail only once. While I was in the very act, the flag-seller said plaintively to me: "I suppose you don't want to buy a flag." The supposition was so correct, displayed such deep psychological insight, that I felt obliged to falsify it.

12 *May* 1917.

PRIVILEGE OF DOGMA

THE ending in the House of Lords of the great case of Bowman *v.* The Secular Society shows that the Lord Chancellor has yet to discover that it is not illegal in this country to seek to disprove the tenets of Christian dogma. Somebody long ago made a bequest to the Secular Society, which is anti-Supernatural and pro-Freedom of Enquiry. The next-of-kin, actuated no doubt by the highest patriotic and unselfish motives, contested the validity of the bequest on the ground that it was criminal to attack the Christian religion, and that a court of law would not assist in the promotion of such objects as those of the Secular Society. The Secular Society won its case in the High Court and also in the Appeal Court, but the next-of-kin, having faith in the House of Lords, went higher. The Lord Chancellor in his judgment justified their faith and their pertinacity; but, happily, Lords Buckmaster, Dunedin, Parker, and Sumner all disagreed with the sublime head of the Judicature, and the next-of-kin were finally beaten by four against one. Lord Buckmaster, in a bland and witty judgment, pointed out that if the Lord Chancellor's theory held good, the result would be that editors and publishers would be able to deny payment to contributors and authors whom they had expressly employed to write philosophical and scientific articles or books, if it could be decided that the work was anti-Christian; while no one could be compelled to pay for any such books or articles when purchased. Enchanting prospect—to step into Hatchard's, seize for your own Professor Bury's edition of Gibbon, and in answer to a request for payment, reply: "Shan't! This book is a crime, and you're an accessory after the fact; and if you make any more fuss I shall come back with a policeman." Bowman *v.* The Secular Society has dragged on nearly as long as the war. It must have cost thousands of pounds—perhaps more than the original bequest. But it has shown what kind of mentality can rise to the highest judicial place in the realm; and, incidentally, it permits the Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association and the Positivist Society to continue in being. Progress persists!

19 *May* 1917.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY

The Royal Academy continues to provide grandiose evidence in support of its conviction that the flight of time is an illusion. Nobody could divine from the display of automobiles in its quadrangle on a fine afternoon that petrol for pleasure has been prohibited. You penetrate within the august building, and there is not a symptom of an entertainment-tax ticket. The gross charge for admission is still one shilling. Determined to suppress every sign of change, the Academy pays the tax itself and says no word. A noble gesture. In the galleries I could perceive not the slightest indication of modernity. I doubt if the Hanging Committee have chosen a single picture which for reasons of technique might not have been painted twenty years ago. One of the places of honour is given to Mr. Frank Salisbury's immortalisation of a young naval hero. It has to be seen to be believed. Mr. Glyn Philpot's portrait of an apache is a very dignified work. Sir William Orpen has several portraits, of which the best is Mr. Winston Churchill—an extremely accomplished piece of representational art, telling you in the most vivid and polished language all that you already knew. Some years ago Sir William Orpen discovered that the inside of a man's hat is full of episodic interest. He may, indeed, be said to be the first modern painter to observe that a man's hat has a concave as well as a convex aspect. He has not yet rallied from the obsession of this discovery. In the mass R.A. fashionable portraits are outshone by the fashionable portraits at the Grosvenor Gallery, where Mr. M'Evoy, but yesterday unknown, dominates the scene. I doubt whether any painter ever exhibited so many portraits in a general portrait show as Mr. M'Evoy exhibits at the Grosvenor Gallery. His translation of Mrs. M'Claren is perhaps the most dazzling graphic feat of the kind in the present age. It is not, however, really interesting. Mr. M'Evoy's water-colours—in the days when people used shamelessly to ask, "Who is M'Evoy?"—used to attract me. Then I suspected that he had fallen into the habit of putting them under the tap before framing them. The suspicion was confirmed. Then he produced an oil-painting of a boy in a green suit, and it was too clever. And now he has become the prince of fashionable portrait-painters.

26 *May* 1917.

GAMING

I WENT into the little Casino. Only one table: roulette. The croupier tried to cheat me after my first throw, but failed. In changing the counters for money afterwards the money-changer tried to cheat me, but failed. It was astonishing to see, after so long an interval, people still believing in systems, as in a religion, and methodically marking down all the winning numbers. No systematist has ever explained to me how, according to him, the result of any previous throw can influence the result of any future throw. It would perhaps be too much to expect a systematist to see that the operation of the maximum must upset all conceivable systems, and that herein precisely is the reason why casino proprietors always insist on maxima. But a systematist out of his common knowledge of the nature of things ought surely to be able to perceive that if an infallible system existed or could exist it would have shut up all roulette houses long ago. An acquaintance of mine, a much-travelled novelist and journalist who ought to have known better, once assured me that there were a few inobtrusive men and women at Monte Carlo who had infallible systems and who always won. "Then why do not the authorities turn them out?" I asked. He replied: "Obviously because of the advertisement. They are a standing advertisement for the tables." When I further inquired why these possessors of secret systems did not make a fortune and retire, the answer was that the systems only permitted of small gains. If no history of human credulity has yet been written, the disease ought to be monographed like claustrophobia or alcoholism. I once played regularly at Monte Carlo for several hours a day. Were I to say that I did this in order to enter fully, for professional literary purposes, into the sensation of the gambler, I should not be believed. (If no history of human *in*credulity has yet been written, etc.) I emerged from the ordeal with 600 francs gain. I was writing a series of articles for *T.P.'s Weekly* at the time, and I recounted my experiences and mentioned that I had won 600 francs. The editor struck this out. He said that it was not permissible for a contributor to reveal that he had made a profit out of the gaming-tables at Monte Carlo; the moral effect on readers would be too bad. For this same paper, in another article, I once wrote that sometimes at home Lord Tennyson behaved "like a pompous ass." The phrase was strong; but I doubt not that it was a protest against the tone of one of the deceitful little biographies of Lord Tennyson that somehow get themselves issued at intervals. The editor cut out the phrase. He said it was impossible to say in any respectable literary weekly that Tennyson ever under any circumstances behaved like a pompous ass, and that if he had passed the phrase he would have received thousands of angry complaints and lost circulation.

A JUDGMENT

WHILE I was painting on the beach to-day a Portuguese workman came up and watched. French being better understood than English in Portugal, I asked him if he spoke French. "*Un poc*," he replied, and it was *un poc*. Evidently he took me for a Frenchman. He told me that he had fought in the war, and gave the names of several places in a very curious pronunciation, but I seemed to recognise the words "Chapelle" and "Laventie." I asked:

"*Etiez-vous près des Anglais?*"

"*Oui. Français bons pour la guerra. Anglais non bons, non bons. Anglais très malhonnêtes.*"

"*Etiez-vous jamais près des Français.*"

"*Non. Jamais. Français très bons. Anglais non bons.*"

Perhaps part of the explanation was that for a time he had been, as he informed me, orderly to a Portuguese general.

PLATE-BREAKING

THE phenomena of the Whitsuntide period and thereabouts may be divided into the superficial and the opposite. A shiver ran through every military unit on the southern part of the East Coast when it became known that enemy aeroplanes had got to Folkestone and the other place (still unnameable!) from the north without being officially detected *en route*. A searching and drastic inquiry was expected, but no detailed inquiry has made itself felt. I may say that nobody was less surprised at the failure to detect and warn than those members of the Anti-Aircraft Service who know both the land and the sea machinery of the organisation, and have ineffectually criticised it. The bravest feat in connection with this sanguinary raid was that of the *Times* on Monday morning, when, with truly astounding courage it implied that it had never believed in Zeppelins, and had always advised concentration upon measures to counteract aeroplanes. In ten lines the *Times* practically effaced the memory of the grand gesture of Lord Beresford in publicly breaking a plate at a Savoy banquet because it happened to have been made in Germany. Lord Beresford, of course, found eager patriotic imitators at the banquet. No doubt he and they forgot, in the ardour of the moment, that the imported German plates were not the property of the smashers, and that, after all, they had been duly paid for by British exports; also that wanton destruction of useful articles involves for their replacement the diversion of goods and services from the war. It probably never occurred to these gentlemen that they were making themselves rather more ridiculous even than the related nobles—one a duke and the other an earl—who utilised an important debate in the House of Lords for the ventilation of a family brawl. All such phenomena may be accounted superficial. The great inner phenomenon of the period is that Mr. Lloyd George, to use a phrase sanctified by Dr. Dillon, is "seeking a new orientation."

2 *June* 1917.

THE TRUTH ABOUT REVOLUTIONS

VERBIAGE, really remarkable in its unconvincingness, has been sent over during the week by correspondents on the Western Front, probably under official inspiration. But nothing about the Western Front can equal in absurdity some of the stuff that gets printed concerning Russia, and the stuff that gets printed concerning Russia is much more sagacious than the stuff that gets talked concerning Russia—especially in serious conservative circles, where revolutions are not understood. There is a large ingenuous body of British opinion that evidently expected the Russian revolution to be carried through, finished, labelled, and put on the shelf with the French revolution in a week or ten days—a fortnight at the most. It is difficult, without research, to say exactly how long the French revolution lasted. Taine annihilates the perception of time in the reader; his method is the static, and all the phenomena of French history from early feudalism to the corruption of the Empire seem to be co-existent. From Carlyle, on the contrary, one receives the impression that the French revolution went on revolving for forty years or so. Perhaps four years would be about the mark. The Russian revolution, a far vaster and less coherent thing than the French, has still, therefore, some years to run before it can fairly be called dilatory by historical standards. Again, people solemnly ask you: "What is the *truth* about Russia?" It would be nearly as reasonable to ask what is the truth about that invisible God who of late apparently has been so often seen. Nobody knows the truth about the Russian revolution. The hundred best informed persons in Europe do not, between them, know the hundredth part of the truth about it. The truth about it could not be contained in a work of the dimensions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. But surely the fact is obvious that, whatever the situation may now be in its entirety, it is an improvement on the situation which obtained before the revolution. Nobody alive has the slightest trustworthy idea whether the war or the revolution will end first. I have had private letters from two recognised non-journalistic authorities on Russia, one in Petrograd, the other in France. Both are hopeful and optimistic. Both count upon the common sense which is admittedly fundamental in the Russian character. For myself I count upon the instinct for self-preservation which is fundamental in all characters. Russians are very sensitive to foreign opinion, and our chief export to Russia should be faith in Russia. The one article which Russians do not require from us is patronage. Of course, we are the world's great protagonists of freedom and all that—though the Defence of the Realm Act, which abolished Magna Carta and Habeas Corpus, was passed by a democratic Commons without having been even read—but we are not just now such high experts in liberty that we can properly treat the Russian revolutionists as children.

9 *June* 1917.

A GENERAL

TRUE stories against our generals, and especially against our inspecting generals, are not rare, but the following is perhaps worth adding to the collection. I guarantee its authenticity. A general was inspecting a battery, and the major in command was explaining that the scale on the ranging-drums needed altering to suit the new guns, as the latter had a higher muzzle-velocity than the old guns previously used by the battery. The general asked: "What is the muzzle-velocity of the new gun?" The major gave the answer. The general said: "Yes, but at what range?"

4 *August* 1917.

MINISTERIAL CANDOUR

IT is perhaps one proof of Lord Milner's true granitic greatness that he continues to stick in the throat of the vast majority of the nation. The things said of him in the Midlands and the North could not possibly be printed without afflicting if not infuriating the Censor. Lord Milner recently took a holiday with his chief. Enterprise as simple as it was natural! And yet the whole country is alarmed thereby. And no doubt rightly. For it is certain that the ex-pro-Boer and the iron hero of South Africa did not tramp over Cader Idris together in order to pick gentians. If we have a strong, silent man—and we have—that man is Lord Milner. He may be hated, but his character is respected. It is respected, for example, by the organising heads of the big departments where the war work is really done. These men, though they may differ violently from him in political principles, prefer him to any other member of the War Cabinet. So much is beyond question. In an age of self-advertisement he despises self-advertisement. I think he is the sole Minister who does not subscribe to Romeike or Durrant, and the sole Minister who does not conscientiously read his "papers" before breakfast,—the said papers being, of course, the newspapers. He does not care if he is never mentioned—so long as his principles make headway. My suspicion is that he pushes silence too far. That he admires Prussia as warmly as *The Morning Post* admires Prussia is not to be denied. How indeed should it be otherwise, having regard to his birth, education, and early environment? But there are ways of admiring Prussia, and even a Cabinet Minister, while keeping his patriotism pure, may admire Prussia too much.

All Ministers whom destiny has made ridiculous should be subjected to a test. Events in South Africa have long since made Lord Milner extremely ridiculous. He was wrong, utterly and grossly wrong. Can he, does he, see that he was wrong? Or has he failed yet to comprehend the vastness of his ineptitude? He ought to be subjected to the test of giving his mature verdict on the closed chapter of history which he helped to write. If he would confess in the forum that he had erred, by prejudice or blindness, he might ameliorate his position in the great heart of the people, which, oftener than some folk imagine, does really beat true. If, on the other hand, he would positively say: "I am unconverted," then we should know, even more surely than we do, where we are, and war to the knife might properly ensue. But Ministers are a queer tribe. They willingly admit that they owe their Sundays or their golf or their silken dalliance to the nation, but it does not seem to occur to even the most honest of them that more than anything else they owe candour to the nation.

29 *September* 1917.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE THEATRE?

Some serious adherents of the stage in Liverpool appear to be rather concerned about what is called the "American invasion." I have heard it stated that "the great majority" of London theatres are at present occupied by American plays. This simply is not the fact, and a study of the theatrical advertisements of the London dailies will show that it is not the fact. The majority—to say nothing of the great majority—of London theatres are not occupied by American plays. Only a minority are so occupied. I do not feel in the least disturbed by the American invasion. I might be somewhat disturbed if no English plays were produced in New York. But it is well known that English plays, and many English plays, are produced in New York. The exchange can only be advantageous. Moreover, if American plays are produced in London, there can be but one reason for it—the public likes these American plays. Why should not the public have what it likes? If the public showed a preference for Timbuctoo plays I should not complain. I should merely try to understand what was the quality in Timbuctoo plays that appealed to the British public. If half a dozen American plays succeed simultaneously in London there must be some rational explanation of the phenomenon. American plays are in the main even more sentimental than English plays, and the explanation of their success probably lies in this—that the sentimentality is done in a more workmanlike and thorough manner than English playwrights have yet achieved. Personally I have no use whatever for excessive sugar on the stage—I prefer salt—but I recognise that sugar can be whole-heartedly or half-heartedly manipulated in a play. Further, American dramatists seem to me to take more trouble than British dramatists in the fabrication of an attractive, outwardly novel, and easily graspable theme. You know where you are in an American play. In sum, it is conceivable that English dramatists may have something to learn from American dramatists in the concoction of a sentimental play. Horrid thought, of course; but one not to be lightly dismissed. At any rate I do not and cannot believe the legend, so sedulously spread in the Press, that the British public goes to see certain plays against its will because British managers refuse to give it better stuff. Such a notion is totally absurd. Everybody connected with the theatre knows that it is as easy to make an unthirsty horse drink as to make the public pay to witness plays against its will. If profit accrues from the production of American plays or any other plays in England, you may be absolutely sure that the public has enjoyed those plays.

Another fallacy calls for exposure. Namely, that there are lots of really good English plays written which cannot get a hearing in England because managers are so terribly commercial-minded. Nothing of the kind. The number of really good plays hopelessly awaiting performance is infinitesimal. Really good plays or even fairly good plays, or even plays with a particle of promise in them, are very seldom written by unknown aspirants in this country. Plenty of promising novels are written; scarcely any promising plays. I know, because I am connected with the management of the Lyric Opera House, Hammersmith, which advertised its urgent desire to obtain promising plays, which has received and read hundreds of plays, and which has not found three possible ones in a year. The piles of pure trash that postmen have delivered at Hammersmith during the last eight months appal the imagination. To my mind the chief answer to the question, "What is wrong with the theatre?" is plain enough. The root of the evil is not in the innocent public. Nor is it in the commercial-minded managers, who, by the way, are not a whit more commercial-minded than the publishers of books. It is in the extreme and notorious paucity of interesting plays. Dramatists must, in the logical sequence of things, precede actors, managers, producers, scenic artists, and public. The first requisite of the theatre is a play. And when interesting plays begin to be written in appreciable numbers, the theatre will begin to improve. Not before.

15 *September* 1919.

THE FARMER'S ATTITUDE

I HAD a scientific and enthusiastic farmer and breeder, a Radical friend of mine, to dinner last Saturday night. He said: "Were you at —— Market to-day?" I said: "You know I wasn't." He said: "Well, you ought to have been. It was well worth seeing. There were something over a hundred pigs. On Monday pigs were selling at 22s. a score live weight. To-day the Food Control people came into the market, and took all the pigs, weighed them, and marked their prices on the basis of the new maximum of 18s. a score. Auctions were suspended. The butchers appointed a committee to settle which butcher should buy which pig, and local butchers had a preference. Those farmers who could afford it walked their pigs home again. There will be practically no pigs in —— Market next Saturday, because pigs can't be sold at 18s. a score live weight without loss." I said: "But you people can't keep your pigs for ever. You're bound to sell sooner or later even at a loss." He said: "My dear fellow, every day this week I shall have people pestering me to sell pigs to them at over the maximum price. Quite easy. For instance, there's no maximum on calves, and I can sell half a dozen pigs and a couple of calves in one lot at a lump sum price. And I'm free to sell pigs for breeding purposes. If a man tells me he wants pigs for breeding purposes I'm not going to hold a court of inquiry about his plans. I have to live. And I can't live out of bullocks, for instance. Every bullock I sell means a dead loss to me of at least £8. Of course the price of foodstuffs has been reduced, but not enough. Also foodstuffs are constantly being sold at over the maximum. I tell you that most people who have taken steps to *increase* production have been caught. Look at flax. We were urged to grow flax—urged! Risky crop. We didn't know much about it. Just as it was ripening the Government commandeered the lot, at a price that left farmers decidedly out of pocket." I said: "What will be the result of all this?" He said: "You will see what will be the result next year. And it will be interesting then to listen to you collectivist chaps. Production is being dried up, that's what's occurring. And if you think that farmers haven't got a real grievance and aren't really resentful—at any rate in this district, where it happens that nobody has made a cent on corn crops—well, you never were more mistaken in your life." The foregoing pretends to be nothing but an accurate précis of a conversation.

17 *November* 1917.

FREEDOM OF DISCUSSION

For forty years, ever since the pure milk of Toryism was first poured into my very youthful mind, I have continually heard that the House of Commons was degenerating. But I had never believed it until the *régime* of coalitions began. I now fully believe it. Indeed, I am inclined to think that the House of Commons is not only degenerate but dead, though a few interested people for their own purposes strive ingeniously to maintain the illusion that the corpse still breathes. No more dramatic illustration of the nonentity of the House of Commons could be desired than the manner in which the offensive censorship of pamphlets has been withdrawn. True, the thing really has been withdrawn; the authorities really have climbed down; and the victory is quite remarkable. But the victory ought to have been won openly on the floor of the House, not bargained out by secret negotiations in which the House was disdainfully and completely ignored. The blow to the prestige of Parliament is severe. And after the craven behaviour of the House in this and other kindred matters, I am not prepared to say that the blow was undeserved. The episode is the more extraordinary in view of the fact that the moral power of the official leader of the Opposition is admittedly enormous.

In justice to legislators generally I ought to add that one or two of them have indeed spoken with force in this matter. The following extract from a speech will touch the hearts of all lovers of common sense: "The mandate seems to have gone forth to the sovereign people of this country that they must be silent while those things are being done by their Government which most vitally concern their well-being, their happiness, and their lives. To-day and for weeks past honest and law-abiding citizens of this country are being terrorised and outraged in their rights by those sworn to uphold the laws and protect the rights of the people. I have in my possession numerous affidavits establishing the fact that . . . private residences are being invaded, loyal citizens of undoubted integrity and probity arrested and cross-examined, and the most sacred constitutional rights violated. It appears to be the purpose of those conducting this campaign to throw the country into a state of terror, to coerce public opinion, to stifle criticism, and to suppress discussion of the great issues involved in the war. I think all men recognise that in time of war the citizen must surrender some rights for the common good which he is entitled to enjoy in time of peace. But, sir, the right to control their own Government according to constitutional forms is not one of the rights that the citizens of this country are called upon to surrender in time of war. Rather in time of war the citizen must be more alert to the preservation of his right to control his Government. He must beware of those precedents in support of arbitrary action by administrative officials." And so on, to: "If the people are to carry on this great war, if public opinion is to be enlightened and intelligent, there must be free discussion." Let no reader rush to Hansard in order to study at length this allocution in Mr. Asquith's best manner. It was uttered, not in the House of Commons, but in the United States Senate, and I have taken it from the official *Congressional Record*.

Meanwhile, as is natural, the executive of the Irish Government copies the great exemplar in London. By way of soothing Sinn Fein and cutting the ground from under the Spanish feet of Edmund de Valera, M.P., the Dublin police have raided the shops of a few aged persons who sold Sinn Fein postcards and have been selling them unmolested for months. Now nothing could be cruder, more infantile, and less "frightful" than a Sinn Fein postcard. I once examined the stock of one of these little shops with a view to collecting some really rebellious literature, but the show was so poor that I could not bring myself to spend a single halfpenny on it. Further, twelve small Dublin children have been summoned to the police-court and solemnly fined one shilling apiece—for collecting money towards a fund to provide for the dependants of rebels killed in Easter week!

1 *December* 1917.

A very pleasing example of the Government control of opinion has been brought to my notice. A man was going to the United States, and before he started his baggage was duly examined according to the principles of the official mind. The examiner, sequestrating certain printed matter, said to the traveller: "You are not permitted to take these papers with you

to New York." "But," cried the traveller, "they are the recent issues of *The New Republic* which I've just received from New York." Said the examiner: "I don't know anything about that. You can't take them." And the traveller did not take them.

15 *December* 1917.

And, speaking of opinion, there has been a good deal of control of opinion in the matter of Lord Lansdowne's letter. Not only was French Press opinion about the letter grossly misrepresented in the London Press, but London Press opinion was grossly misrepresented in the French Press—until, of course, the posts had had time to overtake the cables. The *Manchester Guardian* resentfully asks why Reuter failed to telegraph a less inaccurate account. (Incidentally, let me say that not Reuter alone among telegraphists was to blame.) This question seems to me to be a very odd question to come from a newspaper. Reuter is the wholesaler. The *Manchester Guardian* is the retailer who sells goods to the public. The effect would be surprising if a shop put up a notice in its windows as follows: "The goods which we sold to you last week were not what they pretended to be. Why?" Even the most benign and fatuous public would retort that if the retailer did not know why, it was his business to find out why, and to state why, and finally to arrive at an understanding with the wholesaler. I bring no accusation against Reuter, but it is obvious that the fault was either Reuter's or the Censor's; and it is equally obvious that daily papers, being customers buying goods from Reuter for commercial purposes, are well entitled to make an effective fuss when the goods supplied have for any reason been proved to be unsatisfactory. No telegraphic agency can continue to exist without the support of daily papers, and I have never been able to understand the habit which daily papers have of referring to telegraphic agencies as though they were almighty and inscrutable gods. It is notorious that for decades past public opinion in the Colonies and Dependencies has been seriously influenced by the political prejudices of telegraphic agencies; but colonial and similar newspapers are far less powerful to protect themselves, assuming that they wanted to protect themselves, than the earthquaking organs of this isle. The *Manchester Guardian* can easily obtain and print the answer to its own question; and if it has not done so, I suggest, as one of its most faithful subscribers, that it ought to do so immediately.

15 *December* 1917.

WAGNER AFTER THE WAR

OVER thirty years ago I first heard *Die Meistersinger*, in Italian, at Covent Garden. I stood on tiptoe at the back of the farthest gallery, the price of which, I think, was half a crown. I could make nothing whatever of the affair; but I was very proud and even conceited the next day, for it was my first Wagner performance. The house was packed in every part then. And it was packed in every part last night, when I heard the opera in English for the first time. Covent Garden is very English; saturated with English tradition. It is vast and shabby, and the most beautiful theatrical interior in London —far more beautiful than the Scala at Milan, or the Paris Opera House, or the Costanzi at Rome, but surpassed at Florence in both shabbiness and beauty. Nearly the whole of the audience was seated before the lights were turned down; and when they were turned down the place became magical. The immense arch separating the amphitheatre from the body of the auditorium crossed the immense dim gilded curves of the tiers. Close at hand sculptured candelabra, thick with grime, were silhouetted grossly against the faint diffused light. On the wall of the top gallery, infinitely above and distant, one purple-shaded electric lamp gleamed. The forms of the tiny people in the gallery could scarcely be discerned; they were mysterious and impressive, and the crowded rows in the stalls not less so, nor the superior persons in the innumerable discreet alcoves called boxes. Here and there a screened lamp threw its ray on the word "Exit," obeying the ordinance of public authority. A match flared up in a box occupied by the wife of a very prominent statesman; someone there, slave of the cigarette, still deemed himself above the law. I could hear muffled footsteps in the corridor behind me. I knew that in the enormous once-handsome foyer, itself larger than many theatres, decorated with excellent paintings and disfigured by the most abominable architectural alterations, the bar girls were ready for their work, and that outside were some scores of automobiles, and that on the stage at various altitudes scores of artistes and mechanics were waiting. The conductor, in the dimensions of a doll, raised his stick over the hidden orchestra. The most dramatic moment in any great opera is when the first chord is sounded. The die is cast then, the boats burnt, the battle opened. Any one of perhaps a hundred individuals can bring absolute disaster to the business; the risks of some fatal failure in co-operation are tremendous; yet absolute disaster never occurs. . . .

