

THE
APPLE TREES

FOUR REMINISCENCES

HUGH WALPOLE

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FOR
HENRY JAMES
AS HE KNOWS
WITH
LOVE

We are old fashioned people who drink tea at six, or not much later, and give cold mutton and pickle at nine, the good old time.—*Charles Lamb.*

**THE
APPLE
TREES**

FOUR REMINISCENCES

BY HUGH
WALPOLE

with
wood-engravings
by Lynton Lamb

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THE ENTANGLED GARDEN

There is a fearful passage in Virginia Woolf's beautiful and mysterious book 'The Waves' which when I first read it gave me an acute shock of unanticipated reminiscence. This is it:

'Since I am supposed', said Neville, 'to be too delicate to go with them, since I get so easily tired and then am sick, I will use this hour of solitude, this reprieve from conversation, to coast round the purlieus of the house and recover, if I can, by standing on the same stair half-way up the landing, what I felt when I heard about the dead man through the swing-door last night when cook was shoving in and out the dampers. He was found with his throat cut. The apple-tree leaves became fixed in the sky; the moon glared; I was unable to lift my foot up the stair. He was found in the gutter. His jowl was white as a dead codfish. I shall call this stricture, this rigidity "death among the apple-trees" for ever. There were the floating, pale-grey clouds; and the immitigable tree; the implacable tree with its greaved silver bark. The ripple of my life was unavailing. I was unable to pass by. There was an obstacle. "I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle," I said. And the others passed on. But we are doomed all of us by the immitigable apple tree.'

'The ripple of my life was unavailing. I was unable to pass by. There was an obstacle. "I cannot surmount this unintelligible obstacle".'

Exactly mine also, at one moment of my childhood was this experience of the sensitive Neville's. When I read these lines I was swung back absolutely into the centre of that evilly

enchanted scene—the tangled untended orchard that ran down to the mysterious river, the echo across the fields of the Cathedral bells, the dry knotted hands of old Wallace, the gardener, the inescapable loneliness as though one were caught into a cruel net flung over one by a malicious power, the long dusty classroom with the rows of bound 'Graphics', the clocks at the stair-head that grunted like an ancient asthmatic man, the figures seen like men in a dream of Mr. Read and Mr. Harvey and Mr. Dall, my parents kind and watchful and infinitely remote, my brother and sister—and, most sinister of all, like a prison wall with immutable confining strength, the school beyond the fields and the town—over all these things the gnarled and sterile apple-trees.

In positive fact there was nothing terrible in any of this. For many a child it would have been a life of easy freedom, games and enterprise, but for everyone who has any imagination at all there has been one moment at least in life when all companionship has been withdrawn, when the penalties of living are weighted too heavily for any hope of escape, when isolation appears endless. Lest these words should appear too melodramatic I would say that never again after my fifteenth or sixteenth year was life to be so unhappy, never again was I to be unable to meet confidently loneliness and isolation, never again was I to know fear in the sense that I knew it then.

I am not, in fact, recovering now the consciousness of those years with any wish to wring my own sense of pity. I have had a happy life, the happier, I suppose, because I can see so clearly now how causeless are most of one's fears, how kindly one's companions are, and how rich & invigorating all

experience, however dangerous, comes in the end to be. But childhood is often a desperate time because it seems endless, because if you are sensitive you are hurt & bewildered, because the passage from babyhood to puberty is misunderstood by nine out of ten who reach maturity, misunderstood because so quickly forgotten. I recover now this moment not through egotism but simply because other children perhaps are feeling now what I felt then and are helpless... My father was at that time Principal of Bede College, Durham, an educational establishment for the training of schoolmasters. There were five of us, my father, my mother, my sister and brother. My sister & brother were younger than I. I went every day to Durham School and some of my unhappiness came, as I will presently explain, from the snobbish dislike of being a day-boy. My father's college was not considered by the dignitaries of the Cathedral & the professors of the University a very handsome affair—we were a little 'outside' things socially—and some of my unhappiness came from that snobbery also. I was a complete failure at the school in every possible way. The four masters who had to do with me—Mr. Hillard, Mr. McKenzie, Mr. Poole and Mr. Smith—found me dull, objectionable, lazy; and dull, objectionable, lazy no doubt I was. I can see them now with eyes almost gratefully friendly—Hillard tall, gaunt and remote; McKenzie (a warm and loyal friend of my father's) exceedingly neat, cut sharply as though with scissors from a sheet of paper, a devourer of Greek accents, a tyrant for accuracy. Poole warm-blooded, irascible, generous, impatient; & Smith small, debonair and a devil for sarcasm. I mention these men thus in detail because they hung over my life like the avenging gods, their shadows falling over every fragment of my path in a fashion that was

never, I am certain, apparent to them. I could nowhere escape them; in my uprising and downsetting there they were. I would dream of them by night and as I walked trembling to school of a morning wonder how possibly I might placate them. I was, in fact, a terrible coward. But here again I must insist that my childhood was not all unhappy—very, very far from that. I am only now trying to recall one short hard period that appears to me now after all these years like a patch of black shadow cast possibly by those same gnarled apple-trees and all around it the grass bright with sunlight. This sense of apprehension, of fear, endured for a year or more but crystallized into one moment, one complete experience. There is another sentence in 'The Waves' that exactly describes it: 'I dash and sprinkle myself with the bright waters of childhood. Its thin veil quivers. But the chained beast stamps on the shore.'

My isolation at that time now, when I look back on it, seems to me very strange and I am sure that it was, most of it, my own fault. My sister & brother were too young to be my companions: I made no friends at the school. My father appears to me in recollection especially remote at that time and it was not in fact until long after that we became real friends. He was a delightful man, with a Faith as simple as that of a good and trusting child, a warm eager friendliness for all the world. But he did not then or ever understand morbidities or eccentric twists. Life was as clear to him as a bowl of shining glass and what one must do was to serve God and do one's Duty, both God and Duty being beyond miscomprehension. He had not I think a very easy life at this college, had obstacles of all kinds to surmount and, being himself altogether loyal, direct and unsuspecting, was

bewildered often by the tortuous motives and methods of others. Of all of this I, of course, at the time knew nothing. What he *did* see was that I was none of the things that he wished me to be, lazy and stupid at school, unpopular, poor at games and always uncommunicative. I spent my time, it seemed to him, in reading novels and writing trashy stories. He had, I don't doubt, many serious & melancholy conversations with McKenzie, the Worshipper of the Greek Accent, the stickler for efficiency and alertness. McKenzie would have done something for me if he could, but I was everything that he most disliked and I was a day-boy, which meant that he saw me only at the bottom of his class or slinking furtively home when the moment of happy escape had arrived.

My father had not at that time the experience of life that he afterwards obtained, nor had he yet that beautiful tolerance and charity so fully as in later years. In any case at that time, thirty-five years ago, the relation of fathers and sons was exceedingly difficult. There was still enough of the old Victorian discipline remaining to prevent the comradeship of to-day. Neither he nor I knew how to be comrades. I moved in a world of half-lights where things, both beautiful and ugly, were dimly seen. Books were to me a passion: morality of little importance save through fear. He was also busied about a thousand things, building that career of helpfulness and human piety that was to bring happiness to such a multitude of people, but I knew nothing of that. Men and women seemed to me then to move in a static world. Their problems were over. They were married and had their occupations in which they moved serenely and without

trouble. *All* their questions were answered, I thought, and very fortunate they were!

My problems were also of course largely confused with sex at that time, and to my father sexual relations were as simple and definite as breathing! It was, all his life through, the same with him. He had infinite charity to the sinner but *could* not understand the sin! The temptations, remorse, fears of Hell, curiosities, inextricable mysteries that made up my progress into puberty would have bewildered him had he known of them. There was a simple answer to all these things: 'Do nothing, my boy, that you would not like your mother to know!'

There were, alas, many things at that time that I would not like my mother to know—many things that she did not know.

I wonder now that she and I did not reach friendship sooner than we did; for, in later years, we achieved an intimacy so easy and beautiful that the experience of that alone has made life worth living had there been nothing else to be thankful for! But I fancy that she was realizing at that time some of my own apprehension. She had been brought up in a little country town, Truro in Cornwall, the adored child of devoted parents, a member of one of the happiest families in England. Truro in her childhood had a perfect retired life of its own, the deep lanes that surrounded it scented with flowers almost the whole year round, the sea not far away, balls and parties and picnics, the jolly intimacies of families that had been friends for generations.

Into the middle of this came tragedy—an epidemic of Scarlet Fever, killing her brother, all but killing herself. That, I fancy, was the beginning of her apprehensions. Then directly after her marriage to my father (she was very young at the time) she was carried off with him to New Zealand, a New Zealand very different then from the civilized country of to-day. Here I and my sister were born, here she faced many roughnesses both of actual living and social manners. They *meant* to be kind, those New Zealanders, but she had seen so little of the world, had been brought up in so intimate a family happiness, had not tasted roughness, so that that experience must have been often terrible for her. Then followed years in New York when she was ill and harrassed and sick for home. By the time that Bede College was reached she had learnt to protect herself by a sensitive reserve as though she said: 'There is danger on every side; I must be on my guard.'

There was never anyone with a lovelier nature than my mother's. To the day of her death when she was over seventy she had the impulse to almost reckless enjoyment of a child. When she was seventy I took her to a performance of 'Saint Joan' in London and at the end she turned to me, her eyes shining, and cried: 'Oh I have enjoyed that! I *have* enjoyed that!'

She had a great capacity for happiness in little things: a walk, a tea-party, music, the novels (in those Bede days) of Lucas Malet and Miss Montresor (there was a book called 'Into the Highways & Hedges' that she loved) and Mrs. Humphrey Ward. But always, behind everything, lurked Apprehension. She was incredibly brave if faced with a real crisis, but *little* troubles—a careless maid, an alarming visitor, a casual word

spoken in jest, worried her beyond all reason. Her great happiness was in her family and her religion. The second of these never failed her, but the first, I fear, in my own small person, distressed and bewildered her.

In addition to my parents and brother and sister and the four avenging deities at the school there were the masters at the college—Mr. Read, Mr. Harvey and Mr. Dall. Mr. Read was small and dark and reserved. Mr. Harvey was young and gay; he was a relation (a cousin, I think) of the actor Martin Harvey and so seemed to me, who had at that time been only once in my life inside a theatre, a radiant being from a fairy world. Mr. Dall was tall and broad and handsome. At this particular crisis in my life I knew him no more than to pass the time of day but it was he who, afterwards, was to lead me out of all this unhappiness and bewildered egotism. That is another story, but of the half-a-dozen human beings to whom I owe almost everything in life he is the first because the earliest. How I wish now that I could tell him all that I owe him, make up a little for some of the unhappiness that came afterwards to him and his devoted wife. Always one is too late, always the moment of generosity has passed without one's recognizing it, always like a boomerang life returns to you what you send out of it! These three men were part of a most mysterious world. One of the strangenesses of our existence at this time was that our house was not our own. We shared in the main building and although our quarters were divided completely from all the activities of the college yet, just beyond the wall, there they were!—the bells and voices and steps, signs of another world and yet part of our world also!

I myself was even more oddly mixed in the college life although not belonging to it, for my little bedroom was *in* the college, set between the bedrooms of the masters and just beyond one of the men's dormitories. Their life went past and through me but regardless of me, as though I did not at all exist! The college bell would be my first sign of life on waking and then I would hear through the thin wall the serious ablutions of Mr. Read, Mr. Harvey trilling a song on the other side and the men in the dormitory rushing into their clothes to be ready for *their* lives whatever they might be. In my own place I seemed to have no life at all: I belonged nowhere, and yet I *had* a life, for there was school to be faced, there was that awful walk through the town when I would be weighed down by the knowledge that none of the things that I should, the night before, have prepared were learnt by me and that one or other of the Deities was already waiting there on the hill to catch me out, to proclaim to the world my stupidity. I existed because my fears, my adventures, my confusions existed; but no one, it seemed, knew that I existed—or knew only sufficiently to wish that I did not!

It was part of my trouble that none of the external things—the house, the garden, the river, the town, the school—seemed to me to be real. Somewhere there was a real world—the endless succession of novels that I read told me so—but I was not in it and I did not know where to find it.

