BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

A. A. MILNE

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BOOKS BY A. A. MILNE

Illustrated by E. H. Shepard

WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG
WINNIE-THE-POOH
NOW WE ARE SIX
THE HOUSE AT POOH CORNER
THE HUMS OF POOH

SONG BOOKS FROM
THE POEMS OF A. A. MILNE

Music by H. Fraser Simson. Illustrated by E. H. Shepard

FOURTEEN SONGS
THE KING'S BREAKFAST
TEDDY BEAR AND OTHER SONGS
SONGS FROM 'NOW WE ARE SIX'
MORE 'VERY YOUNG' SONGS

IF I MAY
NOT THAT IT MATTERS
ONCE A WEEK
THE DAY'S PLAY
THE HOLIDAY ROUND
THE SUNNY SIDE
THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY
MR. PIM PASSES BY
FOR THE LUNCHEON INTERVAL
TOAD OF TOAD HALL
THOSE WERE THE DAYS

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

BY

A. A. MILNE

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My thanks are due, and gladly rendered, to Messrs. Chatto and Windus for allowing me to re-publish the Epilogue from *The Story of the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith*, and to Messrs. John Lane & Co. for a similar courtesy in respect of an Introduction to *The Chronicles of Clovis*. If Messrs. Methuen had not allowed me to use certain Introductions to various books which they have published, they would have had to wait another year or two for this one; it is not yet possible to say, therefore, how grateful which of us should be to whom. An Introduction to *The Granta and Its Contributors* having been at the time its own reward, I have included it without consulting its publishers; but if I have, so to speak, outrun the Constable in doing this, I offer my apologies. For including two introductions to my own books I have, however, no apology to make. They wanted to join the others, and I saw no way of stopping them.

A. A. M.

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING

1. FOUGASSE
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8. ‘THE KING’S BREAKFAST’

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THERE was a time, long since past, when I used to write an essay every week. Each Thursday, or whatever the day was, I would sit down before a blank sheet of foolscap, and gnaw the end of my pen. The whole world, or it would be more true to say the whole non-controversial world, lay open to me; I could take a gold-fish from its pool in Sussex, a malacca-cane from (I suppose) its grove in Malacca, Columbus from his ship in mid-Atlantic, or a stockbroker from his lunch in Cheapside, and say all that was to be said on the matter in a thousand words. The difficulty of course was in the selection of the subject rather than in the writing. It is easier to make an essay on *Walnuts* than to make an essay on *Anything* (including walnuts), just as it is easier to be a tram than an omnibus. When your road is chosen for you, you can go ahead diligently; when you choose it for yourself, you are looking over your shoulder at the other roads, surely much more attractive, which you might have chosen; in which attitude progress is less fluent. However, one gets there at last.

As soon as one has written enough essays of this sort to make a book, one makes a book; and finds to one's surprise that one really has made a book; something, that is, with a personality. One had supposed that one was saying something true about gold-fish or walking-sticks or bandstands, whereas actually it was the gold-fish and the walking-sticks and the bandstands which were saying something true about oneself. This is a discovery which an author makes, and to which he becomes accustomed, more quickly than does a critic. Three-quarters of literary and dramatic criticism is an expression of regret that the author is not somebody else. It *is* regrettable; I often wish that I were Shakespeare, or, on such occasions as this, Lamb. So, too, when I am told, as I so often am, that it is time I 'came to grips with real life'—preferably in a brothel or Public Bar where life is notoriously more real than elsewhere, minds more complex, more imaginative, more articulate, souls nearer the stars—I realize sadly that, even if I made the excursion, I should bring back nothing but that same self to which objection had already been taken.

For we cannot escape. I have noticed, when playing golf, that the more I alter my swing (and I alter it every week, in the certainty that at last I have

attained the true one, so that on one day I am playing like Vardon, on another like Mitchell, on the next like Taylor)—the more this happens, the more characteristic of myself does my swing appear to the onlookers. In vain I assure my caddie or my opponent that I am a different golfer altogether to-day; that I have a straighter left arm, a more advanced left foot, a flatter trajectory of the club-head. He only smiles. He would recognize my ineffective swing three hundred yards away. I am unalterably what I am.

So, then, it may be said that, whatever subject an author chooses, or has chosen for him, he reveals no secret but the secret of himself. This is my apology for the miscellaneous contents of this book. The days when I wrote a weekly essay, the days when I wrote a weekly 'humorous article', are behind me, and have yielded their harvest. Books no longer collect themselves. When I write an essay now, it is because some publisher has demanded an Introduction, and I never can resist writing Introductions; because some editor has sent me a book, and I never can wrap up a book and send it back again, so must needs pay for it in twelve hundred words; or because some other editor has asked for my views on this or that subject, and by mentioning the subject has set me thinking on it—to the damnation of whatever I am trying to do, until I have worked it out of my system. Here is the sum total tied up together; the gleanings, over many years, of a lazy worker now in that field; the reflections, to vary the metaphor, of an easy-going tram, which has occasionally chosen its own line. Its title should be the only title for any book of essays—*Myself*. But since booksellers demand something more distinctive, I have called it *By Way of Introduction*; for when I am not introducing myself or a greater than myself, I am but introducing a subject on which there is more to be said than I have said, or doubtless can ever say. And because this is also the title of the first chapter, I have taken this opportunity of introducing the rest of the book to you.

INTRODUCING FOUGASSE

THERE are various methods of introducing an artist to his public. One of the best is to describe how you saved his life in the Bush in '82; or he saved yours; and then you go on, 'Little did either of us anticipate in those far-off days that Fougasse was destined to become . . .' Another way is to leave Fougasse out altogether, and concentrate, how happily, on your own theories of black-and-white drawing, or politics, or the decline of the Churches; after all, an introduction doesn't last long, and he has the rest of the book to himself. Perhaps, however, it is kinder to keep the last paragraph for him: 'Take these little sketches by Fougasse, for instance . . .' and the reader, if he cares to any longer, can then turn over and take them. Left to ourselves that is the method we should adopt. But the publisher is at our elbow. 'This is an introduction,' he says. 'For Heaven's sake introduce the fellow.'

Let us begin, then, by explaining Fougasse's nationality. I never discuss his drawings with another, but we tell each other how remarkable it is that a Frenchman should have such an understanding of English sport. 'Of course,' we say, 'in the actual drawing the nationality reveals itself; the Gallic style stands forth unmistakably; only a Frenchman has just that line. But how amazingly British is the outlook! Was there ever a Frenchman before who understood and loved cricket as this one?' We ask ourselves how the phenomenon is to be explained. The explanation is simple. A *fougasse*—I quote the dictionary—is a small mine from six to twelve feet underground charged either with powder or loaded shells; and if a British sapper subaltern, severely wounded at Gallipoli, beguiles the weary years of hospital by drawing little pictures and sending them up to *Punch*, he may as well call himself Fougasse as anything else. Particularly if his real name is Bird, and if a Bird, whose real name is Yeats, is already drawing for *Punch*. Of course it would have been simpler if they had all stuck to their own names like gentlemen, but it is too late now to do anything about it, and when a genuine M. Fougasse of Paris comes along, he will have to call himself Tomkins. Once the downward path of deceit is trodden, there is seemingly no end to it.

We have our artist, then, Kenneth Bird of Morar, Inverness-shire. When I first met him at the beginning of 1919, he was just out of hospital, swinging slowly along with the aid of a pair of rocking-horse crutches. This was on

his annual journey south, for they have the trains in Morar now. Once a year Fougasse makes the great expedition to London, to see what the latest fashions may be, and is often back in Morar again before they have changed to something later. I have seen him each year; in 1920 with two ordinary crutches, in 1921 with two sticks, in 1922 with one stick; soon, perhaps, he will be playing again the games of which he makes such excellent fun. But, selfishly, we cannot regret that Turkish bullet, which turned what I suspect of being quite an ordinary engineer into such an individual black-and-white draughtsman.

I am really the last person who should be writing this introduction, for all drawing is to me a mystery. When I put two dots, a horizontal line, and a vertical line into a circle, the result is undoubtedly a face, but whose, or what expressing, I cannot tell you until afterwards, nor always then. But these mystery men can definitely promise you beforehand that their dot and line juggling will represent Contempt or Surprise or Mr. Asquith, just as you want it. It is very strange; and, sometimes I think, not quite fair. However, this is not the place wherein to dwell upon the injustice of it. What I wanted to say was that with Fougasse I feel a little more at ease than usual; we have something in common. Accepting the convention that writers write exclusively with the pen, and that black-and-white artists draw exclusively with the pencil, I should describe Fougasse as more nearly a Brother of the Pen than any of the others. Were I in the *Punch* office now, I should never begin my weekly contribution until his drawing had turned up, lest it should prove that he had already written it for me; and he, I like to tell myself, would be equally fearful lest that very week I might have got his drawing into type. ‘The Tragedy of a Trouser’, for instance—it is a whole article. Any wide-awake trade union would forbid it.

But it is Fougasse’s golf and cricket articles of which, as a rival practitioner, I should have complained most; in which, Plancus no longer consul, I delight most. Turn to page 31 and you will see all that is to be said on the subject of village cricket. How lucky draughtsmen are! What a laborious business we others should have made of it! Would any of you have laughed at our wordy description of the fielder in a cloth cap to whom one can run a single?—‘but one gets in two for trousers tucked into socks’—‘stretching it to three for a straw hat’—‘and four for a black waistcoat’. Each fielder as drawn here is a joy. Yet there is something more than that; we are not just laughing at them, for they are our friends. We look from one to the other of them, and gradually the smile becomes a little wistful. It was how many years ago! Now the printed page has vanished, and we see again the village green. Straw Hat was the postman. Not quite like

that, however, for he wore the official trousers with it, but he moved slowly, being the postman and tired of it, and one ran three to him. Black Waistcoat was the dairy farmer; his the cows which had to be driven off the pitch on a Saturday morning; a mighty underhand bowler, bouncing terribly. Fougasse is wrong here, for his hand could stop anything, and one would never run four to him. I doubt if you would ever run four to a black waistcoat, their hands are so big. Slow in the return of course, but safe, safe.

You may think that you have had enough of War Sketches, but you will be glad to see the historic 'Gadgets' again, and perhaps even now '1914-1918' will give you a lump in the throat with your smile, and make you somehow a little more proud. It is so very much England. But taking the drawings as a whole I should say that the charm of their humour lies in the fact that they make the very jokes which we should have made for ourselves, if only we had realized that they were jokes. When Mr. Bateman gives us his brilliant life-study of the man who breathed on the glass in the British Museum, we realize that this is an inspiration far outside our range. 'How ever did he think of it?' we say to ourselves in awe. When Mr. Morrow draws us a little supper-party at the Borgias, we have to admit sadly that the comedy of a supper-party at the Borgias would never have occurred to *us*. But when Fougasse describes to us his feelings in the presence of the Wedding Detective, or the conversation of the Club Bore in the library, then we beam upon him delightedly. Why, it's absolutely true! We've noticed it ourselves a hundred times! As we were saying to Jones only yesterday . . . Alas! we flatter ourselves. We saw the pebbles lying there, day after day, and there, for us, they would still be lying. But a humorist picks them up and holds them this way and that. The light shines upon them. See! They are precious stones.

INTRODUCING FAIRYLAND

[*The Science of Fairy Tales*, by E. S. Hartland]

> 'I don't believe in fairies,
> I've something else to do,'

says Mr. John Drinkwater, and we need not waste our time arguing with him. It is his own affair. With a salute for his honesty we pass on.

> 'I don't believe in fairies,
> I think that lazy men
> Who think the sunshine commonplace
> Invented them, and then
> Forgot that it is wonderful
> That five and five make ten.'

But at this point we interrupt. For that was not how it happened. It is the purpose of this book to examine the matter a little more scientifically.