The curtain rose. The church choruses, gently lifting and subsiding, seemed to tranquillise the orchestra. Thrilling and overwhelming beauty was achieved. It was a sublime example of the power of art to triumph easily over prejudices and hatred and resentments. For Wagner was a modern German; he was a very German German; he had little use for the English. The opera is intensely German. Our troops were still occupying Germany. Only the previous week our officers had suffered outrageous insults at the hands of truculent Germans. Yet here we all were, charmed, enthralled, enthusiastic, passionately grateful! Seventy-five years since Wagner had begun the composition of this colossal and lovely work, this most singular opera whose purely philosophic theme is the conflict between the classical and the romantic! What a droll, impossible theme for an opera! But the terrific pure original force and beauty of its inspiration and execution had overcome time and us. The performance was worthy of the occasion: beautiful singing, excellent playing, good acting, admirable and ingenious stage-management. Only the costumes and scenery were cursed with the curse of sordid and pretentious ugliness which lies upon all indigenous productions at Covent Garden. In thirty-one years I have seen no visually beautiful production at Covent Garden except the Russian ballet.

CHARITY CARNIVALS

A NUMBER of people seem to be at last waking up to the economic fudginess of the grand, impressive institution of the war-charity mart and carnival. Women of unbridled patriotism go to these vast stunts and make purchases of all sorts, and then defend their conduct on the plea that the money goes to charity. It does, in so far as the affair is a success; but the ladies in question have not given anything to charity. As a rule—especially when they leave their transactions to the final day—they have merely acquired, on terms very advantageous to themselves, goods whose production has absorbed raw material and labour which might have been more usefully employed. Likewise, in witnessing carnivals or other shows, they have merely indulged their taste for glitter and snobbishness. In neither case have they "helped the war" in an efficient manner. Many women do work really hard in arranging these undertakings (though they are not always the identical women who receive the praise of the illustrated press); but, on the other hand, many of them unquestionably lend a hand, or a face, or a leg, in order to satisfy the primeval passion for picturesque self-exhibition.

As a means of raising money nearly the whole of the mart and carnival business is extremely wasteful, even when it succeeds in amassing considerable sums of money; but sometimes there is an actual deficit. The present reaction is due, I am afraid, less to the direct perception of economic truths than to grave personal inconvenience and disappointment caused by the amateurish and exasperatingly foolish organisation, or rather lack of organisation, which has been noticeable in certain grandiose efforts. Two arguments are used in favour of the continuance of the great fashionable industry. The first is that money could not be raised in any other way. To which the answer is that it has been and it still could be. The second is that an appreciable section of our educated and refined womanhood would do nothing "for the war" if they were not allowed to do just this. To which the answer is that, on the whole, it would be better "for the war" if they did nothing. In many windows of small provincial towns you see a card bearing the words: "A MAN has gone from this house to fight for King and Country." It would not be a bad plan, if the charity mart and carnival business were to wither under the sirocco of public opinion, to have cards prepared for certain residences in certain select West End streets: "A LADY is idling in this house——"

15 *December* 1917.

A LEGAL BANQUET

THE most stimulating incident at the Gray's Inn dinner to meet the Prime Minister, as to which expectation rose so high and realisation fell so low, was the short speech of Lord Halsbury, aged ninety-six, in reply to the toast of his health, proposed after the end of the formal programme. The vigour and directness of this old man are still astounding. "We have heard to-night some things with which we heartily agree," said the illustrious Die-hard, and added, with malicious reluctance, "and many things in which—I suppose—we must acquiesce." It was a good saying, and Lord Halsbury brought the house down far more effectively than Mr. Lloyd George when, in speaking alike of Prussian treaty-breakers and of Englishmen who supported the war in 1914 and now don't support it, he made, with immense gusto, the broad remark: "We all know that a man who enters into a bargain and then backs out of it is a dirty scoundrel."

Mr. Lloyd George himself looked a strong and independent individuality. (But then Lord Beaverbrook was not, I think, present. At any rate he was not in his advertised place.) The tone and phrasing of the Prime Minister's references to Lord Lansdowne were histrionically very clever. But there was little in his speech beyond one or two rather happy similes. He began by saying that the speech was addressed to the nation. Conceivably it may have suited the nation, but the assemblage of inside experts found the procession of platitudes somewhat tedious towards the close. When the speaker ceased to manipulate his eye-glasses and dropped his notes, everyone waited for a grand climax. Forensic skill, however, seemed to falter at the critical moment. The peroration was much better to read than to hear. The voice lacked conviction. Do not suppose that the performance was a failure. As a task in the spectacular day's work of an extremely harassed Prime Minister it went through with fair efficiency, even with credit. But as an energising stream for the reinforcement of men at once intelligent and candid, it simply did not exist.

As the diners were invited to meet not only the Prime Minister but the "Heads of the Air Force," and the night, after the Prime Minister had sat down, became distinctly aerial, it was a pity that in no speech was any reference made to the very prominent part in the air played by Canadians and Australians. I am not in favour of making a song about Colonials at the expense of the mere Briton; but the fighting heads of the Air Force themselves make a quite special song concerning the extremely helpful enthusiasm of Colonials about the air. In one congratulatory speech, referring to the youthfulness of the main body of air-fighters, it was said that many of them but for the war would still be at Eton or Harrow. This perfectly well-meant conventional phrase was taken up with spirit in the Service reply to the toast, and the fact was stressed that far more fighting aviators came from Board-schools than from Eton or Harrow. Indeed the democratic system of promotion in the Air Force got a free advertisement, and drew applause which was noticeable without being vulgar.

22 *December* 1917.

MUSICAL COMPOSERS WHO GET A HEARING

The following extract from the *Sunday Express* shows how some musical-comedy music is written. It ought not to be lost to the world in the files of a newspaper. It needs no comment:

"Cannot Read a Note

"*Society, Ltd.* is entirely a two-man production, the two Arthurs responsible for it writing it together when staying up the river. Arthur Carrington is one of those rare people who, having a remarkably good natural ear, can play any music once heard. Consequently, though he has travelled all over the Continent to hear good music he has never had a lesson and cannot read a single note, each chord of his setting for *Society, Ltd.* having been transcribed by a musician as the composer played it on the piano. He is forty-nine years of age, and has only recently discovered that he had any gift for musical composition."

21 *March* 1920.

FREE-HANDEDNESS

Dr. P. had a young patient whose father is a big employer and very wealthy. The youth was suffering from tuberculosis in some form, and Dr. P. suggested that a specialist should be consulted. "The best," said the father. A consultation was arranged with the very eminent Dr. Q. Dr. P. was five minutes late for the appointment, and found the patient, the father, and Dr. Q. already assembled. The father was telling Dr. Q. wonderful tales about Dr. P. After some more general conversation the father suddenly said: "Now, gentlemen, let's get to business," as though at a Directors' meeting. Dr. Q.'s verdict was sufficiently serious. At the end the father said: "Now, doctor, how much is your fee?" Dr. Q. said five guineas. "What?" cried the father. Dr. Q. repeated, five guineas. The father looked at Dr. P. and said: "I thought you'd brought me to the best man in London?" "So I have," said Dr. P. "What?" cried the father again to Dr. Q. "You're the best man in London and you only charge five guineas! You'll have to take more." Dr. Q. said that five guineas was his charge, and he shouldn't take more. "You'll have to," said the father, and pulled a roll of pound-notes out of his pocket two inches thick, fastened with two indiarubber bands. He wet his thumb and began to count—up to ten. He then felt in his waistcoat pocket for a ten-shilling note, but couldn't find one. "Never mind," he said. "Here's an extra ten shillings for luck, doctor," and then added an eleventh pound-note, and offered the money to Dr. Q., who protested. "Either you'll take 'em or they'll go in the fire." Dr. Q. took the money. The father then proceeded: "Now, doctor, this is an important day in my life, meeting the top man in London in his line. I don't mind telling you I had a bottle of Veuve Clikko at my London office before I came. Now you must come with me, and you too, Dr. P., and we'll have another bottle. I've got my car waiting at the door. She was a damned clever old woman, was that widow." It took the two doctors some time to make the father understand that they wouldn't and couldn't come. So he went off with his son, whose serious state did not seem to trouble him in the least.

HARDSHIPS OF THE RULING CLASS

FOOD-QUEUES are annoying, not merely or chiefly to the classes which constitute them, but to the ruling class—partly because they are held to be the seed-bed of disaffection, and partly because they are an offence to the eye and a disturbance to the soft heart of the ruling class. The ruling class can splendidly tolerate the most ghastly inconvenience to the other classes so long as it is not forced upon its august attention. But what can be more exasperating to members of the ruling class than a quarter-mile queue of dirty and shivering children, women, and old men, in the immediate neighbourhood of a great railway terminus when the exodus for Christmas holidays is in full swing? Even the plenteousness of food in the few remaining restaurant-cars will not suffice to expel the memory of those queues. And Heaven knows that food is still plenteous in the restaurant-cars! You pay, for instance, a fixed price for breakfast, and three rich rashers of bacon and a couple of eggs, besides porridge, butter, sugar, marmalade, and jams are forced upon you. You are not permitted to pay half-price for, say, one rasher and one egg. You must put your money down for three rashers and two eggs, and naturally you don't want to lose what you have paid for. The arrangement is characteristic of that glorious survival, the British railway company. Hotels and their restaurants are more harsh, but then they are not managed by railway directors. In the most chic restaurants of the West End you cannot get butter, or any substitute for it, at either lunch or dinner. The most exclusive clubs are the scene of terrible hardships in the matter of sugar. So that it can no more be said that the wealthy are not bearing their fair share of the horrors of war. The blockade, indeed, is certainly getting stricter.

Nevertheless, the blockade seems still to leak, even in the West End, far from restaurant-cars. The other day a customer went into a perfectly respectable tea-shop, and had a carefully rationed afternoon tea at a table. He then demanded of the waitress: "Can I have some cake?" To which the waitress replied: "Well, sir, it's like this. I'm forbidden to serve you with any cake, but if you go to that counter and buy a cake in a bag, you can bring it to this table and eat it here." If Lord Rhondda has not yet made a serious attempt to see life steadily and see it whole in the only manner proper for a Food Controller, that is, by doing the Haroun-al-Raschid stunt in tea-shops, I suggest that he might well begin a tour at once.

29 *December* 1917.

CAILLAUX

Joseph Caillaux is finding a great deal of support in the Press, both French and English. And among this support none is more remarkable, even if it be not surprising, than that of the Paris correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, who actually compared him, before he publicly compared himself, with Dreyfus—hinting that he may be a martyr! There are three points in the Caillaux affair which need notice. The first point is that the real basis of the charges against him is apparently never mentioned in the newspapers. The real basis is that he is supposed to have been acting in the interests of big German-controlled business concerns which survive in France under French or Swiss auspices and names. Hence, it is said, his pacifism and his anti-Englishness. The second point is that the trial of Caillaux, whatever form it takes, will probably prove nothing. The gang of adventurers who infest French politics are all mixed up together, and each individual can, to a very large extent, protect himself in a moment of crisis by threatening revelations about the others. This fact is notorious. For myself, I shall be surprised if Caillaux comes to any real harm at the trial. As to whether or not he is guilty of taking German money I am not prepared to offer an opinion. The third point is that, even assuming Caillaux to be innocent of venality, and admitting all his personal charm, the nimbleness of his wit and his extraordinary readiness of resource, he has one fatal defect. He is a fool. I doubt whether there exists in European statesmanship to-day another man so completely bereft of common sense as Caillaux. Some say he is mad. He may be, though I doubt it. But that he has again and again behaved with the most astounding silliness cannot be seriously disputed. He has carried foolery to a degree at which, in a politician, it is the equivalent of crime.

29 *December* 1917.

TEACHING HISTORY

I FIND signs of an improvement in the methods of teaching history—even in public schools. Indeed, it seems probable that public schools are awakening to the fact that there is such a thing as a world-movement. Many readers will share the stupefaction and delight with which I learnt that one of the oldest public schools in England—Oundle—has recently erected a special building, and rather a fine building, for the study of industrial and economic history, etc. Of course, it is chiefly a library. By the Oundle method the boys work in groups, or sometimes singly, upon a given subject. The labour of research is divided into sections, and each group takes up a definite section, reading the authorities, and making original maps, charts, and graphs. The various sections are then collated into a grand combined pow-wow. Thus in the Michaelmas term last year the subject of Slavery was taken, under five sections: (i.) Classical Times, (ii.) Africa, (iii.) America, (iv.) American Civil War, (v.) Slavery in Relation to England. The scope of the affair was evidently enormous. That the choice of authorities was catholic was indicated by the detail that under section (iii.) was included Mark Twain's greatest masterpiece. (Need I say that Mark Twain's greatest masterpiece is *Life on the Mississippi*?) My first thought naturally was, on glancing through the vast syllabus: "Yes, this is all very well. But what about slavery *in* England?" I then discovered that the subject for the present term is precisely "The Enslavement of the Working Classes and the Struggle for Freedom," of which the third and fourth sections comprise, "Child Labour and Factory Life in England," and "Adult Labour in England." The authors studied under these sections include Cobbett, Sadler, Rogers, the Hammonds, and G. D. H. Cole. I seem to remember the epoch when in the Eton curriculum, as a concession to modern ideas, wood-carving was admitted as an alternative to (I think) either Greek or German. As I have not the Eton curriculum before me I cannot be exact, but anyhow the alternative had an element of prodigiosity. That epoch is apparently passing. Oundle belongs to the Worshipful Company of Grocers, and its growth during the last twenty years has been tremendous.

16 *February* 1918.

FOR AND AGAINST PROHIBITION

THE mistress of the house being away, I had a male party for Easter. We talked quite a lot about alcohol. Not many men can talk intelligently about drink, but far more can talk intelligently about drink than about food. A few days previously I had been to the dinner given to H. G. Wells by George Newnes Limited to celebrate the completion of *The Outline of History*. There was only one wine at that dinner, Bollinger 1911, a wine that will soon be extinct. It was perfect, as perfect as the cigars. I now got up one of my rare remaining bottles of it. We decided that no champagne could beat it, even if any could equal it, and I once again abandoned the belief, put into me by certain experts, that the finest 1911 champagnes were Krug and Duc de Montebello. We relished various wines, clarets, burgundies, and ports, ranging up to fifty years old; together with old brandy. It was inevitable that we should discuss that subject upon which the arguments are apparently as forcible on one side as on the other—American prohibition. Would the veto be withdrawn? Or would prohibitionism spread gradually through the world? I have never been able to believe that the great historical institution of alcohol, whose use has heightened and commemorated so many tremendous events, could be destroyed in spite of the vast influence of almost universal human appetites. But a doctor who was among us conceived a future in which man in general would procure daily enjoyment and ecstasy on a plane less sensual than the present one. When he had amplified his idea it was possible to imagine an epoch when alcohol would be looked back upon as barbaric and a very inefficient vehicle of pleasure, and when the cellarage of Rheims would be regarded as the Catacombs are regarded. But some other vehicle will have been devised before this can happen. In the meantime alcohol produces a delightful social atmosphere that nothing else can produce. Only its next-mornings are not triumphant. Of course I do not trouble to say that the morrow of an orgy is not triumphant—that goes without saying. I mean even the morrows of temperate indulgence. After a few days of this male holiday I discovered myself anticipating with some eagerness the next meal and the next glass. My sleep became even more insecure than usual, and a feeling of *malaise* infected the first hours of the day. Yet I never drank more than one glass of champagne at night, and perhaps a spoonful of brandy. No whisky, and, above all, no liqueurs. Almost the smallest quantity of alcohol taken regularly day after day will clog my own particular machine. I was driven by the force of intimate facts nearly to the extreme position of the late Victor Horsley about alcohol. And on the last day of the holiday, so that I might be reasonably ready for the first day of work, I was obliged to decide that I would drink no alcohol at all. I had to get alcohol not merely out of my body but out of my thoughts. Still, during the holiday, alcohol did at moments create a unique zest for existence.

HINDLE WAKES

It has been a fairly momentous week, full of shipbuilding "mysteries" that thousands of people could very well explain if they were allowed, and of Siberian mysteries which really are mysteries. Nevertheless, Trafalgar Square, brightly illuminated in the evening, gave night after night an uncanny illusion of the war being over and air raids a mere memory. The orchestra and the strings of lights and the moving crowds of dark silhouettes under the glare resembled nothing so much as Hindle Wakes. But to give green electric eyes to Nelson's lions was a mistake. The National War Savings Committee, admirable in nearly every way, has often accepted bad advice in matters of art. The gigantic scenic paintings which hide the façades of the National Gallery and the Royal Exchange are regrettable in their extreme mediocrity, and they might so easily have been both beautiful and striking. I suppose that the financial results of the week of hustle are, as a whole, considered very satisfactory, though the returns of the Trafalgar Square Tank cannot possibly be so considered. And really Glasgow and the other great provincial competitors must have thought that London played it rather low down on them in getting an enormous subscription for War Bonds from the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt. The notion of these Commissioners employing their resources to increase the National Debt doubtless gave intense pleasure to the brains that thought of it. At any rate, during one week the citizens have subscribed, without the impetus of a set Loan, vastly more than the country has spent—which is somewhat novel.

9 *March* 1918.

HOTEL MORNINGS

THE bell-indicator, and the sole bell, for the entire floor are just outside my bedroom. The first ring disturbs me about seven-fifteen. After that, for half an hour, the rings are sporadic, very infrequent; but from a quarter to eight to eight o'clock their frequency rapidly increases, until at the hour the bell seems to be ringing almost continuously,—expression of the collective, urgent, insistent, ruthless desire of the population of the floor to drink tea and obtain hot water preparatory to getting up. From eight o'clock the rings gradually decrease, until at about eight-fifteen they are as rare as they were at seven-fifteen. The great collective desire has been appeased. The unanimity of this population brought together by chance is most remarkable. It is also, somehow, very funny. It makes me laugh to myself as I lie reading. The phenomenon of the increasing and decreasing frequency of the rings occurs with astonishing sameness morning after morning. It makes a rather striking illustration of the instinct of human beings to conform, to coalesce into an ordered community, and of the mighty force of public opinion.

The mentality of some Continental hotel servants is very queer. When one has grasped it one understands why hotel servants are hotel servants and why they are not revolutionaries. Every morning the servant attached to my room answers my ring promptly. He puts his head inside my door and murmurs some phrase of which I do not comprehend the component words but which I know signifies: "What does the gentleman want?" Every morning I reply in a language of which I have acquired only about four phrases, that I want hot water and a cup of tea. Every morning the servant's face expresses a mild, polite surprise at such a curious demand. Every morning as the servant plants the tea on a chair by my bed—and not before—he says to me suddenly, in the manner of an explosion, and in English, "Good morning, sir." He is a gloomy and patient man, with a fatigued smile. Strange that he should get up earlier than I do! Strange that he should get up without tea! Strange that his life's work should consist in keeping me and such as me in ease and idleness! (Off and on I have lived in pleasure hotels for years, but I have never grown used to this strangeness; and I never shall.) The man may not be a fool; but he is a simpleton.

Breakfasts in pleasure hotels are trying affairs. Sensitive people avoid them by breakfasting in their own rooms, unless, like me, they are driven downstairs by an insatiable desire to watch human nature. At these breakfasts human nature rasps you. What it wants to eat, how it asks for what it wants, how it eats what it wants, its mean ingenuity in extracting from the hotel more than the hotel wants to give it for a fixed payment,—all these and many other manifestations of the functioning of early-morning human nature rasp on the raw sensibilities of the sensitive. For instance, an old lady comes down. She is dingily dressed in black. She is ugly. She has the complexion of a cabman. She is morose. She is offensive. She is exacting. She is the negative of charm. She wants bacon and eggs. The Englishness of asking for bacon and eggs in a Continental hotel is odious to me; it is disgusting. Not merely does she want bacon and eggs, but she wants them very quickly. She continually harries the pale head-waiter, who is wearing his worst dress-suit and dirty linen; but happily the raging rollers of her desire for bacon and eggs break quite harmlessly on the rocky smoothness of the head-waiter's imperturbable polished demeanour. . . . I see the bacon and eggs coming; and at the same moment I see an old gentleman coming. The old gentleman sits down at the same table as the old lady. Says she, as the head-waiter deposits the dish: "I've had some difficulty in getting your bacon and eggs, and I was very much afraid you'd have to wait. However——!" "Thank you, darling," says the old gentleman. She did not want the bacon and eggs for herself; she wanted them for him! She is the old gentleman's darling. He does not behold her with the same eyes as I behold her. He does not observe that she has the complexion of a cabman. I estimate that they may have forty or fifty years of married life to look back upon. They are thoroughly accustomed to one another. They talk together like very old friends. My sensibilities have been rasped, but now they are smoothed; and I have to admit that hotel breakfasts sometimes offer marvellous compensations. The aged couple begin to chat with neighbouring tables. Their superficial uncouthness disappears. I learn that they have travelled much, and seen many works of art worth seeing, and that they can differentiate between schools of painting, and that the lady, at any rate, can talk fluent Italian. Yet they don't in the least look like connoisseurs. They look like nothing at all but British winterers-abroad. Astounding, is it not, that so much commerce with beauty should not have prevented them from achieving such a damnable personal ugliness? Presently the old man turns to me, and says, with the delicatest

suggestion of humour in his blinking eyes: "Can you tell us whether it is Saturday or Sunday to-day? We were discussing the point upstairs, and couldn't decide it."

ENGLISH SOCIETY IN THE NINETIES

I HAVE been reading Wilfred Scawen Brunt's Diaries. The proof-correcting of them is not impeccable; but perhaps the occasional negligent composition, and the mistakes in proper names and in French, are to be excused in so old and sick a man. One of his characteristics is the way in which he takes for granted all the paraphernalia of service and apparatus necessary to the luxurious existence of such a person as himself. Thus in a considerable record of a long driving tour in a coach and four there is almost nothing to show that he did not groom and feed and harness and unharness the horses, and wash and grease the coach, without any menial aid. The descriptions of life in and on the edge of the African desert are delightful and very ably done. But the most interesting parts of the first volume are the entries about London Society at the close of the nineteenth century, and especially of the group known as the Souls. He is continually insisting upon the extreme intelligence and the high education of this group. They certainly were clever—apparently they could write brilliant poems between two sets of lawn tennis; they were highly diverting conversationalists, and their heads must have held a tremendous mass of facts. But, with every advantage, what did they amount to, after all? What was their achievement? They were more remarkable for self-indulgence and caprice and irregular hours than for any sort of steady endeavour. Their education taught them neither discipline nor tenacity of purpose nor the art of life. They had not the supreme intelligence, for the supreme intelligence consists in an understanding of the value of deportment. They were in the public eye, and the most famous of them, particularly the women, simply did not know how to behave—and to this day do not know how to behave. They had not even the wit to keep their photographs out of the illustrated papers. They developed a mania for self-advertisement. And notoriety became as necessary to them as wine, cards, and constant change. For the most part they have done nothing except corrupt society and render it ridiculous. As regards the fulfilment of ambitions Lord Rosebery is the typical example of them. Lord Rosebery displayed the limits of his intelligence when, emerging from a sybaritism founded on the wealth of the Rothschilds, he declared that it was good for a poet to starve. The one man among them who has realised himself and maintained a massive public dignity in the face of terrible handicaps (which it is needless to specify) is precisely the man whom Blunt in these earlier years refers to with condescending toleration: H. H. Asquith. The favoured group and its descendants have now become the pawns of millionaires who treat them with a mixture containing 5 per cent. of flattery and 95 per cent. of breezy disdain.

CERTAIN PROFITEERS

A PUBLISHER told me the other day that he had been offered some "disgusting" paper—such paper as before the war he would not have given 1½d. a lb. for—at 1s. 4½d. a lb. as a special favour. Scarcely a fortnight ago buyers were raising their hands at a price of 1s. a lb. The next situation to be acute will be the paper situation. Papermakers are prospering as gorgeously as salt-unions. They do not conceal it. But can the innocent things be blamed? They cannot. Paper-buyers surround them as courtiers surround thrones, and simply force high prices upon them. The same excuse cannot be made for the fashionable-restaurant profiteers. Lunchers and diners do not bid against each other in our vast, gilded, orchestral eating-houses. The prices at *chic* restaurants have not greatly advanced, but the quantity of food supplied has greatly diminished. The scandal is not that one cannot get certain foods—nobody expects them—but that the "portions" of the food one can get are so impudently small. And from the firm attitude of the waiters one may divine that they have received definite instructions to distribute the very tiniest quantities which the eater will accept without physical protest. Nowadays I rarely go into a *chic* restaurant, but I am inclined to describe my few recent experiences therein as experiences of being swindled. People continue to permit themselves to be swindled, because the habit of being seen in these restaurants satisfies something in their spiritual natures. Their feelings in *chic* restaurants might be described by slightly modifying Dr. Johnson's description of his feelings on the Paris boulevards: "Sat in the *chic* restaurant awhile. Ate nothing in particular, but was glad to be there." There are restaurants which, in addition to withholding the exquisite torture of bad music, give twice the quantity of food, rather better cooked, at about half the price of the *chic* restaurants. These restaurants I frequent, but if any reader imagines that I am going to disclose their names and addresses he is immensely mistaken. I have spoilt too many good, cheap restaurants in my time by disclosing their names and addresses.