The novel-reading was of course a great part of my trouble. My father was right in that. The very moment that school was over I would slip away, like a little criminal for whom the whole world was hunting and, with my detested school

books corded together under my arm, would hasten to the Town Library. This was an ancient dusty place at the top of the main street near the Cathedral. Here, in gloomy state, sat the lady Librarian guarding a small collection of new novels, the only things that the visitors to the Library found interesting. Behind and around her was shelf upon shelf of old, forgotten, desolated novels. I climbed the ladder, and, with dust in my eyes, dug for treasure. Fielding, Smollett, Bagehot, Mrs. Radcliffe, 'Monk' Lewis, Mrs. Shelley, Fenimore Cooper, Eugene Sue, Mrs. Gore, Hawley Smart, Whyte Melville, Henry Kingsley, G. P. R. James, Mrs. Craik—these and many, many more, became to me friends and companions so real that they moved with me everywhere. In the house there was a small child's bagatelle board, and on this, day after day, I played my authors the one against the others, writing the scores on slips of paper and adding them at the end of the week, often in a panting excitement to see whether the author of 'Hermspray' had defeated the creator of 'John Halifax', whether Cooper had the better of Victor Hugo (as I always hoped he would) or the sarcastic Miss Ferrier yielded to the superior aim of Charlotte Mary Yonge. No wonder my father thought that he had a crazy son! He saw me on a bright afternoon when I should have been gaining victories at football sending the little balls down the worn thin green surface and, sunk in the heavy dining-room armchair, devouring page after page of Ouida and Frank Smedley! How intensely exasperated I should have been in a like case with a son of my own!

But the thing that I am trying to do here is to bring back exactly the moment when this unreal fantastic life reached its unreal fantastic climax. That climax was not, perhaps, in

strict truth at any actual hour: it was spread possibly over many weeks—and yet I see it as an actual moment. I can still shiver in my bones if I recall the collision of all these different forces even as Neville in 'The Waves' recalls the moment when the Cook spoke of the dead man and the 'apple-tree leaves became fixed in the sky'.

Something at any rate burst, as a paper bag is burst, that atmosphere of dread and apprehension, liberated me, flung me out into a real world where the flags waved on the Castle wall and the knives and forks on the dinner-table stayed straight in their places, cheerfully, under the decent but not too beautifully painted portrait of my grandfather. At a precise moment the world shook itself back for me into its safe and sound position. But first, before the knives and forks are straightened, the crisis must occur. There was the Orchard.

How can one tell at this distance what that Orchard was? A very little Orchard, maybe, by any test of scientific reality—a few crumpled trees rising in knotted convolutions protestingly from thick rank grass. I am sure of the grass, its close hot smell in summer, and the edge of a leaf sharp enough to cut your hand; lying down in it a beetle, its wings faintly shadowed like the tracing of metal on metal, lighter dark against darker dark, close to one's eyes becomes gigantic in its world, ants and bugs and creeping flies hastening from its path as Early Man from the Mastodon. Were I to return now to that Orchard—as in fact I am now returning—I would find only these few trees, this grass on the rough ground sloping to the river, the hum of flies and the rough odour from the vegetables beyond the trees. I

would look and see old Wallace, spare, Scotch, and grub-like cursing the cabbages, wheeling truculently a wheelbarrow, thinking of Scotland. So much in scientific reality: but things are what they become, not what they are. That certainty of fact is but the beginning of the adventure, & although it must be truthfully noted, it is in growth that all its power and importance comes.

Since that early day I have encountered many wild confusions of forest, from the bare stones of Skiddaw Forest where there are no trees at all, from that poisonous mosquito-haunted island grove off Florida where I was desperately lost in a space about ten yards square, from the dense forests of Thomlinson and Conrad and Hudson—yes, even my provincial unexploring experience knows that darkness, the sodden undergrowth, the certainty of a secret unseen watcher, the terror that one will never return to safety again—but never anywhere shall I be lost and abandoned as I was, at that moment, in that miserable little garden running down to the river. It appears to me now that I waited for years just on the border of it, that every afternoon when I returned from school, clutching my dusty novels, I thought: 'To-morrow I shall be lost in that garden and never find my way out again.' I was lost in so many ways—moral, physical, spiritual—that to be lost finally beyond hope of rescue seemed at that time the inevitable climax. The apple-trees, their leaves fixed, were waiting for me.

At the bottom of the Orchard there was a dumping place used by Wallace for refuse—wickedly shining tins, potato-skins, half-burnt paper, rotting vegetables, festered there. I asked Wallace whether these things did not crawl about the

Orchard in the night. I could see the tins with their jagged edges turning clumsily through the grass & the stalks of the cabbages raising their stems like feelers in the air. But Wallace did not believe in metamorphoses. Things were what they seemed to be and the world was evil because men no longer went to Chapel as they used to do. I would stand just beyond the flower-beds and look down the slope to the apple-trees. I could see the river, the fields, the rising town and the Cathedral towers over all. I had the fantastic childish notion that could I but walk far enough I would escape all this. In the novels that I was for ever reading there was always this business of escape from something—escape from physical danger, escape from tyranny, escape from a dreary occupation, escape from poverty. The stories of Wilkie Collins, especially then loved by me, were peopled with figures escaping across dreary wastes under leaden skies, from mad-houses, from pursuing avenging Indians, from fat cheerful Foxes, from dry persecuting Lawyers. There was a scene in 'No Name' that always haunted me, the moment when Magdalen, disguised, visits Mrs. Lecount in the empty Lambeth house and finds her seated beside her aquarium in which there squats her favourite toad. That toad was somewhere in the Orchard waiting for me... Well, I too was to escape and happily never return. One short half-hour saw both my captivity and my liberation.

I can, I find, name the exact day when, after a moment of absurd and nightmare terror, all this morbidity came to an end. I kept a Journal—from what motives of egotism, loneliness, desire for fame, hope of companionship I cannot now retrace—and, the other day, searching through the battered clumsy little book I found this entry:

April 2, 1897.

Heard mother and father talking of me last night and they said that if I did not do better I should never be able to be a clergyman. Was kept in this morning by McKenzie from twelve to one over the Virgil. He asked me why I didn't do better and I said that I tried and he said I didn't. He said that I could do things that I hadn't got to prepare so that I must be lazy. I went to the library and got 'The Smuggler' by G.P.R. James and 'Sant Ilario' by Marion Crawford. It was a half-holiday and I stayed at home reading. Father is away on a Mission in Hartlepool. Miss S. came to call and found me reading on the sofa. I hate Miss S. and before mother came in she asked me to tea. I said I couldn't because there was school every day and she said to-day was a half holiday. I said we had to play games on half holidays. I went into the orchard and everything was rotten.

Mr. Dall came and asked me to come one evening and see him and Mrs. Dall, and I said I would. In the evening I wrote at 'Arnado the Fearless'. At Bagatelle William Black beat Rider Haggard 19-14 although I wanted him not to. Tomorrow at school there's a lecture on 'Stanley in Africa'.

Behind these bare lines that run up and down the page as though trembling with the palsy I can find, I think, the climax of my immaturity.

First came the casual overhearing of a brief conversation. My bedroom was next to that of my parents, and on this occasion the door between the rooms had not been closed. I had been asleep & woke to be conscious of those two murmuring voices—voices, although I was not then aware of it, most dearly loved by me. My parents had arrived, I suppose, at some point of exasperation and despair about my future, that despair so often needlessly suffered by parents, needlessly because children achieve their own destinies. In any case I was soon conscious of my own name and sat up in bed feverishly anxious. Yes, they were in despair. 'What are we to do with Hugh?' ... 'McKenzie can make nothing of him.' ... 'If he does not improve he will never be ordained.' ... 'It is these wretched novels—' ... 'His sulkiness makes it so difficult.' ... 'He is quite unlike other boys—'

The voices fell away. The grief that my parents felt had communicated itself to me. It was true. I was hopeless. Everyone thought so. I was not like other boys.

I lay, hot-eyed, dry-mouthed, wondering what I could do. I would go to them in the morning and promise improvement. But improvement *where*? It would be the same, do what I might, at school. The very sight of McKenzie or Poole froze into utter forgetfulness anything that I might have learnt the night before and I *knew* that it would always be so; it was not only terror but a fatal inaccuracy, a sheer inability to remember facts, or, at any rate, facts that did not interest me.

I should remember until I died Mrs. Lecount's toad, Mrs. Proudie's sudden tenderness to Mrs. Quiverful, Nanty Ewart's death, Mrs. Peyser's kitchen; but Greek accents, algebraic formulæ, the principal products of Nicaragua—these things hated and fled from me. I would read no more novels, the bagatelle board should be put away. I would distinguish myself at football, I would save my pocket-money and buy my mother a present ... all useless, for the root of the matter was unchanged. Young though I was I could put myself in their place—my parents, McKenzie, Poole. I could see exactly how I must appear to them; and the truth that I appeared something very other to myself made things none the better!

I shed bitter tears, burying my head in the pillow that they should not hear me, but tears (which I shed far too readily) did not help at all, for there was no one to dry them for me. In the morning I moved in a cloud of black despair that shut everything away from me. Reading again that shabby Diary every detail of that day returns to me. At school that morning I was worse than ever. For an hour McKenzie and I stayed alone in that cheerless class-room, he walking up and down in front of me, his hands clasped behind his gown, hating, most naturally, this unattractive sulky boy whom, for his father's sake, he would help if he could, who refused altogether to be helped!

By the afternoon the apple trees of the Orchard hovered close above my head. It is no unusual experience with mature years to discover how, on occasion, through liver or sudden bad news or simply a heavy lowering thundery sky, one can move out of safety into danger, a danger that belongs to

everything about one, chairs and tables, the window that refuses to close, the door that creaks, a bell that will not ring. But one knows by now that such things pass, that there is an inner world of the soul where, if one can reach it, there is a real balance of values and a consciousness of security. But a child cannot sink its personal experience deep enough. It must learn by the external pressure of exterior things. The hoofs of the beast on the shore can be heard, but one has not understood by then that the beast is inevitably chained.

So, in the afternoon, there came Miss S. Miss S. is dead now and no one remembers her but I. She was a thin elderly female, dressed as I remember always in grey, jingling with little chains and bracelets, a faint grey moustache on her upper lip. She had, I recall, large flat boots and eyes always moist so that she was perpetually wiping them. Where she came from I do not know, nor whither she went. She visited my mother. She was the first grown-up person in whom I was consciously aware of something indescribably affectionate. Physically she revolted me, but she liked that I should sit close to her. She put out her long grey-gloved hand and pinched my knee. She would hold me in front of her and with her long arms pressed on my shoulders would say: 'How you are growing, my child! Quite a little man now!' Once she stroked my cheek and I felt sick. Poor Miss S., whose only thought was kindness, how I hated her!

With her entrance into the drawing-room that afternoon the trees of the Orchard crashed about me. This was the end, the awful unutterable end! I must have looked at her, as I sprang from the sofa, with eyes of real terror. I was on the edge of some awful behaviour, something indescribably dreadful,

bred of loneliness, hysteria and the isolation of an abandoned being! I said something, that I would tell my mother that she was here, that I must give a message. I know not what, but I remember that, smiling, she drew me onto the sofa beside her and I felt on my shrinking knee the soft clinging texture of her glove and saw her face, with the grey moistured eyes, the thin sharp nose, most dreadfully close to mine.

'You must come to tea. You must come to tea,' she said softly. 'One afternoon. You must tell me about school, tell me everything.'

I stammered. I made excuses. The room darkened. Against the window the branches of the trees tapped with their skeleton fingers; all the leaves were sharpened, like knives.

I cried out something and broke from the room...

I was in the Orchard at last. I had been caught and would never again escape. I lay in the deep grass, pressed down by some heavy hand, and the beetles, the worms, the little buzzing flies moved about my body. The apple-trees bent lower and lower. The ground heaved beneath me with a slow hesitating motion like the fall and lift of the sea. The leaves were in my nose and my mouth. Against my tongue I could feel the veins of the leaves, and the dry toneless bark of the twigs brushed my cheek.

The Orchard descended upon me and swallowed me up. For the first and last time in my life I fainted. When later I rose,

chilled and bruised out of that darkness, the Cathedral bells were ringing for Evensong, a pale blue evening sky swam serenely between the high stems of the few mild apple-trees, I heard someone in the garden pleasantly calling my name.

And my childhood was ended.

PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE

A novel by M. André Maurois, 'Le Cercle de Famille', opens with these words: '*Les souvenirs de l'enfance ne sont pas comme ceux de l'âge mûr, classés dans les cadres du temps. Ce sont des images isolées, de tous côtés entonnées d'oubli, et le personnage qui nous y représente est si différent de nous-mêmes que beaucoup d'entre-elles nous paraissent étrangères à notre vie.*' This is, I know, what many men feel in their middle-age. They look back to that strange uncouth uncertain creature with an interest affectionate, patronizing and detached. There was once a young man of whom I knew something. I have a tenderness in remembering him but—he is gone. I have known so many men since then!