Our author divides Fairy Tales into two classes. In the first come 'all those stories which relate to definite supernatural beings, or definite orders of supernatural beings, held really to exist, and the scenes of which are usually laid in some specified locality. Stories belonging to this class do not necessarily, however, deal with the supernatural. Often they are told of historical heroes, or persons believed to have once lived'. Lady Godiva and Dick Whittington, for instance. These stories are called *Sagas*. The second class consists of tales 'told simply for amusement. Being untrammelled either by history or probability, the one condition the tale is expected to fulfil is to end happily. Stories of this class are technically called *Marchen*; we have no better English name for them than *Nursery Tales*'.

A *Saga*, then, is the natural growth of man's vanity, whether for himself or for his hero. It is not an invention of a lazy man who thinks beauty commonplace, but of an imaginative man who thinks the truth commonplace, as so often it is. If I hole St. Andrews in 90, and tell my friends that I did it in 89, that is the beginning of a *Saga*. By the time my grandson gets the story I am round in 75, and my great-great-grandchildren recount to their own grandchildren the tale of the Family Hero's score of 60 in the dark days when golf balls were neither round nor resilient. By this

time the story has become a little difficult. Such a score admits only of a supernatural explanation. The explanation is provided. A certain Colonel Bogey to whom their ancestor had sold his soul . . . and so on. The *Saga* is complete.

The *Nursery Tale* is an equally simple growth. It is too late for a modern mother to wonder if her children ought to be brought up with a belief in fairies. Their acceptance of fairies is as natural as their acceptance of the Milkman or the Mayor. You cannot tell bed-time stories about a milkman without his becoming The Milkman, and once he is in capital letters he is a figure round whom legends inevitably grow. Moreover, he has—he must needs have—the fairy-like quality of appearing and vanishing at will. The child hurts himself and is consoled by a story of his favourite character; if there is no one to console him, he makes shift to console himself; and it is a short step from this to the magical appearance of The Milkman in person, offering his own condolences. Be as matter-of-fact as you please; think with the poet that 'fays and leprechauns are slatterns of the mind'; but you have now got a fairy in the house—Fairy Milkman—as powerful as Fairy Blackstick.

And why not? To say that a child has no need for fairies when there are so many beautiful birds and butterflies in the world, or no need for seven league boots so long as five and five most wonderfully make ten, is like saying that a man has no need for Switzerland until he has exhausted (as none of us has) the beauties of England, nor any need for Wordsworth until he has mastered every line of Shakespeare. We need not forget the

Storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light

in our eagerness to look out of

Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

Let us take the best of both worlds.

For, indeed, Fairyland has to offer us that most tender of all the virtues, Simplicity. This is no country for the sophisticated, the worldly wise. Even the Wicked Ogre who eats babies alive, and by our own standards compares ill with a politician, does not dream of going back on his word. You could stake your life on the tossing of a coin with him, and know that, if you won, he was at your mercy. Does your deliverance from his dungeon depend upon

your guessing of a riddle, you can be sure that he will let you know quite fairly if your guess was correct. Even in matters of high policy, when the King promises his daughter to the winner of a slippery-hill-climbing contest, no lawyers are called in afterwards to challenge the conditions. How blandly, one feels, would a modern Rumpelstilzkin announce that his name was really Robinson, and produce naturalization papers to prove it. But in Fairyland honesty was not the best policy—it was the only policy.

For I like to think of Fairyland as a country which exists; and I suppose that we whose childhood is over mean no more than this when we say that we believe in fairies. Yet being in a manner still childish, we ask ourselves questions about the enchanted country, which are not for the scientific historian to answer. You will not find in this book an explanation of just what did happen when Magic Sword met Magic Sword. One would like to know. Perhaps they never did meet, or, meeting, declined the combat. Certainly it would spoil the freshness of the morning for the Third Son of a Woodcutter if he suspected that the Third Son of the Charcoal Burner was also under the patronage of a Fairy Godmother in his demand for the hand of the Princess. Nor is the problem of Seven League Boots solved here, as some day, somewhere, it must be solved. To pursue, to visit, to escape, in multiples of twenty-one miles seems to have been enough for the simple inhabitants of Fairyland; but how was it when one had an exact hundred of miles to the King's Palace? Five strides . . . and a five-mile trudge back, with one's boots in one's hand. . . . It would need a gallant young man to carry it off on his first visit. But then, as we have seen, they were simple people to whom kind hearts were more than stockinged feet. . . . Or there may have been boots within boots. . . .

It is time, however, that I handed you on to Mr. Hartland. My qualification for writing this introduction is that I have read and enjoyed his book; his qualification for writing the book can be seen by a glance at the Appendix; and, glancing at it again myself, I have decided not to introduce him to you, but more reverently to present you to him. In three of his chapters he discusses the supernatural lapse of time in Fairyland, by virtue of which years seem as moments. Following him into Fairyland we shall find that the hours we spend there under his leadership have indeed something of this magic quality.

INTRODUCING SAKI

THERE are good things which we want to share with the world, and good things which we want to keep to ourselves. The secret of our favourite restaurant, to take a case, is guarded jealously from all but a few intimates; the secret, to take a contrary case, of our infallible remedy for sea-sickness is thrust upon every traveller we meet, even if he be no more than a casual acquaintance about to cross the Serpentine. So with our books. There are dearly-loved books of which we babble to a neighbour at dinner, insisting that she shall share our delight in them, and there are books, equally dear to us, of which we say nothing, fearing lest the praise of others should cheapen the glory of our discovery. The books of 'Saki' were, for me, at least, in the second class.

It was in the *Westminster Gazette* that I discovered him (I like to remember now) almost as soon as he was discoverable. Let us spare a moment, and a tear, for those golden days in the early nineteen hundreds, when there were five leisurely papers of an evening in which the freelance might graduate, and he could speak of his Alma Mater, whether the *Globe* or the *Pall Mall*, with as much pride as, he never doubted, the *Globe* or the *Pall Mall* would speak one day of him. Myself but lately down from *St. James'*, I was not too proud to take some slight but pitying interest in men of other colleges. The unusual name of a freshman up at *Westminster* attracted my attention; I read what he had to say; and it was only by reciting rapidly with closed eyes the names of our own famous *alumni*, beginning confidently with Barrie and ending, now very doubtfully, with myself, that I was able to preserve my equanimity. Later one heard that this undergraduate from over-seas had gone up at an age more advanced than customary; and just as Cambridge men have been known to complain of the maturity of Oxford Rhodes scholars, so one felt that this *Westminster* freelance in the 'thirties was no fit competitor for the youth of other colleges. Indeed, it could not compete.

Well, I discovered him, but only to the few, the favoured, did I speak of him. It may have been my uncertainty (which still persists) whether he called himself Sayki, Sahki, or Sakki which made me thus ungenerous of his name, or it may have been the feeling that the others were not worthy of him; but how refreshing it was when some intellectually blown-up stranger said, 'Do you ever read Saki?' to reply, with the same pronunciation and

even greater condescension: ‘Saki! He has been my favourite author for years!’

A strange, exotic creature, this Saki, to us many others who were trying to do it too. For we were so domestic, he so terrifyingly cosmopolitan. While we were being funny, as planned, with collar-studs and hot-water bottles, he was being much funnier with were-wolves and tigers. Our little dialogues were between John and Mary; his, and how much better, between Bertie van Tahn and the Baroness. Even the most casual intruder into one of his sketches, as it might be our Tomkins, had to be called Belturbet or de Ropp, and for his hero, weary man-of-the-world at seventeen, nothing less thrilling than Clovis Sangrail would do. In our envy we may have wondered sometimes if it were not much easier to be funny with tigers than with collar-studs; if Saki’s careless cruelty, that strange boyish insensitiveness of his, did not give him an unfair start in the pursuit of laughter. It may have been so; but, fortunately, our efforts to be funny in the Saki manner have not survived to prove it.

What is Saki’s manner, what his magic talisman? Like every other artist worth consideration he had no recipe. If his exotic choice of subject was often his strength, it was often his weakness; if his insensitiveness carried him through, at times, to victory, it brought him, at times, to defeat. I do not think that he has that ‘mastery of the *conte*’ which some have claimed for him. Such mastery infers a passion for tidiness which was not in the boyish Saki’s equipment. He leaves loose ends everywhere. Nor in his dialogue, delightful as it often is, funny as it nearly always is, is he the supreme master; too much does it become monologue judiciously fed, one character giving and the other taking. But in comment, in reference, in description, in every development of his story, he has a choice of words, a ‘way of putting things’ which is as inevitably his own vintage as, once tasted, it becomes the private vintage of the connoisseur.

Let us take a sample or two of ‘Saki, 1911’.

> The earlier stages of the dinner had worn off. The wine lists had been consulted, by some with the blank embarrassment of a school-boy suddenly called upon to locate a Minor Prophet in the tangled hinterland of the Old Testament, by others with the serene scrutiny which suggests that they have visited most of the higher-priced wines in their own homes and probed their family weaknesses.

‘Locate’ is the pleasant word here. Still more satisfying, in the story of the man who was tattooed ‘from collar-bone to waist-line with a glowing representation of the Fall of Icarus’, is the word ‘privilege’:

> The design when finally developed, was a slight disappointment to Monsieur Deplis, who had suspected Icarus of being a fortress taken by Wallenstein in the Thirty Years’ War, but he was more than satisfied with the execution of the work, which was acclaimed by all who had the privilege of seeing it as Pincini’s masterpiece.

This story (*The Background*) and *Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger* seem to me to be the masterpieces of this book. In both of them Clovis exercises his titular right of entry, needlessly, but he can be removed without damage, leaving Saki at his best and most characteristic, save that he shows here, in addition to his own shining qualities, a compactness and a finish which he did not always achieve. With these, I introduce you to him, confident that ten minutes of his conversation, more surely than any words of mine, will have given him the freedom of your house.

INTRODUCING SHEPARD

THERE are other differences between Author and Artist than the medium of expression. For instance, an artist of reputation who illustrates advertisements of soap is an object of nothing but envy to his fellows, whereas a writer of similar reputation, who had been exposed as the author of such delightful dialogues as precede the arrival of furniture in plain vans, would deem it necessary to slink past Sir Edmund Gosse with his hat over his eyes. Why this is so I cannot say; nor why, when an author produces a book entirely on his own, no artist is asked to write an introduction, whereas the book of Shepard cannot make its charming bow to the world until Milne, or somebody moderately respectable, has agreed to chaperon it.

Mr. E. H. Shepard, of all people, needs no introduction at my hands. Anybody who has heard of me has certainly heard of Shepard. Indeed, our names have been associated on so many title-pages that I am beginning to wonder which of us is which. Years ago when I used to write for the paper of whose staff he is now such a decorative member I was continually being asked by strangers if I also drew the cartoons. Sometimes I said 'Yes.' No doubt Mr. Shepard is often asked if he wrote 'The King's Breakfast'. I should be proud if he admitted now and then that he did.

I must confess that I am writing this Introduction a little self-consciously; feeling, no doubt, much as Mr. Elliott feels when asked to photograph Mr. Fry. We have a perfectly true story in our family that one of us was approached by an earnest woman at some special function with the words, 'Oh, are you the brother of A. J. Milne—or am I thinking of Shepperson?' E. H. Shepard, though surely he owes something to that beautiful draughtsman, is not to be mistaken for Claude Shepperson, nor am I that other, to me unknown, from whom I have so lamentably failed to profit; but you see what she meant. You see also what I mean; and how I am hampered by the fear that somebody may read this Introduction, and feel that Mr. Shepard is not being very modest about himself. For if I let myself go I could make him seem very immodest indeed.

Perhaps this will be a good place in which to tell the story of how I discovered him. It is short, but interesting. In those early days before the war, when he was making his first tentative pictures for *Punch*, I used to say

to F. H. Townsend, the Art Editor, on the occasion of each new Shepard drawing, 'What on earth do you see in this man? He's perfectly hopeless,' and Townsend would say complacently, 'You wait.' So I waited. That is the end of the story, which is shorter and less interesting than I thought it was going to be. For it looks now as if the discovery had been somebody else's. Were those early drawings included in this book, we should know definitely whether Townsend was a man of remarkable insight, or whether I was just an ordinary fool. In their absence we may assume fairly safely that he was something of the one, and I more than a little of the other. The Shepard you see here is the one for whom I waited; whom, in the end, even I could not fail to recognize.