Speaking of profiteers reminds me that the existence of this genus—I have no wish to brand the whole genus with evil epithets—will probably do more than anything else to bring about the conscription of a certain amount of wealth when the post-war budgets come to be tackled. There are arguments for and against the conscription of wealth, but the sentimental argument in its favour will assuredly carry it. The war has divided the nation into two parts. The larger part has lived in safety, in comparative freedom, in comparative luxury; and a very considerable number of individuals in it will be monetarily richer at the end of the war than they were at the beginning. The smaller part—such portion of it as survives—has abandoned its civil position and prospects, has risked life and limb and health, has suffered terribly, has exchanged liberty for a harsh discipline, and has received at the best a miserably inadequate wage—a wage that scarcely anybody of corresponding status in the larger part would look at. Visitors to the front are well aware that this smaller part has exceedingly keen convictions as to the propriety of the conscription of wealth, together with a general desire for the blood of profiteers. Homicidal intentions may wither, but the intention to see that some wealth is conscripted will unquestionably not wither. And the philanthropic performances of wealth will not save wealth. In a new exhibition of war-pictures by Mr. Nevinson (who is a wit as well as an artist) is a fanciful portrait of a repellent type, thus labelled: "He made a fortune and gave a sum."

16 *March* 1918.

BRAINS AND EATING

BRAIN-WORKERS expected no favours from Lord Rhondda; but they did not expect to be insulted. Says Lord Rhondda: "Scientific opinion is unanimous to the effect that a man does not need any more food because he works with his brain than he would need if he were not working." I should like Lord Rhondda to produce his authorities. I have little scientific knowledge of the mysteries of the human organism in being, but I have a very considerable empiric knowledge of the functioning of my own body. I assert that I can sit down fresh to my particular sort of brain-work, and at the end of three hours' concentration upon it I can be so utterly exhausted that further efficient work is impossible till the next day. I am prepared to believe that the exhaustion has a toxic origin, and that physical exercise will appreciably mitigate it; but, on the other hand, I should not have the volitional energy to take physical exercise in these circumstances until I had received nourishment, which nourishment I should certainly not have required had I remained idle or merely written letters or bright articles or memoranda for committees. My experience is that I need more food for a day's brain-work than for a day of activity in the open air; that brain-work induces hunger, and that if this hunger is not satisfied neuralgia ensues. And I know that my experience is quite a common one. As one truly humble and anxious to learn, I beg to ask those who know more about me than I do myself the following questions: Does continuous and severe cerebration destroy tissue? If it does not, why am I hungry after working in a chair and not hungry after reading a novel in a chair? If it does not destroy tissue, what does it do? If it does destroy tissue, what becomes of Lord Rhondda's dictum?

23 *March* 1918.

A TRANSATLANTIC VIEW

THE wife of an American official, staggered and delighted at the spectacle of a very great munitions factory in Britain: "I can just feel the monarchical principle pulsating through all this effort."

30 *March* 1918.

AFTER THE MARCH OFFENSIVE

LAST Tuesday afternoon amounted to a "great occasion" in the House of Commons. Mr. Lloyd George's speech was a most ordinary performance. It is a pity that so few people have the faculty of being amazed at the ordinary. The Prime Minister went through the ceremony of what is known as "reviewing the situation." All the information which he imparted to the House during the first fifty minutes of his speech was told in about thirty seconds, and it had only a trifling importance. The rest was a hash-up of what everybody knows, done really very badly indeed; and on the military side it had the sole effect of making the German achievement seem more miraculous even than we had thought it. Seventy minutes had passed before Mr. Lloyd George arrived at his proper theme. He spoke for a hundred and seventeen minutes, in which period he was detected only once in the use of an argument. When he referred to the valour of the British Army he was cheered. When he said that conscription in Ireland was simply justice to England he got a long-sustained cheer from the Conservative benches. And when he uttered any easily comprehended sentimental truism he got the tiny cheer which any speaker can get at any public meeting for such things. But after a horribly creaking peroration he sat down practically in silence. The show was incompetent. Worse, it was forced, meretricious, and noisy. One felt constantly while Mr. Lloyd George thumped the brass-bound dispatch-box and looked histrionically round the House challenging Members to deny his impassioned assertion that two and two make four—one felt that the dispatch-box ought to have been a tub. One felt that if this kind of stunt has to be done in order to placate the traditions of the House, Mr. Horatio Bottomley could do it far better than Mr. Lloyd George. The spectacle was humiliating, the waste of time shocking. Mr. Asquith showed the difference between genuine Parliamentarianism and the other thing, and Mr. Joe Devlin dramatically showed the difference between genuine oratory and the other thing.

13 *April* 1918.

THE ROYAL ACADEMY AGAIN

THE Private View of the Royal Academy was somewhat less crowded than usual. There were far more horses (well fed) in the quadrangle during the afternoon, and far fewer automobiles than for many years past. Still, there were a few automobiles (other than electric) using petrol or gas for purposes for which it is illegal to use petrol or gas; but the policemen round about showed no sign of any intention to issue summonses. Within, there was a notable paucity of khaki, and the English ruling class, though very prevalent, seemed somehow less domineering and offensive than aforetime. The chief characteristic of the Exhibition was the absence, not merely of portraits by the fashionable performers, but of any portraits whatever of certain prominent youngish and middle-aged women, without portraits of whom no exhibition has hitherto been considered respectable. The supreme positive achievement of the show is Mr. Frank Salisbury's. Who could believe that he would surpass his rendering of the heroism of Jack Cornwall? Yet he has done so. His group of the King, the Prince of Wales, and Sir Douglas Haig, with their satellites, is simply and totally amazing; and the footnote which represents the Queen and some nurses is as amazing as the main subject. In front of these canvases you have to pinch yourself in order to be sure that you have not fallen into a trancèd vision. Mr. Salisbury undoubtedly ought to be president of the R.A., for no one has defied time and the evolutionary process so perfectly as he has. The picture of the year will be Mr. Walter Bayes' life-size version of the alien-haunted Tube during a raid. It is not a bad picture, but it will be overpraised for the realism of the woman in the ill-fitting stays. The R.A. has no objection to the nude, but I question whether it ever admitted ill-fitting stays to its walls before. Those interested in graphic art will discover relief in distinguished productions by D. Y. Cameron and George Clausen. The picture by Anning Bell, bought by the Chantrey Trustees, is the best Anning Bell I ever saw. Still, it leaves one entirely indifferent. I hear that a determined effort was made to get the Trustees to buy pictures by Wilson Steer and William Nicholson. It failed. The R.A. probably has an inkling that there is a war on, but thinks it is the Boer War.

11 *May* 1918.

J. G. BENNETT

THE most curious thing in the notices of James Gordon Bennett is the statement that he was in bed when Stanley called on him in the early morning in Paris to arrange the Livingstone expedition. In Paris Bennett rose at terrible hours, such as 4 a.m. I have known resentful employees of his who have had appointments with him in what they held to be the middle of the night. On the other hand he reckoned to have finished his day's work at 9 a.m. Even in old age he was a fellow of astounding energy. Unfortunately much of the interesting part of his biography could not be printed without offending Anglo-Saxon public opinion. He knew how to spend money and how to waste it. The last and greatest of his yachts, the *Lysistrata*, was possibly not equal in grandeur to some modern rivals, like the incomparable *Iolanda*, or the *Nahma*, but she was a startling vessel. I remember once, on the Riviera, off which coast the *Lysistrata* often "hung," a well-known Clyde shipbuilder telling me that he had just had an order to duplicate certain fittings for the yacht. He said: "They were of solid gold." And in this way James Gordon Bennett "went on."

18 *May* 1918.

PORTUGUESE STREETS

Some streets in Portuguese towns and villages have agreeable peculiarities. For example, the numbering often, if not generally, includes the ground-floor windows as well as the door. Thus quite a small house may well occupy three numbers in the series. And there is no modesty or underhandedness or sparing of expense in the business; every number is carefully painted over door or window in large characters. What was the object of this method of numeration I never became sufficiently intimate with any municipal authorities to learn. Indeed, I was never sufficiently anxious to learn, being content to enjoy the mere fact. Not satisfied with carrying the numeration of houses further than some people, the Portuguese have also carried the nomenclature of streets further. If a street is called after a regiment—and some are—all the chief victories in which the regiment participated are set up, with dates, at the ends of the said streets. (I doubt, however, whether this is good League of Nations propaganda.) I woke one morning in a suburb of Lisbon, and looking out of my window beheld the following street sign on the opposite wall: "Street of the Lusiads. Poem by Camoens. First edition 1572." Anybody can see sense in this device. The advertisement for fine literature is permanent. Probably very few people dwelling in the street will be tempted by the sign and the information to get hold of Camoens and study him; but somebody might be tempted; indeed a certain type of person might deem it a social duty, the performance of which was necessary to his self-respect, to read the works of a classical writer in whose street he lived. Anyhow the process of familiarisation with the symbol of great things is continuous. I have not read the Lusiads myself, in any language; but I am assured that they make an admirable bed-book, and that once taken up they cannot easily be put down. I can believe it. All great epics are full of meat and of juicy side-dishes if only people will refrain from taking them as seriously as porridge. *Paradise Lost* is a whole picnic-menu, and in fragments makes first-rate light reading.

Other and more grandiose countries might advantageously imitate Portugal in this matter of street nomenclature. But they must not shrink from a full achievement. "Lusiads Street" would have no effect. Ninety-nine per cent. of the inhabitants of a Lusiads Street would live and die without troubling to guess what Lusiads were. But inhabitants of the "Street of the Lusiads. Poem by Camoens. First edition 1572," unless they happen to be blind, are forced to absorb the most important fact of their national literary history. I can imagine the tremendous effect in New York of an "Avenue of the Tales of Mystery and Imagination. By Edgar Allen Poe. First edition 1845." It would turn New York into a city of dreams—and would also produce a strike of clerks and a ukase of the Postal Administration forbidding the admixture of letters with letters. But nobody need be afraid. It is only very young and ingenuous republics who go in for this kind of thing.

SACCHARINE

The world is full of marvels. You go regularly into your favourite chemist's, in order to mitigate by means of drugs the effects of too much devotion to your country, and bottles of saccharine always lie on the counter in front of you in heaps, inviting you to buy. You do buy, but only occasionally, because one phial of saccharine goes a long way, and there are heaps of them in the marvellous world. Then one day you notice that saccharine has disappeared from the counter. You happen to want some. The chemist, though he is your favourite chemist and knows your weaknesses and talks politics with you, immediately puts on a perfectly blank smile and says that he has no more saccharine and can't get any. No use ingeniously cross-examining him! He is determined that his ignorance shall be perfect. He doesn't know the cause of the mysterious disappearance of saccharine. He doesn't know when he will be able to get a fresh supply. He hasn't the slightest idea about anything at all. He exists apparently quite content amid the most disconcerting enigmas. You remember having seen in the newspaper that the Food Controller had some sort of a notion of controlling saccharine at some future time. But you cannot bring yourself to suggest to the chemist that herein lies the explanation of the mysterious disappearance of saccharine. The chemist's resolve to be an honest simpleton ties your tongue. And you go from shop to shop. No saccharine anywhere. Not even at the club. Saccharine has vanished like gold in a revolution.

18 *May* 1918.

THE JOCKEY CLUB

One institution at any rate has not been "controlled" in the war—namely, the Jockey Club. The Jockey Club, instead of being controlled, is "requested." Its representatives seem to meet the representatives of the War Cabinet on equal terms. The Government, according to an announcement apparently official, "requested the Jockey Club to co-operate with them in carrying into effect" the limitation of racing rendered necessary by the stress of war. Whereupon the Jockey Club duly met and unanimously agreed that "such a request coming direct from the Government should be loyally complied with," and gave the necessary orders for cancellation of race meetings. What would have happened if the Jockey Club had "loyally" differed from the War Cabinet on the grave question, Heaven knows! But we can all guess what would happen to the Football Association or the M.C.C. if the War Cabinet wanted anything from such bodies. Their "loyalty" would not be appealed to. They would just receive an order from some department, and that would be the end of that. The further curtailment of racing is probably directly due to the season-ticket holders' dangerous resentment against race-trains to and from Gatwick. If season-ticket holders had any sense they would all become members of the Jockey Club. It would then suddenly be discovered that to raise the price of seasons would involve the ruin of the Empire, and the Board of Trade would sing a tune quite different from its present melody.

1 *June* 1918.

BALZAC'S TECHNIQUE

Les Employés and *Le Curé de Tours* are among the works of Balzac that I like best. They are half-novels. But the beginning of *Les Employés* is terrible. Balzac takes over forty pages to lay down his principal personages, Rabourdin and des Lupeaulx. The latter is a complete "character" (in the old meaning), and the description of him might be made into a complete Balzacian work. The former is almost complete, but there is tacked on to the description of him a full account of his scheme for re-organising the Civil Service. You feel here that Balzac did not know what he was talking about. The account is full of facile generalities that would not stand serious criticism, and also it is involved and heavy. In short, ill done; dull. Nevertheless, when you have got through the forty odd pages, you have a reward in your own feelings. You *do* feel now that the ground plan is well and truly laid, and the trouble which Balzac has made you take ensures your interest for the future and makes it genuine. Especially as the thing does get slightly more interesting in itself towards the end of the forty odd pages. There are sentences about des Lupeaulx and company; for example: "*Leur constante habitude de toujours faire un mouvement de tête affirmatif pour approuver ce qui se dit, ou pour s'en donner l'air, communiqua quelque chose d'étrange à leur tête. Leur langage fut plein de mais, de cependant, de néanmoins, de moi, je ferais, moi, à votre place (ils disaient souvent à votre place), toutes phrases qui préparent la contradiction*" (p. 41). . . . In fine, having arrived at Madame Rabourdin's campaign to capture des Lupeaulx, you await with joy the sequel.

Note the falsification characteristic of Balzac in exaggerating the charm and beauty of Rabourdin's home. He invents circumstances to account for it, but the invention is not convincing. You can see the impulse to idealise getting stronger in him. In a moment Madame Rabourdin is one of the seven or eight really superior women of Paris. And he gives her for a friend Madame Firmiani (*née* Cadignan)! At the ministerial reception there is little surcease from character description (pp. 45-47), and one thinks that the intrigue is really beginning, when the Saillard Baudoyer lot is introduced. The ensuing descriptiveness occupies over twenty pages (pp. 47-68). At Madame Rabourdin's the intrigue makes a fresh start, for des Lupeaulx is now casting on Madame Rabourdin the eye of love; but unfortunately M. Rabourdin happens to be talking to a "supernumerary" in the Civil Service, and hence (at p. 71) there is a dose of descriptiveness round about supernumeraries in general and young Sébastien de la Roche in particular (pp. 71-76). Then Madame Rabourdin begins her battle with des Lupeaulx, and the intrigue moves once more. But (on p. 81) Madame Rabourdin having gone to bed, Balzac curves away to the subject of the denizens of the Civil Service bureaux. He describes the offices (pp. 82-85), and yields to the temptation to sketch in greater detail the division of M. de la Billardière (who is dying), in fourteen pages (pp. 85-98). After this comes a little scene (pp. 98-99) between minor clerks to prepare for the catastrophe due to de la Roche's carelessness about secret documents. Then (at p. 101) Balzac has the magnificent nerve to say: "*Avant d'entrer dans le drame, il est nécessaire de peindre ici la silhouette des principaux acteurs de la division la Billardière.*" This painting occupies thirty-three pages. We are at p. 133. The story gets a move on.

TAILORING

My tailor, while trying me on, talked about trousers, and I said that a pair of trousers could really only be worn once. After that it was no longer worthy of a dandy. He said that he had said to G. W. E. Russell that a man ought to have a pair of trousers for each day in the week. Russell replied: "I do not agree with you. I think he ought to have a pair for every day in the month, so that he will only wear a pair at most twelve times in the year." The tailor asserted, doubtless with some poetical tailorish exaggeration, that Russell, in order to be consistent, thereupon ordered "about forty" pairs of trousers.

A FIRST NIGHT

THE attendance at a theatrical first night usually comprises three groups: 1. The professional first-nighters—critics, agents, ticket-agents, playwrights, and theatrical advisers. Most of them are bored by the stage, blasé, weary, indifferent. They seldom or never applaud. 2. A small intermediate group, partially overlapping No. 1 and consisting of professionals who have some reason to be sympathetic towards the author, the management, or the players. This group shows its friendliness by giving applause which in other circumstances it would not give. 3. Friends of the author, the management, or the players, who are not regular first-nighters. This group is present in order to applaud, it is determined to applaud, and if there is no reason to applaud it makes occasions. Thus on a first night the applause is both less and more than it is on an ordinary night. On the whole, the friendliness easily beats the indifference—but not always.

A first night reception is by no means even a fairly sure index of what the reception by the general public will be. Rapturous first nights have inaugurated short runs, and chilly first nights have been followed by many months of enthusiasm. Nevertheless there is one kind of negative manifestation on a first night which amounts to an absolutely reliable prophecy of failure. We had a clear example of this manifestation on Tuesday evening. The author had got hold of a good idea, and he could draw characters, and he could make middling to excellent jokes. But the audience gradually grew uneasy. It grew uneasy because it did not know what the author was driving at; and it did not know because the author did not know. The main stream of the story divided itself into various rivulets, and these rivulets were gradually lost in the sands of the desert. There were a dozen stories, but there was no story. Above all there was no sense of direction. The thing was incoherent in its entirety. No episodical cleverness, no qualities of sincerity or wit or passion will atone for this defect; and the defect is fatal. Whereas on the other hand the mere virtue and attraction of a plain story, moving in a recognisable curve from somewhere to somewhere, may atone for all other defects. The uneasiness induced by a lack of coherence is painful. It is not perhaps physically evident, save by an exaggerated eagerness to appreciate points; it is secretly felt, and it spreads like poison gas, unseen and inescapable. All audiences are alike in their instinctive attitude towards narrative incoherence. They are not necessarily bored, though they may be bored; they are *dérouté*, which is worse. Everybody knew before the second act was over that this play must fail. Of course in the foyer no one openly said so, for in the foyer friends of the management and the artistes always abound. Only in the second interval did a middle-aged, benevolent actor, taking a busman's holiday, come along and say sadly to a member of the management: "You know, I'm not very happy about this play." The good man wrought a most painful effect by the simple act of uttering a sentiment that was universal. The third act picked up ever so slightly. At the end Group 1 departed in grimness. Groups 2 and 3 remembered all the passable jokes and the ingenious turns of plot, and called loudly for the author, and a beaming gentleman came forward and stated that the author positively was not in the house, but that the favourable verdict of the audience should be conveyed to him. The author was standing in the back street and already knew his doom past any doubt. The next morning all the newspaper notices were the same. Nothing brings about unanimity in press criticism like a lack of the sense of direction.

THE INQUISITION ON "SEASONS"

It is curious and interesting that, in the sensational rebellion of season-ticket holders and would-be season-ticket holders, the phrase "bomb-dodgers" has begun to lose its popularity. A month ago, two months ago, it was all the rage; and just as once the right-minded used contumeliously the term "free-thinker," so now the right-minded were then holding it to be a sin to dodge bombs. Apparently the theory was that as decent people they ought to stand still for possible bombs to drop on them, and that there was something heroic and patriotic in doing this. Another theory, which still lives, was to the effect that up-river trains were monopolised by wealthy aliens, who had obtained their riches by dubious means, who spoke queer English, and who would be interned if the Home Office was not full of what Clemenceau calls *consciences pourries*. I have never been able to get any confirmation of this theory. I was talking to a friend who comes from Maidenhead like a sardine and returns thither like a sardine every day, and he assured me that his fellow-sardines are quite ordinary English Britons, with no trace of the exotic. This man has gone to live at Maidenhead because of a female relative whose nervous system has been disturbed by the noise of raids. He is wondering about the future of his season-ticket, and whether the judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature of the Great Western Railway will graciously permit him to continue the same or not. He is one of the tens of thousands of the disaffected. Indeed the season-ticket ukase has exacerbated the season-ticket public, which naturally is a public of fixed habits, more deeply even than the raising of the military age.

1 *June* 1918.

INTERPRETING THE GOSPEL

SUNDRY official and semi-official exponents of Christianity have ventured from time to time during the war to maintain that the New Testament injunction to love one's enemies was not merely an injunction to love one's enemies unless they happened to be Germans. They have all got into trouble, some of them into serious trouble. The latest victim is the Archbishop of York, who said something dubious on Good Friday in New York, and has been taken to task by the wonderful Lord Denbigh. The Archbishop does not usually answer attacks in the Press, but to this excellent rule he has made an exception in favour of Lord Denbigh. His reply is infinitely prelatical. He explains that the occasion being the Good Friday service he was obliged to base his address on the famous words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He says: "I did not choose the subject, but obviously it could not be avoided." Obviously! He then shows that he was prepared to pray for the heads of the German militarist party on certain conditions—conditions which really ought to satisfy Lord Denbigh—and he asserts positively that he never did adjure his New York congregation to "think kindly of the rulers, soldiers, and peoples of Germany and Austria." He further says that he didn't condemn the German treatment of prisoners of war because he hadn't time. In fact, he defends himself with skill. Nevertheless he made a mistake in replying to Lord Denbigh. In the minds of the judicious the resulting situation is very strange. It would need Mr. Lytton Strachey to deal with it adequately. I have often suspected that the Archbishop of York is an "eminent Victorian" strayed into the wrong century.

1 *June* 1918.

INTERNATIONAL

I ESCORTED to the dinner a young woman who had a cold, together with a red nose resulting therefrom; but the redness was partly disguised by powder, and moreover her dress fitted well, and she was satisfied with it. Among the guests were a young little Second Empire baron, ugly, decent, the embryo of an intensely conventional and respectable Tory, and his wife. They had been married only three years, and had a baby of two years, and yet that pretty French girl had exactly the expression of a confirmed British matron. She had never heard of Count Robert d'Humières, the translator of Kipling, but thank Heaven she had heard of Kipling; had even read him and thought him "interesting." Also an Englishwoman and a male friend of hers, successfully pretending that they had met in Paris by mere accident. Also a Roman countess, stoutish, philosophic, who convinced me in about a quarter of an hour that she was one of the wisest and shrewdest of women. Also the fat son of a Russian banker; he was a philosopher, professionally; he spoke English with fluent badness, infecting the air by reason of a chest disease from which he suffered. Also a Greek spinster, who told me that she had once been engaged to an Englishman, but the match was broken off because of his weak lungs. She was agreeable, tolerant, thin, wizened, over-mature, famished for love; no grace in her form. Also a young girl with a strange coiffure, suffering from the first onset of Christian Science, and in search of a husband with luxury thrown in; lamentably unintelligent. Lastly an old politician—journalist of the Commune; tall and big, gentle, forgiving—with thick, flowing white hair. During the Commune he had been stood up against a wall to be shot, but someone in authority had strolled along and saved him by a few seconds; after which he was transported for ten years to Cayenne or New Caledonia. He returned, and became one of the first chroniqueurs in Paris. An immense cackle uprose of philosophy, the arts, literature. And through this dizzying cackle a patient and clever valet and an English parlourmaid kept their heads, serving very well a fairish dinner. No surcease in the discussion. The talkers picked up the universe and shook it like a rat. Its affairs got definitely settled about a dozen times, but unsettled themselves instantly every time. After three hours the perfect servants insinuated themselves once more with varied and much-needed drinks. At midnight I removed my lady. The inexhaustible servants treated us as perfectly helpless. Nice, forbearing, human creatures they were. "Good-night," said my lady pleasantly to them, out of the fullness of her satisfaction with the evening. They were too well-trained to reply. But what the evening was all about I could not conceive, and outside the universe seemed much as usual.

THE SIEGE OF PARIS

The Leberts, old husband and wife, were in the little room boarded off from their kitchen. There was just space for us three and the cat. A fire burned in the corner. Monsieur, with his cap on, glanced mechanically at a newspaper. Madame was half seated on the corner of something not a chair. I asked them for details of the siege of Paris. It seemed to have left no particular mark on their minds. They were more interested in an accident that had happened to them just before the siege and in their great store of potatoes. They had three children, and the children had gone to school as usual throughout the siege. At first they were allowed a quarter of a pound of meat per day per person, but later only two ounces; and one pound of bread. Then came black bread, made of horse-chestnuts and barley. For about a fortnight this bread was uneatable, and destroyed the stomach unless it was first cooked over a fire. As a railway employee Lebert was requisitioned for ambulance work when necessary. But he was also in the National Guard, receiving for that a franc and a half a day. There was drill every day, and every day the different companies of the National Guard marched through Paris with their bands. No one worked. It was very cold. Rice was specially commandeered for the soldiers. When a horse fell the men leaped on it, cut it up, and carried off the pieces. Lebert was convinced that towards the end the Government played tricks with the food supply, so as to induce the people to acquiesce in the capitulation. Crudely, the Government destroyed food on purpose—according to him.