Looking back, I see myself, younger, more ignorant, more enterprising perhaps, but so essentially the self that I now am that life can, for me, only be interpreted by that continued unbroken individuality. We know no life but our own (and our own dimly) and if we are assured in ourselves of the continuance of that inner personality we must, if we are

honest, hold to that assurance. I have learnt some things, scored some victories, suffered many defeats. My education, sentimental and otherwise, is still proceeding. What does life intend other than that history of the soul which Keats proclaimed the only meaning of existence? It is not fashionable at this moment, when we are temporarily discovered to be no more than a battle-ground for whirling atoms and excited electrons (forgive my amateur science!) to believe in the existence of the spirit of individual man, but we must each of us interpret life by our own experience of it: I must not deny my own.

When I came to London in 1908 I was, I am afraid, very much what I now am—impetuous, excited, self-confident, for ever rushing into circumstances before examining them, constantly surprised, as I am to-day, by the sequence of events, foreseeing so little, expecting so much. I have learnt *something*, of course, learnt at least to be prepared for surprise both in people and things, learnt especially that good and bad events will be constantly mingled; learnt, most of all, that everything I myself prepare will go wrong and that a kind of patient waiting for direction is the best of all philosophies if only one could acquire it! I have learnt, too, of course, that the literary life is not a second discovery of Paradise. I remember, many years ago, reading a translation of some of the de Goncourt Journals and saying to myself: '*Can* this be true? Surely writers *sometimes* have a good word for one another!' And of course they have, very often, but there *are* other elements in it beside good-nature and modesty!

A week or two ago a young novelist, just tasting his first success, lunched with me. What a glorious world he found it to be! How generous and kindly were authors! How interesting and unselfish! And, as I listened, I was back again in that small room in Glebe Place, Chelsea, setting out the tea-things for my first grand party to which Henry James and Galsworthy and Masfield were coming.

Well, I don't know that at the last test my young friend is very wrong. The literary life is one of constant disappointment, chagrin, slaps & curses, sudden betrayals. That on the surface. But it is a life also so intriguing, so tantalizingly filled with work that is always to be better than it is, so rich in friendship and adventure, that I cannot believe there is any other so good. And I have been abused in my time as much as most men! In those first years—from 1908 to 1912—I had no doubts whatever, neither doubts of myself, nor my friends, nor of life. I tremble a little as I look back and see that confidence. On what was it based? On simply nothing at all.

When I ran away from a schoolmastering adventure that did nothing for me but provide me with a novel and prove to me my utter incapacity for schoolmastering, there was no single soul in the world who believed in me. I had shewn a story to Ian Maclaren and he, kindly, firmly, forbid me to hope. I handed my first attempt at novel-writing to Arthur Benson; he found that it had no gifts of any kind. A very intelligent schoolmaster to whom I tendered the first half of 'The Wooden Horse' handed it back to me with the single comment: 'Whatever else you are, you are not a novelist'—the *only* thing, I suppose, that I am! It is marvellous to me

now to think that I had no sense then at all of the terrific competition that I must encounter, of the difficulties of starting, the greater difficulties of continuing, the greatest difficulty of all—that of keeping up! I argued, I think, that I had been writing since I could crawl, that nothing would stop me writing, that I could live on very little (a pound a week was plenty, I thought), that my life was my own to do with as I wished. Not so very marvellous, after all, these determinations, when I look around me now and see a dozen boys and girls a day convinced just as I was!

I cannot say whether that writing world of twenty-four years ago was easier to make a start in than this one to-day. Yes and no. It was quieter, less crowded; but on the other hand there was not, I am sure, the wide interest in books that there is now, not so many reading publics, not so wide and eager a look-out for original and unusual work. In any case I made my plunge, came to London with thirty pounds in my pocket and the manuscript of a novel, took a room at four shillings a week in Glebe Place, Chelsea, and waited upon events. I owe my start, and incidentally I suppose most of the happiness of my life, to two men. One of them was called Massie. Massie was a large, stout, very-round-faced American partner with Mr. Curtis Brown in a Literary Agency. Now that was really an extraordinary thing! Massie met me somewhere and for no reason whatever sprang into a belief in me. *What* he believed in I cannot imagine, for I had nothing to show except my self-confidence, and he must in his time have met a great many confident young men. He was a most voluble man, a kind of Micawber, I think, his head filled with schemes and enterprises all of a cloudy intangible kind. Mr. Curtis Brown was, I suppose, the practical side of the affair.

Words flowed from Massie like lava from a volcano. He was very impressive, or at least he impressed me immensely, and I listened to him very much as David Copperfield listened to Micawber. I should come and work in the Agency. What I was to do there nobody knew, for I had no experience of anything; but something I should do and all would be for the best. (I don't to this day know what Curtis Brown thought of the affair.) After a week or two (during which I sat outside Massie's door, a sort of young Cerberus, that I might prevent intruders) it appeared that one of the things I could do was to provide the bones and sinews for a work on 'Careers for Young Men'. There was irony enough in that, seeing that I had no career of my own as yet and little idea as to how to get one.

'There isn't such a book,' said Massie. 'It must have an enormous sale.'

'Where do I find out about Careers?' I asked.

'You go to the men who have made them, of course, and inquire as to their beginnings. Then you get Facts from Encyclopædias.'

I print the word FACTS in capital letters because it is surely the greatest irony of all that I should have begun to make a living by acquiring Facts, for Facts all my life are exactly what I have never been able to get hold of! When my characters ask of me by what means they earn their living, how much have they in the Bank, what Stocks and Shares they possess, all the things in truth with which Balzac overflows, I show a blank face for an answer. And Massie

was quite as blank as I was. His directions to me to get Facts from an Encyclopædia were wrapped up in a confusion of rhetoric mostly of the Idealistic kind, concerning the Good, the True, the Beautiful. I can see him now, in his little room, which contained a lady secretary, an enormous typewriter, and a photograph of his wife on the roll-top desk, his body shaped like a gigantic bolster, pouring out words: 'The principal thing in life, Walpole, is to trust to the Ideal. Every morning I say to myself "Now study the human being in his most beautiful aspect and remember that men are what you wish them to be. Half the trouble in this world, Walpole, comes from forgetting the Ideal, and if we Americans have one thing in which we pride ourselves..." Then the lady secretary (who greatly admired Massie) would give a polite little cough, as much as to say: 'There are all these letters waiting, Mr. Massie, and it is nearly lunch-time and—'

In the background of this personal job of mine I was conscious (although I myself took no part in it) of the world of letters as seen in a Literary Agency. Had I a son who was determined to be a writer, and of whose true talent I was rather uncertain, I should start him, had I the power, in a Literary Agency. None of the successful ones ever seemed to come to the Agency—they wrote letters from afar. Those who came were the young ones who had written a story, an article or a novel, who arrived filled with hope and left their article, story or novel in the hands of Mr. Massie and Mr. Brown, eager with confidence. These bright young figures were not depressing, but there were also the failures. How often they came and how kind Mr. Massie and Mr. Brown were to them! Ladies, shabby and anxious, often with tears in their eyes and always torrents of words on their lips.

Gentlemen, also shabby, anxious only for a small loan, a tiny advance, or even a word of reassurance.

'Mr. Smith has had your article, Mr. Jones. We are sure to hear in a day or two. I will ring up and enquire—'

or

'No good, I am afraid, Mr. Smith. You see "The London" is overcrowded with articles', or

'I am afraid they can give no advance this time, Mr. Brown. You see "Summer Love" didn't earn its advance. No, I know. It's a bad time just now. Things will be better soon.'

I was amazed, I remember, to discover authors, whom I had thought extremely successful, members of this melancholy band. I have been charged in my time with too constant an enthusiasm for the books of my contemporaries. I am perfectly ready to defend my enthusiasms. Mine was the first review of Lawrence's 'White Peacock' to appear anywhere in print (although Edward Garnett was, of course, his discoverer). Mine was the first critical book on Joseph Conrad to appear in English. I was among the very first to acclaim Rose Macaulay, David Garnett, Sacheverell Sitwell's prose (still not sufficiently recognized), Ralph Hodgson, Henry Handel Richardson, E. M. Young, and many more (I am not boasting but merely making a little protest for myself). All this is of no importance except that I think that I realized, in those first days in that Agency, a fact that I have never forgotten—that praise does little harm and if the book is a good one may just make the difference. If the book is a

bad one your praise will not sustain it. No book has ever been successful yet without some excellent reason for that success, while many a good book has been lost because there were not enough voices raised on its behalf to direct it towards those who would care for it.

I learnt also in this Agency the terrible battle that the writer's life must be. There are so many books, their flow is so constant that if a writer begins to lose his readers (because they are weary of him, because they find him monotonous, because his own vitality is exhausted) neither time nor attention is given to his failure. So many can, and eagerly will, take his place. Yes, I know all about critics as dictators of taste. A well-known critic told me once that he considered himself a policeman directing the literary traffic! 'How can you praise a bad book?' I have been asked. 'If your power is sufficient it will prevent the good books being read.' Yes, but maybe it is not a bad book? The critic's judgement is personal. If he sees what he thinks is a good thing he should say so. I do believe that, in spite of publishers' clever (and sometimes unscrupulous) selections from reviews, there is not enough generosity in this matter, too much jealousy, too much fear of an author's success.

And then, finally, may you not spoil a young author by too extravagant an applause? I have never yet seen a young author who is worth anything at all spoiled by too much praise. The slaps are on their way. So soon as he reaches a position there will be plenty of abuse. We need not too tenderly fear for him!

Well, here I was with Massie and my 'Careers'.

It was arranged that I should interview famous men. Alas, I interviewed but one first and last. He was a gentleman who had won renown by writing about cricket, and why either I or Massie should have supposed that this would be a useful Career for young men to adopt I cannot imagine. Only one human being in my time has won public renown by writing about Cricket, Mr. Nevil Candus, and even his mellifluous phrases are by now a little monotonous perhaps!

However, I set off. The interview was a sad failure. I have been interviewed myself since that day and I have learnt that there are three classes of interviewers: those, sharp and prompt, with little time to lose and a list of questions numbered and arranged; those who come to talk only about themselves, their hopes, their prospects; and lastly those who have nothing to say of any kind. I was, on this occasion, of the last of these. I knew nothing about cricket and, I fear, cared nothing. My Celebrity had not, to do him justice, any desire to impress me. He wished only to be rid of me. When I asked him the steps that anyone should take if he wished to write about cricket he looked at me, I remember, with complete blankness.

'The steps?' he asked. 'The steps?'

'Yes,' I stammered. 'For a Career ... how should one begin?'

'My God!' he cried. 'I don't know. It isn't a Career. It's a bloody bore.'

Thus ended the only interview that in all my life I have conducted.

After this I disliked so intensely the thought of future interviews that I led a haunted and hidden life. Other names on my list were the Bishop of London, Eugene Sandow, Sir Arthur Collins of Drury Lane, Hall Caine and the director of Marshall and Snelgrove. I thought of these powers with fear and loathing. I cannot to-day hear their names without a shudder. I was determined to interview none of them, yet without their aid the book on Careers made no progress. I was deceiving Massie, who, had his thoughts been less cloudy and his purposes less idealistic, would have found me out very quickly. But he trusted me. He said every morning: 'Say, how about those Careers? Whom did you see yesterday?' I answered that I had been arranging my Facts and the answer seemed always to satisfy him. He worshipped Facts, I think, simply because he never came anywhere near them. However, this dishonesty of mine could not continue. I was taking his money and doing nothing whatever for it.

I was saved by the other of my two friends, the other benefactor whose fine deeds and good character I would like to record. Charles Marriott (whose Cornish novels are magnificent: no other writer, alive or dead, save Hudson, has described Cornwall as truly as he has done) had introduced me to the sub-editor of the daily 'Standard', Mr. Samuel Jeyes. Jeyes asked me to luncheon and I went with every intention of impressing him with my wonderful ability. There were, however, many guests, and my ability would have gone altogether unrecognized were it not that someone spoke of a novel, no one knew the name of its author save myself and, out of simple goodness of heart, Jeyes gave me one or two new novels to review.