Art is not life, but an exaggeration of it; life reinforced by the personality of the artist. A work of art is literally 'too good to be true'. That is why we shall never see Turner's sunsets in this world, nor meet Mr. Micawber. We only wish we could. But Life does its best to keep the artist in sight. Whether sunsets tried to be more Turneresque in the 'fifties I do not remember, but the du Maurier women came in a stately procession well behind du Maurier, and banting youth toils after Shepperson in vain. Kensington Garden children are said to be the most beautiful in the world, but in a little while Shepard will make them more beautiful than ever. Bachelors remain bachelors because they are always just a little too late for the fair, their adoration having shifted with the years from the du Maurier girl to the Gibson girl, and from the Gibson girl to the Baumer girl, until bachelordom was a habit. But every mother prays simply for a little Shepard child, and leaves it to Mr. Shepard whether it is a boy or a girl. . . .

Which reminds me that, whether anybody else or not is liking this introduction, Mr. Shepard himself is beginning to feel anxious about it. However modest we are in public, in private we are never too modest for praise; but we do like to be praised for the right thing. Mr. Arnold Bennett will remain unmoved if you tell him that he knows all about the Five Towns, but he will blush delicately if you assure him that he knows all about Town. So with the rest of us. No artist but hates to be pinned in a groove like a dead and labelled butterfly, and none of the secular but loves so to pin him, feeling that thus, and only thus, is he safe. Not many of the pictures here are pictures of children, but I can imagine Mr. Shepard saying wearily, when their legends were sent to him for illustration, 'Children again! But I can *do* children! Give me something I'm not so sure about, like the inside of a battleship or a Bargee's Saturday Night.' Well, here are some of the others; nor battleships, nor bargees; but not children. For in a sense this book is Mr. Shepard's escape from me, and from the setting-board to which I have

selfishly condemned him. How unfortunate that, even here, I am at his elbow. ‘Ah! Drawings of children,’ some fool will say, seeing our names together on the title-page. But he will be wrong. They are just drawings of Shepard’s.

My one regret is that there are still no bargees. Not because, as some dull people seem to think, only the slow, the insensitive, and the unimaginative are proper subjects for a work of art, but because a Shepard bargee would so plainly be anything but slow, insensitive, and unimaginative. He would not be tied to the heavy lorry-wheels of the realist, but would soar over the Tower Bridge on wings; and we should say sadly to ourselves, ‘If only bargees were really like that!’

And in a little while they would become more like that.

INTRODUCING *GRANTA*

THERE is nothing so tiresome as the introduction by the Chairman of the Guest of the Evening. Here is a similar sort of introduction which will probably be as tiresome. To keep it in character, therefore, I shall begin in the recognized manner with a 'little story' which 'happened to me the other day'. But this, unlike the Chairman's little story, will not be recognized, for it is true.

I was playing golf in a foursome—a friend and I against another friend (Smith, let us call him) and the professional. Standing on the second tee and waggling his club with an air, Smith said to the professional, 'I say, what exactly *is* the line to this hole?' He did not really want to know, for he has a line of his own here—to the right, through a gorse-bush—but he wanted to be impressive up to the last possible moment. His game, thus far, had been very impressive; thus far, Smith had not made a mistake. The first hole he had played perfectly. His partner had driven on to the green, a foot from the pin, and Smith had picked up the ball and said, 'You give us that, I suppose?' His walk to the next tee was also good; his waggle stylish; and it sounded well to ask, 'What *is* the line to this hole?'—as if he could place the ball just where it was wished. The professional looked down the course. Five hundred yards away were four scattered specks on the horizon, four players approaching from divers points the distant green. And the professional, shading his eyes with his hand, said to Smith, 'Well, sir, play on his Grace the Duke of Leeds.'

We all have our proud moments of reflected glory; moments never to be forgotten; and those of us with an eye on posterity have already decided which of these memories shall be graved on our tombstone. On Smith's will be the simple words, 'He once played on the Duke of Leeds'; and on mine the boast, 'He was a *Granta* man.' But perhaps there should be another line added, 'He once played on Calverley.'

Calverley was our hero. What chance had he at Oxford of indulging his glorious irresponsibility? He had to come to Cambridge to keep truly young. We, who followed him from afar, picked up his youth, if nothing else. It seems absurd that on a point of chronology, no more, the *Granta* cannot claim him. In the index to this book his name should be written large. 'CALVERLEY. Influence on Smith, p. 27. Influence on Brown, p. 42.

Influence on Robinson, p. 128. Inferiority of Jones to —, p. 160. Imitations of —, *hic et ubique*.'

We were very young in those days, and young, it still seems to me, in the right sort of way; not with the portentous youth of our rival university; not scornful, not cynical, not superior; but youthfully light-hearted; light-headed perhaps; laughing too easily, if you like, too loudly, if you will have it so, but laughing. What if we laughed sometimes to show you that you had had the joke? Better do this, we felt, than clear the throat in the Oxford manner to show you that an epigram was coming. Life, for us, was not 'rather a problem', to be solved by a phrase at twenty, but 'rather a rag', and at twenty most to be enjoyed. Do we blush as we read again our old contributions, thinking, 'How immature they were'? Not we! We think proudly, 'How expressive of our immaturity they were. How much they were ourselves. Does any of that divine youth hang over us still? If it be so, let us thank Cambridge and the *Granta* for casting the spell on us.'

But I am delaying the moment when the *Granta* will speak to you for itself. First, however, let Mr. F. A. Rice, the present Editor, and only begetter of this book, tell you something of the paper's history. Lucky Mr. Rice! He is privileged now to begin the great journey from Liverpool Street (where you disembark from Cambridge) to Fleet Street. He is at the heavenly age when you wonder whether it is nicer to be Milton or Fielding. Along what tributary of Fleet Street will his hopes take him? An Oxford man would saunter down the Strand to Wellington Street (if that is still the address); an Edinburgh man might double back to Printing House Square; but a Cambridge man could hardly resist looking in at Bouverie Street to pass the time of day with the London *Granta*, as Mr. Rice calls it, himself already a humble contributor. Yes, I say humble purposely. I detect traces in his book of a charming awe of those of us who set out before him, and who have arrived . . . not very far perhaps. He sees swans ahead of him. Well, it will do him less harm to mistake a goose or two for a swan than to proclaim that all established swans are geese. He will write the better for feeling that it is wonderful to write at all. For you may find much youthful folly in these old contributions of *Granta* men, but you will not find, I think, that most unlovely folly of youth—the folly of superiority.

INTRODUCING HAMMERSMITH

Sometimes I feel that it was I who founded the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith; that mine is the policy which has directed it thus far; mine the banana barrows which adorn its entrance. It may be that I am wrong about this, for if it is my theatre, what the devil should Mr. Nigel Playfair be doing in the gallery? Possibly I have engaged him at a small salary to pick up the banana-skins. More likely, though, it is his theatre after all—and he has engaged me, at no salary at all, to write about it. If so, here I am.

I think that, when I die, I shall have graved on my tombstone—possibly among other remarks—these magic words, 'He was a good listener.' My real claim to immortality, the reason why I regard the Lyric as my own child, lies in this: that when Mr. Playfair first began—really began—to talk about the theatre he was going to open, it was I who gave him the cues. The future Lessee and Manager talked: the unknown dramatist and his wife listened. No great work was ever undertaken without some such co-operation as this, but as a rule Posterity does little to honour the more humble member of the firm. Whenever I am in Ludgate Circus I look vainly for the statue of Lady Wren; whenever I am in the foyer (if I may call it that) of the Lyric, Hammersmith, I feel that what it really wants (to make it a foyer) is a bust of myself. But for me . . .

Well, Nigel talked, and we listened. Every Sunday he came to us. How eagerly we followed his progress from week to week! With what disappointment we heard that he had just failed to secure an option on a disused shop in the Mile End Road; with what joy, on the following Sunday, that he was now negotiating for a lease of Buckingham Palace. As I was to be his first author, it was necessary that I should be kept in touch with his prospects. Say what he will about his art, a dramatist, in as far as he is a craftsman too, must consider his stage and his public. A play for the National Opera House, Covent Garden, such as we were discussing earnestly one Sunday, would naturally be different in certain technical details from a play for an open-air theatre at Wapping Old Stairs . . . and on the next Sunday I was the first to admit this.

Then came the day when Nigel made his great discovery of Hammersmith. Embittered locals assert that Hammersmith existed before,

and for other reasons; as indeed is manifest once a year, when Cambridge shoots its bridge in eight minutes five seconds, and Oxford, in its vicinity, quickens to thirty-nine. But whereas all that a thousand university oarsmen have discovered is that Hammersmith is about eight minutes by water from Putney, Mr. Nigel Playfair made the much more important contribution to knowledge that, practically speaking, Hammersmith is only round the corner from Shaftesbury Avenue. It seemed a long way round to us on that first morning when we went there, but Nigel assured us that one only had this feeling on a Sunday, and that actually, when the trains were running, it was more conveniently situated than Wyndham's or the Haymarket. We agreed that, for residents in Hammersmith, this might be the case . . . and so, at last, arrived.

I forget just what happened when he showed us the theatre for the first time. As far as I remember, he said proudly, 'This is it!' . . . and, after an awkward silence, I said, 'Oh, yes,' and my wife said, 'Are you sure?' It turned out that he was positive. We went inside. 'There you are!' he said cheerfully, and for a little while we stood looking down at the stalls from the dress circle. No doubt Nigel was already counting the crowned heads beneath him, but to me the theatre felt terribly empty. It seemed that never would there be more than three people in the dress circle, and none in the stalls. To give it a more prosperous air, we went down into the stalls and stood looking up at the empty dress circle, thus increasing the size of the house by about seven and sixpence. Finally, realizing that no more could be done in front, we went behind; and the Lessee and Manager showed us proudly—but in turn, of course—the principal dressing-rooms.

So it was that I took the Lyric, Ham—I mean that thus, as far as I can remember now, the new management at Hammersmith came into being. You may say that I don't seem to have had much to do with it. Perhaps not; and yet in some curious way I still seem to myself to have had a great deal to do with it. Evidently, too, the Lessee and Manager feels that justice has not yet been done to me, for why else should he deem his book incomplete without some words from my vindicating pen?

Well, I have said the words and need say no more. It may be left to posterity and the Mayor of Hammersmith to do the rest. Of the many achievements of the Lyric Theatre since those days this book will have told you. There is only one rule for successful theatrical management, and I give it away here. Follow your own humour. In an undergraduate paper many years ago there appeared these words: 'Your college may not be the best in Cambridge, but it certainly isn't if you don't think it is'—a simple and

universal truth. The public may not like a play, but it certainly won't if the manager doesn't like it. If he but hold a pipe through which a dozen windy acquaintances, partners, rivals, backers, and other experts make music as they pass, nobody will care to listen; but if he blow enthusiastically for himself, the crowd will soon be round him. Mr. Playfair is often accused of knowing, in some occult way, the tunes which the public really likes. He has much more valuable knowledge than this: he knows the tunes which he himself really likes—and is not afraid of them. His *flair*, of which people talk, is the *flair* which a few women have, of exploiting, not their toilets, but their personalities by means of their toilets; a *flair*, however, beyond most women, whose horizon is bounded by the minatory words 'stock size'. Mr. Playfair (metaphorically speaking) has never bothered to be stock size. Whether he is shingling five years before everybody else, or five years after everybody else, does not worry him; the point is that his carte-de-visite has now reached that stage in its development when shingling is the most effective style. The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, neither leads the fashion nor follows it; it is neither high-brow nor low-brow. It is simply a theatre which thinks for itself. I only intrude myself here because it was once my privilege to listen to it thinking.