On the announcement of the capitulation the National Guard (200,000 of them) had a lot to say (*faisait des potins*), and the Government was accused of treachery. When the Germans entered the Champs Elysées, only Bonapartists and Royalists (among Frenchmen) were there. All Republicans absented themselves. The cafés were closed. One café remained open, and the mob afterwards sacked it. The Prussians were confined to the Champs Elysées, the Cours la Reine, and the Place de la Concorde. Those of them who tried to break bounds (*forcer la consigne*) were roughly handled, and one was killed. The Leberts were still full of pride in this ostracisation of the Prussians by the Parisians. Otherwise they appeared only to attach importance to the siege because I attached importance to it. They behaved like the inhabitants of a picturesque historic town or curious village in the presence of an interested tourist. Their life had gone pretty calmly on throughout the siege. During the Commune they resided in a cellar for a fortnight. They repeated calmly: "Yes, we slept in the cellar and kept the shutters closed for a fortnight because there were always sharpshooters in the streets." And Lebert made an elemental joke about sleeping with his sister-in-law in the cellar. A baker lived next door, and they ordered their bread over the wall. When, for some reason which I have forgotten, they could not order bread over the wall, they called out to passers-by to order bread for them.

MADSEN GUN RUMOURS

After nearly four years of war and nearly three years of air-raids, it has suddenly occurred to the authorities to protect from bombs the only decent outdoor statue in London, that of Charles I. There is some chance of the protective work being finished, or nearly finished, before the next air-raid. Thus is the irresistible force of sound ideas demonstrated. Sound ideas do in the end "get there." I notice that even musical comedies are opening their unwilling doors to ideas. The legitimate stage is usually ten years behind events, and the illegitimate stage usually twenty years behind. But to-day may be seen a musical comedy devoted wholly and solely to flying. George Edwardes would never have tolerated it. Similarly, Sir Auckland Geddes has just accepted and fathered a most ingenious idea for introducing the reality of industrial conscription without the appearance. It will result in a notable increase of Sir Auckland's popularity. Similarly, the War Office has set its door ajar—not fully open yet—to Mr. H. A. Barker's ideas about manipulative surgery. Many well-informed and simple-minded people will regard this last as the most wonderful thing that ever happened at the War Office. But it is not.

The most wonderful thing that ever happened at the War Office is the affair of the Madsen gun. The Madsen gun is admitted by everybody, including the War Office experts, to be the best machine-gun in existence. Most persons whose opinion is of value think that no other machine-gun can compare with it. Lord French asked for Madsen guns over three years ago. He didn't get them. But he nearly got them. Mr. Lloyd George ordered 5000 of them. Then the War Office "intimated" that it didn't want Madsen guns, and a factory which was specially erected and equipped to execute Mr. Lloyd George's order was "diverted" to the manufacture of Rolls-Royce engines. Even to-day, though the unique value of the Madsen gun is the theme of every martial lip, the Army Council is "not in favour of a change," and G.H.Q. thinks that the disadvantages of adopting the new type outweigh the advantages. Administrative difficulties lie in the path, and also the War Office is worried about manufacturing difficulties—though surely these concern the Ministry of Munitions rather than the War Office. Nevertheless—and herein is the wonder—the Madsen gun is coming. Yes, it really is coming, thanks largely to the insistence of Lord Beresford. The War Office people have announced that "further consideration of the whole matter leads them to hope that a way out . . . may yet be found." The War Office is actually "anxious to find a solution of the difficulties." It may be taken that in due course, either during or after the war, the Madsen gun—the greatest casualty-saving weapon in the history of war—will exist in considerable quantities. Lord Beresford gave the opinion in his speech in the House of Lords on the 6th instant that two battalions armed with Madsen guns would hold three divisions on a limited front.

15 *June* 1918.

FATIGUE

I SCARCELY felt tired in the morning. The day before might have been just an ordinary day. Only I had a queer "full" feeling in the head. And I was irritable and gloomy. I searched for the cause of my gloom, and there was no cause. Moreover I had no real desire to conquer my gloom. Its cause must have been physical. After lunch I was profoundly aware of my fatigue. I slept an hour. I could have slept longer, but I got up. With satisfaction I felt that *I had had a sleep*. Then tea and a cigar. I meant to work, but I perceived that I was too tired to work; my head was too "full." I lay down again and read, and slept three-quarters of an hour. It was at this point, when the fatigue was nearly but not quite dissipated, as I lay on the bed, that I began to have fine sensations. A perception that my gloom was passing; what a wonderful thing life was; an intensified consciousness of myself as an existing organism. Still, there remained a slight "fullness" of the head; a pressure at two points right and left of the crown. Withal a kind of enjoyment of these remains of fatigue, knowing that they would soon be gone. And a physical pleasure in the half-fatigued realisation of my being; a looking-forward to the next activity; a calm resting. All this passed off when I arose, but not the memory of it. I finally went to bed with an ardent appetite for sleep; yet not quite so ardent as I had anticipated. It was the intermediate period that was the most agreeable. However, the whole experience was somehow voluptuous.

THE RAILWAY GUIDE

LATE at night in the hotel lounge I heard a man asking the page what "a.b." meant in the *ABC Railway Guide*. As the page didn't know, I explained that the train so marked carried only 1st and 2nd class—no 3rd class. The man said: "Oh! Thanks. I had an idea it was that. It doesn't make any difference to me, however, as it happens I always travel second."

PAVLOVA AT THE PALACE

She danced the dying swan. (It was a pity, after the Russian Ballet, to see her in front of such ugly scenery.) A feather fell from her costume.

One man said to another:

"Moulting."

Such was the whole of their conversation.

It is this kind of thing that infuriates me against audiences, and against English audiences in particular. It annoys me more than the laughter, half-hysterical, half-loutish, which even in West End theatres seldom fails to punctuate a poignant moment in a play. Edmond de Goncourt got the measure of the ridiculous monosyllabic Englishman in his curious novel *La Faustin*. An English lord goes to look over an empty house. When he sees a bird in a cage he ejaculates: "Bird." And when he sees the bath he ejaculates: "Bath." And during the entire visit he says nothing else whatever.

ECHO DE PARIS

Lord Grey's pamphlet about a League of Nations has not had a strikingly favourable reception in France; but there was at least one sound article upon it in the Socialist Press. I imagine that Lord Northcliffe is a much more popular man in French Fleet Street than Lord Grey, and his tips are apt to be accepted there. The *Daily Mail* began by boycotting the pamphlet, just as it began by boycotting the Asquith luncheon at the Aldwych Club; in both cases the boycott broke down, and the failure was demonstrated in the usual manner—that is to say, by ill-temper. Perhaps the worst article on Lord Grey's pamphlet appeared in the *Echo de Paris* on Friday of last week. It was written by M. Géraud, known to the French militarist and reactionary world as "Pertinax." On this occasion "Impertinax" would have been a more suitable pseudonym. M. Géraud treated a League of Nations as the idle dream of a "country gentleman." The country-gentlemanliness of Lord Grey was insisted upon. Indeed, it occupied the better part of a column, and was embellished with guaranteed and utterly false anecdotes, such as the anecdote that Lord Grey once, at a moment of crisis, broke an important appointment with statesmen and diplomatists because the fancy suddenly took him to go hunting. I need say no more about this article than that it certainly ought never to have appeared. I sent my copy of the *Echo* containing it to a friend. The copy was a whole copy, as sold in Paris, and not the edition without advertisements which, under the new military law, now has to be produced for foreign circulation. Wishing to read the article again, I got a copy of the foreign edition of the same issue. Sure enough, there was an article by "Pertinax" in it; but not the same article, quite a different article on quite a different subject. The Grey article had entirely disappeared. Thus were "Pertinax's" notions about Lord Grey and about Lord Grey's pamphlet judiciously confined to the French public. Which is instructive.

29 *June* 1918.

A CANADIAN BANQUET

THE Canadian journalists now in Europe are a very bright and variegated lot. They have come prepared to learn, and they are learning—also admiring. When I met them a young man from Quebec who preferred to talk in French rather than in English invited me to tell him the whole truth about all our principal politicians. I judiciously refrained. Another gentleman from London (Ontario), who had not been here before, handsomely admitted that our London "had it" over his. He went further, and asserted that London (England) was much more of a "place" than even New York. The visitors were really immensely impressed by Mr. Lloyd George's oration at the private dinner given in the banqueting cave of the Savoy Hotel on Friday of last week. And indeed I have never heard the Prime Minister suit his audience better. The speech, by the way, was imperfectly reported. The reply to it was given by Mr. Woods. When I asked who was Mr. Woods, I was told that he was "a prairie man." He is the editor of the *Calgary Herald*, and the most popular person in the delegation. His speech was "the least as is" long, but it was an admirable speech delivered with a great deal of charm. When Sir Robert Borden bayed his voice across the enormous cave, you might have thought that nobody could maintain the rôle of the British bull-dog better than he. General Turner, however, maintained it better. The restrained vigour of his tenacity was simply terrific. General Turner had far more letters after his name than any other speaker, and you felt that he must have deserved them all. He showed a demeanour fit to strike Hindenburg with apoplexy.

20 *July* 1918.

SLUMP IN PESSIMISM

THE last fortnight has been on the whole a very trying time for confirmed pessimists, of whom I know several rather advanced specimens. Pessimism, when you get used to it, is just as agreeable as optimism. Indeed, I think it must be more agreeable, must have a more rare savour, than optimism—from the way in which pessimists abandon themselves to it. "Look!" said a friend of mine to me once, of another friend who was a passionate pessimist. "Look! Here is Blank coming in, terrified lest there may be some good news." And so it was. Many pessimists seem to be now cured. At first they hated the feeling of hope. But they have grown used to it, and are beginning not positively to dislike it. The Ludendorff stock is down in Britain, and even Prussian prestige, always, up to the present, curiously high in the share-lists of those who prefer peace to anything, has started to sag heavily.

27 *July* 1918.

SHORT STORIES

WHEN the short stories of Tchekoff began to appear in English, we wondered whether Russia had not produced a greater than de Maupassant in this line. Of course we could not depose de Maupassant all at once, but I think that little by little we did do so. Tchekoff is more comprehensive than de Maupassant; his interests and his sympathies are wider; he certainly observes more; he was a far more generally interesting personality. True, his artistic education was not equal to de Maupassant's; he was less exclusively and severely an artist; and he wrote a sad quantity of mediocre stuff. But the mass of his first-rate stuff is large; and when you come to tales like *The Ravine*, The Moujiks, and *Aphrodite*, you are aware that nothing could be better; you say that de Maupassant never produced anything quite so full and complete as these. After some years of Tchekoff I took up with de Maupassant again. Well, I doubt whether after all Tchekoff "has it over him." Although admittedly de Maupassant is a bit of a monomaniac and admittedly Tchekoff is not; although Tchekoff's work is more complete—still in the emotional power of rendering a given situation de Maupassant is perhaps somewhat the superior of the other; assuredly he is not his inferior. And does anything else finally count? In sheer creative force is either *Aphrodite* or *The Ravine* equal to such a tale as *L'Inutile Beauté*? *L'Inutile Beauté* was the first story of de Maupassant's I ever read; on its wings I crossed the Channel and was transformed from an islander into an awakened and excited citizen of the world; conceivably I have a weakness for *L'Inutile Beauté*. Yet even after allowing for the favourable prejudice I am bound to put this story at least as high as the very best of Tchekoff. The situations in it are most drastically simplified, and is that a fault? Is it not, rather, a virtue? And the handling of the thus simplified situations never falters in its austere and tremendous power. Whatever Tchekoff was he was not austere. As for de Maupassant, he steadily cultivated simplification. *Boule de Suif*, the story by which he is chiefly known, is not simplified. It is a youthful attempt to be complex and complete. It succeeds. It is a great story, but it is a little self-conscious, "arty," and over-careful. *L'Inutile Beauté*, like *Le Champ d'Oliviers* and *La Maison Tellier*, shows a supreme ease and assurance—a perfection of masterful technique and of economy that Tchekoff did not in my opinion achieve. The mention of *Le Champ d'Oliviers* reminds me that de Maupassant was very economical in the use of his themes. He treated the theme of this story at least twice elsewhere—in *Duchoux* and *Un fils*; he treated it tragically in the first story, with grim comedy in the second, and harrowingly in the third.

Let us all thank God that there is no "best short story." When you have nicely balanced Tchekoff against de Maupassant for the championship, you suddenly think of Tolstoi and *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, than which no story can be better. I am not sure that any short stories in English can qualify for the championship. Thirty years ago Walter Scott's *Wandering Willie's Tale* was always cited as the best. Then it was Stevenson's *Thrawn Janet*. Then Kipling took the floor. And to-day Conrad and Hardy have ousted their forerunners in vogue. And neither of them writes short stories any more. So far as I know, short stories with serious pretensions to greatness are not being written now, either in France, Russia, or England. And if they are not being written in France, Russia, or England, they are not being written anywhere.

BYRON ON THE STAGE

THE weird and even terrible spectacle offered by the Stage Society at Drury Lane Theatre, in the alleged shape of Byron's *Manfred*, did prove one thing—namely, that Byron was not such a wild fool as he sometimes appeared. Apropos of *Manfred*, he wrote to the excellent Murray on 15 February 1817: "You may perceive, by this outline, that I have no great opinion of this piece of fantasy, but I have at least rendered it *quite impossible* for the stage, for which my intercourse with Drury Lane has given me the greatest contempt. I have not even copied it off, and I feel too lazy at present to attempt the whole; but when I have, I will send it you, and you may either throw it on the fire or not." And on 3 March he wrote: "I sent you the other day, in two covers, the first act of *Manfred*, a drama as mad as Nat Lee's Bedlam tragedy, which was in twenty-five acts and some odd scenes: mine is but in three acts." And on 9 March he wrote: "The thing, you will see at a glimpse, could never be attempted or thought of for the stage. I much doubt if for publication even. . . . I composed it actually with a *horror* of the stage, and with a view to render the thought of it impractical, knowing the zeal of my friends that I should try that for which I have an invincible repugnance—namely, representation." Why the Stage Society should have chosen to put upon the stage what is after all nothing but the noise of Byron affectedly and picturesquely weeping for his strange sin, I cannot imagine. Still, it is the first business of the Stage Society to experiment; so I do not complain. The scenery looked as if it had survived from the first British performance of *Die Walküre*. Heavens! What Alps!

3 *August* 1918.

COUPONS

The change in the value of the meat coupon has had a disastrous effect upon the private lives of those who eat mainly in restaurants and clubs; for—at any rate in the more dignified and righteous palaces—it has practically abolished the half-coupon. The committees of some clubs protect themselves against the wrath of their members by exhibiting a copy of the Food Regulation which compels them (in theory) to yield up to the Control one coupon for every five ounces of uncooked meat. Useless to tell the patron of restaurants that he can now employ all his coupons for beef; he could always do so! And almost useless to tell the clubman that he can now have ham *ad lib.* He is already sick to death of pig. He has pig for breakfast and then for lunch, and often eke for dinner when coupons run short or his wife has confiscated the week's supply. Happily the coupon is not always insisted upon in certain restaurants—restaurants which I will not name. There are restaurants, and good ones, in which, after a mock search for your ration-book, you can moan to the head-waiter that you have forgotten it, and the head-waiter, after pulling a pained, sympathetic face, will say, with a noble gesture: "I suppose I must give you one of *my* coupons." And he produces a coupon from a receptacle similar to that in which he keeps his inexhaustible supply of saccharine. And there are restaurants in which any fragment of a coupon, or anything that looks like a coupon, will serve for any quantity of meat for any number of persons.

The fact is, the Food Control cannot control the coupon system. In order to do so effectively it would be necessary to bring back the entire Army from the Front to act as checkers. I am told that coupons are weighed in mass by the Control, a method which simply invites various ingenuities of evasion. And frequently the Control does not even weigh; it ignores, especially in the provinces. As one of a party of six the other day I sat down in a hotel to an admirable and entire leg of mutton. The obscene word "coupon" was not breathed in that very correct hotel, which had doubtless never heard of the Food Control, nor guessed that frightful tyrants exist in Palace Chambers.

In the luxurious and political portions of Paris meat difficulties are over, but not sugar difficulties. The French, however, being an ingenious and resourceful race, can create sugar out of nothing. If in a fashionable restaurant you want sugar and have none, you call the waiter and you say: "Waiter, my cloak-room number is so-and-so. I must have left my sugar-packet there. Please go and get it for me." And he goes and gets it for you. This is Gallic. We could never imitate it successfully. We have not the requisite refined sense of style. On the other hand, French children are very British. When Big Bertha has fired, the street urchins playing together give a loud cheer. It is certain that London kids would do the same.

17 *August* 1918.

THE MERRY WIDOW

WHEN I first saw it at Brighton, this spectacle had already become a classic. But to me it seemed to be just the same old thing over again. The music was much less "charming" (otherwise, superficially and temporarily attractive) even than I had expected. A troupe of about forty, with elaborate scenery, costumes, and properties. The girl principals had apparently been chosen for their looks. Not one could avoid the most glaring false emphasis. Thus a heroine looking at a man asleep on a sofa, there being no other man asleep on the stage: "But *he* may wake up," instead of "He may wake *up*." This kind of blunder recurred constantly. Also such pronunciations as "reco*gnise*." The male principals were better. The story was all about getting drunk, whoring, and obtaining money. There was nothing else in the piece at all, except a certain insistence on patriotism. The hero had a string of six trollops from Maxim's, and the names of these light ones were on the lips of the other characters the whole time. Strange that a concoction of such piquant ingredients should result in such excruciating boredom. I stood two acts, and then I left, preferring to die in bed than in the stalls of a theatre.

TRAVEL AND POLITICS

One night a man and woman had a long conversation in the hotel writing-room, a place certainly not intended for conversation. He was a military officer, with a face so red that it might have been painted. He had been through the Staff College. He spoke in a quiet voice, slowly, with a restrained and judicial demeanour. He had evidently attained, or had maintained from birth, a high degree of stupidity. The woman chiefly listened. Her turn had not come. But she showed at intervals a determination to get her turn. She was interested in charities. The officer recounted how he had been to Reading at election time, and had observed that the walls of the town were covered with obviously inaccurate coloured posters.

"I said to myself: 'What sort of a mind must the British voter have to be influenced by such things?'"

He spoke with the air of a psychologist who had made a great and startling discovery about the mentality of the British, and on the discovery he proceeded to build an immense superstructure of political theory. Coloured posters had been necessary to awaken him to an elementary truth concerning human nature.

Then, going far backward, he said that he had read in the *Times* Joseph Chamberlain's Tariff Reform scheme, knowing nothing about Tariff Reform—knowing not even what the words meant. He had "waited six months for a reply," and had seen only one, which was mere personal abuse of Chamberlain. "Therefore," the six months being up, he had come to believe in Tariff Reform, and had gone in for it blind. But his most interesting contribution was a theory of the effect of travel on political opinions. He had observed that nearly all English abroad were Unionist and Tariff Reformers. Liberals might go abroad, but "at the end of the voyage" they had almost always been converted to sound politics. He cited the saying of a ship's captain, a fervent radical, who said that in thirty years of the sea he had only met one radical passenger.

"Very interesting," commented the woman, still waiting her turn.

The officer continued in his calm and judicial voice, but as I could no longer write for his absorbing babble, I left the room at this point. Although I could not endorse his theory about the sanative influence of travel on politics, I did agree that nearly all English abroad are Conservative. I have never yet been fortunate enough to meet a British radical in a first-rate foreign hotel. Politically I have invariably suffered a great solitude in the best foreign hotels. Indeed, the unanimity of British political opinion abroad amounts to a most imposing phenomenon. On the other hand I have never heard an intelligent political discussion in English in a foreign hotel. Never! And I have lived much in foreign hotels. On social questions the British attitude in hotels was admirably illustrated by the remark of a beautiful and elegant tennis-playing girl at Cannes, apropos of a miners' strike: "They ought to be forced down the pits and *made* to work." General agreement on the courts.

PRO-GERMANISM

THERE is a strange leniency about our magistrature, especially when glaring cases of pro-Germanism come before them. Two women of the mature ages of twenty and twenty-one respectively were guilty of repeatedly asking that tea should be given to two German prisoners in the vicinity of Farnborough. They also wrote to a German prisoner and enclosed to him a packet of cigarettes. Will it be believed that these unpatriotic females were fined only three guineas each? The magistrate admitted that the case was "most serious," and yet he was "loth" to send the women to prison. One's blood boils when one thinks of the opportunities afforded by tea and packets of cigarettes for Hun plots, and of the misguided sentimentalism of the magistrate in relation to so dangerous a case. Will this Government never do anything to root out the pro-Hunnishness which is still so frightfully rampant among us? Will it wobble for ever? What hidden hand is protecting these females? Do not imagine that the instance is isolated. There may be, there probably is, an extensive secret organisation functioning in our midst. Thus the other day a woman, whose son fought for us at Jutland, gave a sixpence to a German prisoner who was passing through Cheltenham in charge of some horses. She was fined £7, 10s.—three hundred times her offence. But why was she not sentenced to penal servitude for life? Unfortunately Parliament is "up," and these grave matters cannot be adequately exposed to the light. But a time will come, and it may come sooner than some people expect!

17 *August* 1918.

FOCH

AMID these enormous events, and the sound and dust of falling architecture and the glinting of flames which will develop into vast conflagrations, it should be remembered always that there is one man in Europe who is entitled to say to himself, and who no doubt is quietly saying and repeating to himself: "I've done it. I've done the trick," and with difficulty believing his own thought. For it is very well to talk about solidarity, unification, valour, doggedness, the inevitable triumph of noble ideals, the inevitable failure of wrong; the entire situation to-day (except possibly the Palestine section thereof) is built upon a couple of days' work in July last and the creative strategy of one man. If the Germans had not been out-manoeuvred in July the psychology of the whole world (and especially the psychology of Ferdinand) would have been utterly different and the material phenomena would have been utterly different. The Germans were out-manoeuvred. Experts still violently argue about the true inwardness of the first battle of the Marne, but common people will unanimously maintain that the man who pulled the fat out of the fire in the summer of 1918 is the same man who pulled the fat out of the fire in the autumn of 1914. What was he doing in the long interval? Few among us could say offhand. Assuredly he was not doing what he ought to have been doing: that is, commanding the Allied forces. Is it not marvellous that his classic work on war has only just now been translated into English? True, as a race, we hate and distrust general principles! Nevertheless the fact emerges that the greatest general has at last reached the top.

We do not yet fully realise the potential prestige of Foch. Even to-day in the popular legend he has by no means reached the looming Titanism of Ludendorff or even of Hindenburg. Nor does he stand where Joffre stood. The careers of big generals are astounding. Hindenburg threw down his newspaper and walked out of a little café in a little provincial town, and crossed the German Empire to kill a hundred thousand Russians in a day. He had it in him to do one thing, and he did it perfectly—and it was a large thing. The rest of his reputation was meretricious. Nothing could stop Ludendorff from climbing over him. Ludendorff has about forty times more brain than Hindenburg. Ludendorff was passing himself off as one of the greatest generals of all time. He did all but become one of the greatest generals of all time. Then it was discovered that he was lavishing on war highly distinguished gifts which Heaven had meant for the gaming saloon. He was indeed a very finished poker-player—who lost. He showed a countenance calculated to persuade nearly everybody that "three of a kind" was a "royal flush." Unhappily for him, someone, or some mysterious force, said to him at the wrong moment: "I'll see you." And that was the end of Ludendorff as one of the greatest generals of all time.

5 *October* 1918.

MISCELLANEOUS READING

My habit is to buy, *inter alia*, books with semi-reputations or with no reputation at all, in the hope of discovering something good that the public has missed. Lately, alarmed by the steady increase of these unread and unassessed volumes in my library, I have taken to reading "in" books instead of reading them, so as to get as quickly as possible some adequate notion of the stock in hand—with results certainly informative but otherwise not very satisfactory. It seems to me that few really first-rate books can have failed to make a first-rate reputation for themselves, and that "subterranean" reputations are not very well justified. The public does not miss much. I got F. Manning's *Scenes and Portraits*, on the strength of high praise of it from people who ought to be able to judge. Well, I couldn't read it. The author is very clever and original, and sometimes suggestive; but he does not know his job. He is an amateur. He cannot hold the thing together, and his literary sense is very defective. Similarly, I attacked several books of Bernhard Berenson's which I have possessed for years. I suppose that Mr. Berenson's competence as a critic of painting is entirely authentic. But he too has failed to develop the talent for holding a thing together. Nor can he express himself clearly. Nor, despite grammatical correctitude, can he even manipulate a sentence for the reader's benefit. He continually baffles the reader. And, still in the region of art criticism, Mr. Herbert Furst's imposing and fully illustrated book on Chardin is worse. Its literary amateurishness, shown as much in the absence of general design as in detailed inefficiency, is acute. I hoped for better satisfaction from Mr. Charles Ricketts' book on Titian. Ricketts on Titian! The combination promised lusciously. I was not wholly disappointed. Mr. Ricketts is an individuality with a definite attitude towards both life and art, with unusual perceptions, with originality and courage to match. His book, though confused and far too allusive, is interesting. It would be more interesting, and less irritating, if he had not set out to write with "style." He has achieved one or two pretty good passages of "style," but as a rule he achieves a mere delicate preciosity which is full of the maladroit. He just is not sufficiently expert. I was disgusted with Baudrillart's rather well-known work, *Histoire du Luxe*, and I wish I had never bought those four buxom volumes. The subject is splendid, the treatment rotten. A shocking example of shameless book-making—as bad (and this is saying a lot) as Charles Vogel's "free translation" of Friedlander's *Moeurs Romaines*. I suppose that these books are the sort of concoction that Brunet's *Manuel du Libraire* would amiably describe as "*ouvrages estimés*." My most successful quarry recently has been Gregorovius's *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*. It may not be great, but it is thoroughly good, and can be perused without fatigue for hours at a stretch. I would put it a little below Ferrero's *The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, of which it may be called in part a sequel. Ferrero is more brilliant. Ferrero knows all about the craft of writing. He has nothing to learn about the manipulation of sentences. Few authors seem to realise that the first business of an author is to write, and that, if an author cannot write, whatever his other qualifications may be, he has no excuse for producing a book.