When, since that day, I have been inclined to be, for a moment, exasperated by some unfavourable notice of a book of mine, I have comforted myself with the reflection: 'There doubtless goes Hugh Walpole.' For, inexperienced and courageous, I attacked, as it were from the cradle, the work of veterans. My view was, I think, that there were too many elderly gentlemen encumbering the ground. How were we, the young ones, ever to receive proper attention when all these Elderlies continued to write? I was, I think, quite honest according to my lights. It is easy enough to find faults, however great the writers. I was only, I fancy, about seventeen when I first read 'La Cousine Bette', & it struck even my very young fancy that Adeline Hulot was far too good to be possible & Baron Hulot so gross an old idiot that no punishment was too bad for him! So about my Elders I said what I thought and Samuel Jeyes did not deter me. It was a pleasant saying of Rhoda Broughton's that she had begun by being the Zola of her time and ended by being the Charlotte Mary Yonge. So I began with a fine reputation for ferocity only to come, in my old age, to a tradition of over-kindness. Jeyes, in any case, liked my ferocity so much that he gave me all the fiction-reviewing on the 'Standard' at a salary of One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, and this work I did for four years. Jeyes was a splendid man, intelligent, experienced, wise and generous. He was leader-writer for the 'Standard', as well as sub-editor, & those were the days when Leaders still counted. He had a vast knowledge of men and affairs; he conducted the Courts of Europe with excellent dignity. He despised the art of fiction; if he had not he would not, I suppose, have given the novels of England into such tender hands.

'Novelists think a hell of a lot of themselves,' he would say to me. 'There's about one good novel every ten years and don't you forget it.' He suffered a little, I think, from a mild wonder that men like himself worked so hard and wielded so much influence yet were unknown while some 'little sensationalist' (his favourite name for a novelist) was recognized everywhere. But he knew that it was the fate of his calling and he did not complain.

He had at times a sharp and sarcastic tongue and there has always been something about optimists like myself that sarcastic tongues have found appetizing. I appalled him often with my naiveties and my profound belief that men were what they appeared to be. He had few illusions about mankind, but his generosity, his patience, his sense of humour saved him from bitterness. He disliked the cynics as thoroughly as the sentimentalists.

I often tried him very hardly, and there was one crisis that nearly separated us for ever. I was tired and had a cold: an American friend proposed that I should go to Switzerland and Venice with him, so to Switzerland and Venice I went without a word to anyone. I spent an excellent fortnight with mountains & gondolas, posted home my reviews, and returned to London gaily enchanted. He sent for me.

'You have lost your job.'

'But why? Did you not get my reviews?'

I suffered half an hour of discipline during which I was told that I was a wastrel, a good-for-nothing idler, swollen with

conceit of myself, useless both to God and man. I said farewell and thanked him for his kindness to me. When I was at the door he said:

'The books are waiting for you at the office. Get out of my sight!'

Long ere this I had said farewell to Massie. I fancy that I offered to return the money with which he had so generously presented me (it was, I think, about a hundred pounds) but this is possibly a romantic notion of my later years. In any case he refused altogether to think that he had had the worst of the bargain. I believe indeed that he had not—not because I myself gave him anything, but during all those months that he felt the book on 'Careers' floating about his head he thought himself to be in touch with the practical world of business & affairs—to be Balzacian in fact. It may have been that that was what he really was (Mr. Curtis Brown can tell me), but I clearly drew nothing out of him but the Prince Florizel. I can see him still, after twenty-five years, with his plump cheeks, his odd fat shapeless body, moving, as the dusk falls and the lights come out to spurt and wheel over Piccadilly, carrying his tray of cream-tarts followed by his dark-haired lady secretary, tempting the passers-by into adventure. 'Come, sir. These Tarts if you will but try them will give you dreams of the Ideal more glorious than the stars of the evening sky. What you will do, when you have eaten, is to believe in Mankind. What is the matter with the world to-day, as we Americans plainly discern, is that...' And so he wanders eternally, smiling, eager, words pouring from him like water, the Friend of Man—and incidentally the friend of one young adventurer who will never forget him.

One thing more was needed to set my feet firmly on the London pavement, and when that is told, I will leave the small incidents of my own career. I have said that I came up to London with thirty pounds, saved out of schoolmastering, and the manuscript of a novel. The novel was called 'The Wooden Horse'. I wished to give it every advantage, a classical title included. I had quite deliberately put into it everything that would, I hoped, help it. Cornish scenery of a very coloured kind, a noble long-suffering hero, a beautiful heroine, a female sinner who repented, a theme apposite to the day. I had done these things deliberately and yet not deliberately. As always, so soon as my fairy-story began I was carried away, believed in it utterly, lived, ate and drank with my characters. It was a neat little book of no importance except that it showed that I could tell a story and had an incurably romantic mind.

I had, quite honestly, very little notion that anyone would be found to publish it, but I was determined that it should go to every publisher in London if need be, and what would be better than that it should start at the top with the firm responsible for Thackeray and the Brontës, the then great and powerful House of Smith, Elder.

So to Smith, Elder it went, and I sat down to be patient. One evening a few weeks later I returned to my room in Glebe Place, and Mrs. King, my landlady, shouted to me from the top of the stairs that there were two letters for me. I went into the little sitting-room that had the aspidistra, the china ornaments, the wool mat—rough and crimson—of Mrs.

King, and the portrait of Meredith (all beard and eyes), the copy of the 'Mona Lisa', and the works of Walter Pater of Hugh Walpole. The first of the two letters (as I so well remember) told me that I owed ten shillings and sixpence to the bookshop of Mr. Hatchard, the other ... the other ... informed me that 'The Wooden Horse' was accepted!

I did not look at the terms proposed, I did not wait upon debts or landladies or aspidistras. I seized my hat and rushed into the street. There was at that time a little restaurant on the river known as 'The Good Intent'. Chelsea artists sat there and also I myself; they at a long table in the centre, I by myself modestly in a corner. Down to the 'Good Intent' I ran, planted myself at the central table among the artists, cried to them all that my novel had been accepted and bade them drink my health. That they did and afterwards took me to a Chelsea party where I was drunk for the first time in my life. Next morning I ran across the river to Lambeth (my father was then rector of Lambeth) and told them the news. A more glorious and wonderful moment I shall never know!

But in this Reminiscence (and the one that follows it) what I should really like to do is to give some sense of the atmosphere of that pre-war London now so swiftly slipping back into a colour more romantic & legendary than so many of the more distant civilizations that preceded it. For the very reason that it was the final hour before the coming of the New age it must always have a charm and a pathos for us that did not by right perhaps belong to it. We of course saw nothing extraordinary in it. There may appear now many signs that we should then have discerned. We saw none of them, and even as Marie Antoinette played Blind Man's Buff

at Versailles, so we heard for the first time Chaliapine sing and drank Munich beer at Odinino's. To myself now it has an air of the country, of a sort of Fête-Champêtre, of the excited expeditions of my childhood when, on a lovely summer's day, we drove in jingles to the sea. There are some beautiful lines in a poem by George Crabbe which, although they describe something so very different, have for me exactly the colour of those few delightful years:

They feel the calm delight, and thus proceed
Through the green lane—then linger in the mead—
Stray o'er the heath in all its purple bloom
And pluck the blossom, where the wild bees hum;
Then through the broomy bourn with ease they pass,
And press the sandy sheep-walk's tender grass,
Where dwarfish flowers among the gorse are spread,
And the lamb browses by the linnets' bed;
Then 'cross the bounding brook they make their way
O'er the rough bridge—and there behold the bay!—
The ocean smiling to the fervid sun—
The waves that faintly fall and slowly run—
The ships at distance and the boats at hand;
And now they walk upon the sea-side sand
Counting the number and what kind they be
Ships softly sinking in the sleepy sea:
Now arm in arm, now parted, they behold
The glittering waters on the shingles roll;
The timid girls, half dreading their design,
Dip the small foot in the retarded brine.
And search for crimson weeds, which spreading flow,
Or lie like pictures on the sand below;
With all those bright red pebbles that the sun

Through the small waves so softly shines upon;
And those live lucid jellies which the eye
Delights to trace as they swim glittering by:
Pearl-shells and rubied star-fish they admire,
And will arrange above the parlour fire—

Translate these country and sea-terms into the details of my
London days and you have my world!

The heath with the purple bloom was the whole prospect of literary endeavour, the blossom was the acceptance of my first novel and I the wild bee! The dwarfish flowers, the gorse, the linnets embraced all the types of my now rapidly growing circle of kind friends. 'The ocean smiling to the fervid sun' was the grand and glittering London scene, and 'The ships softly sinking' the fine but aged authors whom myself and my friends were to succeed. The 'timid girls' were everywhere, but the timidity was mine rather than theirs; and as for the 'crimson weeds, the bright sea pebbles, the lucid jellies, the pearl-shells and rubied star-fish', were they not displayed in every shop-window that I passed?

Most of the real pleasures in my life have come from little things, and the capacity to realize at the actual moment the pleasure that they were giving me—a picture on a wall, a tune on a barrel-organ, the moment before the curtain rises at the theatre, a meal at an Inn after a long country walk, the rows of books in a shop-window, the turning of a corner to find a beautiful view, the unexpected entrance of a friend, the first tasting of food in a foreign country, the first placing of a

new possession in your room, the learning of a friend's success, the purchase of something you badly need but cannot afford—blue jugs, peach-coloured carpets, a bunch of carnations; a fountain's play in the sun. I have nowhere found this delight in small things more beautifully rendered than in Frank Kendon's 'Small Years', and for sheer inability I will not try here to emulate him, but it was not until my arrival in London, when I was already twenty-three or older, that those small miracles that occur for most children in the nursery came to me. The dark heavy leaves of the apple-trees had indeed by now receded! I was at last liberated from all my fears and obsessions.

It is not, I am sure, only fancy that makes me now believe that that pre-War London was especially adapted for these simple pleasures. Gone now are those old horse-buses where one could sit just behind the driver, watch his whip as it flourished in the London air, talk as man to man and learn from him about the world. Is there anyone alive on account of whose Benefit one would wait a day and a night outside Drury Lane Theatre as one did then for Ellen Terry? Are there any bookshops now where first editions of celebrated authors are to be bought for a shilling as was the happy fortune within the dark recesses of that fantastic Paradise in King's Road, Chelsea? Does the muffin-man any longer ring his bell of a summer evening down the streets of Kensington? What evening paper to-day has the romance of the pink colour of the 'Globe' or the green enchantment of the 'Westminster'? Eros has at last returned, but the Circus has, alas, with its flashing lights & roaring motor traffic lost the air that then it had of a village square where gossips congregate to pass the time of day. But (and here I know it is

my own years and not essentials that mark the difference) most glorious of all pleasures were the adventures of the theatre. With the exception of one Pantomime and 'Henry IV, Part I' at the Haymarket (where I would have greatly preferred 'The Sign of the Cross'—I was ten years old at the time) I never entered a theatre until I grew up. During my first year at Cambridge I stayed for a fortnight with a clergyman at Highgate, and his daughters, with a true frenzy for the theatre, hurried me on an omnibus at three in the afternoon that we might take our places in the gallery queue. I saw during those happy days Mr. Forbes-Robertson's 'Othello', Irene Vanburgh in Pinero's 'Letty', Lewis Waller in 'Beaucaire', Tree in 'The Eternal City' and Wilson Barrett in a drama about King Alfred, when he wore a goatskin, and was given poison in a cup by Miss Lillah McCarthy.

But my *real* theatre-time came now. Once and again there is an agitation to abolish the Queue, and I see, as I pass, rows of little chairs for the comfort of enthusiasts. What weakness! What blindness! Is there any way to approach the theatre so grand as that proud standing in the street while the wandering musicians play, then that confused stumbling up the dark stairs, with a halt, a progress, a halt again, then that wild rush for a seat, that arrogant glance down from the heights at the still-empty theatre, and finally, that illusion and magic that the ceiling and distance lend?

From that small room in Chelsea all these pleasures were at hand. There was Marie Lloyd at the Chelsea Palace, Granville Barker playing Dubedat at the Court, Duse acting to half-empty houses somewhere in the Tottenham Court Road, 'Sumurun' at the Coliseum... But I must pause.

Nostalgia grows too powerful. In my third 'Reminiscence' I will try to recover some of the figures that peopled this crazily delightful Town.

HENRY JAMES'S HIGH HAT

*'J'ai la tête romanesque,
J'aime la pittoresque.'*

This little quotation placed by Sickert at the head of one of his exhibition catalogues and the motto that I placed at the top of my four 'Herries' novels (I suspect that Sickert invented it, although he asserts that he took it from a Victorian operetta) defines exactly the colour and conflict of my life from infancy until now.