INTRODUCING CRIME

When I told my agent a few years ago that I was going to write a detective story, he recovered as quickly as could be expected, but made it clear to me (as a succession of editors and publishers made it clear later, to him) that what the country wanted from 'a well-known *Punch* humorist' was a 'humorous story'. However, I was resolved upon a life of crime; and the result was such that when, two years afterwards, I announced that I was writing a book of nursery rhymes, my agent and my publisher were equally convinced that what the English-speaking nation most desired was a new detective story. Another two years have gone by; the public appetite has changed once more; and it is obvious now that a new detective story, written in the face of this steady terrestrial demand for children's books, would be in the worst of taste. So I content myself, for the moment, with an introduction to a new edition of *The Red House Mystery*.

I have a passion for detective stories. Of beer (if I may mention it) an enthusiast has said that it could never be bad, but that some brands might be better than others; in the same spirit (if I may use the word) I approach every new detective story. This is not to say that I am uncritical. On the contrary, I have all sorts of curious preferences, and the author has to satisfy me on many strange matters before I can award him an honorary degree. Thus, to take a point, I prefer that a detective story should be written in English. I remember reading one in which a peculiarly fascinating murder had been committed, and there was much speculation as to how the criminal had broken into the murdered man's library. The detective, however (said the author), 'was more concerned to discover how the murderer had effected an egress'. It is, to me, a distressing thought that in nine-tenths of the detective stories of the world murderers are continually effecting egresses when they might just as easily go out. The sleuth, the hero, the many suspected all use this same strange tongue, and one may be forgiven for feeling that neither the natural excitement of killing the right man, nor the strain of suspecting the wrong one, is sufficient excuse for so steady a flow of bad language.

On the great Love question opinions may be divided, but for myself I will have none of it. A reader, all agog to know whether the white substance on the muffins was arsenic or face-powder cannot be held up while Roland clasps Angela's hand 'a moment longer than the customary usages of

Society dictate’. Much might have happened in that moment, properly spent; footprints made or discovered; cigarette ends picked up and put in envelopes. By all means let Roland have a book to himself in which to clasp anything he likes, but in a detective story he must attend strictly to business.

For the detective himself I demand first that he be an amateur. In real life, no doubt, the best detectives are the professional police, just as in real life the best criminals are professional criminals. But in the best detective stories the villain is an amateur, one of ourselves; we rub shoulders with him in the murdered man’s drawing-room; and no dossier nor code-index nor finger-print system is of avail against him. It is the amateur detective, therefore, who can best expose the guilty man, by the light of cool, inductive reasoning and the logic of stern, remorseless facts. Indeed, this light and this logic is all which I will allow him. Away with the scientific detective, the man with the microscope! What satisfaction is it to you or me when the famous professor examines the small particle of dust which the murderer has left behind him, and infers that he lives between a brewery and a flour-mill? What thrill do we get when the blood-spot on the missing man’s handkerchief proves that he was recently bitten by a camel? Speaking for myself, none. The thing is so much too easy for the author, so much too difficult for his readers.

For this is really what we come to: that the detective must have no more special knowledge than the average reader. The reader must be made to feel that, if he too had used the light of cool, inductive reasoning and the logic of stern, remorseless facts (as, Heaven bless us, we are quite capable of doing), then he too would have fixed the guilt. It is, of course, impossible for the author so to present the clues that they have the same value for the reader in his library as they had for the detective by the body-side. A scar on the nose of one of the guests might suggest nothing to a detective, but the explicit mention of it by the author gives it at once an importance out of all proportion to its face-value. One cannot be surprised or hurt if the author, aware of this, evens matters up by gliding as lightly as possible over the noses of the other guests, perhaps even more prolific of clues. We shall not complain so long as both the author and the detective have left their microscopes at home.

And now, what about a Watson? Are we to have a Watson? We are. Death to the author who keeps his unravelling for the last chapter, making all the other chapters but prologue to a five-minute drama. This is no way to write a story. Let us know from chapter to chapter what the detective is thinking. For this he must watsonize or soliloquize; the one is merely a

dialogue form of the other, and, by that, more readable. A Watson, then, but not of necessity a fool of a Watson. A little slow, let him be, as so many of us are, but friendly, human, likeable. . . .

You can understand now how *The Red House Mystery* came into being. The only excuse which I have yet discovered for writing anything is that I want to write it; and I should be as proud to be delivered of a Telephone Directory *con amore* as I should be ashamed to create a Blank Verse Tragedy at the bidding of others. Yet I have wished many times that I had not written this book. For I feel that from the point of view of one enthusiast it is very nearly the ideal detective story. Though I have never seen him, I knew him so intimately; I know just what he wanted put in, what he wanted left out. I consulted his desires, his prejudices, at every step. . . . It is pathetic to think that this is now the one detective story in the world which he will never be able to read.

INTRODUCING ‘THE KING’S BREAKFAST’

(In a musical version)

BEFORE we start singing ‘The King’s Breakfast’—and I have had a lozenge in my mouth all the morning, in the hope of being in good voice—there is a little matter which has to be settled between us. You will remember that when the King asked the Queen for butter, the Queen naturally asked the Dairymaid, and that the Dairymaid, having no butter with her, promised to ask the Cow. So far, so good. But the Dairymaid, in promising, used a very curious expression. She said:

I’ll go and tell the Cow
Now
Before she goes to bed.

You will not be surprised to hear that, as the result of these words, the whole world has been asking, *Why did the Cow go to bed at breakfast-time?*

Now in this matter there have been, for many years, two schools of thought. The Grumphiter School (called after Dr. James Grumphiter of Ladbroke Grove) holds that, for reasons as yet unascertained, the Alderney cow was in the habit of having a short nap in the forenoon, probably between the hours of ten and twelve. At noon she was awakened; and, after a drink of water and a couple of health-biscuits, was led back into the fields again; from which point in the day she followed the routine of the ordinary cow. In other words, Dr. Grumphiter thinks that the Alderney was a special kind of cow who required special care in the mornings.

An entirely different view of the matter is taken by the Cadwallader School. (‘Cadwallader’, I should explain, is pronounced ‘Calder’, and was so spelt until 1903, when the Professor married again; ‘School’ of course is pronounced ‘Scool’, the ‘h’ being kept quiet.) The Cadwallader School, led by Professor H. J. Cadwallader of Dunstable University, is of opinion that ‘the transactions narrated in the poem cover a period of, approximately, twenty-four hours, and that actually *two* breakfasts have come within the purview of the historian’. It is a pity he uses such long words, but no doubt you see what he means.

Let us consider this Cadwallader Theory for a moment. A time-table of events would seem to go something like this:

Monday 9 a.m. King and Queen at breakfast. King realizes that there is only enough butter for that day's meal, assuming (as usual) that the Queen is not hungry. He helps himself to the last of the pat, saying to her Majesty, 'Don't forget the butter for the (to-morrow's) royal slice of bread.' The Queen says, 'I won't,' but she is thinking of something else.

10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Queen attends to her customary royal duties, Monday being a particularly busy day, what with Receptions, Executions, the Washing, and so forth.

6 p.m. The Dairymaid asks for orders. The Queen, interrupted in her toilet, says that butter will be wanted for to-morrow's breakfast. The Dairymaid promises to tell the Cow now, before the latter goes to bed.

6.15 p.m. Cow suggests marmalade instead.

6.30 p.m. Dairymaid assures Queen that marmalade is tasty.

6.31 p.m. Queen says, 'Oh,' and decides to wear the purple after all.

10 p.m. Their Majesties retire to rest.

Tuesday 8 a.m. Their Majesties rise.

9 a.m. Their Majesties descend the royal staircase into the Banqueting Hall. Fanfare of trumpets. As the last note dies away, the Queen says to King, 'Talking of the butter for the royal slice of bread, many people think that marmalade is nicer. Would you like to try a little marmalade instead?'

9.5 a.m. King says, 'Bother.'

9.6 a.m. King says, 'Oh, deary me.'

9.7 a.m. King sobs, and goes back to bed.

After which it is pretty plain sailing. The Queen comforts His Majesty, and hurries to the Dairymaid; in a trice the Dairymaid is with the Alderney; in a jiffy the Alderney, repentant after a good night's rest, gives the Dairymaid the necessary butter; and in a brace of shakes the Dairymaid has brought the butter to the Queen. Whereupon:

The Queen took
The Butter
And brought it to
His Majesty . . .

and so, calmly, to the long-wished-for end.

Well, that is the Cadwallader Theory. But why, if these were the facts of the matter, has the Poet (to use the local name for this sort of man) not put them more clearly before us? Why did he not tell us the truth? Thus:

The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen wasn't
Listening:
'Can I have some butter for
To-morrow's slice of bread?'
The Queen said:
'I won't, dear . . .
Stockings and
A night-cap—
Or wear the cap another week
And send the shawl
Instead?'

The Queen took
The washing . . .

But we need not go any further with it. The Professor suggests that the Poet wrote as he did because he had a long story to tell *but very little paper to tell it on*. It was necessary for him, therefore, to squeeze the events of twenty-four hours into a space of five minutes, regardless of historical accuracy. And the Professor adds in a thoughtful foot-note, '*Poets are like this*.'

We have to decide, then, which of these two schools of thought has found the right explanation of the Dairymaid's words. And the answer is, 'Neither.' The truth of the matter is simply this: The Alderney had chased the King across two turnip fields the day before, and, *as a punishment*, had been sent to bed immediately after breakfast. She hadn't meant any harm, as you will know if you have ever read an old song which was sung in those days, and which is supposed to have referred to this adventure of the King's. Here it is:

FEED-MY-COW

I went down to feed-my-cow,
(Feed-my-cow,
Feed-my-cow)
I went down to feed-my-cow,
At ten o'clock in the morning.

She looked out and shook-her-head,
(Shook-her-head,
Shook-her-head)
She looked out and shook her head
At ten o'clock in the morning.

I said bravely 'Here-I-come!'
(Here-I-come,
Here-I-come)
I said bravely 'Here I come,
At ten o'clock in the morning.'

She looked out and shook-her-horns,
(Shook-her-horns,
Shook-her-horns)
She looked out and shook her horns
At ten o'clock in the morning.

I said bravely 'Not-so-close!'
(Not-so-close,
Not-so-close)
I said bravely 'Not so close,
At ten o'clock in the morning.'

She came out and shook-her-tail,
(Shook-her-tail,
Shook-her-tail)
She came out and shook her tail
At ten o'clock in the morning.

I went back to ask-the-time,
(Ask-the-time,
Ask-the-time)

I went back to ask the time
At ten o'clock in the morning.

She came too, to ask-the-time,
(Ask-the-time,
Ask-the-time)
She came too, to ask the time
At ten o'clock in the morning.

We both ran, but *I-asked-first*,
(*I-asked-first,*
I-asked-first)
We both ran, but I asked first—
'Twas ten o'clock in the morning.

Well, that was how it happened; and in the afternoon, when the King felt rested, he decided to give the cow a very severe punishment. So it was ordered (and the King wrote it out and sealed it and signed it with his own hand) that on the very next day the Alderney should go to bed 'at ten o'clock in the morning'.

Now then, having got that off our minds, we can clear our throats. But before we begin to sing it, I think I ought to tell you how to *say* a poem like this. It doesn't matter whether you are reciting it, reading it, acting it, or even singing it; there is one way only of doing it, and that is—*on tip-toe*. This story of 'The King's Breakfast' is not a walk or a slide or a slither—it is a ballet-dance. I have heard people recite it; and I have heard them say, with a great deal of expression, as though they were reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* aloud to a sick friend:

The King asked the Queen (*swallow*) and the Queen asked the Dairymaid . . .