PRAYER

I READ on the walls of this city that religious bodies throughout the country have interpreted recent events as an answer to prayer. In accordance with such a view, further prayer-meetings were held at Queen's Hall on Tuesday last, and it seems probable that these will prove equally successful. They were certainly under careful management. In large letters on the posters were the words: "Front reserved seats, 1s. to each meeting." People who will arrange to sell reserved seats at a solemn appeal intended to influence the designs of an omnipotent and inscrutable Deity concerning the destinies of mankind will probably have the notion of making similar arrangements for the Day of Judgment. For many years I have been going about saying that no manifestation of human nature could shock me. I was wrong.

5 *October* 1918.

RESPECT FOR BRAINS

A MAN with a long hooked nose (not a Jew), aged from forty to forty-five, was talking with his wife to an older couple. He had charge of the conversation. He said he liked walking. He would take long walks, anything up to forty-eight miles, and enjoy them. He also liked driving. Yes, he liked to be behind a pair of good horses. But he liked motoring too; and his little boy knew the make of every motor at sight—even to motor-cabs. Then about books. "If you were to see the books I buy. If I live to be a thousand I shan't read half of 'em. Haven't read half Dickens and Thackeray yet. I have a friend, a bookseller in Charing Cross Road, and when there's a library for sale he always lets me know and I go to the sale. I like light books myself. Now there's Wells's *Tono-Bungay*. I read that. I lent it to men with minds, those brainy people, two or three of them, and they were delighted with it—Oh! quite enthusiastic. Well, of course it was good, but I couldn't see so much in it myself because I haven't got the mind." (He was very frank and nice, and I saw that there must be a large class of persons who frankly recognise the existence of a brainy class intellectually above them.) He named Frank Danby, Hichens, Mason, and several others as being specially readable. "Of course they're not great—nothing *great* in them; but they pass the time. . . . I frankly admit to reading a lot of trash." His wife, though she seemed rather a dull, common woman, said with sincerity that she *did* like Shakespeare. The older couple had no interest in books whatever; but this fact did not apparently disturb the bookworm in the least.

EGYPTOLOGY

So far as I know, nothing has yet been said in the lay (as distinguished from the specialist) Press about the importance of dealing with archæological excavations and kindred matters at the Peace Congress. Some may wonder what on earth archæology has to do with the felicity of peoples, and how a nation with any sense of proportion can worry itself about excavations at a time when the structure of society is being recast. But the intelligent will not wonder, being well aware that archæology is a branch of study essential to the felicity of peoples. I hope that some British statesmen, or at least one, will go to the Peace Congress with a few clear ideas about the bearing of politics upon archæology. The French will certainly have a good deal to say on the subject. Perhaps it may occur to the Prime Minister to take with him to Paris Mr. Arthur James Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, among his other luggage.

The condition of archæological affairs in Egypt, for example, is very unsatisfactory. When the French, in the early eighties, left us to manage Egypt, they arranged that the Director of the "Service des Antiquités" should be a Frenchman. The idea was natural enough, for they have a strong sentimental interest in Egypt, partly on account of Napoleon, and partly on account of Champollion ("the Younger"), who, I believe, is for good reason regarded as the founder of modern Egyptology. Much has happened since the early eighties to strengthen the British position in Egypt, but the Director of the Service des Antiquités is still rigorously a Frenchman. Indeed, by the Treaty of 1904 it was expressly agreed afresh that he should be a Frenchman. There have been great Frenchmen in the post. The last great one was Maspéro, who has been succeeded by a gentleman whose speciality is not archaeology but philology. The whole question ought to be reopened. It ought to be reopened for two reasons. The first reason is that the French authorities are not properly looking after the aforesaid antiquities, and, of course, we are getting the blame for the neglect into which precious remains have fallen. Pierre Loti, in his dolorous ecstasy, *La Mort de Philæ*, chid the wretched barbaric English alone. (Which is just what he would do.) The second reason is that antiquities cannot be satisfactorily handled unless the direction of the matter is under the control of the Government which is actually governing the country where the antiquities lie. When the management of the antiquities is in the hands of a subject of one Government, and the country is run by another Government, little can be done at the instance of the latter without a "diplomatic question" immediately arising. Be it borne in mind that nothing can relieve us of our responsibility before the world for Egyptian antiquities. The Director thereof ought plainly to be an Englishman, and I doubt not that the Englishman can be provided. We might then cut a better figure than we are cutting. We might even try to catch up with the United States, which, as a nation, is capable of far more excitement about antiquities than ourselves.

And the Egyptian question is only a part of the much larger question of the effect of military victory upon the study of archæology. Unimaginable new fields have been set free to the excavator and the student. There are Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine—yes, and the Balkans. All these fields ought to be systematically distributed, by a special committee of the Peace Congress, among the Powers concerned; and the principle upon which they ought to be distributed is plain.

30 *November* 1918.

PLAY-LICENSING

THERE is serious news as to freedom of speech. The Lord Chamberlain has refused to license Brieux's *Maternité*. I cannot imagine why, unless it is that the play contains some references to abortion. I do not regard Brieux as a great dramatist; but he is a considerable moralist, and the worst of his plays is a million times better than any musical comedy which might treat maternity in the bawdy manner, and which the Lord Chamberlain would license without a murmur. I wonder what Lord Sandhurst is about. He licensed *Les Avariés*. He may have done so at a hint from the War Office, which at one time was much alarmed about venereal disease. But he did license it. In *Maternité* we have a play which has been performed all over the world without protest. Protest against it would indeed be absurd. Lord Sandhurst kills it, and of course he gives no reason. The matter ought to be inquired into. Some time ago the Lord Chamberlain used to be advised about debatable plays by a committee thus wonderfully constituted: Sir Edward Carson, Sir Walter Raleigh, Lord Buckmaster, Sir Squire Bancroft, and Sir John Hare. The last named has, I feel sure, retired. My information is that the Committee does not meet, but that debatable plays are sent round for individual opinions thereon. Were the individual opinions unanimous about *Maternité*? Or were they not? Looking at the personnel of the Committee, I am ready to wager that they were not. Indeed, I know they were not. And if they were not, why did not the excellent Court official give the play the benefit of the doubt instead of rendering his country ridiculous in the eyes of the civilised world?

14 *December* 1918.

ROSTAND

Edmond Rostand married young, made his success young, and died young. He was only thirty when *Cyrano de Bergerac* dazzled the critical and the vast uncritical worlds. He became an Academician at thirty-four, and he died at fifty. The triumph of *Cyrano* furnished one of the most extraordinary instances on record of the complete deception of an audience of highly sophisticated experts. There is no doubt that Catulle Mendès was, for once in his life, absolutely sincere in his ecstasy when he raved about this sadly fustian play. Everybody who was anybody agreed with Mendès. In four hours Rostand was transformed by magic into the greatest genius of all time. *Cyrano* could be better judged on its merits at the rather mournful revival of it at the Gaité in the early nineteen hundreds, with Jean Coquelin in his father's part. Roxane was then taken by Marguerite Moréno, an exceedingly witty woman and the best *diseuse* in France. To hear Moréno enunciate even such a simple question as "*Qu'est-ce?*" was to receive light on the inexhaustible question of stage diction. The revival failed. Rostand's next "great" play was *L'Aiglon*, a work of immense length which failed in spite of the universal determination that it should be a success. After *L'Aiglon* Rostand didn't mature another idea for a "great" play for ten years. His period of gestation was enormous. The crowing of *Chantecler* was engineered by the supreme theatrical advertiser of the earth, Henri Herz. Herz in those days was not a man but a miracle. He familiarly addressed all actresses, even the most distinguished, as "*ma belle créature*." (They loved it.) Herz saw that *Chantecler* offered the opportunity of his life. The difficulties were extreme, for the younger school had already discovered that Rostand had no genius; but the possibilities were huge. Herz elaborated the boom for quite two years, and reached his first climax with the arrival of Rostand and the Rostand family in Paris for the rehearsals. The Rostands "descended" at the Hôtel Majestic, just opened; and it was stated, whether truly or not I cannot say, that Herz not only arranged that no hotel bills should be presented, but exacted a daily payment to himself from the hotel. It is certain that people stayed at the hotel for the sole satisfaction of seeing Rostand. They saw him. *Chantecler*, if it did not fail, was not a success; and the career of Rostand ended. He had a considerable sense of the theatre; he could play with words and with conceits; he was full of such pretty notions as the falling of dead leaves upon the body of a dying man. But he was not a poet, and his gift was no more authentic than the influenza which a few weeks ago prevented Marshal Joffre from coming to London. I see that a London newspaper called Rostand modest. He was retiring, but assuredly he was not modest. The entire family versified. Madame Rostand has written many verses quite as good as her husband's, and she is very highly esteemed by the readers of *L'Illustration*. Maurice Rostand at fourteen was a marvellous boy, handsome, mature, elegant, and already a somewhat accomplished craftsman. His promise was altogether too brilliant; no one could have fulfilled it, and he has not fulfilled it.

14 *December* 1918.

THE CORNET AT ELECTIONS

The election was not everywhere quite so inexpressibly tedious as it proved to be in central London. Indeed, it may live in the history of elections as the cradle of a new form of electioneering. A certain candidate in the industrial Midlands faced, and solved, the problem of the woman voter in a scientific and original spirit, and with the most startling and spectacular success. Being shorthanded, like all captains of all peace industries in these days, he was confronted by the impossibility of visiting each and every new voter in her home. He saw that it simply could not be done, and that instead of going to the new voter he must inveigle the new voter to come to him. An automobile by itself was useless. Even the meanest streets are so accustomed to cars at election time that no hooting and tooting will suffice to arouse the serious sex from its domestic preoccupations. The enterprising fellow hit on the combination of a motor-car and a cornet. Dashing down a street and stopping, he put on a professional cornet-player to perform his loudest. The whole street would rush out to see what on earth was happening. Whereupon the candidate, having thus ingeniously collected all the new voters within earshot, began his harangue. It is expected that he will get in, and he deserves to get in. Of course you will assume that he is a Coalitionist. But no! He is a mere uncouponed libertine Liberal.

21 *December* 1918.

TWO GENERALS

SAID one Divisional General to another: "How should you define Bolshevism?" Said the other Divisional General, with pained finality: "I'll tell you what Bolshevism is, old thing. It's simply pure Socialism! That's what Bolshevism is."

AN OFFICER'S GRIEVANCE

THE other day I met a British officer who had been wounded nine times, captured by the Germans while in a state of unconsciousness, and in England reported killed. He seemed to be perfectly well and perfectly cheerful. But one matter had aroused his resentment. It was not that as a prisoner he had received only six parcels out of thirty-nine dispatched by his friends. It was not that on returning to life and England he had had to pay for the advertisements of his own decease in the *Times* and the later advertisements contradicting the same. It was that his solicitor had forwarded to him, among other bills, a bill thus conceived: "To Memorial Service (fully choral), three guineas." Somehow the words "fully choral" rankled in his mind.

AT A PUBLIC DINNER

FEW phenomena can be more conservative in tone than a public banquet. Things pleasantly revive there that have been interred decades ago even in club smoking-rooms. The affair last night was in honour of a famous hotel proprietor, and a famous Alderman of the City of London was in the chair. The chairman, remembering "commercial days," gave the old adhortation: "May the tears of friendship crystallise as they fall, and be worn as jewels by those we love." It was charming. It was received with sincere enthusiasm. The chairman also, and with equal success, told the old story of two Yorkshiremen on their respective Mayors. Said the first: "Our Mayor wears a bl——y great chain." Said the second: "We let our old beggar go loose." And finally, twitting a rival hotel, he told the classic story, so full of ineffable implications, of the lady who had forgotten both the number of her room and the name of her husband. Beneath the general upper layers of jolly content with the world were the usual bitter individual dissatisfactions. For example, at the same table as my friend A and myself sat a young man, aged about thirty-one, with bad teeth. He was depressed and peevish, and obviously preoccupied by the labour situation. He said he had worked five years in an engineering shop and knew what work was. The working man was spoiled, and that was all there was to it. Spoiled! When A produced an opposing argument, he merely replied: "Nonsense! Nonsense!" with a calm, peevish superiority—and this after about five minutes' acquaintance! Then A discreetly changed the topic and quite by accident tried music, in which he happens to be interested. The young man's whole demeanour altered immediately. He was an amateur oboe player, and quite keen. He really knew very little about music, but he played the oboe, and he was a different man from the moment of the introduction of the word "orchestra."

LIFE OF A GIRL

A FRIEND sociologically interested in such records gave me this brief biography of a girl. The girl's mother was a harsh woman. Her father was a chemist, but he tippled, and in the end lost his business. Then the mother came into a fairly substantial legacy. The father and mother lived on this till they lost the entire capital in a bad investment. The shock of the solicitor's letter informing him of the disaster killed the father instantly. He died on the spot. The mother couldn't manage her daughter. She said to the girl: "Here, I can't satisfy you. I can't get you what you want. Here's twopence. Go out and buy your own dinner." And the girl did so. Then the girl left home and met a young man who persuaded his mother to let her come into the house to live. The pair lived together maritally, the man's mother making no objection, as there was mutual attraction. Later, the man went to Buenos Ayres. He wrote and asked her to join him, but she wouldn't. She then ceased to be interested in love. She had saved a bit of money and at last departed to Leeds, took a room at a little temperance hotel, and decided to commit suicide in a fortnight. At the end of the fourteen days she went to the railway station and lay down before the London express. But she was seen from a signal-box, and the signalman stopped the train. In the police court she wouldn't give the magistrate any reason for the attempted "rash act," and wouldn't promise not to try again. She was committed to the Infirmary, and once again would promise nothing, either to the matron or to the official visitors. She kept on good terms with the nurses; she helped one nurse, and the nurse lent her money. She tired the authorities out, and was eventually released. She declined to go back to her mother, while admitting that she still loved her mother. Instead she went to her married sister's. Then she passed through various sentimental experiences with various men, and ultimately reached London. She got an engagement as a mannequin at Sylviane's, near Hanover Square, at 15s. a week. There she met an American journalist. Their idyll lasted three weeks, whereupon he left her; afterwards he wrote to her from the United States about her soul. Thenceforward the usual adventures, each no doubt briefer than the last. She was only nineteen when she tried to commit suicide

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THE OCTOGENARIAN

At Madame R.'s in Paris I met Brunet Huart, the painter, aged eighty-four. He wore light striped trousers, a waistcoat of black velvet, a rather large tie, rather large and striking gloves, and generally was dandiacal. He remembered Florence in 1858, and the anecdotes of King Humbert's circus-like appearances in the Cascine. He liked Kipling; also Wells; but he thought Wells didn't explain enough. He remembered the fighting in the auditorium of the Théâtre des Variétés, Paris, on account of a play which made fun of shop-assistants. The theatre was full of shop-assistants and their sympathisers. When the noise grew unbearable an actor came forward and thumped furiously on a table. Everybody was so staggered by this impudence of an actor to his public that silence ensued and the actor said: "No! Never shall a counter-jumper bring this curtain down." The old gentleman was afraid of motor-cars and in particular of his young cousin's driving. He had just returned from a round of family visits, ending at Bourges. Then he curved off into a long story of an adventure in the Palazzo Orsini in Rome (when paper money as small as 5d. was issued—current in the city only), where he got enormous attention from a concierge by two payments of a franc each. "The concierge would have given me a bed in the Palace, I think," said he. He had a curious and unusual knowledge of the relative sizes of things, from St. Peter's downwards. He was certain that a revolution would occur within six months, precipitated by losses due to inundation and bad harvests, and consequent labour unrest. He said that he had painted all his life, but had entered the studio of a celebrated master only at the age of twenty-five. He now got his military friends, colonels and so on, to send down a soldier with a horse to serve as models for two or three hours daily. Here he explained in detail how he taught the soldier to lift up the horse's leg so that he could see how the light fell on the legs of a galloping horse. Even recently he had painted in the rain, enjoying the pretty colours of barley, oats, etc. He kindly offered to criticise my drawings. He was full of various energy, and affirmed that he had not begun to feel old until he was seventy. His chief subject was undoubtedly the Palais Royal, and of course he said: "The Palais Royal was in all its splendour in those days, and the plays given there were *really* witty" (1850-60). But the samples which he offered of Palais Royal wit in those great days were feeble and flashy. He seemed to be able to remember in detail all the Palais Royal burlesques of popular tragedy, and he quoted miles of tirades in verse. He talked well, if too much.

MORPHIA

THE second-hand furniture dealer in the Boulevard du Montparnasse was seated at his desk at the back of the shop when I went in, after dark. I asked about his wife, and he came forward and leaned against a table, and said she was really cured of her illness, but she would never be well till she ceased taking morphia. He inveighed against the managers of nursing-homes who gave their patients morphia merely to quieten them and thus let them contract the habit of morphia. It then appeared that his wife had definitely become a morphinomaniac. She now insisted on having four to five injections a day, and would also often take during the day fifteen to thirty drops of laudanum, and then veronal or sulphonal to induce sleep. If he used the old device of an injection of pure water she detected the trick at once. She would stop in bed for three days and then get up for a few hours. At that moment she was out. She would return at six, and would demand an injection instantly, and another at 10 p.m. If there was no morphia in the house he simply had to go out to the chemist's and get it, even in the night. Otherwise there was a scene. And his wife's scenes were really noisy. She would cry: "You are cruel. You have no feeling. If this wasn't the ground floor I'd throw myself out of the window." Sometimes she would administer the injection herself, and then there was much blood. She bought morphia from four or five different chemists. Yes, he would admit frankly that she was a morphinomaniac, and that there was nothing to be done. Sundry doctors among their customers had warned her, and for a while she was impressed and would stop, but she always began again. Then I bought a brooch.

PROPHYLAXIS

ANOTHER controversy has been reopened—the question of the propriety of prophylactic treatment for syphilis. Sir William Osier and a number of other medical eminences wrote to the *Times* and openly advocated prophylactic treatment, stating that it was simple and effective. Thereupon the chief official opponents of prophylaxis, the National Society for the Prevention of Venereal Disease, under the chairmanship of Lord Sydenham, replied with arguments against prophylaxis, the principal of which seemed to be that certain Borough Officers of Health did not agree with the views of Sir William Osier and his colleagues. In the exchange, Sir William won easily. Later, a pseudonymous correspondent, who was rightly given a place next to the leader columns, and who must be some celebrated layman, completely finished off the National Society with great epigrammatic brilliancy. Lord Sydenham, who is apt to be egregious, tried once more, with lamentable results. That the National Society is doing excellent work cannot be doubted, but its thesis that prophylaxis will encourage irregular sexual intercourse cannot be sustained, for it involves the complementary proposition that men and women are kept virtuous by fear of disease; which is contrary to all experience. Only one thing encourages irregular sexual intercourse—and that is the existence of faculties for it. For example, there is relatively far more irregular intercourse among the male inhabitants of central London than among the male inhabitants of a small provincial town. Underlying the thesis of the National Society is another one, to the effect that it is immoral to try to preclude the risks attendant upon immorality, while it is not immoral to try to lessen the evil consequences of immorality after they have occurred. Such themes could be debated for ever, but the man of average sagacity is not likely to be interested in them. The man of average sagacity would wish to know what is the nature of the simple and effective prophylactic which is guaranteed and advocated by the highest authorities in medical science. And if the general public through the ordinary channels may not have this information, the man of average sagacity would wish to know why. It may be asserted of all parties to the controversy that whatever else they may be they are mystery-mongers.

11 *January* 1919.

AT THE QUAI D'ORSAY TERMINUS, PARIS

It was three o'clock and already dusk. I ordered tea on the *terrasse* of the Station café within the station. It is a very good café. You could judge by the crystalline cleanness of the decanters. A middle-aged man sat down, drank a red liquid, paid, and departed instantly. Two workmen simultaneously ascended the two sides of a high ladder and began to adjust an arc lamp up in the air. From the floor below there was such a continuous rumbling of trains that it was a little difficult to hear speech on the *terrasse*. All the big lamps lighted themselves, as it were, clumsily and uncertainly; and there was a complicated change in the values beneath the great arches of the roof. But the vast glazed end of the station showed silvery light for a long time afterwards. Faint clouds of steam rose occasionally from below, and through these the electricity would shine like the sun through fog. The activities of the station were very numerous. The Paris directory was constantly being consulted; also the exceedingly foul *Chaix* railway guide. The slot machines for platform tickets functioned all the time. The latest telegraphic news was pinned up at intervals; the meteorological news had a separate board. The evening papers arrived at the two bookstalls, and were separated and folded on special folding tables. Two tobacco shanties, one in charge of a young girl and the other of a woman, did ceaseless business. Similarly with bonbons at another booth. Game licences were dispensed in still another booth. A wagon-buffet, with chiefly flasks of liqueurs, trundled eternally to and fro. Luggage-lifts full of luggage kept ascending and descending; and in the arrival section luggage was shifted forward in an unending procession of trunks and bags on a moving metal band. The bridge spanning the chasm in which the trains were hidden led to a whole row of offices. Policemen and other officials, uniformed and not uniformed, were always flitting about. Some of them, not uniformed, would approach barriers and unlock the barriers with magic keys. Lots of travellers stopped to study the notice about floods. "The train for Nantes goes no farther than Angers," and so on.

Towards five o'clock the place grew much busier. All the considerable seating accommodation was taken up, and the waiting-rooms were fuller. The entire acreage of the immense main hall became wet from the feet of travellers. (Outside it never stopped raining.) The left-luggage office was enormously patronised. A bell rang occasionally for the departure of a *rapide*. Two Spanish women stood talking just outside in the rain. An English nurse appeared in charge of a girl nearly as old as herself and two young boys. The one regular phenomenon was the illuminated clock. It functioned ruthlessly, and seemed rather like a sardonic deity presiding over an apparatus that was extravagantly big for its purpose.

STREET CRIES

AFTER the £50,000 fire at Barker's, Kensington, in which four servant girls were killed, crowds were standing about, for what purpose it was impossible to guess, and hawkers with black-edged memorial cards were crying: "*In* loving memory of the victims! *In* loving memory of the victims." And the crowds were purchasing the cards.

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

INTO the country I went to do some work for a change after the officialism which the war had imposed upon me. In this case the country was a village of 1200 inhabitants on a main line out of London. At the beginning of the war the superior, truly patriotic people in the village had lamented that this village was less patriotic than surrounding villages. (The superior, truly patriotic people in every village were saying just the same of their village.) Nevertheless, this village sent over 12 per cent. of its total inhabitants to the war even before conscription, and something like 16 per cent. in all. And when I got back there a nice young woman stepped across the road to me and said: "Excuse me speaking to you, sir, but we're getting up a tea for our returned prisoners." Among other things, I heard that a man who was supposed to have perished in the hands of the Turks after Kut had arrived safely at his mother's house. And a Battery which had enlivened the village for two years had vanished except for a score of men. So that the war was really over in the village. An Asquithian standing as a champion of Labour had lost by a neck (owing to the overseas vote) in the Election to the Coalition candidate. But nobody in the village seemed to be interested in politics. At any rate, not in national or international politics. As for the Kaiser's head, indemnities, Britain for the British, and similar matters, I heard not a word, though German prisoners armed with dangerous agricultural weapons and quite unguarded were all over the place. Much less nonsense was talked in the village than in Chambers of Commerce about making Germany pay. A roadmender said to me: "I reckon her's got to eat first."

Local politics, however, which after all are the basis of national and international politics, did make a good second to the weather in topics of real discussion. The absence of frost took prime place, for without speedy frosts the land would never "work." Then the house-famine. Then demobilisation. Then the proposed memorial to the fallen. A public meeting was called to discuss the question of the memorial. The clergyman began the proceedings by stating his decision that the memorial must be associated exclusively with the Church of England. As a fact, the clergyman wanted a new organ, and he was filled with the notion that a new organ was the only conceivable, proper, or practicable memorial to the fallen. Whereupon a Nonconformist arose in the meeting (there are several chapels in the village), and started off by asserting the arguability of the position that the memorial need not necessarily be associated exclusively with the Church of England. (The clergyman draws an average congregation Of about twenty to his services.) Whereupon the clergyman beat the Nonconformist down and asserted that he was out of order because he was trying to argue that which *ex hypothesi* was not arguable. Whereupon the Nonconformists departed from the meeting, and it finished somewhat abruptly. Whatever happens, it is fairly certain that the clergyman will not achieve his new organ. I suppose that the prevalence of clergymen similar to this clergyman is the origin of the term "The Church Militant." Anyhow, the village was genuinely interested. And the tea to returned prisoners is going to be a considerable success. Later on, it is hoped, a tea will be offered to men returning from the British Army. But not yet!

Meanwhile, round about, "shoots" are going on. Hounds are killing or drawing blank. Estimates are being prepared for the refitting of yachts. The merits of rival designs for new motor-cars are being discussed. Dodges for enticing young women into domestic service are being discussed. Plans are being made for world-travel. The wines of the future, the price of season-tickets and of suits and millinery, the decline of the poetry-boom, the fullness of restaurants, the prospects for the theatre—these furnish topics of animated conversation. And the necessity of a bathroom for each guest-room in the after-war house is frankly admitted. It is all most astonishing; it is wildly funny, having regard to the fact that millions of people are starving in Europe and hundreds of millions are on the edge of starvation, and that anarchy is more infectious than influenza. Still, deep in every heart is doubtless the thought: "I wonder what *will* happen?" For men and women in beautiful and spacious homes are not such bland lunatics as they may seem when they prattle of their historic ideals.