During those pre-war years in London I suffered because of it; and during the post-war years, so determinately, so resolutely realistic, who can say what agonies mine have been? And yet, perhaps, not such agonies after all, for one is what one is, and to see everything twopence coloured means that your own life is twopence coloured as well.

I was often told in those early years by members of that especially frank and well-meaning band of friends by whom such optimists as I are for ever attended, first that I was ludicrously disposed to think well of my fellow human-beings; secondly that I did not think as well of them as I

pretended; thirdly that I was taken in by everyone and preferred to be.

At twenty-five I was prepared to believe what I was told. The time would come, I assured myself, when I would discover how like wolves, monkeys & cats all my friends were. Meanwhile I *did* prefer my self-deception!

But now I am nearly fifty, I have seen a good deal of the world, have known every variety of human, and, without any idealistic sentiment whatever, speaking indeed with the most realistic cynicism, I must maintain that nine out of ten of us are, in the main, courageous, generous and kindly. Ludicrous we often are, and from my own life I can summon to my memory enough mean, treacherous and cowardly acts to fill the Old Bailey for a week; but, on the whole, I repeat, my intentions have been honourable, I bear no malice, love where I can and hope for the best. Only once in my life have I suffered real treachery from a friend, and on the other hand I have seen sufficient noble acts, been rewarded sufficiently by undeserved kindnesses, been astonished often enough by unexpected loyalties to write a new (and thoroughly authenticated) Book of Golden Deeds. Mine, I am inclined to believe, has been an average experience. We are all at the mercy of our impulses and, I suppose, our glands. We gossip ill-naturedly, bite the hand that feeds us, curse our conditions and spurn our benefactors; but these superficial habits seem to me to weigh lightly against conduct courageous over many years, love that overcomes all the obstacles of time and familiarity, patience (and especially the patience of women) that cheerfully accepts humiliation and hardship.

I have known scoundrels: the Turkish gentleman who gave me dinner in Petrograd and afterwards murdered at least fifty gentlemen in Sweden (that is a story that should be told one day), the lady of Kensington who tortured her Pekinese, the young man in Gloucestershire who stole his sister's savings; but scoundrels are rare and wickedness hard to find.

Laziness, stupidity, ignorance, these are common—but a *wicked* man! It seems that one only reads about him in the newspapers. I indulge in these platitudes only because I remember how miraculously charming I found everyone in London before the War. They can't in reality have been as charming as all that. But you must remember that I was reacting from my Apple-Trees, that it seemed to me wonderful indeed that people should be so kind, eager to help, generous and friendly. You must remember that I was unimportant enough to rouse no jealousy. I fancy, as I have already said, that London then was a more agreeable, hospitable place for a young writer than is London now. For one thing writers still made their homes in London at that time. There were the Sunday afternoons at Edmund Gosse's, Violet Hunt's parties on Campden Hill, the Sidney Colvins at the Museum, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes' exciting teas at Rumplemayer's, John Galsworthy somewhere in Kensington, Somerset Maugham in Charles Street, H. G. Wells out at Hampstead, the Samuel Butler circle at a restaurant in Oxford Street (dear Dick Streatfield, Lawrence Binyon, Sturge Moore, Masefield), and Robbie Ross, most generous of all men, in Shepherd's Market. I will frankly confess that at that time I ran to writers as a kitten runs to milk, whereas now...! But it was not only youthful excitement. There was more leisure, of course, but there was also, I think, more generosity—and at that time the fateful game of pillorying

your contemporaries was on the whole considered a sport unworthy of good fellowship.

Of all these hosts the most exciting, I suppose, was Edmund Gosse in Hanover Terrace. Not, possibly, in actual experience. Those Sunday afternoons were often painted in low tones, the conversation murmurous and extremely polite. Yes, on occasion: but then on another occasion how unexpectedly the sparks would fly and how I would sit in my corner trying to catch and remember the sketches of character, the intimate details, the ridiculous absurdities!

Gosse and Henry James were the two men who, for my generation, went back the farthest; but James was, for the most part, cautious and discreet, while Gosse, if the right mood were upon him—the things he could tell you! But Gosse's moods! They changed as swiftly as sunlight and shadow sweep the breathing sea. I knew him first when I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, a friend of Arthur Benson with whom Gosse had an almost feminine relationship. Gosse would come to stay at Magdalene with Benson, would arrive on Saturday afternoon, quarrel on Sunday morning and return to London. On Monday there would be an exchange of telegrams—repentant, humorous, sentimental. On Monday evening Benson would be busy writing a ten-page letter of affectionate explanation. Gosse was, I think, of all men I have ever known the warmest-hearted and the most sensitive. Readers of 'Fathers and Sons' can recognize readily enough whence that sensitiveness sprang, but the trouble was that his friends never knew what unconscious and trivial remark might stir the storm. We were all in disgrace one time or another; were, most of us, taken back into favour again with

a warmth that made us forget our troubles. Through all these tempests Gosse preserved his slightly malicious but always enchanting humour. He played games with his personal relationships and, I think, in most instances enjoyed the battles. He would not forgive before the right and dramatic moment had arrived.

I remember that once I invited him to dinner. He arrived at my rooms and looking suspiciously about him enquired if there were any other guests.

'Only one,' I said. 'Eddie Marsh.'

Now Marsh was one of Gosse's closest friends then and always, but it happened that at the moment there had been a quarrel.

'Marsh!' he cried. 'I will not meet the man. I am going home.'

I persuaded him to remain. Eddie arrived and after a few minutes' awkwardness all was well. Eddie had for a week or two been 'Marsh' but soon to-night was 'Eddie', 'dear Eddie' & even 'dearest Eddie'. A delightful evening. But on parting Gosse said grimly: 'Good-night, Marsh', implying that the time had not yet come for the quarrel to be ended.

During those first years I was frankly terrified of Gosse's temper. Although I maintained a bold front to the world, my Apple-Trees were not so far behind me that I knew no doubts, and Gosse had a genius for hitting one's weaknesses. I felt that one day there would be a terrible explosion and

that, after it, I should never be so frightened again, having, as it were, experienced the worst. I was right.

Henry James had a Seventieth Birthday and his friends wished to congratulate him. They commissioned Sargent to paint his portrait (it is now in the National Portrait Gallery) and, when the portrait was finished, they invited subscribers to come to Sargent's studio and see it. The letters of invitation were to be sent out by Gosse and myself. The donkey-work was to be my share and I was filled with tremors. 'I know', I said to James, 'that there will be blunders and Gosse's rage will be a terrible thing.' James understood thoroughly well my fears and, with that angelic kindness and courtesy innate in him, took every trouble, coming down into the City with me to visit the printers, seeing that the list of names was complete. 'Now', he said (but of course with much more circumlocution), 'there can be no error.'

The letters were sent out. I thought all was well. The following evening I dined with Maurice Hewlett, who did not care for Gosse. Arriving at his house he met me in the hall and was wearing his most sardonic expression. He said: 'I have received a most charming letter from yourself and Gosse. I knew, dear Hugh, that you were fond of me but, frankly, had not supposed that Gosse cared for me very greatly. This letter has reassured me.'

My heart sank. Something terrible had occurred. Indeed it had. Hewlett shewed me the letter. I had omitted to fill in the names of the subscribers and the letter began:

Dear

We wish to inform you...

and ended

We are, Dear

Yours sincerely

Edmund Gosse

Hugh Walpole.

When it is understood that these letters were sent to many of the most impressive figures in the land—Curzon, John Morley, Mrs. Humphrey Ward—the blunder had its humorous side. But I saw nothing humorous in it at all: nor did Gosse. I shall never forget that awful five minutes standing in front of Gosse's priceless first editions, looking into the eyes of meditative Pre-Raphaelites, hearing the gentle rumble of the Regent's Park traffic while my schoolmaster thundered. I was forgiven; I was even patted on the head; but I was 'a bit of a fool' to Gosse from that day to the end.

During his last years his sensitiveness, I think, left him and he became one of the dearest of old men. With the black patch over one eye, that gave him a resemblance to one of the amiable pirates about whom his son so charmingly writes, he would recreate for me George Eliot on one of her solemn philosophic Sunday afternoons, or George Gissing, shy and awkward but suddenly and most unexpectedly eloquent, or Browning gossiping at a dinner party, Swinburne screaming, Tennyson mumbling through his

beard, Ibsen talking funereally of his unpopular preference for 'Emperor and Galilean'.

Everyone came, I think, at one time or another to those Sunday afternoons, and I can remember George Moore explaining why Anne Brontë was by far the greatest of the Brontës, Seccombe brilliantly declaiming Beddoes, Sidney Lee listening in heavy silence to a Baconian, Mary Cholmondeley murmuring that she was tired to death of 'Red Pottage', Max Beerbohm's almost overwhelming courtesy, Stephen Phillips listening to the compliments of a lady who would insist that he was greater than Milton.

But of all the figures that come back to me now the most persistent in my mind is Thomas Hardy, the most persistent because he sat in a corner and never said a word. I had myself at my very first meeting with him felt the force of his silence. Mrs. Clifford asked me whether I would care to have tea with him. Would I not? She conveyed me to a small flat in, I think, Kensington where Hardy and the first Mrs. Hardy were at that time staying.

I went with every ardent intention of impressing Hardy with my originality, my vitality, my enthusiasm. I had always trouble with my enthusiasm, for it was genuine, unaffected, unselfconscious. It was only when I *looked back* that I repented, felt my *naïveté* and ignorance, vowed that next time I would be cautious, coldly calculating, wise and epigrammatic as were all my older friends. I had heard somewhere that Hardy found young people nowadays too sophisticated.

'Here's one young man', I thought, 'who's not sophisticated at all!'

We arrived and at once the first Mrs. Hardy took the floor. She was, as I remember her, a dear old lady in a lace cap and had, on this occasion, so much to say that words poured forth like water from a fountain. It was all very maddening to myself, who saw Hardy eating his cake in a corner, uttering no word. Nor could I utter either. On and on went Mrs. Hardy. Mrs. Clifford and I nodded our heads like any mandarins, the clock ticked and Hardy enjoyed his tea. I was in despair: I looked piteously at Mrs. Clifford. Nothing was to be done. On and on and on went Mrs. Hardy. At last we got up to go and then, by a kind of delicious miracle, a crumb stuck in Mrs. Hardy's throat, she turned aside to cough. Hardy, smiling gently, approached me. After all I was to be granted my moment! He looked at me with great sweetness and said:

'Mr. Walpole, I understand that you intend to write novels.'

'Yes,' I cried, ready to burst into a grand exposition of my fine purpose and noble ambitions.

'Don't!' he said sadly, patting my shoulder. And we went away.

That was, I think, the only word that he ever addressed to me. At Gosse's he allowed the flood of talk to swirl about him without any attempt to plunge into it. He smiled a little, he sighed a little, and yet always was the most striking figure in the room. 'Oh!' I used to think, 'If I can but cultivate some

reserve! If I can only learn to retire into some tranquil wisdom of my own, discover a philosophy that will protect me from my impetuositities!' I know now that I never shall.

Only once, I think, did I hear Hardy let himself go, and that was on the subject of reviewers. Someone incautiously asked him whether he thought well or ill of contemporary critics. Very quietly he said what he thought of contemporary critics; there was but little left of them when he had done. I remember I was astonished that anyone so great, so safe in his greatness, as Hardy should care what critics said of him. Care! He cared as though he were a young man at the beginning of his career. He burnt them up with his scorn, tore them to fragments, threw them to the winds, then sank back into his Wessex fastnesses once more. That was a surprise to me, but soon I was to learn that everyone, great and small, young and old, could be hurt by the most trivial and ignorant of criticism—Hardy, Conrad, James, Hewlett, Hudson—none seemed so sure of the quality of the work that any light, silly word might not disturb tranquillity. So it was, so it is now, so it will be ever.

Everyone was kind to me. On Campden Hill we played tennis while Violet Hunt gave the Pre-Raphaelites an odd sort of Northumberland cloud and thunder that I have never since been able to divorce from them. Kinder than anyone was Somerset Maugham in Charles Street. In his hall were two lovely Tang Horses. 'Oh!' I thought, 'if only one day I can have horses like those!' Meanwhile he gave me very much good advice, none of which have I ever taken. I felt—I still feel, I think—that he was *wiser* than anyone else. He has the reputation of cynicism, but he never was, and never will

be, a cynic; because all he wanted of men was that they should be honest. They were, they are, I fancy, more honest than he thinks them to be; if he were not so kindly-hearted he would not be so often disappointed.