Now that is not how it was written. It is always a good idea to suppose that, when somebody writes something in a certain way, this is the way in which he wants it said:

The King asked——
The Queen and——
The Queen asked——
The Dairymaid——

It is a ballet-dance, in which each step is distinct, not a waltz, where one step slides into the next; formal, like a Dutch-garden, not a riot in a herbaceous border. And, above all, it is 'expressionless' as far as meaning goes. All that the speaker has to express is the rhythm and the shape of it; the words have very simple definite meanings of their own, and can take care of themselves quite nicely. Don't be afraid of saying 'and' at the end of the second line; the second and third words have the same value, and you need not be alarmed because one is a Royal noun, and the other is only a common conjunction. I know that you are in the habit of saying ' 'nd'—'Jack 'nd Jill', and quite right too. But there will be no sort of panic among the guests if, on this occasion only, you say 'and', nor will anybody wonder what the word means. Only mind that you do say 'and', and not 'nand'. 'The Queen nand'—if you say this, you're slithering again, not tip-toeing. What I want you to do is to give each word which you stress a 'ting', and then leave it; touch, and away—as if it were a hot poker.

And again, remember: no 'expression'. No, not even when 'he kissed her tenderly', and 'slid down the banisters'. If these words are 'funny', they will be twice as funny for being said in just the same voice, as if one way was as good and as natural as another for celebrating the appearance of the butter. Indeed, the more I think of it, the more I am convinced that a Russian who knew the meaning of no word of English, but only how to pronounce it, would be the ideal person to recite 'The King's Breakfast'. So, if you like, pretend that you are a Russian.

At the moment, however, you are not to recite, but to sing. Now when the composer wrote the music, I wanted it to be printed in the same shape as the words, so that when it was published it would look like a washing-book, long and narrow. Apparently you can't do that; it falls off the piano just as you get to the high note. So here it is, printed in the ordinary way. But I beg you, accompanist and singer, to play and sing it as I have tried to explain, in short lines. No doubt there are musical reasons why you won't be able to do this all together, but keep the idea in your heads as you go along. . . .

And now our guests are closing their eyes one by one, and it is time we woke them up.

REVIEWS

LEADING UP TO:

1. DRAMATIC ART AND CRAFT
2. PORTRAIT OF A GOOD MAN
3. HIGH LIFE AND LOW LIFE
4. THE AUTHOR IN THE THEATRE
5. ’A BABBLED OF GREEN FIELDS
6. DR. WATSON SPEAKS OUT

DRAMATIC ART AND CRAFT

[*The World in Falseface*, by George Jean Nathan.
Playwrights on Playmaking, by Professor Brander Matthews]

Mr. George Jean Nathan comes from the 'Mother, look at George!' school of criticism, and is now enjoying a post-graduate course of 'Oh, Mr. Nathan, you *do* say things!' As a professional dramatic critic he has been saying things for years, and this book is a collection of his best bits. Evidently he is a person of some consequence in America just now. 'Much is made of the fact that I often leave the theatre in the middle of the second act of a play,' he tells us. Under this stimulus he writes (and who would not?) with a buoyant swagger which is delightful, but which may lose some of its buoyancy when the fact that he has left the theatre in the middle of the second act is made much of no longer. Meanwhile, he is sufficiently exciting. When he says: 'The lesser British playwrights . . . such playwrights as A. A. Milne, for example . . . The net impression that one takes away from their exhibits is of having been present at a dinner-party whereat all the exceptionally dull guests have endeavoured to be assiduously amusing'—when he says this, he may give more pleasure to my friends than to me; but I do not leave the theatre. I stay to the end, and am rewarded a hundred pages later by the most charming piece of ingenuousness imaginable. He is telling us that, during the last year, he has met personally eleven men whose work he had criticized: four sound artists whom he had praised, seven incompetents whom he had damned. 'When I met the seven incompetents I found them agreeable and amiable men, interesting to talk with and extremely companionable.' But as for the four sound artists, 'I could scarcely bear them. They were devoid of social grace; they were stupid; they were as heavy as lead; they were bores.' It is a fascinating picture. Mr. Nathan and the seven amiable second-raters getting on charmingly together. . . . Mr. Nathan, the smile from his last good thing still on his lips, moving confidently across to the four first-raters. . . . I must not spoil it by a word of comment. Let us leave it there, with all its delightful implications.

Professor Brander Matthews' book takes us into a different atmosphere. *Playwrights on Playmaking* is a collection of essays which should be read by every critic of the theatre who is also interested in the theatre. With

Professor Matthews the play is the thing, even if Mr. Nathan is feeling for his hat. With Mr. Nathan, Mr. Nathan is the thing, even if the play is so good that nobody but Mr. Nathan goes to it. 'If I were appointed official dramatic censor,' says Mr. Nathan, 'I should, with negligible exception, promptly shut down every play that was doing more than 3,000 dollars a week.' Molière, whom Professor Matthews quotes, thought differently. 'I am willing to trust the decision of the multitude; and I hold it as difficult to combat a work which the public approves as to defend one which it condemns.' The Professor agrees. 'The eternally dominating element in the theatre is the audience,' he says. If the dramatist cannot win the approval of the playhouse crowd, he should write, not plays, but novels. The printed play is nothing. 'To judge a play by reading it is like judging a picture by a photograph.' The dramatist must please, not the play-readers, but the playgoers, 'and if they render a verdict against him he has no appeal to posterity. It is a matter of record that a play which failed to please the public in its author's lifetime never succeeded later in establishing itself on the stage'.

Professor Matthews, you see, is quite definite about it, and he has Molière and others behind him. We cannot just say, 'Rubbish!' in the Nathan manner. We cannot content ourselves with a comparison of 'Strife' with 'Tons of Money', or 'Heartbreak House' with 'Chu Chin Chow'. We shall have to examine the matter. Now, the first thing to be noted is that playwriting is not an art alone, but also a craft. I suppose that the difference between an art and a craft is this: that an art is something personal to the artist, whereas a craft is inevitably a collaboration. A sonnet is complete in itself; that Wordsworth wrote it is all that matters. But a chair wants not only Chippendale to make it, but a collaborator to sit in it. If, in his lifetime, humanity had suddenly become two sizes broader in the beam and three sizes shorter in the leg, Chippendale's chairs would have taken on a different beauty; but Keats would not have changed by a word his 'Ode to a Nightingale'. Indeed, we may almost say that a chair would not be a beautiful thing at all if mankind had been so constructed that we could never sit down; in other words, that it is only beautiful because it is useful. As another writer has suggested, the reason why a castle is beautiful, and a castellated mansion an abomination, is that the ancient castle was built for use and the modern castellation was only built for ornament. Left to himself a craftsman is without inspiration.

A dramatist is both artist and craftsman. He is a stage-craftsman by reason of the fact that he collaborates with the public. To put it vulgarly, every play is a bluff. Things didn't happen so, and couldn't happen so; but the dramatist is going to bluff the audience into believing (for three hours

anyway) that things did happen so. The manner of his bluff depends upon the attitude to the stage of the contemporary audience, the intelligence of the people, the conventions of the period, and so forth. That is to say, it is dictated to him by his collaborators, the playgoers. Suppose that a dramatist wishes the audience to know what his hero's thoughts are in a certain crisis. If the conventions of his time allow of soliloquy, he makes his hero soliloquize. A soliloquy is neither good art nor bad art in itself; it is merely good craftsmanship or bad craftsmanship according to whether the audience is prepared or unwilling to accept it. But it is bad art if the speech, as *thought*, is untrue to character. On the modern stage soliloquy is unacceptable by the audience. A modern dramatist, then, has to find some other way in which to get his hero's thoughts across the footlights. Perhaps he makes him, under the stress of great emotion, burst out with them in the presence of other of the characters. It does not follow that the dramatist conceives his hero capable of exposing himself thus in public. All that the dramatist says is, 'My hero would *think* like this (or I am no artist). His thoughts will eventually become known to the other characters, privately, one by one. To show you these scenes, one by one, would take up too much of your time. So I am trying to bluff you into believing, just while the scene lasts, that he might actually reveal himself to all of them together. And if I can't make you believe it, then I shall try to make the speech so good that you won't stop to ask yourself whether he could or couldn't have spoken it in public; you will let yourself be carried away by it.'

It is obvious, of course, that in this matter the author is very much in the hands of his players. I emphasize again that, in detail, no play can be in the least like life; the essentials are true, but the details only masquerade truth. The author puts up a bluff, and the players carry it out. But the author is also very much in the hands of his audience. If they won't be carried away, they won't be carried away. If a scene, written to be judged by their hearts in a moment of emotion, is referred coldly to the judgement of their heads, so much the worse for him. Professor Matthews, on this point, speaks with great understanding of 'Agamemnon'. The beacons announce that Troy is taken; within an hour Agamemnon (absurdly enough) is home again! Modern criticism labours to explain that what Aeschylus really meant was this, that, and the other. The simple explanation is that Aeschylus knew that his audience, seeing the beacons through the eyes of the watchman, would now want to see Agamemnon, and would want to see him at once. Whether Agamemnon could do a three weeks' journey in an hour had nothing to do with the play, and still less to do with their enjoyment of the play. You may call them unsophisticated, or you may call them uncommonly wise; but,

whatever they were, Aeschylus knew them and wrote for them. For a more sophisticated (or less wise) public he would have written very different plays. But, since he was an artist, they also would have been the plays of Aeschylus.

And now we might ask ourselves (and Professor Matthews): What do we mean by 'the plays' of Aeschylus, or Shakespeare, or Sheridan? What do we mean by 'Hamlet'? Do we mean Irving's 'Hamlet', or Tree's, or Forbes Robertson's? We mean none of these. We mean Shakespeare's 'Hamlet'. And Shakespeare's play of 'Hamlet' can only be found in the printed book. The Professor himself tells us how certain characters in 'The School for Scandal' should be played. How does he know? Because he has read the play. When a critic damns Barker's production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (as does Mr. Nathan), he means that, from his *reading* of the play, he feels certain that Shakespeare meant something different. To the dramatist as artist the printed play is everything; it is his appeal to posterity. To the dramatist as craftsman the acted play is something less than everything; for, until he shares with the Almighty the privilege of creating flesh-and-blood people, it can never be played as he saw it. It is useless to say that Shakespeare wrote 'Hamlet' for Burbage. He may have seen Burbage as he began to write, but after a dozen lines he saw only Hamlet. But if to the dramatist as craftsman the acted play is never all that he meant, the play acted three hundred years later, under a different convention, would be a nightmare. Many critics write of a Shakespearean production as if the ideal 'Macbeth' (or whatever it may be) were waiting round the corner for the ideal producer and the ideal cast. The ideal 'Macbeth' is an impossibility; just as an ideal production of 'Man and Superman' would have been an impossibility in Shakespeare's day. We may read and enjoy Shakespeare's plays, because he was a great artist; but we can never see them performed. He was much too great a craftsman for that.

PORTRAIT OF A GOOD MAN

[*On England and other Addresses*, by Stanley Baldwin]

THERE is a certain sort of literary tourist who comes back to England after a few minutes' sojourn in a country, not only prepared to reveal its soul to his readers, but eager to suggest on his title-page that everybody else has been lying about it for years. In the same complacent spirit I should like to call this article 'The Truth About Baldwin'. Something, however, possibly the fact that I know so little of my subject, holds me back. Yet the reprint of some of his speeches, including as it does a photograph complete with pipe, gives certain material for speculation; and I speculate accordingly, well aware that the real truth may be deposited elsewhere.

It must always be difficult to find the man behind the Prime Minister. For a Prime Minister is so much in the limelight that some sort of make-up is forced on him. He cannot be his simple, natural self. Gladstone may have started by being a grand old man, but in the end the Grand Old Man was all that was left of Gladstone. One may see oneself diffidently as a Welsh wizard, but, once the grease-paint is on, one is 'The Welsh Wizard' to an audience for whom nothing but wizardry is now good enough. 'I am sorry,' said Tree to a visitor in his dressing-room, 'but I did not recognize you in this beard.' In some such words as these many a Prime Minister must have addressed himself. For in these circumstances it is impossible not to overplay the part, impossible not to make one's personality carry more than it is fitted to carry. 'What of myself shall I exploit,' one can imagine the newly-elected Prime Minister saying; 'what is to be my line?'—knowing that, when he has chosen his line, he must move on it for ever. 'In fact, not a 'bus, but a tram.'