25 *January* 1919.

ORTHODOXY

I CANNOT say that I was surprised to read a newspaper report of a private in the Royal Engineers who was fined six days' pay because, being very tired, he was fool enough to go to sleep in church. It was the clergyman who noted his offence, and who thoughtfully and kindly reported it to the commanding officer. This is the sort of thing that so endears our ancient army system to the intelligent citizen. Nevertheless, the ancient army system is not without merit, and sometimes works both ways, as it did in the present case. For on the next Sunday the company of Royal Engineers combined to boycott the collection plate of the good clergyman and gave 30s. to the sleeping sinner instead.

But I really am somewhat surprised at a recent action of that vast institution, the Camps Library, whose chairman is Sir Edward Ward (forty-four years' military service), and whose honorary director is the Honourable Dame Eva Anstruther. We are being specially urged just now to remember that the soldiers still bound to the slack tedium of military duty need literature for their diversion. I have supported the Camps Library myself; but I shall hesitate about doing so in future—and I imagine that many others will hesitate—until some satisfactory explanation is given of the fact that the authorities controlling the Camps Library obstinately refuse gifts of books by Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Mill, Spencer, Matthew Arnold, Lecky, Ray Lankester, and other illustrious champions of man's right to think for himself. In the autumn of last year a clergyman named Nolloth protested in the *Daily Mail* against the pernicious spread of rationalist literature in military camps. The official ban on Darwin, Matthew Arnold, and Co. appears to have been the result of this clerical protest. Messrs. Watts are the publishers of the cheap reprints of the aforesaid improper authors, and they had made a habit of presenting copies of their publications to the Camps Library. It was intimated to them that the habit must cease. Correspondence ensued. The following was the final epistle from the Honourable Dame Eva Anstruther: "In reply to your letter of the 23rd December, which I have shown to our chairman, Sir Edward Ward, I regret that I have nothing to add to my letter of 19th November informing you that, as we are reorganising this Library, we do not for the present see our way to accepting your kind offer of the popular scientific reprints." And so that's that. I should like to inquire whether the Camps Library refuses, or has ever refused, orthodox Church of England literature. I should also like to ask how long "for the present" is to continue. As long as it continues we are fronted with the interesting phenomenon that our "citizen army" is being officially deprived of an opportunity of reading Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*.

1 *February* 1919.

CARTOONISTS

The reproduction in the *Manchester Guardian* of a political cartoon from the *Sydney Bulletin*, illustrating Mr. Hughes in the act of speechifying to the Australian Press delegates to this country, brings one sharply up once more against the fact that there is no political caricature in England worth three-halfpence. The *Bulletin* cartoon is really very funny; it is also well drawn; and its humour is in the drawing and not in the letterpress. I do not know who the cartoonist is,[1] but if the Press-lords of this country had any genuine imagination, they would immediately begin to compete for the services of that cartoonist and get him to London on the next steamer. When one thinks of the melancholy and ridiculous efforts of *Punch* in the domain of political caricature, and of the tenth-rate drawings in the popular dailies, one perceives that life in Sydney must have appreciable compensations. But our Press-lords seem to be obsessed by a single idea—the imitation of one another. I am still waiting for a popular weekly illustrated in colour. We ourselves have cheap fashion papers and boys' papers illustrated in colour. Our sole coloured monthly is an established success. But no Press-lord has yet bethought himself to inaugurate a popular coloured weekly. No doubt each is waiting for a rival to start the thing.

1 *February* 1919.

The cartoonist was Mr. Low, and he has been induced to come to London by the proprietors of the *Star*.

SUNDAY THEATRES

Mr. Arthur Bourchier has this week revived the "agitation" (as it is certain to be called) for Sunday theatres. For myself I am in favour of Sunday theatres. I accept Mr. Bourchier's description of the present illegality of Sunday performances as "a stupid survival of the darkest form of Puritanism." Sunday cinemas have squelched all the stock arguments against Sunday theatres, and Mr. Bourchier scores effectively when he points out that the other Sunday *Scandal*, which he could not play at the Strand Theatre, was given on the film across the road. Here my agreement with Mr. Bourchier ends. He wants to have the theatre open on Sundays, but to stipulate that plays performed on Sundays shall not be performed on weekdays. He sees in this device a chance for reviving "serious and intellectual drama." He thinks that managers "would risk, for a run of a few Sundays, experimental productions upon which they could never depend to fill their theatres eight or nine times a week." I don't. Nor do I assent to Mr. Bourchier's assumption that managers exist who are hungering to produce "serious" plays, but who are prevented from doing so by the dearth of theatres. I recall, for example, the recently concluded joint management of the Haymarket Theatre, which had a free hand if ever a management had, and which produced three plays, none of which had the slightest interest for intelligent people. In my opinion, the main reason why plays for intelligent people are not produced is that such plays are not written. I have personally taken a hand in a search for these fabled plays which are alleged to be awaiting production, and I have not yet come across them in any quantity worth talking about. Mr. Bourchier's notions, however, are decidedly more in accordance with the tendency of human nature than Canon Adderley's. Canon Adderley would agree to Sunday plays if they are serious, and he suggests that the Sabbath should begin about 7 p.m. on Saturday and end about 7 p.m. on Sunday. He sees here a device for getting people to bed early on Saturday, and getting them to morning service on Sunday. Holy simplicity!

22 *February* 1919.

ROPS

STILL more about the censorship. In June last a firm of picture-dealers in London, very honourably known, ordered from Amsterdam fifteen etchings by Felicien Rops at a total price of £127. Last month the consignment had not reached these chaste shores, but the picture-dealers, after long inquiry, had learnt that it had been held up by the British Post Office, on the ground that some of the etchings were "indecent." On the 24th ultimo the picture-dealers reasoned gently with the Post Office. They pointed out that Rops was regarded by competent authorities as one of the greatest modern etchers, that his works (including many of those held up) had been publicly exhibited in London, amid the plaudits of the most respectable journalistic critics, that all the impugned etchings are to be found in the Public Library of Washington, and that Rops is well represented in all the great collections. Also that fully illustrated books about Rops, written by first-rate authorities, can be bought from any good second-hand bookseller in London. Hence the picture-dealers hopefully asked for the release of the consignment. Fond picture-dealers! Four days later they received the following epistle from the G.P.O.: "I am directed by the Postmaster-General to inform you that as certain of the prints contained in the packet in question were undoubtedly of an obscene character the packet was properly stopped in the post under the regulation shown at page 17 of the Post Office Guide. *Its contents have been destroyed in ordinary course*" (my italics).

What is to be said about the bureaucratic vandal responsible for the absurd destruction of these valuable works of art except that he behaved like an ignorant and barbarous ass? For, note that all the etchings were destroyed, though only some of them were objected to. Probably he had never heard of the illustrious Rops. And probably, if he had been called upon to decide the fate of an injudicious selection of pictures from the National Gallery, the Louvre, the Prado, the Hermitage, and the New York Metropolitan, he would have commanded the destruction of these also. The picture-dealers have in practice no remedy. Can you imagine a useful discussion about a matter of artistic interest in the House of Commons? 90 per cent.—nay, 95 per cent.—of the Elect would ask, "Who the deuce is Rops?" and would yawn till the next question. Nevertheless, the Postmaster-General ought to blush for his subordinate; and some rule ought to be made to the effect that Post Office officials shall not be permitted to destroy works of art until the consignee has had an opportunity to appeal to a body of experts whose decision is final. But I doubt whether there is one member of this innumerable Government who cares a fig, a bilberry, or a tinker's curse about either the dignity of any art or the national dignity in regard to any art.

8 *February* 1919.

A question was asked in the House about the destruction of Rops' etchings. The Postmaster-General admitted all the facts, and stated that he would do nothing to alter the system which permitted the highly cultivated human products of our public schools to destroy at their own caprice the works of genius. However, the present exposure has probably accomplished some good, for even anonymous officials hate to be made ridiculous in the public eye.

22 *February* 1919.

The scandal of the destruction of a whole series of etchings by Felicien Rops has not yet abated. Last week the Postmaster-General offered to the House of Commons a new defence of his vandalistic subordinate, in which he remarked *ex cathedra* that it needed no special training to judge whether or not a work of art was obscene. Wandering in what remains of the National Gallery the other day, I paused in front of more than one work and asked myself: "Would Mr. Illingworth's censor consider this obscene or would he not?" And I could not decide upon the answer. The Rops issue is being obscured in controversy. Some may deem Rops a poor artist, and they may be right, though the great body of expert opinion throughout the world is against them. Some may deem some of Rops' designs obscene, and they may be right, though the said works are allowed to enter freely into every other country. (Many admittedly great artists have

produced admittedly obscene works of art.) Thousands of classic works would be condemned as obscene by the average official in his own drawing-room, and thousands are only saved from general public obloquy by the fact that they are protected by the prestige of a public gallery. All this is beside the point. The point is that a Post Office official without special training had the right to destroy on his own responsibility works of art which are esteemed and shown in every important capital. The point also is that the Post Office official destroyed a number of works which he did not regard as obscene. So far as Rops is concerned, those who say that his work is mainly obscene simply do not know what they are talking about. Much of it is perverse, but perversity is not obscenity. Cranach was perverse; but what a fuss there would be if a Post Office person destroyed a picture by Cranach! No exception can be taken on moral grounds to the bulk of Rops' output. Finally, I am in a position to say that a very high official of the Post Office and a very high official of the British Museum have both expressed grave disapprobation of the Rops-Illingworth incident. As well they might! But more than an expression of disapproval is needed. Action is needed. And I wish that some British Museum or National Gallery official of sufficient authority (preferably one with a title) would go to the excellent Mr. Illingworth and tell him gently, but firmly, that in asserting that it needs no special training to decide the question of obscenity Mr. Illingworth was making himself and his department totally ridiculous.

8 *March* 1919.

SEX EQUALITY

London is really a very remarkable city. The other day, according to the papers, there was trouble in a London restaurant because a lady smoked therein. A waiter asked her to desist. She refused. Then, according to his own account, the waiter knocked the cigarette out of her mouth. Who would have thought such an incident possible, if it had not occurred? Nothing is commoner in truly fashionable restaurants than smoking by ladies. But apparently restaurants of a more bourgeois type have a different code; also the waiters thereof have a different code. The sad fact is that the fight for sex equality is not yet over. It is won, but not finished, and a "sort of war" persists in odd corners of the battlefield. And there are still public places where even daring and desperate women do not venture to smoke. A duchess might smoke in a restaurant-car of a train, but she would never smoke on the top of an omnibus. Still, evolution proceeds. I can remember the time when a lady who travelled at all on the top of an omnibus risked her reputation in doing so.

29 *March* 1919.

FRENCH JURIES

I DO not know anything about the inwardness of the mysterious acquittal of the murderer of Jean Jaurès; and probably if there is any inwardness, and if I knew it, I should not be able to print what I knew. But, in spite of the usual rumours, I am inclined to think that there is no inwardness worth talking of, and that the mystery resides solely in the mentality of the French jury. Justice and juries are not among the things which they manage better in France. Balzac, strangely, had a great admiration for the French judicial system (criminal department), but he did not hesitate to show its weakness, as in the celebrated scene in which Madame de Serizy snatched the dossier of Lucien de Rubempré from the hands of the *juge d'instruction* and threw it into the fire in the very room of the *procureur-général*. There are modern examples of Madame de Serizy, and it is not surprising that there should be, in a country where a judge of the Supreme Court earns less than a Sheffield steel-roller hand. Such details of Villain as have reached London are sparse and unenlightening. One would like especially to know something about the class-composition of the jury. But whatever this may have been I do not hesitate to say that the jury was less judicial than the least judicial English jury that ever sat. English juries, like English committees, have a quality of fundamental common sense that is entirely unknown in similar French bodies in France. And they can keep to the point. In fact, they are often more judicial than English judges. French juries are always under the illusion that they are taking part in a drama by Henri Bernstein, and no travesty of a trial that was ever seen on the English emotional stage could approach in sheer fustian the realities of an ordinary French trial. Indeed, a good French actor is merely a French barrister who has missed his vocation. The jury that acquitted Villain no doubt thought that it was accomplishing a *beau geste*. The whole thing is a most disquieting symptom of French nerves at the present time.

5 *April* 1919.

IN THE TUBE

To-day I had three journeys in the Tube railway. Coming from Hammersmith, the carriage being not full, there were seven or eight women, and I had the opportunity of examining all of them. The Tube is much better than a bus for these inquisitions, because you are not so close to the people opposite you, and can therefore spy with more freedom. Curious how one can see one's own traits (as one ought) in all the people one meets! (Compare Emerson's essay on "History," where the idea is treated with the finest philosophic grandeur.) I was specially attracted, and repelled, by a fat young woman. I only knew she was young by the beauty of her fair complexion. She was amorphous, and in the matter of clothes her chief idea seemed to be to make herself look as old as possible. Her boots were sound, but all wrinkles and creases, and unevenly laced. She must have thought very highly of herself, and she must have been very narrow-minded. Also, incapable of tender emotion—unless over a baby. She was the sort of girl who while being made love to would calmly reflect that to-morrow was the day for cleaning the parlour. Every woman has charm somewhere, but this one had as little as it is possible for a young woman with a good complexion to have. She must be always quite sure of herself. She would never give way—until she had to—and when giving way she would be forcibly-feeble, as we almost all are. I could not help thinking of Mr. Bonar Law who in the Commons last night said with forcible-feebleness that the Government had counted the cost of letting the hunger-strike at Mountjoy prison run its course—to death if necessary—and that nothing would make them alter their decision. . . . And all the time he and the Government were trembling at the spectacle of a whole nation raging against them and a whole nation on strike against the Mountjoy régime, and to-day the papers are full of reports of Governmental concessions to the hunger-strikers. The Government appeared to me to be comically like that fat, obstinate, repellent, self-satisfied girl. I don't know why, but it was so. I would lay anything that the fat girl had sized up all the other women in the carriage unfavourably, and set them down as the silly woman, the namby-pamby woman, the powdered woman, the no-better-than-she-should-be woman, the irresponsible woman, the untidy woman, the grinning woman, etc. In that fat girl I could decipher all my own baser prejudices and my unshakable good-conceit of myself.

RITUALISM

JUST as I was arriving at my tailor's yesterday morning an automobile stopped at the door. The owner jumped out—he looked young, but I could only see his back—and he was followed by a valet bearing a suit-case. In addition to the chauffeur the automobile carried a footman dressed to match the chauffeur. Three grown-up men, and a machine weighing a ton and three quarters, to move another grown-up man from his house to his tailor's! I had a natural curiosity to see that customer, but though I entered the establishment immediately after him, he had already vanished, together with the valet and the suit-case. When I asked for Mr. Melchizidek—Mr. Melchizidek being the expert who fits the upper part of my body—I was apologetically told that Mr. Melchizidek was engaged, but hoped to be free in a few moments. I sat on the cushioning of the club-fender and beheld the shop. In the middle a bookstand holding the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Illustrated London News*, and beneath these such grave tomes as Burke's *Landed Gentry*, *Debrett*, the *Post Office Guide* (in a leather case). On the walls, no water-colours by Brabazon or Conder, no fashion-plates, but gold-framed royal patents authentically signed by private secretaries and grand chamberlains. The shop seemed to be full of an atmosphere of unrest and excitement, even of apprehension. The dignified employees who neither cut out nor fit nor stitch, but merely attend, moved somewhat feverishly and mysteriously to and fro. I saw a court coat of black velvet whisked on a menial arm through the shop. The valet from the automobile passed through, outwards, hat in hand. I feared I might have to wait a long time. But no. In a very few moments Mr. Melchizidek appeared and led me into a trying-on cubicle. Mr. Melchizidek had "succeeded" with me. Nevertheless he was nervous. At the end of the séance, he said, with an uneasy laugh: "Very busy this morning, sir. King's levée. First since the beginning of the war." All was explained. A quite simple explanation, only I had never thought of it. I recalled that a detachment of cavalry with orchestra and colours had gone down George Street at 10.30 o'clock. Mr. Melchizidek added: "I have to dress Sir Blank Blank." "Who's he?" I asked casually. "Well, sir, all I rightly know is he's just been made a knight." "Never heard of him!" I said, still more casually. Not a tactful remark on my part. Mr. Melchizidek simply didn't know what to say.

The following is part of the official account of the Levée, which I read to-day in the *Times*:

> "His Majesty also received Colonel Sir Henry Fletcher and Colonel St. John Gore, Standard Bearer and Clerk of the Cheque and Adjutant of His Majesty's Bodyguard of the Hon. Corps of Gentlemen at Arms, and presented them with the respective Sticks of Office. These Officers were introduced into His Majesty's presence by Lord Colebrooke, the Captain of the Gentlemen at Arms, and having been named to the King by the Lord Chamberlain, kissed hands on their appointments."

One has sometimes the most unexpected glimpses of interesting unknown worlds.

THE PRIZE FIGHT

During the last stage of the dinner the host came round to you and said, in that politely casual tone of a man who knows more than you do, but who would not like the fact to appear: "Got your ticket safe? Might be as well to keep an eye on it till you're inside." You then divined that you were about to enter another world, a world where the eruptive potentialities of the social organism may show themselves more disconcertingly than in yours. And the inflections of your reply tried to prove that you were an accustomed citizen of that other world. Later, the host said: "I brought a knuckle-duster with me." He presented the steely instrument for inspection. "You can do some useful work with that on your fingers," he said, and added fatalistically: "But, of course, it wouldn't be any good if half a dozen of 'em set on you at once." In answer to the naïve inquiry: "How do you get there?" he said: "Oh! That'll be all right. I've got fifteen taxis at the door!" Fifteen taxis at the door! It indeed is another world, and one which the taxi driver comprehends and approves. Could anybody get fifteen taxis at any door for an excursion to the Albert Hall for a League of Nations meeting, or to Lowndes Square to hear Robert Nichols recite at Mrs. Kinfoot's? Nobody could.

The crowds began long before the Stadium was reached. The street was narrow and dark, and in an empty space scores of huge policemen were watching the eruptive potentialities. You clutched your ticket, for, after all, it bore the figures £10, 10s. Still, there was no difficulty about entering. You noticed the thick solidity of the barriers panelled with barbed wire, but they opened quickly for you, and the strong attendants had none of the geographical indecisions which characterise nonchalant programme-girls in fig-leaf white aprons over short black frocks. As you squeezed into the central enclosure of the auditorium close to the ring (a squared circle), where one of the preliminary bouts was in progress, the final attendant said quickly: "Sit down here until the end of the round, sir." Ferocious homicidal yells from behind reinforced him: "Sit down! Sit down!" You sat down quickly—anywhere. The attendant crouched on his haunches. (This was not *Tristan*, of which ten or twenty bars don't in the least matter. This was pugilism, the most holy and impassioning sacrament of its world.) A few seconds more and you were in your seat, one of four or five thousand. You realised that the affair had been wonderfully organised and rehearsed.

In came Mr. Cochran, the mysterious organiser, escorting the Prince of Wales, the Prince holding a cigar just in the manner of his grandfather, and Mr. Cochran looking rather like one of the Antonines. Mr. Cochran gazed around at the vast advertisements of his own theatres, and at the cinema operators precariously suspended over balconies. Mr. Cochran had thoughtfully provided loops of rope for them to rest their feet in. Mr. Cochran had forgotten nothing. It was his hour. He deserved it. It pains me as a professional observer that I cannot recall whether the Prince and Mr. Cochran wore smoking-jackets or swallow-tails. Opinion was divided as to the sartorial proprieties. Some star-actors and some millionaires wore smoking-jackets; some star-actors and some millionaires wore swallow-tails. The millionaires were richly represented. There they were, dotted about, the genial wizards who have removed Arlington Street from the map, who are said to have the Government in their pockets, and who assert with calm conviction that "Lloyd George can't put it over *them*." Women were certainly too few; some had sought to atone for the paucity by emulating the attire of the gladiators in the ring. They made futile spots of sex on ten guineas' worth of plush in an environment where Aphrodite had no status whatever.

The raised ring was already well illuminated, but soon many lamps that had been unlit fizzed into activity, and dazzling torrents of bluish light rained down a treble-X radiance on the battleground. The cinema men prepared themselves. The last of the preliminary bouts finished. An M.C. climbed into the ring and besought the audience to stop smoking, so that the champions about to dispute the mastery of a continent might breathe more easily. The celebrated Mr. B. J. Angle, whose word was to be law to the champions, climbed into the ring and delivered a short homily. Mr. B. J. Angle was evidently a man who knew his own mind, and who also knew his world. Some persons were pained because he wore a grey suit and brown boots at 10 p.m. in the presence of the Prince of Wales, and they did not hesitate to express their

narrow-mindedness. A little box, covered with advertisement, was deposited in the centre of the ring. It contained the gloves. The sublime moment approached. You had a unique sensation; you admitted to yourself that it was well worth ten guineas, and also that the subject of the reconstruction of Europe lacked actuality.

Beckett and train appeared first, and the train was so numerous as to be bewildering. For a moment you thought that both boxers and both trains must be in the ring. You understood better the immense costliness of a really great fight, and the complexity of the machinery which is necessary to perfect it. You perceived that though £8,000 was to be divided between the combatants, neither would be overpaid when he had reckoned his time and discharged his expenses. When Carpentier and train appeared, the ring was like a market-place. One figure, Carpentier, stood out astonishingly from all the rest. All the rest had the faces and the carriage of bruisers. Nobody could have taken Carpentier for a boxer. He might have been a barrister, a poet, a musician, a Foreign Office attaché, a Fellow of All Souls; but not a boxer. He had an air of intellectual or artistic distinction. And long contact with the very physical world of pugilism had not apparently affected his features in the slightest degree. In the previous six years he had matured, but not coarsened. He seemed excessively out of place in the ring. You could not comprehend what on earth he was doing there. Surely he must have lost his way! Beckett, a magnificent form, with a countenance from which you would not infer much power of ratiocination, gazed long at Carpentier from under his forehead, whereas Carpentier scarcely glanced at Beckett. At one moment Beckett appeared to you like a dumb victim trying to penetrate the secrets of a higher and inscrutable power; at another moment you were persuaded that grim Beckett was merely contemplating his poor destined intellectual victim with the most admirable British detachment. At one moment you felt that Carpentier must inevitably be crushed; at another moment you were convinced that if Carpentier was not too many for Beckett, then the course of civilisation had been very misleading.

I know nothing about boxing; my opinion on boxing would be worth about as much as Beckett's on Scriabin. But I had seen Carpentier, in 1913, when he was a boy, knock out Bombardier Wells at the National Sporting Club in less than two minutes, and the performance was so brilliant, so easy, so natural, that I could not believe that anybody else would ever knock out Carpentier. Now, however, I was overborne by the weight of expert prophecy. All the experts were certain that Beckett must win. Some of them murmured something perfunctory about the million-to-one chance of an early knock-out by Carpentier, but none of them had in reality any fear of such a chance. I surrendered, and privily told myself what a simpleton I had been to imagine for a single instant that Carpentier would not be smashed. (I forgot the peculiar accents in which Lord Fisher said to me in 1915, that *his* life then was "nothing but one damned expert after another.") Further, the experts killed Carpentier immediately they saw him. They said he was not in condition; they liked not the colour of his skin; they said he had gone right off; they said he was a dead man. And I submissively persuaded myself that this was so. The ritualistic prologue to the encounter seemed to take a very long time. But it served excellently its purpose of heightening the excitement of expectation. When the bell at length rang, and Beckett and Carpentier approached each other lonely in the ring, beneath a million candle power of radiance, and the whole barbaric Stadium was stilled, and hearts knocked remindingly under waistcoats—in that moment, even those who had paid twenty-five guineas for a ten-guinea seat must have felt that they had got a bargain.

There had been some grand fighting before the big event, particularly between Eddie Feathers and Gus Platts, and experts had said: "This will be the best fighting of the evening. You'll see. A championship match is never any good." The devoted experts were wrong again. In five seconds the championship fighting stood plainly in a class apart, thanks solely to Carpentier. Carpentier caught Beckett on the nose at once. Beckett positively had to rub his nose, an act which made the strong men around me shudder. Beckett was utterly outclassed. He never had a chance. . . . The Stadium beheld him lying prone on his face. And the sight of Beckett prone, and Carpentier standing by him listening to the counting of allotted seconds, was the incredible miraculous consummation of all the months of training, all the organisation, all the advertising, all the expenditure, all the frenzy. Aphrodite, breaking loose in the shape of a pretty girl *bien maquillée*,

rushed to the ring. Men raised her in their arms, she raised her face; and Carpentier bent over the ropes and kissed her passionately amid the ecstasies of joy and disillusion that raged round them. That kiss seemed to be the bright flower of the affair. It summed up everything. Two minutes earlier Beckett in his majestic strength had been the idol of a kingdom. Now Beckett was a sack of potatoes, and Carpentier in might and glory was publicly kissing the chosen girl within a yard of the Prince of Wales.