What Arnold Bennett wanted of his fellow human-beings was more common-sense. He was a Legend in London at that time—from that time, indeed, until the day of his death. 'The Old Wives' Tale' had but recently appeared, and it seemed to everyone extraordinary that he should have written it. Before the appearance of that great book he was regarded as a novelist of the second or third rank when he was regarded at all. But *after* it the tales about him were endless—his appearance with his odd lock of hair *en brosse*, his sharp voice with its squeaky tone, his stiff walk, his bowler hat cocked sideways, the top half of his face with its beautiful eyes so kindly and penetrating, the lower half running to nothing at all, his voluminous French with its atrocious accent, his cocksureness, his air of knowing *everything*; above all his friendliness, and a charm of nobility that was always there, even when he was most cocksure, most provincial. It wasn't right, people said, that so good a journalist as he should also be able to write a good novel. He should be more remote, less dramatically interested in clothes, food, prices. He broke all the rules, and loved that people should see him break them. When he died it was as though some of the colour of earth and sky had gone for ever. And still, as the years go on, that sense that we have been unjustly robbed remains...

From all these figures, so pleasant, so sharply marked, so kindly in spirit, three men most vividly remain. Of one of

them, Joseph Conrad, I must write at some other time. So much has lately been recorded of him, his personality is so firmly set in the minds of so many persons, that I am diffident of a contribution that must at present be redundant. Of the other two, one, Murray Gilchrist, has, I think, evoked no record anywhere, and the other, Henry James, has only once—to my mind—been drawn as he really was. Oddly enough, Desmond MacCarthy, who did not know him very well, is the only man as yet who, by his account of him, seems to have known him at all.

It is of Murray Gilchrist that I always rather doubtfully think when I bravely assert that no good writing is, in the end, ever neglected. I still believe that in the main this is true; but Gilchrist is, I am bound to confess, sad evidence to the contrary. Does anyone to-day know 'The Rue Bargain', 'Nicholas and Mary', 'Natives of Milton'? Was there any sale a year or two ago for that volume of his collected short stories bravely and kindly fathered by Mr. Eden Philpotts? Answers in the negative to both questions I fear. Yet one day that original beautiful work must come into its rightful kingdom. It is for one thing unique. No one, before or after, has written quite like Murray Gilchrist, with his rich fantastic Eighteenth-Century colour—Cowper and Pope mixed with the extravagance of 'Monk' Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe—and then, mingled with this again, his English Peak Derbyshire background, moor and stream and rough peasant dialect. He wrote like a fine woman of the Eighteenth Century disguised in Derbyshire country clothes; he looked a huge red-faced English Squire with a thin voice & the ambling gait of a good-natured sheep-dog. I admired him many years before I saw him, for, as a child, a paper called 'The Weekly

'Telegraph' was almost my Bible, and time and again he contributed his rich, elaborate short stories, having for fellow-contributors Phillips Oppenheim and Leonard Merrick. What a pennyworth for a greedy schoolboy! All in one number—a short story by Gilchrist, and for serials 'The Worldlings' by Leonard Merrick & adventures of diplomatists in Monte Carlo under Oppenheim's sharp eye.

Someone told me that Gilchrist would like it if I wrote and told him how ancient and faithful an admirer I was; so I wrote, and during a London visit he came to see me. I remember very well how brilliantly filled my small rooms were by that large gay figure. He was so tall that he must bend his head when he entered, and he was broad with it. He liked to wear very brightly-coloured country clothes & he had a passion for coloured pocket handkerchiefs; he generally carried three, all of different colours—one in his coat and the other two protruding from his trouser-pockets. His hair inclined to be carroty, and his face, as I have said, glowed as though he had but just come from a long moorland tramp in the rain.

He invited me to stay with him in Derbyshire. Those visits were odd indeed. He lived with his mother, two sisters and a friend in an old Elizabethan or Jacobean house on the moors some ten miles from Sheffield. This house was all that the most romantic novelist could desire; its rooms were so low that you must be for ever bending your head (why Gilchrist wasn't permanently bent double I cannot imagine), thickly beamed & quite incredibly dark. His mother and two sisters lived in the one half, his friend and himself in the other. So dark was the house that we lived for the most of the day in

candle-light. Gilchrist preferred it that way. Out of doors he would walk mile upon mile with a giant stride and couldn't have enough of the sun, wind and air; *indoors* he liked candles and Elizabethan thickness of atmosphere and, if possible, the rain beating on the leaded panes. In the evening after dinner we paid a ceremonial visit to the other part of the house, carrying our candles through dark and winding passages, talking there to the old lady as though we had but just arrived from China and had exciting tales to tell about the Great Wall and the palaces of Peking.

Gilchrist was the least conceited of men, but he liked to sit in the low heavily-beamed room and, as the candles flickered in the old silver candlesticks, read aloud some of his favourite pieces from his writings. I have always greatly disliked to be read aloud to, and there is one fine poet of whom I am very fond, whose company, however, I have sometimes avoided because of his passion for reading his own poetry. Gilchrist, however, was different. There was in him a good deal of the child, and I think that my youth provides no more charming memory than of this big-limbed broad-shouldered man gently reading one of his richly fantastic stories in the candlelight while, beyond the windows, the storm swept the moor and the rain hissed down the chimney. He had for a while a fine reputation. Henley admired him, and Andrew Lang and Gosse—all the Panjandrums. But his books never sold very greatly: his contemporary friends, Philpotts and Bennett, scored their great successes; he fell into pot-boilers, and a new generation, very much less romantic than his own, swept up and outpaced him. He died, in the first years of the War, a disappointed but never embittered man.

I hope that soon someone will rediscover him, as others, far less worthy than he, have been rediscovered. I salute with reverence, admiration and deep affection one of the kindest, gentlest, most genuine artists I have ever known...

Henry James is, of course, a very different matter. 'Oh God!' I can recall hearing St. John Ervine murmur at a City Dinner where both himself and I were orating, 'he's talking about Henry James again!'

I wouldn't say that really I have done it so often. I have refrained through all these years from writing about him, and it is one of the odd features of his case that the people who knew him best—Miss Bosanquet, Jocelyn Persse, Edith Wharton among the still living, Mrs. Clifford, Howard Sturgis, Mrs. Protheroe, Lady Colvin—have never written a word. The only *good* things about him have come from Desmond MacCarthy and Ford Maddox Ford—neither of whom knew him well—and Ford's piece is a brilliant Hueffer-like caricature.

To all this strange silence there has been added the tragedy of the Letters. Percy Lubbock edited them brilliantly, but there were too many of them, and not he nor I nor any other of James's friends realized the *public* effect of all those mannered protestations and apologies with which every letter began. We were so used to them; we knew *why* they were there and what they meant; but, winding their way in & out through those two long volumes, they seemed like so many Oriental bowings to the casual reader, wearisome, insincere, altogether out of touch with this curt and peremptory age. Further than this there was the attack by H. G. Wells in

'Boon' which hurt James so grievously. At the time all the Jacobeans gathered round the Master and told him not to mind the barking of a little dog at his heels. But James was, as ever, more wise than they. He knew that Wells was no 'little dog'. He knew moreover—although he would admit it to no one—that there was some *real* point of criticism at the bottom of Wells' 'Elephant picking up a pea'. He knew, with a sudden alarmed Cassandra-like vision of prophecy, that that criticism would persevere into future generations. It has. In fact it may be said that his elaborate prefaces to his Collected Edition, his two volumes of Letters, his quarrel with Wells, anecdotes given currency by those who scarcely knew him, have created a quite legendary figure, a sort of stuffed waxwork from whose mouth a stream of coloured sentences, like winding rolls of green and pink paper, are for ever issuing. The best—in fact at present the only—penetrating criticism of him, Rebecca West's 'Henry James' suffers badly from this same ignorance of the real man. Who, before it is too late, is going to paint a true portrait? Theodora Bosanquet, his secretary, alone of all living persons is qualified to do so. I hope that she will regard it as her proper duty to English Letters.

I, most certainly, am the last of all people to attempt it. I knew him only during the last ten years of his life. I loved him, was frightened of him, was bored by him, was staggered by his wisdom and stupified by his intricacies, altogether enslaved by his kindness, generosity, child-like purity of his affections, his unswerving loyalties, his sly and Puck-like sense of humour. I was sometimes bored so that I had pins and needles in my legs and arms. That was because I was a young man in a hurry, ambitious, greedy and excitable. I was

not really vain. When he told me gently that I was an idiot and that my novels were worthless I believed that, from his point of view, it must be so, and that if the world had been peopled with Henry Jameses I should certainly never publish a line. The world was not.

He was also a sick man during a great part of the time that I knew him, and I was then extremely healthy and as filled with vitality as a merry-go-round at a fair. It was this vitality that attracted & bewildered him. How could I have so much eagerness, so much real curiosity about life, so much interest in so many *different* things, and yet penetrate life so thinly? Why, if I wanted to know so much, didn't I see that I knew more? When I visited Lamb House I must give, in every detail, the full account of every adventure. There he would sit, listening, his head on one side like a stout and very well-dressed robin. But at the end of it I had omitted, it seemed, every essential.

Here, indeed, was another trouble—his Puritan American conscience. He was curious about everything, he knew everything (he had lain, I know, under his own Apple-Trees and seen their boughs, like shining steel, hang cruelly above his eyes), but his Puritan *taste* would shiver with apprehension. There was no crudity of which he was unaware but he did not wish that crudity to be named. It must be there so that he might apprehend it, but it must not be named. I was, alas, too crude myself to present anything without naming it, and I learnt to dread that shy look of distress that would veil his eyes as he apprehended once again my clumsy intrepidities. We were all perhaps, except Percy Lubbock and Edith Wharton, in something of the same

box. I have never met Mrs. Wharton and I know that she is a delightful lady, but oh! how, in those young days, I learnt to loathe her very name!

In general I have found in life that it is possible to keep up a real hatred of anyone only by never meeting them. Had I known Mrs. Wharton I would in all probability have eagerly agreed that she was the wisest, most radiant, most witty of all her sex. But I did not meet her. Only my *naivetiés* were exposed naked to her sophisticated wisdom—all this in the kindest fashion. But the kindness only made me hate her image the more. Had it been a century or two earlier I would have made a doll of wax, named it Wharton, stuck pins into it & roasted it over a slow fire. Percy Lubbock was another matter. Him I *had* met and liked exceedingly; although I shall never forget the awful evening when I offered to Lubbock and Arthur Benson *my* notion of the theme of 'The Wings of the Dove'! Lubbock's agony was an immortal thing.

The rest of us—Lucy Clifford, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Jocelyn Persse, the Von Glehns—all suffered, I think, at times from that fear of our own *naivetiés*, and met the trouble in our own several ways. Also we would all, I fancy, agree that we had never, any of us, loved any other human being in quite the same fashion. His tenderness of heart was unequalled in the world: of that peculiar quality I should like to say something in a moment, but this at any rate is most certainly true—that we knew that with him we were encountering a quite unique nobility of spirit. I have known other men and women who possessed some of it: Arnold Bennett, Douglas Haig, Lady Colvin, my mother, an old servant we had in Edinburgh, a friend of mine not far from

me now as I write. It is a most peculiar quality, arguing, as I think, a spiritual quality in man more permanent than the life of the body. It has nothing to do with sins and failings. The possessor of it can have every fault in the world except meanness and all-devouring egotism. It is, beyond everything else, a power of generosity, of loyalty and forgetfulness of self. It has a quality of sweetness quite unmistakable. While it persists in man, mankind need never despair.

This sweetness anyone who knew James more than casually will at once recall. It was never sentimentality; his subtlety of brain and sharpness of humour made his relations with his friends always a little adventurous. He loved them, but he found them odd, he found them often unaccountable. He saw, of course, in them more complexity than was really there, as indeed he saw more complexity in everything than it was good to believe was there! He lived, we all felt, I think, deeper down than the rest of us, and had visited a country, like the little boy in the Pied Piper story, that made him always a little bewildered because he had had experiences that he could communicate to no one. His elaborate, intricate sentences, so often imitated (never quite successfully), came from his sense that words were not enough for the things of the mind. That was why, after an infinity of elaboration, the thing that he wanted to say would sometimes emerge at last trivial and unimportant—as though in despair he had let his treasure go, because he could not haul it up far enough into the light, and so at the last he caught at anything as a substitute.