To contemporary historians Mr. Baldwin is the Good Man, the Idealist, the Honourable Gentleman. He has every qualification for the part. I am inclined to believe that he is the only politician in our time who has honestly put his party before himself and his country before his party. The emergence of this apparition from the Conservative back benches must have affected the admirers of Sir William Joynson-Hicks so strangely that in sheer bewilderment they elected him their leader. Mr. Baldwin must have been equally bewildered. What was he doing there who knew nothing of place-

hunting, vote-catching, string-pulling? Some sort of understanding with his conscience was necessary, some settlement between the Prime Minister and Mr. Baldwin which would clear the ground and establish their future relations. So at Worcester he takes up his position:

> I have but one idea that I inherited, and it is the idea of service —service for the people of this country. . . . It is a tradition; it is in our bones; and we have to do it. . . . That natural sympathy that I had as a child has so ripened that one feels, when one is giving one's life in service for the people of this country, one is not working for any kind of abstraction or any large party of voters. . . .

And so on. We listen open-mouthed. What else can we do? Two years later at Leeds he is deeply entrenched:

> Feeling as I did, I was driven into the course which I embraced in December, 1916, when I accepted Mr. Bonar Law's offer to serve as his Parliamentary Secretary. I did that deliberately, because I believed that at my time of life, having already sufficient means to be independent of the active business in which I had passed my life up to then, I had the opportunity of giving my services to the country without any feeling that it was necessary to be remunerated for them. . . . I have never said, or believed, that that service which I had the opportunity of rendering was one whit higher or better than any other.

In other words, he had obtained the post, coveted by a hundred ambitious place-hunters, of Parliamentary Secretary (unpaid) to the Prime Minister. With the memory of those place-hunters in their minds, did some of his audience smile, as they heard him assuring them, who had never suggested it, that he did *not* believe this service of his to be greater than anybody else's? But whether it was greater or not, Mr. Baldwin went on rendering it. For it had become his lot and that of other middle-aged men 'not to seek the ease that we might legitimately seek, but to carry on to the end', the end in Mr. Baldwin's case being 10 Downing Street. 'It is and it will be,' he reflects, 'a tremendous burden,' but it is his 'proud contribution' to a 'broken and shattered world'—worthy, perhaps, to be set against the sacrifice by others of their lives.

Well, there is the Prime Minister as Mr. Baldwin sees him. Does he recognize himself in his make-up? He must find it difficult. For myself I

refuse to recognize him. This is not Mr. Baldwin speaking, for the photographs of that simple back-bencher convince me that he is neither prig nor hypocrite. This is just the Prime Minister, living up to the public conception of him, overplaying his part as Good Man, Idealist, Honourable Gentleman. Indeed, it must be very difficult not to overplay a part so novel.

What, then, is the real Mr. Baldwin? Let us listen to him in his moment of triumph, addressing his followers at the Albert Hall after a great election victory. In such a moment the real man may peep out. And let us also, when listening to him, strive to hear echoes of other voices—voices of this Prime Minister and that in their moments of triumph:

> We have had to-day perhaps the most magnificent opportunity of service to our country that has ever been given to any party. . . . Can there be anything that stands before us more clearly than the groups of our fellow-countrymen who listened in faith to what we had to say, who trusted us and have given us their confidence, and who believe in their hearts that we have come to London to do what we can to right those things which are hard and difficult for them? . . . I want to see the spirit of service to the whole nation the birthright of every member of the Unionist Party. . . . I urge on you all as workers in that great Unionist Party to render all the service you can to the common weal in the districts in which you live. There is always work and to spare for human betterment in every parish in the country.

This trumpet-call to Lord Birkenhead and others was received, no doubt, with thunders of applause. Or perhaps it was not. Perhaps it got no more than a 'Hear, hear' from Mr. Churchill. But at least it made it clear to the party that a new prophet had arisen to lead them, a prophet in whom they could take an odd sort of pride, half-shy, half-apologetic; a leader whom even if they did not follow, they would do well to keep as a hostage—a guarantee of any good faith which might get left out of their own speeches.

A guarantee of good faith. Is Mr. Baldwin more than this now, or is one content that he should just be this? I think we may be content. It may be that in one of the executive positions one requires more; the massive brain, to take a case, of a Jix; but at the head of the Cabinet character rather than intellect would seem to be our need. We forget neither Lord Balfour's white-hot idealism, nor Lord Oxford's passionate interest in the working man, nor Mr. Lloyd George's selfless indifference to power, when we say that under

no other leader could England have come through the General Strike so well. He has proved to us convincingly that cleverness is not enough.

But, alas! it is also true in this very human world that goodness may be overdone. There was once a very ordinary fellow who threw a stone at Aristides, giving as a reason, rather than an excuse, that he was tired of hearing him called ‘The Just’. We are so unused to hearing a politician called ‘The Good’ that for the moment we have nothing but bouquets to throw at our Mr. Baldwin. But this will not last. The time will come when we shall be looking round for other ammunition, and it is in speeches like those at Leeds and Worcester that we shall find it. Let us hope, therefore, now that Mr. Baldwin has restored his confidence in himself, that he will be able to take his goodness a little less seriously. He need not be afraid that we shall misunderstand him.

HIGH LIFE AND LOW LIFE

[*Lions and Lambs*, by Low. With Interpretations by 'Lynx']

BEYOND his draughtsmanship Low has two necessary qualifications for his job. He is a Democrat and he is a Colonial. In saying 'Colonial', I keep an anxious eye on Mr. Amery. For some reason, which I have never been able to understand, the Empire was saved (failing Tariff Reform) when it was decided to speak of the Colonies in future as 'the Dominions-beyond-the-seas'. Low, then, is a Dominions-beyond-the-seaman. Yet even if we lose our Empire and 'sink to the level of a fifth-rate Power'—about the size of Italy—I shall continue to call him a Colonial. It is more convenient.

But, first, Low is a Democrat. I suppose that the motto of the Democrat, for use on banners, is 'The People against Privilege'. I seem to remember some such device in the First Democracy of Mr. Lloyd George. No doubt it is easy to make fun of the dispossessed, but the laughter which follows is a little uneasy. Good laughter must come from the diaphragm, whose region the soul inhabits, not from the roof of the mouth, the neighbourhood of the brain only. The victim of our laughter must be able to afford it, so that we can comfort ourselves with the thought that, if we have the laugh, he, anyhow, still has the cigar. He must be a privileged person; established. The decline of F. C. G. as a political cartoonist began when his party became established, and he had to attack the politically dispossessed. Governments do not matter to Low, for he is not a political cartoonist. He is a democratic cartoonist; on the side of the People against Privilege.

Also he is a Colonial; who has lived with us long enough to know us, but not long enough to be bothered by our traditions. It is a tradition of ours that, for purposes of public reference, all statesmen are sober, high-minded, and, even if regrettably incompetent, incompetent in a nice, public-spirited sort of way. It is a tradition of ours that the Navy is not only placed above Party but spoken of below the breath. It is a tradition that all men of a certain education and upbringing are habitually corruptible if they happen to become Quartermaster-Sergeants, but, in some curious way, utterly incorruptible (until they are found out) if they happen to become Police Sergeants. It is a tradition that Judges and Doctors have stripped themselves of all human weakness and wrapped themselves in all human knowledge.

And so on. If Low believes all these things—and there are intimations in his work that he doesn't—he discovered them for himself. He was not blinded by the tradition.

We all know his Portrait of the Artist. It comes, always with point, into many of his cartoons. 'I am only a common man,' he seems to be saying, 'and, in my common way, this is what I think of your nobs.' In this book he has told us what he thinks of thirty-six of the nobs. I do not claim Complete Nobship for them all; neither does he, for he calls them Lions and Lambs; some roar and some bleat. But they have this in common, they are all privileged persons. That is to say, if one of them were arrested, he would expect to know the Judge and the Prosecuting Counsel personally. The case would not necessarily be hushed up, for sixteen of them are artists of a sort, who might just as well be in prison as not, for all the good they are doing out of it; but the atmosphere of the trial would be friendly, as among peers. So, however cruel he be to any of them, Low does not feel uneasy. They have so much else. Who would not be Arnold Bennett or the Lord Chief Justice or my Lords Beaverbrook and Birkenhead, even with this Low fellow sticking pins into him?

Our nurses used to tell us that we could not help our faces. They were as misinformed about this as about gooseberry bushes. We may not be able to add a cubit to our stature by taking thought, but we can certainly add a flush to our nose by taking something else. We bring lines to our mouth and secrets to our eyes, which may not be there when we are looking our best at ourselves in the mirror, but cannot be hidden for ever. Save in one case, I have no means of knowing whether Low's subjects ('objects' is perhaps the better word) were drawn when they were on guard or not; but I suspect that he has been least successful when some hitherto unobserved lamb has given him a formal sitting, and most successful when his model has been so much of a lion that it could be seen any day for sixpence at the Zoo. Fortunately for Low it is the habit of most modern authors to relax into publicity when the day's work is done. They lecture, they debate, they take the chair, they attend public dinners, and have as many clean shirts as a haberdasher. With three or four exceptions, Low's thirteen authors are as open to inspection by the curious as his twelve politicians and Lady Oxford. He has inspected them all; joyfully.

And 'Lynx' has interpreted them—mostly by the light of his own reading of them, but sometimes, I feel, by the light which Low has thrown upon them. The combination is irresistible. Perhaps I am prejudiced, for 'Lynx's' way of thought happens to be similar to mine. He thinks along lines which

have a definite equation, as most of us do, but as Low doesn't. One follows behind Low with a fearful joy, knowing that the next top hat is for it, yet wondering just how; but one precedes 'Lynx' confidently after a little, saying over one's shoulder, 'Come on, there's a man in white spats over here, absolutely made for you. . . . That's the way!' To Low's pencil Birkenhead and Thomas are equally comic, Bennett and Belloc equally worthy of deflation; but 'Lynx' separates the sheep from the goats, and if, for the most part, his pens bear the labels which I had long given them in my own mind, I at least have no cause to complain. Sometimes he thinks as delightfully as Low draws. To him Mr. Hugh Walpole looks 'as successful as the Blue Train', Miss Clemence Dane reminds him of 'the entire hockey team of a good girls' school', and Lady Oxford ('as brilliant as an unshaded electric light') is imagined giving Pavlova a few hints on dancing. The Scotsman in Keene's picture said with surprised admiration that thoughts came into that man Shakespeare's head which had never come into his; but how much more do we admire a man if thoughts come into his head which, less well expressed, had always been in ours?

So, having rejected my first idea that 'Lynx' was somebody whose work on these lines I knew (Gardiner or Thompson, for instance), and never having got very far with my second idea, that I was 'Lynx', I am left asking, 'Who is he?' Somebody, obviously, from the *New Statesman* school, and, not so obviously, I hazard, a brilliant speaker, but a less experienced writer; an amateur, not a professional. There is an air about some of these interpretations as if the author were more accustomed to writing on his feet, leaving the elbow-work—the insertion of punctuation marks and removal of superfluous hairs—to some beautifying Hansard. 'Let no honest man pretend that he would not rather be at Hatfield talking with our rulers rather than playing billiards at his local Conservative Club'—how naturally that second 'rather' would slip out, and be forgotten in the cheers and laughter which followed. Many another sentence would seem to be looking for a *Question* or a *Hear, hear*, to ease it, so that the reader could take breath. But since some of Low's drawings also take away the breath, this, perhaps, is fitting. One is left gasping delightedly at both of them.

THE AUTHOR IN THE THEATRE

[*How a Play is Produced*, by Karel Capek]

In music-halls and places where they laugh a humorous view is taken of a man's relation to his mother-in-law or a husband's to his wife, and one cannot make much headway against the accepted tradition. I wrote a play once in which a character, by profession a pedlar, told an apprehensive audience that he had been happily married for twenty-five years. 'But in your profession you must go away from your wife a good deal,' commented the Hero, whereat good humour was restored, and the whole house laughed in happy assurance that it saw my point. Unfortunately the pedlar's answer, 'Ah, but then I come back to her a good deal,' ruined the joke, and left the audience with a disturbed feeling that I was treating the sacred things of life irreverently.