We left the Stadium immediately, though the programme of boxing was by no means concluded, and in Red Lion Square found our taxi-driver, whose claim to distinction was that his grandfather had been a friend of Mr. George R. Sims. All the streets of the vicinity were full of people abroad for the event. They were all aware of the result, for at the very doors of the Stadium, on our emerging, a newspaper boy offered us the news in print. They all stood or moved in attitudes of amaze, watching with rapt faces the long lines of departing motors. You perceived that the English race was profoundly interested and moved, and that nothing less than winning the greatest war could have interested and moved it more profoundly. This emotion was no product of a Press campaign, but the Press campaign was a correct symptom of it. It was as genuine as British fundamental decency. Not Beckett alone had been stunned. The experts were stunned. Their prime quality of being ever cheery had gone from them. They could scarcely speak; there was naught to say; there was no ground for any argument. They were bowed with grief. Fate had heavily smitten them. One of them murmured: "I consider it's a disgrace to Great Britain." Another: "It's the champion of Great Britain that's been beaten. . . . This—after Mdlle Lenglen!" Where to go in these circumstances of woe? Obviously to the Eccentric Club. We went, and were solaced and steadied with an aged Courvoisier brandy. Sipping the incomparable liquid, and listening to the exact reconstitution of the battle by the experts, I reflected, all solitary in my own head, upon what, with such magnificent and quiet hospitality, I had been taken to see. Was the show worthy of the talents and the time lavished on its preparation and accomplishment, worthy of the tradition, of the prowess, of the fostering newspapers, of Mr. Cochran? It was. Was it a moral show? It was—as moral as an Inter-University Rugger match. Was it an æsthetic show? It was. Did it uplift? It did. Did it degrade? It did not. Was it offensive? No. Ought the noble art to continue? It ought. I had been deeply interested.

PATRONS OF THE OPERA

THE social aspect of Sir Thomas Beecham's very agreeable grand opera season at Drury Lane has interest. A phenomenon that cannot have escaped the notice of the less gaudy elements of the audience is the presence on the principal nights of hordes of persons whose notorious faces are the innocent joy of readers of the *Tatler* and the *Sketch*. These hordes occupy boxes, usually many boxes, and I see no reason why they shouldn't. But they all know each other; indeed, apparently they are all bosom friends. And they seem all to suffer from an uncontrollable desire to impart their sensations to each other at the earliest possible moments. No sooner does the curtain begin to fall on an act than they rush out to impart sensations, and they keep on imparting sensations until the curtain has been lifted for a minute or two on the next act, when the doors of boxes fly open, waves of babble sweep across the auditorium (for they have not finished imparting sensations), and gradually they settle down, with nods and smiles and glances of mutual esteem, into comparative silence. Further, they have, doubtless quite unconsciously, the air of owning the entire enterprise. It is understood that the more prominent among them are "supporters" of Sir Thomas Beecham. If, indeed, this is so, I look forward to the time when Sir Thomas will no longer need such supporters. Sir Thomas's season at Manchester was an immense success. In his witty valedictory speech there he said that though Manchester was the last place at which he would have expected miracles, a miracle had happened in Manchester.

16 *June* 1917.

THE GUITRYS

THE average successful Sacha Guitry play—there are numerous examples of it—is a confection for the boulevard. But one may say at any rate that it is immensely less tedious than the *machines* of those boulevard-purveyors who are taken with such absurd seriousness in England—Donnay, Hervieu, Lavedan, Bernstein. I hate to class Sacha Guitry with the purveyors, but I cannot class him with serious people like Georges de Porto Riche and François de Curel. I would put him in an intermediate group with Georges Courteline and Tristan Bernard. I wonder whether Sacha Guitry will ever write anything so classically comic as the best Courteline or the best Bernard! Let us be thankful that he has absolutely no pretentiousness. He was born gracious and adroit and successful, but he is not puffed up, even artistically; and I doubt whether he is often worried about the relation of his plays to the truth of life. His average play is cynical, but at the same time it is sentimental—combination adored by all the best publics throughout the world. It is exceedingly, deliciously, witty in spots; parts of it are dramatically very good on their plane; but the goodness of the parts is not such as to conduce to the goodness of the whole. In other words Sacha Guitry is wasteful, too nonchalant, in the use of his material. Though often very adroit over details, he not seldom fails in large constructional skill. I cannot criticise *Nono*, for I have not seen it for years, and my memory of it is very vague. But a striking example of the author's constructional negligence is the last act of *La Prise de Berg Op Zoom*, which tumbles terribly from the level of the third act. While it is impossible not to be amused and to be grateful for plays of this stamp, it is also impossible wholly to respect them. In fact, one's reservations are grave.

As an actor Sacha Guitry wins sympathy at once by youthfully recalling his tremendous father. He is a good actor, and in cynical-sentimental scenes more than good—distinguished. But if he had not been a brilliant playwright and the son of Lucien Guitry, I doubt whether his reputation as an actor would have got beyond France. His wife has the charm of authentic and unquestionable youth; she possesses technique, but her method is apt to be a trifle monotonous, and sometimes she might, I think, advantageously display more softness. Yet now and then she is exquisitely soft. Be as judicial as you will, you have to admit that her performance gives at moments keen pleasure.

There was a great deal of *snobisme* (the French word) in the reception of the first two productions of the Guitry season at the Aldwych Theatre in 1919. An idea seemed to be abroad that they constituted first-rate theatrical art; and this idea, which was gushingly fostered, no doubt sprang from the fact that Sacha Guitry is a prodigy. Well, he is a prodigy all right. It is indeed notable that he should be such an entertaining, lovable, and prolific dramatist and simultaneously such a clever actor. But no profusion of varied non-first-rateness piled together can amount to the first-rate. The opening plays were not first-rate and the acting was not first-rate—and the setting of *La Prise de Berg Op Zoom* was sinful. What was first-rate in the productions was the *ensemble* of the acting. Further, the work of the producer was admirable. The French can produce us and act us clean off the stage. They have in them an innate superiority. Let us grant it candidly.

When Lucien Guitry made his *début* in *Pasteur*, he created the greatest artistic sensation, apart from the Russian ballet, that the London stage has had for many years; and he put Sacha Guitry into a true perspective. *Pasteur* is neither better nor worse than Sacha Guitry's other successful plays. It seems better, but that is because the subject is a noble subject. Sacha Guitry shows in it that he can treat a noble subject quite as sympathetically and as engagingly as a hackneyed adulterous imbroglio. The material extracted by him from Pasteur's biography is magnificent, and he has handled it with much dignity. He has not, however, fused it into a dramatic entity. I heard that he wrote the play in five days, and I can believe it. Upon what principle he selected the episodes I could not divine, nor could I detect in the piece either solid construction or dramatic climax, or even development of character. The development of Pasteur's character was indicated not by Sacha, but by Lucien Guitry. The play was episodically very effective, and it reinforced *Abraham Lincoln* in its lesson to dramatists who are ready to follow new paths. But I seriously doubt whether it will be considered effective twenty years hence. Neither is it consistently even adroit. The oration of the President of the

Republic in the last act, in itself tedious and unconvincing, seemed to stop the action dead. And if the author was here being ironic at the expense of Presidents, then his irony was out of key with the situation. Lucien Guitry as Pasteur was sublime. He was just that. What a lesson in sobriety, in economy of means, and in the employment of overwhelming individual force! The greatness and the personal distinction of Pasteur came over the footlights unfailingly for two hours and a half. It seems a great deal to say, but every moment was perfect; not the least note jarred. The long scene with the child who was the first person to be saved by Pasteur's methods from hydrophobia stands out among many very beautiful scenes. It was ravishing. The author had slightly sentimentalised this nevertheless finely written scene; the actor purified it of all sentimentality. And Lucien Guitry is a humorist, too. In the last act (apotheosis), when his disciples were telling him in vague grandiose phrases of the acclamation awaiting him in the great hall, the suspicious tone in which the hater of "the big bow-wow" stopped them with the simple words, "Je voudrais savoir exactement ce qui va se passer"—this tone brought the house down by its sardonic and benevolent humour. The evening passed in a crescendo of enthusiasm which was highly creditable to the audience. Personally, in an experience of over thirty years, I can remember no acting equal to Lucien Guitry's Pasteur. I said to one of the most brilliant performers on the London stage—and especially brilliant in a Sacha Guitry rôle: "What do you think of it?" He said: "I'll tell you what I think of it. I think I've never seen any acting before."

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN 1920

THE daughter of a rich friend of mine came to see us yesterday. Her age is sixteen, and she is at a French "finishing-school" in Mayfair. This school, which moved over here from Paris during the war and will shortly move back again, counts among the most fashionable establishments of the kind, and is, I suppose, an example of the best and costliest that the rich have managed to get organised for the education of their daughters in the mediæval year 1920. It has twenty-eight pupils. Miranda told us that there were no rules. I discovered, however, that there was at any rate one. Namely, that pupils, out alone, may not acknowledge salutes from male acquaintances in the street. I asked Miranda whether if I met her she would cut me. She replied that she would not. Mistresses and pupils rise at about 8.30 a.m., but Miranda rises an hour earlier in order to practise the piano, of which she is very fond. She "learns" nothing but music and French. Nothing. She shares a bedroom with three other girls. All the pupils are English; but only French may be spoken in the presence of mistresses, who nevertheless are beloved. I should say that such a school would "finish" any girl unless she happened to have a very powerful and unfinishable personality. The Renaissance seems nearly due.

BIOGRAPHY

THE English craze for biography has been the subject of much sarcasm and straight complaint during recent years, but it continues to flourish like golf. The reading public alone is to blame, for if it refused to buy biography by the ton, biography would not be written by the ton. The latest example, and one of the supreme examples, of the wrong way to be biographical is to be found in Sir George Arthur's Life of Lord Kitchener. We used to resent two thick volumes for one man's brief span, but now we have three—super-thick. (We have even six—the Disraeli biography.) It seems seldom to occur to biographers that in the first place a biographer should know how to write. Sir George Arthur is an amateur writer; probably he could paint just as well as he can write; but if he painted a portrait of Kitchener and exhibited it there might be trouble. Not only he cannot write—he cannot compose, nor arrange, nor select, nor sift, nor discriminate, nor exercise impartiality. It may be that he knows more about his subject than any other man; the qualification does not suffice. The great fact is that he simply does not know his job. He has done perhaps half his job—and the easier half—and has left his readers to do the other half. Very few readers could, or would if they could, do the other half. Nevertheless, Sir George Arthur has received very high praise and the praise is worth less than nothing at all. He can at any rate take credit to himself that he has not written the worst and most misleading biography of a great man in the English language. I surmise that that distinction belongs to the author of the official Life of Lord Tennyson, or possibly to the authoress of the official Life of G. F. Watts (another trifle of three volumes). The Life of Kitchener of course had to be written, but many biographies are published the justification for which is undiscoverable. Continental nations seem to manage without an annual plague of some scores of biographies. Why does the British public continue to make incompetent and unnecessary biography so remunerative? Conceivably the reason is that the British public is more interested than any Continental nation in politics and public life, and also—may one say?—more interested in literature. Hence it is more interested in the figures of politics and literature. This interest is creditable, unless it becomes morbid; there are those who assert that it has definitely become morbid.

Practically all our biographies are too ponderous; most of them are amateurishly done. About half of them, and perhaps three-quarters, are quite unnecessary, being begotten by family conceit out of undiscriminating public taste. Now and then an unnecessary biography enters into the domain of righteous and sane literature by reason of its intrinsic excellence. Instances of this phenomenon are Carlyle's Life of Sterling, and Mr. Winston Churchill's Life of his father. If the British have a special racial gift for biography, some born biographers might advantageously turn to and till fields that even in Britain are neglected. The greatest of all Christians, and one of the greatest men in history, whose life was astoundingly picturesque, varied, and eventful, was St. Paul. There is no first-rate full Life of St. Paul in the English language. F. W. Farrar and Thomas Lewin are, I suppose, his chief modern biographers. Farrar is well known, and one need not insist that his fifty-year-old biography is of a popular and impermanent nature. Lewin, his predecessor, is forgotten. And yet I much prefer Lewin to Farrar. Lewin is delicious; he can still be read if he is read in the right spirit. Here is a specimen of Lewin: "More than eighteen hundred years have elapsed since the hearts of all on board have ceased to beat; but imagination still pictures to itself the alternations of hope and fear which must then have agitated each anxious breast, as they waited impatiently for the dawn of day to disclose to their straining sight the features of the coast on which they were cast. The shore was close at hand, but between them and it lay a yawning gulf." Etc., etc. It is a nice question whether modern biographies are more or less sublimely ridiculous than the Lewins amid the yawning gulfs of the seventies.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN 1920

THE following extracts from a public schoolboy's letters show what progress is being made in really influential circles by the idea of the League of Nations. The second extract incidentally shows also how the Staff methods of 1914, 1915, and 1916 still persist. First extract: "On Tuesday there is a colossal field day; 2200 schoolboys, 1500 attacking, 700 defending, Hemel Hempstead. Oundle provides the largest contingent of the attack, 350; next is Harrow with 300. We are hiring the Northampton Volunteer Band for the day. We also take a Signalling Section, of which I am a member, and specially trained scouting parties." Second extract: "The field day was quite a success as far as exercise was concerned. It was a great rag. But considered from the point of view of learning the rudiments of attack it was a failure, because Harrow and Mill Hill—among others—arrived nearly an hour late, and thus rather spoilt affairs! The Signalling Section did run out over a mile of wire; it did set up three signalling stations; it did communicate by flag. But the officers of other schools did not appear to understand that simply by speaking with a mouthpiece they would be talking with G.O.C. attack. So we got very few important messages."

It is perhaps unfair, perhaps unrealistic, to be sarcastic about public school authorities because they deliberately teach the favoured youngsters of the nation to indulge in imitations of the activities which have laid waste central Europe and which even at the present moment are responsible for the starvation and death of innumerable children. (At any rate we may be thankful that Hemel Hempstead was not put to the sack, its library burnt, its girls deported, its old men shot in batches, etc., etc.) If the Government proposed to-day the abolition of the War Office, public opinion would overthrow the Government, and rightly. On the other hand, if the War Office persists it must have its human material, and so long as the existing social system remains unmodified it must have its human material from the public schools. Therefore the public school authorities can make a very plausible case for themselves. But if they inculcate the romance and glory of war—"a great rag"—surely they ought to give equal prominence to the rival conception of a world-peace. Do they, does any one of them, devote a whole day, or even half a day or an hour (to say nothing of preliminary study and training), to formal spectacular propagandism on behalf of the League of Nations? The answer is No. If all the best public schools were annihilated and their traditions annihilated, the consequences would be evil, but evil appreciably diluted with good.

THE DESIRE FOR FRANCE

WHEN one looks back one sees that certain threads run through one's life, making a sort of pattern in it. These threads and the nature of the pattern are not perceived until long after the actual events constituting them. I now see that there has been a French thread through my life. Of its origin I can form no idea, for neither my forbears nor the friends of my youth displayed the slightest interest in France or the French. Yet when I was eighteen or nineteen, and a clerk in my father's law office in the Five Towns, I used to spend my money on French novels—in English translations. I was obliged to be content with English translations because I could not read French without a dictionary, a book of idioms, and intense weariness. I had been studying French almost daily for nine years. I had passed the London Matriculation in French—and let me say that the London Matriculation French paper is, or was, among the silliest and most futile absurdities that the perverse, unimaginative craftiness of the pedagogic mind ever invented. I knew an immense amount of French grammar. And all my labour was, in practice, utterly useless. In such wise are living languages taught on this island. Nevertheless, I deeply enjoyed these secret contacts with French thought and manners, as revealed in French novels. The risks I had to run in order to procure them were terrific. Talk about leading a double life under the paternal roof! I had no need to inquire whether modern French novels would be permitted at home. I very well knew that they would not. Victor Hugo alone would have been permitted, and him I had already gulped down in three huge doses. Still, my father was a very broad-minded man for his epoch and situation. But there are limits—anyhow, in the Five Towns!

I used to order these perilous works from a bookseller who was not the official family bookseller; and I used to say to him, as casually as I could: "Don't send it up; I'll call for it." One Saturday afternoon I reached home earlier than my father. This was a wonder, for it was no part of my business to leave the office before the head thereof. I was supposed to remain at the office until he had thought fit to go, and then to follow him at a decent interval. However, on that day I preceded him. Going into the dining-room, I saw on the corner of the sideboard nearest the door—exactly where my father's parcels and letters were put to await him—a translation of a novel by Paul Bourget which I had ordered. I have never been more startled than I was in that instant. The mere thought of the danger I was courting overwhelmed me. I snatched the volume and ran upstairs with it; it might have been a bomb of which the fuse was lighted. At the same moment I heard on the glass panel of the front door the peculiar metallic rap which my father made with his ringed finger. (He would never carry a latchkey.) Heaven had deigned to save me! Distinguished as Paul Bourget is, respectable as he is, there would have been an enormous and disastrous shindy over his novel had my father seen it. Whether the bookseller had sinned through carelessness or whether, suspecting that I was ultimately bound for the inferno of Paris, he had basely hoped to betray me to my father, I do not know. But I think the kindest thing I can, though to send forth a French novel without concealing it in brown paper was perfectly inexcusable at that period in the Five Towns.

Later I seemed to lose interest in French literature. It was not until I had been in London for a year or two that I turned towards it again. I remember making the delightful discovery that a French novel could, after all, be read in the original without a dictionary, provided one was content with a somewhat vague idea of the sense. The first French book I ever read in this way was Daudet's *Fromont Jeune et Risler Ainé*. I was then about twenty-three or twenty-four. Thenceforward I never ceased to read French, and, by a well-known mental process, I was continually learning the meaning of new words and phrases without consulting the dictionary. I used to buy a French newspaper nearly every day at a shop in Coventry Street. What I made of it all I cannot now conceive. Gradually the legend grew up around me that I was an authority on French literature, and when I became a reviewer French books were very frequently sent to me for criticism, because of my alleged special competence. I would go to French plays in London. When indiscreet persons demanded, "But do you understand?" I would reply, "Not all, of course." It was the truth; I did not understand all. It was also in essence a dreadful life, for I understood nothing.

Strange detail; I began to take private lessons in German (in which language also I had satisfied the University of London). I chose German because I thought I knew enough French! Another strange detail; I used often to say to my friends, "As soon as I am free enough I shall go and live in Paris." And yet I had no hope whatever of being able to go to Paris as a resident. I doubt if I had any genuine intention of going. But it was my habit to make such idle forecasts and boasts; seemingly they convinced everybody but me. I think now that something subconscious must have prompted them. They have all been justified by events. Chance, of course, has aided. Thus, from about the age of twenty-five onwards I used to say: "I shall marry at forty." I had absolutely no ground of personal conviction for this prophecy. But, by a sheer accident, I did happen to marry at forty. And everyone, impressed, went about remarking, "He always does what he says he'll do."

Similarly, I did go to live in Paris. A remarkable group of circumstances left me free from all local ties to earn my living where I chose. I was then thirty-five. Did I fly straight to Paris? Not a bit. I could not decide what to do. I went to Algeria first. On my way home I lingered in Paris. I question if I was very powerfully drawn towards Paris at the moment. I had to come to England to fulfil a social engagement, and then I returned to Paris for a few days, with the notion of establishing myself at Tours for a year or two, to "perfect" my French. I remained in Paris for five years, and in France for over nine years, liking and comprehending the French more and more, and feeling more and more at home among them, until now I do believe I have a kind of double mentality—one English and the other French. Naturally, when I settled in Paris, all my friends said again, "He always said he would do it, and he has done it." My reputation as a man of his word was made indestructible. But to me the affair presents itself as chiefly accidental.

I had awful difficulties with the language. Somehow, very illogically, I thought that the mere fact of residence in Paris would mysteriously increase my knowledge of the French tongue to a respectable degree. I remember I was advised to haunt the theatre if I wished to "perfect" my French. The first play I saw was Edmond Sée's *L'Indiscret* at the Théâtre Antoine. I entered the theatre hoping for the best. I had read the play in advance. I did not, however, succeed in comprehending one single word—not one. I had been studying French for nearly twenty-six years. The man in me who had written scores of "authoritative" articles on French literature was deeply humiliated. I at once arranged to take lessons. Three or four nights a week I was to be seen in the first row of the stalls (so as to hear well) of the little *théâtres de quartier* round about Montmartre. I seemed to make no progress for six months. Then, enchantingly, I began to understand bits of phrases heard in the street. I had turned the corner! Heavenly moment!

PARIS FLATS

THE world revolves very rapidly under its appearance of stability. Only yesterday it seems that I was settling in Paris. And yet then I could buy Empire chairs (*croisées*) at sixteen shillings apiece; I could buy an Empire bedstead for a couple of pounds; and a beautiful dressing-table, whose mirror was supported by the curved necks of the Imperial swans, for three pounds! If I went to Paris now and asked dealers for Empire furniture at such prices, I should be classed as a lunatic. I had lived in an hotel overlooking the Seine for some time, and I was taking possession of a flat and furnishing it. I chose the Empire style for the furniture because I wanted a French style, and the Empire style was the only style within the means of a man who had to earn his living by realistic fiction. Louis Quinze and Louis Seize are not for writers; neither is Empire, any more! To acquire some real comprehension of a nation's character it is necessary to fit out a home in its capital. The process brings you at once into direct contact with the very spirit of the race. Especially in the big shops, which are so racy a feature of Paris life, do you encounter the French spirit, traditions, and idiosyncrasy. At some of the big shops you can buy everything that makes a home—except of course the second-hand. But you must not traverse the immemorial customs of home-making in France. Try to depart from the rule, even as to servants' aprons, and you will soon see that mysterious powers and influences are arrayed against you. The Republic itself stands before you in the shape of the shop-assistant. France is a land of suave uniformity. It is also at once the paradise and the inferno of bureaucracy. There the bureaucracy is underworked and underpaid. All which has been said before, uncountably often. Every Englishman is aware of it. And yet no Englishman is truly aware of it who has not set up a home in France.

For example, I wanted the gas to be turned on in my flat. A simple affair! Drop a post card to the Company telling the Company to come and turn it on? Not at all! I was told that it would be better to call upon the Company. So I called.

"What do you desire, monsieur?"

"I am the new tenant of a flat, and I want the gas turned on."

"Ah! You are the new tenant of a flat, and you want the gas turned on. M. Chose, here is the new tenant of a flat, and he wants the gas turned on. Where should he be led to?"

About a quarter of an hour of this, and then at last I am led by a municipal employé, sure of his job and of his pension, to the far-distant rooms of the higher employé appointed by the City of Paris to deal with such as me. This room is furnished somewhat like that of a solicitor's managing clerk.

"Good morning, sir."

"Good morning, sir."

"It appears, sir—M. Bennay, fourth floor, No. 4 Rue de Calais, sixth arrondissement, is it not?—that you want the gas turned on. Will you put yourself to the trouble of sitting down, M. Bennay?"

I sit down. He sits down.

"Ah! So you want the gas turned on! Let us see, let us see——"

Hundreds of such applications must be made every day. But the attitude of this ceremonious official might be put into words thus: "A strange and interesting application of yours—to have the gas turned on! Very remarkable! It attracts me. The case must be examined with the care and respect which it deserves."

The next moment the official astonishingly rises and informs me that the papers will arrive in due course. I depart. The papers do arrive in due course, papers of all colours and all complexities. One or two tips, and I get the gas. Electricity was not so easy. The Treaty of Berlin did not demand more negotiations and diplomacy than my electricity.

On the other hand, I had no trouble with the police. Every foreign resident must report himself to the police and get a permit to exist. The machine for preventing the unwelcome from existing in France is a beautiful bit of engineering. I ignored the police and just went on existing. Nothing happened. Yet sundry men must have been bringing up families and providing dowries for their daughters on salaries which they received for duties which included looking after me.

I said that it was necessary to fit out a home in a country in order to comprehend the national character. Perhaps that is not enough. You must get married in that country. Let none say that he knows his Paris until he has persuaded the mayor of some arrondissement to unite him in matrimony to a woman. By the time the ceremony is over, and the certificate issued, he will be a genuine expert in the niceties of the French temperament.

PARIS STREETS

WHEN from London I look back at Paris, I always see the streets—such as the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, the Rue des Martyrs, the Rue Fontaine, and the Rue d'Aumale (one of the most truly Parisian streets in Paris)—which lie on the steep slope between the Rue de Chateaudun and the exterior boulevard where Montmartre begins. Though I have lived in various quarters of Paris on both banks of the Seine, it is to these streets that my memory ever returns. And though I have lived for many years in London, no London street makes the same friendly and intimate appeal to me as these simple middle-class streets of little shops and flats over the shops, with little restaurants, little cafés, and little theatres here and there at the corners. The morning life of these streets was delightful, with the hatless women and girls shopping, and the tradesmen—and, above all, the tradeswomen—polite and firm at their counters, and the vast omnibuses scrambling up or thundering down, and the placid customers in the little cafés. The waiters in the cafés and restaurants were human; they are inhuman in London. The *concierges* of both sexes were fiends, but they were human fiends. There was everywhere a strange mixture of French industry (which is tremendous) and French nonchalance (which is charmingly awful). Virtue and wickedness were equally apparent and equally candid. Hypocrisy alone was absent. I could find more intellectual honesty within a mile of the Rue d'Aumale than in the whole of England. And, more than anything whatever, I prize intellectual honesty.