But if his experiences had been rare and strange, his motives of conduct were as direct & simple as Conrad's. In this the

two men were singularly alike. They placed loyalty and fidelity above all other virtues. There was never anyone in history more loyal than Henry James. Many of us know that moment in friendship when we seem to have every reason in the world for a decent and gentlemanly withdrawal. Not James. He said about a friend to me once: 'I not only love him—I love to love him'. Although he had many troubles of his own the troubles of his friends caused him acute distress. Those long, apologetic, enquiring, affectionate sentences at the beginning of his letters were as genuine in their regrets and anxieties as the simple words of a country lover. With his loyalty there went Puckish humours. He had his own ways of testing his friends.

More significant now, on looking back, than any other small incident in our friendship, I find the tiny adventure of the High Hat. In action this was all that it was. I had gone to the Reform Club—where, for several years, he kept rooms—to have luncheon with him. It was summer, and I was dressed in a light grey suit. After luncheon we went up to his room and, after fumbling in a wardrobe, he produced a large hat-box. Out of this came an extraordinary hat—the kind of hat that Mr. Churchill used to wear before he took to bricklaying—almost a top hat but suddenly, at the summit, a bowler. It had a large curly brim, was exceedingly glossy and was lined with bright red silk. Allowing himself even more elaboration than usual, he explained to me that this hat was too small for him, had never been worn by anyone, was surely destined for a wise and elegant head, had in it every kind of suggestion of glory and promise and summer weather and success, was miserable and ashamed by its long imprisonment in the wardrobe, had made him for many weeks self-conscious and

unhappy because he neglected it, was gifted, no doubt, with some especial power of conveying wisdom and brilliance to the head that it crowned, was constructed by the best hatter in London—in fine, there was no hat like it and I—I alone—must wear it!

I blushed, I stammered, I conveyed my thanks. It was jolly of him to give it me, but I had already plenty of hats, nor would this fit me very well, and its shape—surely its shape was a little *odd* for the correct & London young man that I fancied myself to be!

But I thanked him. It was impossible, seeing him standing there, his stocky legs a little apart, his exciting, clean-shaven face gently (a little ironically?) smiling, not to be grateful at his pleasure. Yes, I thanked him and intimated that I would carry it away with me to Chelsea. Carry it away with me to Chelsea? Not at all. I must wear it now. He must see how I looked in it. My present hat should be sent to Chelsea by Special Messenger. Indeed, indeed I did not want to walk home in it. With my elegant grey suit this hat would look most absurd. I had, like any other proper young Englishman, a horror of appearing unusual. I would be sure to meet a friend. The friend would talk. I would be the mock of those literary circles that, alas, loved only too dearly any opportunity for mockery. I suggested, I hinted... James was kind, he was affectionate, but he was firm. He must see how I looked, he must see me down the street...

See me down the street he did, all down the Mall, watching from the portals of the Reform, his eyes beaming kindness, his hands raised in gesture of benediction. At the end of the

Mall I met Mrs. Wanda Lawes, that most inveterate of literary gossips. In St. James's Street, crimson of countenance, I buried myself in a cab.

I thought then only of his kindness, his beneficence, his generosity. But now, in retrospect, was there not, perhaps, a test of my young snobbery, a hint—for me to catch if I were smart enough—at the need for some new adjustment of values? I still have The Hat. Last year I wore it a wedding. At forty-eight it becomes me strangely. Was that also what he intended?

Behind the humour there was also the pathos.

Anyone who insisted that Henry James was a melancholy man would give of course a very wrong impression. His humour was constant, his excited absorption in life perpetual, his love of his friends unfailing and, above all, his passion for his art overwhelming. Nevertheless he was always an exile. When in Europe he felt that he belonged in soul to the America of Hawthorne and Emerson and Lowell, but when in America it was not the America of Emerson and Lowell—something indeed very different. And just as he was an exile of the soil so also was he an exile of the emotions. By tradition, birth, parentage he was a prude and a puritan. By intellect and temperament he was an explorer, ceaselessly inquisitive, aware of all the darkest and most morbid corners of the human heart. It has been said of him that he escaped deliberately all the deeper emotions both in his life & his writings. But just as in his novels he shewed that he knew *all* the passions, feared them, and allowed himself to reveal them only by innuendo (and he *did* reveal them thus), so in

real life one felt that his nobility of character demanded that he should keep himself free of baseness: his *knowledge* of that baseness went almost shudderingly deep. Also his heart and his intellect were for ever in conflict. Just as he loved myself but *could* not understand how I could be so stupid, so he loved all mankind although his brain recoiled before men's slackness of intelligence, their refusal to investigate anything, their eagerness to accept the second-rate. I remember once walking with him in the fields beyond Rye, and two very small and grubby children opened the gate for us. He smiled beneficently, felt in his deep pocket for coppers, found some and then began an elaborate explanation of what the children were to buy. They were to go to a certain sweet-shop because there the sweets were better than at any other; they were to see that they were not deceived and offered an inferior brand, for those particular sweets had a peculiar taste of nuts and honey with, he fancied, an especial flavour that was *almost* the molasses of his own country. If the children took care to visit the right shop and insisted that they should have only that particular sweet called, he fancied, 'Honey-nut'—or was it something with 'Delight' in it? 'Rye's Delight' or 'Honey Delights' or— But at this moment the children, who had been listening open-mouthed, their eyes fixed on the pennies, of a sudden took fright and turned, running and roaring with terror across the fields.

He stood, bewildered, the pennies in his hand. What had he done? What had he said? He had meant nothing but kindness. Why had they run from him crying and screaming? He was greatly distressed, going over every possible corner of it in his mind. He alluded to it for days afterwards.

You may say that only a very foolish old man would talk to small country children like that. But Henry James was not foolish. He had become for a moment his own kind of child, playing with an idea as those same children would play with a doll. So he played with all of us, and so he was often dismayed because we thought we had to wait too long for our pennies.

In the same way the general neglect of his writings was a great grief to him. He thought that the publication of the Edition de Luxe, every novel revised & ornamented with special Prefaces, would give him the recognition which he, and every author born alive, had always desired. Critical recognition, of course, he had; but then, like Hardy, he thought the critics, for the most part, poor fish. It was not that he was vain of his work, but he simply could not understand why it was that the other novelists of his time omitted all the essentials. And the other novelists wondered the same thing about him. He liked Mrs. Wharton's novels because she was a disciple in his own school, but he himself was a poor critic of Hardy and Conrad and Wells simply because the goal that they strived after did not appear to him to be a goal at all.

Then the Collected Edition was published and no one bought it. The majority of the critics thought that his Prefaces were sheer waste of time, the Elephant pursuing the Pea. His ghost may, at this present moment, be conscious of a certain pleasure if he is interested enough to perceive that those same Prefaces are at last beginning to be recognized as the real gospel of the whole trend of the new psychological novel. Dorothy Richardson, Joyce, Huxley, Virginia Woolf should lay wreaths of asphodel before Sargent's portrait in

the National Portrait Gallery. Not, of course, that they will. Life doesn't develop like that.

He saw himself, as the years went on, with the work of his lifetime neglected, laughed at, misunderstood; and, at the last, he saw as he thought his own country of Hawthorne, Lowell, and Emerson betray her grandest trust. So he made, at the very end, one simple gesture, and in that last act of naturalization summed up the whole of his exiled, lonely and honourable life. For in spite of his friends, his art, the love that he won from others, he was lonely. Not, perhaps, more than are any of us, but he saw more deeply into that loneliness.

One other frustrated ambition he had to wrestle with—the Theatre. It is, I think, one of the oddest things in the history of English Letters that men the least designed in the world for success in the theatre should hanker after it so wistfully, and of all strange instances Henry James was the strangest. This passion of his began very early—I suspect that it was in his blood—and just as he wondered why the novel wasted its time so wrong-headedly so, very much more, he was exasperated by the theatre's blindness.

I will frankly confess that I hated to go with him to the theatre. In the years before the War I went many times, and always there was the same catastrophe. We sat in the front or second row of the stalls, James very noticeable in his smartness, stockiness, alertness, and carrying with him a gold-headed cane. Very soon the cane would begin to tap the floor, then, as the play proceeded, the taps would become more furious. At the end of the first Act he would enquire my

opinions. I learnt very soon to be cautious, but, hedge as I might, I was always too kindly. At the end of the second Act it was likely as not that he would rise, pronounce only too audibly 'Rot! Imbecile rot!' and trot furiously from the theatre, I meekly following.

I remember on one occasion that we had Howells and his daughter as our companions. It was a detective play of the kind that I adore. James lasted to the end, indeed, but left then in a tempest of fury, the rest of us huddling behind. Only, in the foyer, Howells pressed my arm, and whispered: 'Never mind. Don't tell him—but we *did* enjoy it, didn't we?'

The worst of all these occasions was the one when he took me with him that he might see for the first time 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. This was the play that had been filling the Haymarket at the very moment when 'Guy Domville' had been failing so dismally at the St. James's, & he had described to me before how, when 'Domville' had been running for a week or so he went one evening to the theatre to find it half empty, and then had walked across the Square to see 'House Full' boards outside the Haymarket. He had refused to see Wilde's play until this long-after revival. He saw it, found it miserable trash. I had myself a dreadful evening because I saw very clearly that here was no wounded vanity or childish chagrin, but rather a deep consciousness that it was *willed* that none of the desires of his heart should be accomplished. His dialogue, he always said, was made to be spoken. I believe that it was, and I would beg anyone who finds 'The Wings of the Dove' or 'The Golden Bowl' difficult, to read a page or two aloud. They will discover then a new experience. It was not also that his

themes were not dramatic. Novels like 'The Spoils of Poynton', 'The Other House' (originally written in play form), 'The Golden Bowl' itself, have themes that are essentially dramatic. And without prejudice I may say that I found 'The High Bid' as acted by Forbes Robertson and his wife one of the most delightful of my adventures in the theatre. It was rather that with plays, as with everything else, he was preoccupied with subtleties important to himself because they were the symbols of all the important things in life, bewildering to others because they missed the passions for which these subtleties stood.

I write with very real diffidence of this good and great man—the best and greatest I have ever known. The time will come, of course, when he will be seen as the real master of this present period of the English novel; yet it is not as a genius of letters that I would recall him, but rather as one of the most human, lovable and humorous of men: a man so essentially noble in character and so honest in his conduct of life that I shall, I fear, never see his like again.

**HE IS A GOD OF
THUNDER AND
HIS TRUMPET SHALL SOUND**

SOWER MYRE FARM

A MOMENT RECOVERED

Criticism has of course its important rights and duties, but the only real moments for a lover of books are those when something is encountered that is, for that particular reader at least, outside all criticism. These moments occur in youth so frequently that the young man gaily expects them to be constant for ever more.

They are not. And, at the last, the reader's happiness is supremely active only in memory. If 'only' is too strong, if an old, old man has any patience with a new green book, then he is a lucky old, old man!

Some of these early ecstasies survive: some do not. I shall be ecstatic never again over 'The Heir of Redclyffe', 'Hiawatha', 'The Lancashire Witches', and the novels of Bulwer. But here was a supreme moment, as supreme now as it was twenty-five years ago, when, sitting under a haystack in Southern France, I read in 'L'Education Sentimentale': *'Assis, l'un pris de l'autre, ils ramassaient devant eux des poignées de sable, puis les faisaient couler de leurs mains tout en causant—et le vent chaud qui arrivait des plaines leur apportait par bouffées des senteurs de lavande, avec le parfum du goudron s'échappant d'une barque, derrière l'écluse. Le soleil frappait la cascade; les blocs verdâtres du petit mur où l'eau coulait apparaissaient comme sous une gaze d'argent se déroulant toujours. Une longue basse d'écume rejaillissait au pied, en cadence. Cela formait ensuite des bouillonnements, des tourbillons, mille courants opposés, et qui finissaient par se confondre en une seule nappe limpide.'*

I have taken down my volume of Flaubert to copy once again this paragraph, but certain phrases from it have been ringing in my head these twenty-five years. '*Des poignées de sable*' ... '*Le soleil frappait la cascade*' ... '*Une seule nappe limpide*'.

I do not say that 'L'Education' is my favourite of all novels, but there lies embedded in it the prose that of all prose I love the best.

And one other recognition of perfection. A warm summer afternoon in Cumberland when, under the dark shadows of the Screes, I read for the first time the 'Pah of Genji'. *That* was rapture indeed, not lessened in any way by the successive volumes. And especially, perhaps, that moment when Genji, half in laughter, half in pity, visits the Princess with the Red Nose:

It was a depressing place to spend the night at in such weather as this. Yet the snow-storm had a beauty and fascination of its own and it was tiresome that the lady whom he had come to visit was far too stiff and awkward to join him in appreciating its wildness. The dawn was just breaking; & lifting one of the shutters with his own hand, he looked out at the snow-covered flowerbeds. Beyond them stretched great fields of snow untrodden by any foot. The sight was very strange and lovely, and moved by the thought that he soon must leave it: "Come and look how beautiful it is out of doors," he cried to the princess, who was in an inner room.'