Well, I may have to be irreverent again. It is a hallowed tradition among those who read about the stage that the author is a nonentity in the theatre. 'And what are *you* doing here?' says the Manager or the Producer or the Fireman or even the Call-Boy to the nervous little man who is hiding in the gallery. 'I'm only the author,' is the meek reply. M. Karel Capek would have us believe that he is an author in this great tradition; 'not only superfluous, but even deserted'; a figure of fun at rehearsals. On these traditional lines he has made an amusing book of his imagined experiences, but he leaves the truth where it was before. We shall have to dig for it. For, as Mr. Chesterton has said, popular jokes may not be true to the letter, but they are true to the spirit. The mother-in-law joke means (which is true) that it is difficult to be a nice mother-in-law; the husband and wife joke means (which is true) that married life is not easy. What is the truth behind the Despised Author joke? Taken literally, it is absurd, as nobody knows better than M. Capek. Yet the tradition must have sprung from something.

Let us go back a little—to that exciting moment, a year ago perhaps, when our Heroine stepped daintily out of the ink-pot. '*Enter* Moira Merrilees,' we wrote, and wondered how to describe her. She was tall, she was dark, she had that sudden dimple at the left of her mouth—you know?—adorable; and her voice—but no, we cannot hope to describe her voice. It remains the indescribable thing. We hear it as we write: 'Oh, there you are, Dennis,' said as only she could say it. *Dennis* replies, I forget what; his voice

is not beautiful, but it is his own. One could listen behind the arras, as *Mr. Pumphrey* will directly, and recognize it. As we write, we see these two, we hear these two, we might be there ourselves, we are there ourselves, for we are *Moira* and *Dennis*, and our voice is now beautiful, now resonant, and our dimple comes enchantingly, and we puff at our pipe, and now we are *Mr. Pumphrey* behind the arras fingering our beard. Can you see them? Can you hear them? Yes. No. Perhaps we are not the artist we thought we were. You can't. Never mind, *we* can see them, even if we cannot get them down on paper for you.

And then, six months later, we are in the Manager's office wondering who shall play *Moira*. Traditionally he should be telling us that he has given the part to the incompetent Miss Jukes; because she is his mistress; or because she is engaged to him on a three-years' contract; or because she is the daughter of Mr. Jukes, the cotton king, who is putting up the money. Actually, he is saying that he has rung up Miss Wilbraham's agent, and finds that the lady is just going to America. Miss Wilbraham is not really like *Moira*; there is nobody like *Moira*; but she is the nearest we can come to it. However, she sails for America, seeming with each sundering mile just a little more like *Moira* than ever before. Well, we shall have to do what we can with Miss Marjolane. She is a beautiful actress, but she has red hair, and even if she sailed for Australia, her hair would never seem anything but red. As it happens, she *is* sailing for Australia, so that is that. 'Miss X?' suggests the Manager tentatively. 'Miss Y?' we hazard doubtfully. Miss Y is not in the least like *Moira*, but there is a faint look of *Mr. Pumphrey* about her, which perhaps is something, and anyhow she is a star of magnitude. However she is also in a nursing-home at the moment; and as Miss X has just signed a contract with somebody else, we must begin again. Miss Z? Hopeless, we feel, absolutely hopeless . . . and continue to feel so until we learn that she is on a six-months' tour . . . when she becomes suddenly our last hope gone.

Am I seeming ungracious to those clever, those charming people who have done so much for my plays? I hope not. An author cannot help having, not only admiration, but also, if they will let me say so, a good deal of affection for them. For a month they and he are a little solitary community, with one aim, one hope, and one fear. The outside world hardly exists for them; almost they might be on a desert island together. Impossible to live thus, week after week, sharing jokes and difficulties, doubts and sudden assurances, without feeling more happily intimate with each other than the time alone would seem to warrant. Impossible also for the author, with hourly need to explain by example how this or that should be done, and

hourly evidence of his own incompetence to furnish the example, not to feel admiration for those who adorn an art so alien to him. And yet . . . and yet . . . impossible not to feel that God is the only happy dramatist; for he, having thought of his play, can then create the players.

It is not a matter of acting, it is a matter of being. By chance I have just picked up a paper and read these words: ‘Never for an instant is he Mr. Charles Laughton, but always Hercule Poirot.’ I have seen Mr. Laughton act many times and always admired him . . . but I have also read the six Poirot books. Mr. Laughton is not in the least like Poirot, and if his name had not been on the programme, I should still have known at once that he was Mr. Laughton.

You may say that a man’s character does not depend upon his face, and that a personality may be transferred from one face to another without loss. I am not so sure. I told a producer once that, if an author had imagined a character in a blue suit while he was writing the play, and the actor wore a brown suit, the dialogue would all be just a little out of focus. Ridiculous, of course . . . and yet here is something which actually happened. I wrote a scene in which A, off-stage in an imaginary bedroom, talked to B, on-stage in a visible sitting-room. Having written it, I decided that the invisibility of A might be detrimental to the scene, and I altered the stage directions accordingly, leaving the dialogue (which was unrelated to the position of the characters) as before. Later, the play was sent to the typist, and, later still, it was put into rehearsal. A and B played their scene in the way that was indicated in the stage directions. By-and-by the producer got busy. ‘Try saying your first line before you come on,’ he said to A and A tried it. The producer and I agreed that this sounded much better. But he was still not happy about it. The next day A’s second line was also being said off-stage . . . and then the third line . . . and, in the end, A was playing off-stage in an imaginary bedroom, just as I had supposed when I had written the dialogue. It was then that I made my ridiculous remark to the producer about the blue suit. Was it so ridiculous? Is it so ridiculous to say that a character’s looks are woven into the dialogue?

I am trying to explain the position of the author from the author’s point of view. To tell me that Moira Merrilees, as conceived by me, is an uninteresting person, and that *Moira Merrilees*, as played by the beautiful and vital Miss Marjolane, will at least be a real living woman, is irrelevant. I know several people who, as conceived by their mothers, are most uninteresting, but their mothers do not wish me to remodel them. Absurd people, parents, I know; absurd people, authors; our plays, too, absurd. We

send our children to boarding-school, being assured by the best authorities that there 'the nonsense will be knocked out of them', and absurdly we wonder if they wouldn't be better with the nonsense left in. When we see them again, they will be our children no longer. Our plays, our absurd plays, are ours until we go into the theatre with them; the operating theatre. The operation is necessary; we ourselves have sought it; our child will be a fine young fellow when it is all over. Everybody treats us with sympathy, with kindness, and yet—and yet—well, there comes a lonely moment when we have to go outside, and sit on the stairs.

There, traditionally, the Fireman discovers us.

’A BABBLED OF GREEN FIELDS

[*The Summer Game*, by Neville Cardus. *The Fight for the Ashes*, by M. A. Noble. *The Turn of the Wheel*, by P. G. H. Fender]

It is the boast of cricketers that our beloved game has provided a *cliché* for Colonels and back-to-the-fire Clubmen, who say, when an immorality to which they are not accustomed has been suggested, ‘My boy, it isn’t cricket.’ Our pride is legitimate. Certainly one could not imagine a footballer saying reprovingly to his son, ‘My boy, it isn’t football.’ Nor could the player of a game whose complexity of rules was fashioned to prevent Scotsmen from cheating each other be expected to say, ‘My boy, it isn’t golf’; nor the lawn-tennis player convey his meaning clearly by saying, ‘My boy, it isn’t lawn-tennis,’ a game at which, when a doubtful point is decided, the loser scowls at the umpire, and the winner insults him publicly by giving away the next point. Indeed, if any other game were used to convey the moral, one would scent an irony in the moralist, as if he should say, ‘My boy, this isn’t so-and-so which you are playing, and you are therefore expected to be a gentleman.’ But when he says, ‘This isn’t cricket,’ there is no mistaking him. We are unworthy of the greatest of games.

The greatest of games? In our present mood we say Yes. Perhaps not the greatest to play; nor the most exciting to watch; but the greatest to love. It may be that we are prejudiced; indeed we must be, as all lovers are prejudiced, for we are the victims of a sentiment which knows no reason. We have watched and played our favourite game in fair country and good company, and it is no longer just a game, but for ever part of us. England in the summer, and in warm meadows slow-shadowed by the tall elms the sound of bat against ball, the shouts and the laughter; it is not a game which happened there or then, but a foolish dream which remains in our hearts as all that we mean by England. So it is to be a lover . . . and to smile when others talk of the Balance of Power or Our Increasing Exports.

To-day I am spectator, not player, and a critic, not only of players but of authors. Fortunately, it is not the custom of a critic to feel doubtful of his qualifications, which need be no more than a pen and the connivance of his editor. Yet I should like to say that as a practitioner I have had my moments. I have played at Lord’s and on the village green; I have made twenty-three

against two England bowlers in their prime; and once I bowled a maiden over to F. G. J. Ford. Mr. Cardus, no doubt, has done the first; Mr. Noble and Mr. Fender have certainly done the second; but I doubt if any of our authors has done the third. I shall move among them, therefore, as an equal.

It is chiefly in praise of heroes that Mr. Cardus waves his lyrical pen. He has a good eye for a hero, which makes one weep that Lancashire is so unalterably his home. To be lyrical over the modern heroes of that county is impossible to anyone who loves cricket as well as does Mr. Cardus. Poor man; the struggle which must go on in his heaving breast between the poet and the local patriot when Lancashire is playing Yorkshire at Old Trafford! Thirty years ago I supposed that the fifth Hell reserved for the wicked was an endless Sussex *v.* Essex match to which the condemned man had been allowed to bring mutton sandwiches only. To-day Sussex is the most attractive county above ground, and in the fifth Hell Lancashire plays Yorkshire inch by inch, and year by year. Yet perhaps we should be glad that Mr. Cardus has suffered so in this world, for evidently it clears his eye for real cricket when he sees it. No man of Kent could be more thrilled by Woolley than he, no Bristolian more delighted by Hammond. In return let a Southerner admit that Macdonald, in consenting to adorn Lancashire, gave her the most beautiful living bowler, a worthy peer of Richardson in his prime.

And, as I write, there comes back to me my first glimpse of a hero. He was new to the game; so in another sense was I; technically, perhaps, not in arms, but certainly lifted up for the occasion, so that I saw his curly black head through the heads of others. ‘That’s Richardson, the new Surrey colt,’ said one eagerly to his neighbour, and close in front of us, after his few ineffective overs, slim then and brown, stood that Richardson who was to be the greatest fast bowler of all of them. A long time ago. Mr. Cardus was hardly born. I can remember, too, *not* seeing Woods and Macgregor playing together for Cambridge. I forget why they would not let me go, but I remember my tears, and that the usual adult consolation (‘Another time, dear’) was even more barren than usual; for I knew that now I should never wag my beard and say, ‘Ah, my boy, I saw Macgregor standing up to Woods fifty years ago!’ However, I saw another great wicket-keeper, Mordecai Sherwin, end on; great from that angle, anyhow. Sherwin, Shacklock, Attewell, Shrewsbury, Gunn, Daft, how the names come back!—was Notts always playing in London?

There were great men before Agamemnon and slow cricketers before Woodfull. But at least the old slow cricketers of Nottinghamshire did play

cricket, English cricket. To-day French cricket seems more popular. In 'French cricket', as we used to play it in spare minutes with a tennis ball, one's legs were the wicket and could never be moved, and from the defending bat the ball bounced here and there, whence again it was bowled. Watch Stevens (of Middlesex and England) at the wicket and you will see the Prince of French-cricketers in action, undisputed champion of the school playground. Watch the bat's delightful back-lift in the hands of another young Middlesex and England cricketer, Robins, and you will feel that, if he played twenty consecutive maidens, he would still be a joy to the eye. 'Support the head of the racket,' old tennis professionals used to say. Alas! the head of the modern bat is too often without visible means of support.