And then the glimpses of domestic life in the serried flats, poised story beyond story upon butchers' and grocers' and confectioners' and music-dealers' and repairers' and drapers' and corset-makers' and walking-stick-makers' and "bazaars"! Thousands of half-visible interiors within ten minutes' walk! And the intense mystery that enwrapped one's own house, reposing in the immense discretion of the *concierge*—who, by the way, was not a fiend. I never knew anything about the prodigiously genteel house of which I rented a fragment in the Rue de Calais, except that a retired opera singer lived over my head and a pianoforte professor at the Conservatoire somewhere under my feet. I never saw either of them, but I knew that the ex-opera singer received about a yard of bread every morning and one and a half litres of milk.

Every afternoon and sometimes in the evening a distant violin used to play, very badly, six bars—no more—of an air of Verdi's over and over again; never any other tune! The sound was too faint to annoy me, but it was the most melancholy thing that I have ever heard. This phenomenon persisted for years, and I never discovered its origin, though I inquired again and again. Some interior, some existence of an infinite monotonous sadness, was just at hand, and yet hidden away from me, inviolate. Whenever I hear that air now I am instantly in Paris, and as near being sentimental as ever I shall be. My ambition had long been to inhabit the Rue d'Aumale—austere, silent, distinguished, icy, and beautiful—and by hazard I did ultimately obtain a flat there, and so left the Rue de Calais. I tell you, I missed the undiscoverable and tragic violin of the Rue de Calais. To this day the souvenir of it will invariably fold me in a delicious spleen. The secret life of cities is a matter for endless brooding.

The sole disadvantage of the ability to take an equal delight in town life and in country life is that one is seldom content where one happens to be. Just when I was fully established in my Parisian street I became conscious of a powerful desire to go and live in the French provinces. And I went. I sacrificed my flat and departed—in order to learn about the avarice, the laboriousness, the political independence, and the tranquil charm of the French peasant, and about the scorn which the countryside has for Paris, and about certain rivers and forests of France, and about the high roads and the inns thereon, and what the commercial travellers say to one another of a night in those excellent inns; in short, to understand a little the fabric of the backbone of France. I often desired to be back again in Paris, and, of course, in the end I came back. And then I had the delightful sensation of coming back to the city, not as a stranger, but as one versed in its deviousness. I was able to take up at once the threads which I had dropped, without any of the drudgery and tedium incident to one's first social studies of a foreign capital. I was immediately at home, and I never felt more satisfaction in

my citizenship of Paris than at this period. It was also at this period that I carried my Parisianism as far as I am ever likely to carry it.

GRAPHIC ART IN PARIS

AFTER an interval of a quarter of a century, I had resumed, by some caprice, my early practice in water-colour painting. One of my school-girlish productions hung framed in the drawing-room of a Parisian friend, whose taste was, at any rate in this instance, unduly influenced by his affections, but who had a large and intimate acquaintance among the most modern French artists—by which I mean among the school known in England as the Post Impressionists, the school which was guffawed at a dozen years ago in England, was treated with marked respect by the *Times* ten years ago; and which in a few years more will be worshipped in England as ignorantly as it was once condemned. I had a particular admiration for the water-colours of Pierre Laprade, a light of this school, and I told my friend I should like to meet my hero. Nothing easier! We met without delay at lunch. Before the lunch I had said to my friend: "On no account let him see my water-colour."

My friend answered: "I shall most assuredly show him your water-colour."

I pretended to be desolated; but, naturally with the naïve hopefulness of the rank amateur, I was secretly pleased. My hero was led to my water-colour, and gazed thereat with indifferent disapproval.

"Monsieur," he said to me, "you have three times too much cleverness, and your work is utterly without interest."

It is scarcely credible, but I felt flattered. I was enchanted that I had three times too much cleverness. M. Laprade and I grew friendly; I visited his studio. We discussed art.

"The only advice I can offer to you," he said, "is to wait until you are conscious of an emotion before an object, and then paint what you feel."

Shortly afterwards I happened to be conscious of an emotion before an object—namely, the courtyard of the old house in Paris where I was living. So I painted what I felt one December afternoon. I then invited M. Laprade to lunch, and left the water-colour lying about. He spied it quickly enough.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he cried, too amiably excited. "You've done it! Oh, you've done it this time! *Très bien! Très bien!* Very interesting! Veritably interesting!"

(I should have kept this masterpiece as a sort of milestone in my swift career as a Post Impressionist, had not my American publisher caught sight of it and walked off with it, unintimidated by its post-impressionism. "I shall use this as a 'jacket' [paper covering] for one of your books," he said. And he did. He had it reproduced in colours, and calmly placed it on the bookstalls of the United States. I learnt afterwards that it was considered by trade experts as among the best commercial "jackets" of its season. Such can be the fruits of an emotion!)

My hero suggested that if I wished to take painting seriously I might attend the Post Impressionist Academy of which he was a professor. I was afraid; but, being ashamed of my timidity, I said I would go with the greatest pleasure. He took me. I entered the studio under his majestic ægis as his *protégé*. It was a fearful moment. I was ten times more nervous than I have ever been when called before the curtain of a theatre. I trembled, literally. It seemed absurd that I, a school-girlish amateur, should be there in that most modern of Parisian studios as a serious student of art. However, I had burnt my boats. I had to summon my manhood and begin a charcoal drawing of the model, a young Italian girl. I scarcely knew what I was doing. I glanced surreptitiously at the other students—about a dozen or so. The other students glanced surreptitiously at me. They were all young, extraordinarily young when compared with myself. I knew then that I was middle-aged. The studio was large and of irregular shape, and the stove was red-hot. Two young men in yellow smocks were painting, close together, and two other men sat behind, smoking, restlessly getting up and sitting down again. Silence. Dusk (3.50 p.m.). I looked about me. There were large photographs of modern masterpieces on the walls, a table with reviews on it, dumb-bells on the floor close to a fiddle-case and a volume of Mozart on a shelf. At the second "rest" I persuaded myself that it was absurd to be discountenanced by a pack of boys. So I joined a group of them in the

jauntiest manner I could assume and made artistic small-talk.

"Come and have a look at my drawing," I said, in a humorous tone. "Criticise it." (M. Laprade had disappeared.)

They came, politely. They gazed at the thing and said not a word.

"Of course, the head's too small," I remarked airily.

"In effect," said one of them gravely, "the head is rather small."

Nobody said anything else. The sitting was resumed.

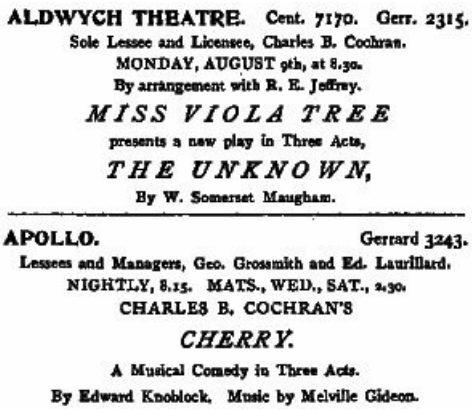
Going home M. Laprade advised me to paint a water-colour of the Tuileries gardens from the Pavilion des Arts Décoratifs. Also to go and examine carefully the Delacroix at St. Sulpice, and then get a photograph of it, and do a water-colour interpretation of it from memory at home. We called at a colour-maker's to buy sketch-books, etc. His demeanour towards the respectful and somewhat intimidated students had been quite informal, or nearly so. He told me that when *he* first came to Paris, there would be a great crowd of students in a large atelier; a professor (of German aspect) would come in; all the students would stand up; and the professor would march about curtly from one canvas to the next, making such remarks as, "That leg is too short."

It might be thought that after this baptism into a cult so acutely Parisian, I should have felt myself more than ever firmly rooted in the soil of France. But it was not so. For several years there had been gradually germinating in my mind the conviction that I should be compelled by some obscure instinct to return to England, where, unhappily, art is not cherished as in France. I had a most disturbing suspicion that I was losing touch with England, and that my (literary) work would soon begin to suffer accordingly. And one day I gave notice to my landlady, and then I began to get estimates for removing my furniture and books. And then I tried to sell to my landlady the fittings of the admirable bathroom which I had installed in her house, and she answered me that she had no desire for a bathroom in her house, and would I take the fittings away? And then I unhooked my pictures and packed my books. And, lastly, the removers came and turned what had been a home into a litter of dirty straw. And I saw the tail of the last van as it rounded the corner. And I gave up my keys so bright with use. And I definitely quitted the land where eating and love are understood, where art and learning are honoured, where women well dressed and without illusions are not rare, where thrift flourishes, where politeness is practised, and where politics are shameful and grotesque. I return merely as a visitor. I should probably have enjoyed myself more in France, only I prefer to live in England and regret France than to live in France and regret England. I think the permanent exile is a pathetic figure. I suppose I have a grim passion for England. But I know why France is the darling of nations.

PLAYERS AND AUTHORS

I SAW on a bus an advertisement of a play called *Come Out of the Kitchen*. Above the title was the name in very prominent characters of Miss Gertrude Elliott. Below the title was a line in characters so tiny that I could not decipher them. However, the bus stopped. I went close, and read the name of Alice Duer Miller, known only to me from the fact that I had often seen it in the American papers attached to the question: "Are women people?" It may be, on the other hand it may not be, that Miss Alice Duer Miller has a clause in her play-contracts, as I have in mine, obliging the theatrical manager producing the play to print the name of the author on all advertising matter. In either case, the appearance of Miss Alice Duer Miller's name on that particular advertisement was as nearly perfectly futile as makes no matter, for not one person in a thousand would read it or notice it at all. There can be no doubt that in Great Britain the name of Miss Gertrude Elliott has incomparably more advertising value than that of Miss Alice Duer Miller. But even so the disproportion between the types of the two names was excessive. I am not, however, among those playwrights who kick angrily against the great importance given to players in theatrical advertising. Theatrical advertising is mainly under the control of players, who are human. If it was under the control of authors, players would not have much of a show, authors being equally human. And there is a good reason for the players' advantage; the public is more interested in players than in authors. It sees players; it likes them, loves them, worships them. Players feast the eye. Authors are seldom seen; discreet authors never. And when authors are seen they amount to nothing at all as a spectacle. I once lately "appeared," against my will, after a first performance. Some said maliciously that the unwillingness was unreal. This was nothing. But one reporter stated that I was wearing a blue shirt—naughty fabrication which I felt compelled to contradict.

Nevertheless, although I fully admit the superior advertising value of players' names—Barrie himself has never got more than even with his interpreters in size of type—I do not think that players are more important than authors to the success of a play. A good play may and sometimes does triumph over bad players; but the greatest player cannot make the public go to see a play that it has decided it doesn't want to see—at any rate in sufficient numbers to put money into the purse of the manager. Some managers are, if possible, more human than either actors or authors, and here (reproduced with typographical exactitude) are two examples of their humanness:



ALDWYCH THEATRE. Cent. 7170. Gerr. 2315.
Sole Lessee and Licensee, Charles B. Cochran.
MONDAY, AUGUST 9th, at 8.30.
By arrangement with R. E. Jeffrey.
MISS VIOLA TREE
presents a new play in Three Acts,
THE UNKNOWN,
By W. Somerset Maugham.

APOLLO. Gerrard 3243.
Lessees and Managers, Geo. Grossmith and Ed. Laurillard.
NIGHTLY, 8.15. MATS., WED., SAT., 2.30.
CHARLES B. COCHRAN'S
CHERRY.
A Musical Comedy in Three Acts.
By Edward Knoblock. Music by Melville Gideon.

Not Mr. Knoblock's *Cherry*, nor Mr. Gideon's, but Mr. Cochran's! . . . Nay, sometimes managers entirely suppress all names save their own. This may be business, but I do not think it is. I hesitate to call it megalomania, but it is nearer megalomania than business. I have thought of inserting a clause in my contracts to the effect that my name shall be printed at least half as large as that of any player or manager. This would coincide fairly well with my idea of a good subtle joke.

HENRY JAMES

HENRY JAMES'S *Letters* are the talk of the moment. I think they are taken too solemnly and that the editor has taken them too piously. The fault of the editor, if it is one, may be excused. Very many of the letters are admirable, but very many of them grate on the sensibility by reason of the tone of ecstatic friendship, and of the ecstatic appreciation of the work of friends, which abound in them. It would be almost cruel to give quotations, for some of the phrasing borders on the grotesque. Several of the correspondents in whom James apparently delighted were or are mediocrities of an exacerbating kind. His affections often overbore his unquestionable critical faculty. Thus he spoke highly of E. A. Abbey's decorations for the Boston Public Library. Now these decorations are merely and acutely ugly, as anyone may perceive by going out on to the staircase of the said Library and comparing them with the lovely frescoes of Puvis de Chavannes. The explanation of this sad shortcoming in the letters is perhaps to be found in a sentence written to Mr. A. C. Benson: "I respond to the lightest touch of a friendly hand." He evidently did. I should not care to insist unduly on the amiable weakness; for a fine, distinguished, and lovable personality emerges from the general body of the letters; and the justness of the man's powerful, even ruthless, critical faculty is manifest again and again. He is admirably discriminating, for example, on the books of his friend Paul Bourget; and he saw through the charming speciousness of Stevenson's letters immediately he read them in bulk. It is possible that he was a better critic than a creative artist. His famous verdicts on the younger generation of British novelists, though naturally they showed that his ageing eye had blind spots, struck me as really first-rate criticism. I read them twice, with great care, for personal reasons, and I was more impressed the second time than the first.

I have seldom been able to enjoy his novels, no doubt because I simply could not read them. I was bogged finally half-way through *The Ambassadors* (or was it *The Golden Bowl*?), and that was the end of James's fiction for me. I can recall only two that I enjoyed—*In the Cage* and *The Other House*. I really did enjoy these. I could surmount the excessive elaborateness of the style, its multitudinous folds and pleats, its determination never to say anything crudely positive. Various great writers have been difficult. For instance, Doughty. But I want some reward for my trouble, and from James I too rarely got any reward. He said somewhere that the fault of the English novel was lack of subject. This is just the fault that I should charge him with. His novels did not seem to me to be *about* anything. And when the subject was perceptible it was usually a very obvious subject—as in most of the short stories. And did he in fact create characters? Do we remember his characters as we remember the characters of Balzac, Dostoievsky, Fielding, Dickens, Hardy, George Moore? Do we even remember their names? I don't, at any rate. I have a vague souvenir of only one character, the Post Office girl in the cage. I do not remember her name; to the best of my recollection the author took care never to mention her name. A pretty trick, but immensely unpractical. I once told a common friend that *A Small Boy and Others* was rather difficult to read. (Had I been generous of the truth I should have said that I had absolutely failed to read it.) The friend passed on my remark to James, and I afterwards learnt that he was considerably perturbed by it—couldn't understand it.

The theatrical interlude in James's literary career is very strange; and in the light of the letters it must be as disagreeable to his admirers as it was to him. He thought he was hard up and precariously situated, though assuredly he never was—judged by the standard applicable to an artist. He always lived in a good quarter and in comfort, and he always travelled a lot. Still, he thought he was hard up, and so he sat down to write plays for money. The votaries of the cult try to gloss over this fact. But it cannot be glossed over. "My books don't sell, and it looks as if my plays might. Therefore, I am going with a brazen front to write half a dozen." And then, after the definite failure: "The money disappointment is of course keen as it was wholly for money I adventured." I reckon this to be pretty bad; but nobody animadverts upon it. Strange how one artist may steal a horse while another may not look over a hedge. Somebody of realistic temperament ought to have advised James that to write plays with the sole object of making money is a hopeless enterprise. I tried it myself for several years, at the end of which I abandoned the stage for ever. I should not have returned to it had not William Lee Mathews of the Stage Society persuaded me to write a play in the same spirit as I was writing serious novels. It was entirely due to him that I wrote *Cupid and Commonsense*. Since then I have never written a play except

for my own artistic satisfaction.

James asserts several times that he had mastered the whole technique of the drama. He never had. Not long since I saw *The Reprobate*. It contained some agreeable bits; but the spectacle it provided of an unusually able and gifted man trying to do something for which his talents were utterly unfitted was painful; it was humiliating. Half the time the author obviously had not the least idea what he was about. It may be said that *The Reprobate* was not his best play. It was not. But he committed it to print. I daresay his best play was *Guy Domville*. Its rehearsals and production by George Alexander at the St. James's Theatre form the tragedy of the *Letters*. I was present as a dramatic critic at the first night of *Guy Domville*. One perceived and admitted the fineness of the author's intentions; I know that I felt sympathetic towards the play; but it had a fatal fault; it was not dramatic. The house was full of votaries of the cult, and the reception as a whole was very favourable. The gallery behaved roughly; but in those days there was nothing at all unusual in that. The gallery booed Henry James. Of course this was sacrilege, but the gallery didn't know it was sacrilege. The gallery had probably never heard of Henry James until that night. My memory is not clear for details, but I have a kind of recollection that George Alexander made a speech which annoyed me far more than the behaviour of the gallery—a speech somehow apologising for the play and admitting that it was a mistake. (I will not vouch for this, but I do not see how my memory could have invented it.) The whole of the first night, and especially its culmination, was horrible torture for the sensitive James. But if he had known thoroughly the technique of the drama he would have saved himself the torture. Part of the technique of a thoroughly equipped dramatist is never to go to his own first nights. Having failed to make money out of plays—and not, according to his own account, having failed to write a good play, James abandoned the drama. This also I think was pretty bad. I must further point out that James once for commercial purposes altered the ending of a play from sad to happy. Tut-tut!

I met Henry James twice. First in the office of Mr. J. B. Pinker. I was amused in secret, because he was so exactly like the (quite good-humoured) caricatural imitations of him by H. G. Wells. But I was also deeply impressed, not to say intimidated. Although I was nearer fifty than forty I felt like a boy. He had great individuality. And there was his enormous artistic prestige, and his staggering technical skill in the manipulation of words. He asked me if I ever dictated. I said that I could dictate nothing but letters; that I had once dictated a chapter of a novel, but that the awful results decided me never to try it again. He said I might yet come to it. (I never shall.) He said he knew just how I felt, and that he had felt the same, but had got into the habit of dictation. (Certainly some of his dictated letters are complex masterpieces of dictation—unless he revised the copy afterwards.) He expressed stupefaction when I said that I knew nothing about the middle classes, and indicated that the next time he saw me he would have recovered from the stupefaction and the discussion might proceed. Talking about the material for novels, he maintained that there was too much to say about everything, and that was what was most felt by one such as himself, not entirely without—er—er—perceptions. When I told him that sometimes I lay awake at night, thinking of the things I had forgotten to put into my novels, he said that my novels were "crammed," and that when something was "crammed" nothing else could be put in, and so it was all right. He spoke with feeling about his recent illness: "I have been very ill."

At a later date, in the coffee room of the Reform Club he came up to me and said: "You probably don't remember me. I'm Henry James." I blushed. (Just as I blushed when in the stalls of a theatre someone tapped my arm from behind and said: "You don't know me, Mr. Bennett, but I know you. I'm Ellen Terry." I think that great legendary figures really ought not to make such remarks to their juniors.) I have a most disconcerting memory. I once met a man in St. James's Street and he stopped and I stopped. I said: "You must excuse me. I remember your face, but I can't think who you are." He replied: "You and I dined together last night with our friend ——" But this man was not a Henry James. And with all its faults my memory was incapable of forgetting a Henry James. He asked me if I was alone. I said I had two guests. He said: "May I join your party upstairs?" I blushed again. It seemed to me incredible that Henry James should actually be asking to join my party. We received him with all the *empressement* that he desired. He talked. He did all the talking, and he was

exceedingly interesting. He said that to him the Reform Club was full of ghosts. He told us about all the ghosts, one after another. There was no touch of sentimentality in his recollections. Everything was detached, just, passionless, and a little severe—as became his age. His ghosts were the ghosts of dead men, and his judgments on them were no longer at the mercy of his affections. He was not writing to them or to their friends. I doubt whether Henry James ever felt a passion, except for literature. I doubt whether he was, in life, more than a dilettante. And, if it was so, that is what is the matter with his novels. They lack ecstasy, guts.

I append here, exactly as it was printed, the criticism which I wrote of the first performance of *Guy Domville*.

> The behaviour of the pit and gallery at the production by Mr. George Alexander, at the St. James's Theatre, of Mr. Henry James's play *Guy Domville* was to me quite inexplicable. The piece is assuredly not faultless—far from it; but it is so beautifully written, it contains so many exquisite scenes, it is so conscientiously and artistically acted, and so lavishly staged, that the *longueurs* of the second act, one would have thought, might have been either forgiven or endured in respectful silence. I avoided coming to any hasty conclusions, and therefore deferred my notice until this week. The period of the play is 1780. In the first act we find ourselves in the garden of Porches, where dwell Mrs. Peverel (Miss Marion Terry), a beautiful widow, her little son, and the boy's tutor, Guy Domville (Mr. George Alexander). Guy, though the bearer of an ancient name, is poor; we see him upon the point of taking Holy Orders. Everything is, in fact, arranged, when enter Lord Devenish, a messenger from Mrs. Domville, Guy's cousin's wife, to say that through a hunting accident Guy is the last male of his line, and heir to rich, though encumbered, possessions. Lord Devenish (Mr. Elliot) urges Guy that it is his duty now to give up the Church and marry, in order to carry on the great family traditions. The conflict between Church and family is movingly displayed. The family wins, and Guy sets off for London with Lord Devenish, whose interest in him, by the way, may be attributed to the fact that the aristocratic and rascally old *viveur* is in love with Mrs. Domville, and has obtained her promise to marry him if he can bring about a marriage between Guy and Mary Brasier, Mrs. Domville's daughter by her first husband.
>
> Guy goes to London, half aware that he is in love with Mrs. Peverel, who is undoubtedly in love with him, though she has almost promised herself to Frank Humber (Mr. Herbert Waring), an excellent young squire in the neighbourhood, whose suit Guy has himself pleaded. The second act is tedious. We meet Guy gaily dressed, in the full enjoyment of life and betrothed to Mary Brasier (Miss Evelyn Millard). But Mary is in love with a young naval lieutenant, George Round (Mr. H. V. Esmond), and when, through plot and counterplot, and after much mock drunkenness between himself and Round, Guy gets to know of this, he assists the pair to make an entirely preposterous and impossible elopement, and sets off to return to Porches with a heart full of hatred for Lord Devenish and his scheming paramour, Mrs. Domville. Lord Devenish suddenly discovers that it will suit his and Mrs. Domville's plans just as well if Guy marries Mrs. Peverel. So he posts to Porches, gets there first, and advises Mrs. Peverel to marry Guy. While they are conversing Guy is announced, and Lord Devenish hides in the library. There is a beautiful scene between Mrs. Peverel and the returned wanderer, and Guy is just making open love to her when he sees Lord Devenish's glove on the table. So Devenish has his finger in this pie also! If Devenish wants him to marry Mrs. Peverel then he will not marry her. The claims of his deserted Church rush in upon him, and he goes away to seek ordination, his last words being a request to Mrs. Peverel to accept Frank Humber.
>
> Such, brief and imperfectly, is the plot. The defects of its motivation will be only too apparent. The whole business of Lord Devenish and his schemes is quite "too thin." Why should a man of his habits, admittedly a guilty lover, and, indeed, the father of Mary, wish to marry Mrs. Domville at all? And, his plan for the bartering of his daughter having failed, how comes it about that it will suit him equally well if Guy marries Mrs. Peverel? The answer is clearly: These things are so in order that the play may not come to a dead stop. In the first act, the absurdity of Lord Devenish's interference in the Domvilles' affairs is not completely apparent, and consequently it is the best act of the three: natural, impressive, and studded with gems of dialogue—gems, however, of too modest and serene a beauty to

suit the taste of an audience accustomed to the scintillating gauds of Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. H. A. Jones. The second act is invertebrate, long-winded, and impossible; and it clearly shows that either of the aforenamed gentlemen, though they may be vastly inferior to Mr. James as literary artists, could yet give him some valuable lessons upon plot-weaving. When one considers the unrivalled work which Mr. James has produced in fiction, one marvels that he should have allowed this second act to get outside his study. For the elopement of Mary and the lieutenant, arranged in a moment, and, we are to suppose, carried out with complete success, is really childish; there is neither rhyme nor reason in it. The third act is fitfully beautiful, and the closing scene, did we not suspect that it was quite unnecessary, most touching.

As for the acting, Mr. Alexander carried off the honours. His performance was probably the best thing he has done; it need only be pointed out that his budding priest was more artistic than his man of the world. Miss Marion Terry, with the Terry voice and movement, could not fail to be charming as the widow, and she showed a fine intellectual grasp of the part. Mr. Herbert Waring, not a villain this time, was admirable as Frank Humber. Miss Millard had small scope, appearing only in one act, as the eloping maiden, but what she did she did meetly. Miss Irene Vanbrugh worked marvels with the little part of Mrs. Peverel's maid; while Mrs. Edward Saker, as the despicable Mrs. Domville, was far, far from successful. Mr. Elliot as Lord Devenish, and Mr. Esmond as the lieutenant, were neither good nor bad. A final word of appreciation for the scenery. The setting of the last act, the "white parlour" at Mrs. Peverel's home, Porches, was one of the most perfect stage interiors I have ever seen.

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Transcriber's Notes:
hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original
Page 35, state of public opinon ==> state of public opinion
Page 86, in effect: We tried ==> in effect: "We tried
Page 223, sincere in his esctasy ==> sincere in his ecstasy
Page 305, close to, a fiddle-case ==> close to a fiddle-case
Page 319, (Mr George Alexander) ==> (Mr. George Alexander)

[The end of *Things That Have Interested Me* by Arnold Bennett]