So simple and timeless is perfection! These encounters—and so many more like them, the first reading of Donne's 'Elegies', of 'Tom Jones', of 'The Prelude', of Keats' Letters, of 'Karamazov', of Claudel's 'Satin Slippers', of 'The Brook Kerith', of 'The Woodlanders'—appear to one nothing but the recognition with happy startled eyes of country that was once one's own, from which one has long been exiled and has unexpectedly regained. As with books, so with pictures & music: the 'Dejeuner sur l'herbe' of Manet, the 'Night Watch', the 'Virgin of the Rocks', the trio in A minor of Schumann, Wotan & Erda in Siegfried, the Elgar Second Symphony. And so again with the soil itself. On such a day, a week before I was leaving for my first lecture in America, now eleven years ago, I sat with my mother in a field above Ullswater. It was a perfect summer evening. They were bringing in the hay, with singing and laughter, and light—spinning as with the murmurous flash of a million golden insects—sparkled upon Ullswater.

'This is where I shall live when I come back,' I said to my mother. And so it was.

This was in fact recovered country, for as children we had been brought—my sister, brother and I—year after year to Sower Myre Farm in Gosforth—a village between Wastwater and Seascale. The years of our childhood are of course the foundation of all our life. We never altogether emerge from them. The dark shadows of the Apple-Trees are never completely to remove their patterns from the walls. But I did not know then that the Sower Myre days were to be eternal. I did not even know that in later retrospect they were to seem so exceptionally blessed. But just as Madame Bovary and

Genji, once seen, are part of one's very soul for ever more, so that Farm, standing naked to the four winds, looking across woods and fields to Black Combe, the sea, the range that leads to the Screes, entered into me then never to leave me again. One place somewhere is one's own. Some never find it; others, seeing it, pass it by. Some prefer the nomadic life. For an artist—be he writer, painter or musician—it is his only final happiness that he may fasten his coloured balloons to one certain foundation—a person, a place, an ambition, a wager, a religion, an obstinacy, a mess of pottage. All my own ambitions have come to this: that I have been able to connect myself with a small square of country, the most lovely to me in the world, & to put on record for everyone who loves it as I do, my gratitude and the peace that I have found there.

Lest this should seem pretentious, let me add that it is very simple really and has in it neither pretence nor patronage. And I will summon Mr. Belloc, who is the best essayist in England since Hazlitt, as he talks to his mule: 'Then at last we came to water again, and the noise of man, and there it was that my mule and I came into a fellowship, and were agreed and thought of the same consummations. I had revered him as a strong and faithful servant, and I had felt gratitude to him as a helper, but now he became my brother for the first time. We were at one in our eagerness for the stable: good food and rest and litter (which means only a bed) and oblivion and the preparation for another day.'

Something of what Mr. Belloc felt about his mule, Cumberland may perhaps feel about me. If so, I am honoured.

The Farm, to my young eyes, consisted entirely of a large kitchen with a cavernous oven, and the hay loft at the end of the tangled garden. There was a bedroom that I shared with my young brother, and this had its mysteries: Mystery Number One—a large coloured text on the wall that went thus: 'He is a God of Thunder and his Trumpet shall Sound'—and, behold, around these terrific words was painted a gay pastoral pattern of butterflies and honeysuckle. Butterflies and honeysuckle when there should have been thunder on Jerusalem as I had seen it hanging in my father's study! 'His Trumpet shall Sound'—and then butterflies! Surely an anti-climax!

The other mysterious thing was the way in which the wind whistled through the bedroom wallpaper. Sower Myre knew all the winds, samples of one or another paying visits on the majority of days, sea-winds filled with shells, mica, and seaweed from Seascale; high turfy winds from Black Combe; icy shining winds from Wastwater—and then of a morning we would awake and find all the winds wrapped away, the morning as still and scented as honeysuckle, so that you could almost fancy you heard the sunlit waves curling on the Seascale beach three and a half miles away.

Well, this wind & this wallpaper. I knew of course that wind whistled through wallpaper. This particular wallpaper was plainly of the whistling kind, being a thin faded white, like a lady fading into decline, and painted with the very faintest of faint rosebuds. Through this then the wind whistled, but whistled with so personal a note that it was not only I but my sister and brother also who created an Image behind it. This Image was a fat, bloated Dwarf who, his stomach pressed

almost into his chin, sat—balanced on nothing, one fat naked knee crossed over the other—behind the wallpaper blowing with all his might! One day, such was his malevolent energy, he would burst the wallpaper, tumble helter-skelter onto my sister's bed, which was next to the wall. It might be that this would be in the middle of the night—and then what, oh what would my sister do? As to the large kitchen, and Mrs. Armstrong who presided over it, how can I ever pay a sufficient tribute? Mrs. Armstrong was stout, short, always smiling, deeply attached to my mother and father, over-anxious sometimes like Martha, a wonderful cook, energetic to a miracle. Mr. Armstrong, still alive, still—after all these years—my friend, would find his natural modesty deeply affronted if I were to speak of him here. Of all farmers he is, I think, the most gentle, whether with man or beast; and of all farmers he is, I think, still—at the age of seventy-something—the earliest riser: in fact I find it impossible to believe now, just as I found it impossible to believe then, that he takes any sleep at all. Of Ida and Dick and Lucy—foster brother and sisters—for the same fear of their modesty I will say no more than that my love for Cumberland, my trust and faith in Cumberland, had their birth in those years when we played together, ate together, quarrelled together, walked and climbed and ran together. So, I hope, we shall go to the end.

Of their patience with me, though, I would like to say a word. Then, as now, I had a burning desire to be allowed to 'run things'. I always knew exactly in a moment what ought to be done. Everyone else seemed to be of two minds, and the fact that my decisions were often proved wrong in the end taught me nothing. So, through those golden summers, I tried to run my little world. In the Barn and Hayloft, which

was our particular kingdom, I conducted cultural hours rather as to-day Oxford and Cambridge arrange their Extension Courses. In the fields that ran down the hill to the dark woods I planned a kind of Olympic Games—wrestling, flat-racing, hurdling, tug-of-war. For these there were prizes towards which every competitor must contribute, and the fact that I, older than the others, won as a rule the prizes never seemed to strike me as unfair! So it continued, the others following my lead with lazy docility, until the Lady of the Vicarage in Gosforth, inviting us to tea, suggesting charades, observing that I wished to play all the principal roles myself, read me a lecture on Conceit, Arrogance and Greediness before the assembled players that threw me into a raging passion of tears and opened effectively the eyes of all my brothers and sisters. My power was never the same again. Beneficial indeed for me, but it was in my nature to rush from one extreme to the other. The Apple-Trees descended. I was tortured by shame, self-distrust, a burning sense of the world's injustice, a resolve never to raise my voice about anything in the world again—a resolve alas! alas! that I have quite singularly failed since then to observe.

To the kitchen, the barn, the whistling wind there must be added one more Farm character—Miss Senhouse. Miss Senhouse was, and even to-day still is, the heroine of Gosforth—heroine not for any publicly heroic deeds or widely-acclaimed charities. She was, it seemed, simply a busy, lively little lady who might have lived in Cranford if she hadn't belonged by bone and sinew to the North. She inhabited a little house crammed with beautiful trifles—watercolours, silver teapots, old pieces of lace, garnets, sets of chessmen and musical boxes. She was sharp, kind,

humorous, and stood no nonsense. She was the only person who at this time (I was twelve or thirteen) thought me an agreeable boy. Nevertheless she gave me some good advice: 'You are a very gloomy boy. Why don't you cheer up? You think too much about yourself. People have no time for anyone who is only interested in himself. Remember that everybody finds himself more interesting and exciting than he finds anyone else; so, if you want to get on in the world, you must *pretend* to be interested in others even if you're not. And if you pretend often enough it will become a habit and at last real enough to take anyone else in.

'Don't be so sorry for yourself. You might have only one leg or have to use an ear-trumpet. On the other hand, when you grow up don't go to the other extreme and be too genial and cheerful-spirited. People won't like that either. They'll think you're pleased with yourself. In fact, whatever you do they'll criticize you, but don't worry. It happens to everybody. It doesn't do any harm.'

She was quite right about the geniality; for, whereas until I went to Cambridge I was so gloomy & dispirited that I was known as 'melancholy Jacques', after that period I acquired a geniality which has always affected some people like the small-pox. I can understand the dislike of it, but am quite unable to alter it. As Arnold Bennett once said: 'The moment you're born you're done for'; and, melancholy or genial, if you raise your voice someone or other will dislike the tone of it. The only thing to do is to remain as quiet as a mouse, and I am, I'm afraid, too constantly excited by one thing after another for that to be possible ... *Mea culpa*. We'll all soon be dead.

Miss Senhouse sympathized with my ambitions to be a great writer, which ambitions I had cherished since the age of five, and, like the egregious novelist in Maugham's 'Cakes & Ale' (supposed, I understand, to be the portrait of a living novelist), have ever since sedulously fostered. I was at that time (as indeed I am still) romantically minded and wrote long historical novels called 'Arnado the Fearless' and 'The Trump of Doom'. At that time my novel was concerned with the unhappy Duke of Monmouth, and I remember that, afternoon after afternoon, I sat among Miss Senhouse's silver teapots and musical boxes and copied page after page out of a history book concerning the Battle of Sedgemoor. She gave me, in the true traditional fashion, the most marvellous teas—thick damp plum-cake, rum butter, hot buttered toast, blackberry jam and honey in the comb. And, when I had gorged myself beyond decency, a cuckoo clock on the stairs always cried the hour as though Miss Senhouse had a secret pact with the bird. Best of all she would constantly make me presents—a small water-colour drawing, a book of silhouettes, a china figure, and once, one of the adored musical boxes. She was a darling, and I don't know why there are no old ladies anywhere any longer. There is nothing in the world so nice.

And, best of all, there was the sea. We would bicycle, my father, my sister and I, while my mother and small brother went in the pony-cart with the luncheon. Arrived at Seascale I hurried to the little station that stood, like a lost sentry-box, in the middle of the sand, and, producing my penny, buy my 'Weekly Telegraph' or one of Stead's Penny Classics, or, if I was very rich, the 'Windsor' Magazine. I cannot think of Seascale without recalling, with love and gratitude, that

monthly splendour. Why, oh why, did it discard its green cover with the grand picture of Windsor Castle? Why are there no more Guy Boothbys with their 'Dr. Nikola' and 'Pharos the Egyptian'? Where has Mr. Max Pemberton and his 'Kronstadt' gone? (I can yet see Mr. Forestier's wonderful picture of the English governess-spy searching through drawer after drawer for state secrets.) Where is now Mayne Lindsey and her Indian stories, where 'The Christian', where those miraculous instalments of 'Stalky'? Why have magazines to-day lost all their savour, their colour, their romance? Or is it only that I have become a Realist at last? Yes, this is only a Moment Recovered! A moment composed of such curious opposites! The smell of cakes baking in the Sower Myer kitchen, the scent of hay dripping from the slowly-moving carts, the clump of the men's hobnails on the flags beyond the kitchen window, the whistle of the wind through the bedroom wall, Miss Senhouse's blackberry jam, the gritty warm sand clinging to one's toes after the bathe, my father's sharp 'Now, children, hurry. You've got to bicycle all the way home.' Black Combe as it caught the last rosy colour of the setting sun, Wastwater silver under the precipitous Screes, the lowing of the cows as they were driven across the yard, the smell of the summer flowers—foxgloves, nasturtium, sweet william, carnation; the races across the sloping field, my mother—so graceful, so gentle—smiling at us from the field gate, the last hurrying sharp note of the Church bell as, clutching our prayer books and our collection-money, we hurried past the famous Gosforth Cross, the Isle of Man—no larger than a man's hand—shadowy beyond the green and purple sea; sinking to sleep with the owl hooting in the tree at the garden end while the

moon stroked the floor and voices rose and fell, sleepily,
mistily, from the kitchen...

All this and more—so much, much more—now, in these later
years, to spell the word Cumberland for me and to prove to
me that nothing is lost however trivial, nothing trivial
however small.

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[The end of *The Apple Trees--Four Reminiscences* by Hugh
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