However, on the dullest batting day there may be consolation, and it is curious that Mr. Cardus, who has to suffer much of Lancashire, should seem to deny himself this relief. A few years ago Sussex was playing Middlesex at Lord's. Middlesex with Hearne and Hendren on the side is always a little soporific, and it is notorious that old gentlemen suffering from insomnia go northwestward in the hope of finding the two at the wicket together. But on this occasion not a head nodded, not an eye closed. It was more than the best day's cricket of the year, it was a day to which one refers the best days of other years. For never has there been such a thrilling display of fielding and catching as Sussex gave that afternoon. Batters and bowlers became the mere instruments of cricket, the cause of beauty that was in others.

Is there anything in sport more beautiful than the perfect fieldsman? Think of Spooner's wrists at cover, Chapman when he first came to Lord's, Hutchings's throw-in, A. O. Jones ready for anything anywhere, Holmes of Yorkshire and Hubert Ashton in the deep! Ashton could field magnificently wherever he happened to be, but I preferred him in the deep, because he had the lightning start and the glorious run of the good footballer. To-day there is a young professional on the ground staff at Lord's, Hulme, also a footballer, who thunders across one's vision from long-on in pursuit of a leg-glance, and makes one grateful for the most deflective batting. And is there a neater, prettier fielder to be seen now than the South African, Owen-Smith? Mr. Cardus says nothing of these heroes. Indeed, in a previous book he achieves the incredible; he writes, 'A Note on Chapman,' perhaps a thousand words, and spares not one word for his fielding! It is as if he regretted the early death of such a good letter-writer as Keats, leaving us to infer, if we cared to, that when Keats was not writing letters he probably wrote poetry or something. It is as if one referred to Mr. Cardus himself as the well-known authority on music.

And so, by way of Chapman, we come to our other two authors, Noble and Fender. (No 'Misters' for such household names.) With them we return to that Old Trafford atmosphere which Mr. Cardus, though he breathes it, keeps so successfully out of his books; and cricket becomes again a grim struggle. Interesting as these books are, they have been published too soon for me. Most of us prefer our Wisden as our wine, old rather than new, and in ten years' time, when the details of the last Test Matches are but a vague and inaccurate memory, I shall take my Noble and my Fender eagerly from their shelf. Meanwhile, I note sadly that, in the opinion of the able and experienced M. A. Noble, the Australian Selection Committee ought to have included 'men of experience and proven ability on the cricket-field', and that, in the opinion of that ingenuous all-rounder P. G. H. Fender, the English team was disgracefully short of all-rounders. Well, well, they had to work it off somehow; and when the atmosphere of first-class cricket becomes too arid for us, we can always wander with Mr. Cardus, in the occasional holiday which he allows himself, to the green and pleasant fields of 'Shastbury', where to have lived, and to have known cricket, he says (and makes us feel), is to have lived for a little while in heaven.

DR. WATSON SPEAKS OUT

[*Sherlock Holmes: Short Stories*, by Arthur Conan Doyle]

THE suggestion of the Editor of *The Nation* that I should myself review in his paper the collected adventures of my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes, which, it will be remembered, I was the first to lay before the public, comes at an opportune moment; for though I am a man of even temperament (save when the weather adversely affects my old wound) I am not one who can sit down under injustice, and in the matter of this book I feel that a grave wrong has been done to me. In order to explain just what this is I must take the public into my confidence in a way that only became necessary in the March of this year, when, as will be remembered, Inspector Lestrade fell off the pier at Southend when the tide was unfortunately out, and suffered a dislocation of the cervical vertebrae which has delayed, if not actually restricted, the memoirs which he had proposed to publish. In those memoirs, as I understand from his widow, he would have done me the justice which a mistaken sense of loyalty to my friend Mr. Holmes has hitherto prevented me doing to myself.

In the course of my different narratives I have had occasion to refer from time to time to a medical practice which I had purchased at Paddington. The real truth about this practice has not yet come to light, for the various small deceptions in regard to it which I played upon my friend Holmes (always an easy man to deceive) have undoubtedly led both him and the public to suppose it other than it actually was. The truth which I am now at liberty to reveal is that the practice when I bought it consisted almost entirely of a Mrs. Withers, and that the surprising death of Mrs. Withers during my prolonged absence at Paisley in connexion with the Syncopated Bacon Frauds left me with no means of subsistence other than an inadequate wound pension. In this predicament it was natural that I should look about for some other source of income.

I had always been fond of writing, and my descriptions of the Afghan Campaign as sent home in weekly letters to my Aunt Hester at Leamington, and by her submitted to the *Leamington Courier*, had received considerable editorial commendation, although, owing to the exigencies of space and an unexpected local interest in some trouble at the gas-works, they had been denied actual publication. In the hope that my pen had not lost its cunning, I

now decided to write out in narrative form some of the adventures in which my friend Holmes and I had participated, and submit them to one of the more popular monthly magazines. Of the instantaneous success of my venture into literature I need not now speak, for it is public knowledge. But the means by which this success was achieved has remained obscure until to-day, when, in the regrettable absence of Inspector Lestrade, it has fallen to me to reveal it.

One of the most useful arts by which a writer may achieve his effects is the Art of Contrast. I remember that in my letters home during the Afghan Campaign (in which I received my wound) I often employed this art with telling effect; contrasting, for instance, the sublimities of the mountain scenery, by which we were surrounded on all sides, with the occasional inadequacies of the sanitary arrangements; and so forth. So now, in my stories, I decided to heighten the effect by contrasting as sharply as possible the characters of Holmes and myself. Holmes is in many ways the most remarkable man I have met, but he was human. *Humanum est errare*, as my old Anatomy Lecturer used to say. Holmes was human enough to make mistakes, and human enough to resent their being found out. It became my habit, therefore, both in my personal relations with him, and in the narratives which I was putting before the public, to cover up, as far as possible, the very natural errors into which he fell, and to heighten the public appreciation of his amazing talent by contrasting it whenever possible with an assumed obtuseness of my own. It amuses me now to think how little he suspected this, just as it fills me with pride to think how greatly he, and through him the country, profited by it. For Holmes was an artist, and, above all, an artist must believe continuously in his own powers.

Let me refer my readers to the story known as ‘The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax’. In this story, it will be remembered, I record how Holmes deduced from the appearance of my boots that I had just come back from a Turkish bath. It was a matter of habit with me by this time to admiringly admit the correctness of all his deductions, and to ask for the explanations which he was longing to give. The explanation in this case was that my boots were tied with an elaborate bow, such as only a bootmaker or a bath attendant would use; undoubtedly a keen piece of observation and an intelligent deduction. But he went on to say, ‘It is unlikely that it is the bootmaker, since your boots are nearly new. Well, what remains? The bath.’ Why, because one has a newish pair of boots, one should not buy a pair of slippers (as in fact I had been doing, having received a substantial cheque that morning from the Editor), why one should not even buy a second pair of boots, I do not know; but it was without difficulty, almost without conscious

thought, that I replied, ‘Holmes, you are wonderful.’ It was on this same occasion that he deduced from the splashes on my left sleeve that I had sat on the left side of my hansom (which was true), and that, therefore, I must have had a companion (which was not true); for, like most men, I prefer to lean against the side of a cab rather than sit upright in the middle. But to have told Holmes so would have destroyed his confidence in himself, and to have told the public so would undoubtedly have detracted from the financial value of the stories. ‘Holmes,’ I said again, ‘you are marvellous,’ and he never suspected otherwise.

Undoubtedly his arrogance grew under my flattery, and sometimes this arrogance was hard to bear. It will be remembered that, in our inquiry into the curious experience of ‘The Retired Colourman’, it fell to me to undertake the preliminary investigations. I was giving Holmes some account of these, and describing with the minute particularity on which he insisted the state of a certain wall, ‘mottled with lichens and topped with moss’, as I put it, when he broke in rudely, ‘Cut out the poetry, Watson. I note that it was a high brick wall.’ Now it so happened that in an earlier inquiry into the extraordinary mystery of ‘The Decentralized Tomato’—one of the cases which I have not recorded, as being only notable for the reason that Holmes was searching Newcastle for a tall left-handed man with a red beard and long finger-nails at the very moment when Lestrade was arresting the actual murderess at Brighton—in the course of that inquiry Holmes himself had said to me, speaking of the high brick wall behind the tomato-house, ‘Tut-tut, Watson, the lichen. Does it suggest nothing to you?’ And when I had made some such obvious answer as that the wall seemed to have been there a long time, he went on muttering to himself, ‘Fool! The lichen! Why wasn’t I told about the lichen?’ It will be seen, then, that my deliberate policy of humouring Holmes was not without its undeserved humiliations.

My readers may ask why I should be taking the public into my confidence now when I have put up with these humiliations in silence for so long? The answer lies in the final collection of all the stories into one volume. If my readers will turn to the last section of the volume, entitled ‘The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes’, they will read there two stories, inferior stories if I may say so without prejudice, written by Holmes himself. As a writer who has taken himself seriously, even from those early Afghan days, I do not object to belittling myself if by so doing I can increase the artistic value of my narrative. But I can reasonably protest when another belittles me. Moreover these two stories were inserted into ‘The Case-Book’ without my permission, and by collusion, I must suppose, between Holmes and the publishers. I protested strongly at the time of the book’s separate

publication; I protest again strongly now. I have written both to the Incorporated Society of Authors and to the British Medical Council. I have also called the attention of Messrs. Murray to a demonstrably false statement in one of the stories, which says, with all the circumstance of apparent truth, ‘It was in January, 1903 . . . The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife.’ I married, as my readers know, in 1887, and my poor wife died in the early ’nineties. For reasons into which I need not go now I did not marry again. Already, as the result of this false publication, I have had an inquiry from the Income Tax Commissioners as to my second wife’s independent means, and a circular addressed to Mrs. Watson calling attention to an alleged infallible method, obtained from an unregistered and unqualified Indian sepoy, for removing superfluous hairs. Is it any wonder that I am indignant?

I therefore solemnly call upon the publishers to withdraw the volume from circulation, even though I myself shall be the first to suffer financially by it. Fortunately I have enough now for my simple needs. With the proceeds of previous sales I have purchased another small practice (an elderly gentleman of arthritic tendencies called Ferguson), and with this and my wound pension (a relic of the Afghan Campaign) I am content. But if that content is to be disturbed by the continual circulation of false statements, then let me warn all concerned that I shall not take it lying down. *There are other revelations which I could make*. . . .

GENERAL

FIRST THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUALISM

I SUPPOSE I should begin by saying that I have neither felt the need for the comforts of Spiritualism, nor come into direct contact with its manifestations. Of its 'proofs' I have only read, and a second-hand proof has something of the shoddy, apologetic air of a second-hand coat. We go through life being told 'for an absolute fact' on the authority of some one 'who actually saw it' lie after stupid lie, until the mere passage of a story from one mind to another seems a guarantee of its falsity. Whatever of the war we forget, some of us will never forget the story of the Russians coming through England. Evidence took on a new meaning for us after that.

Just to say, then, that the proofs of the Spiritualists do not convince me would be to say nothing of any value. But it may be worth while to consider whether the nature of the proofs is such that they would, and should, carry conviction to those who were prepared to accept them. Even if a thing is established as having happened, yet different people will experience different reactions to the established fact. A well-known Spiritualist tells us that with the aid of a 'fire-medium' she has held a burning log in her hand, and suffered no hurt; but though this fact, as she also tells us, gives her a new confidence in the miracles of the Bible, it is doubtful if the fact that she and Christ can both perform miracles will give anybody else a new confidence in the divinity of Christ. A 'proof' can not only fail to prove; it can prove the wrong thing, or too much.

This, it seems to me, has always been the weakness of the Spiritualist's case. However well-documented his 'evidence' may claim to be, it is the wrong sort of evidence. We are told by a K.C. that it is strong enough to hang a murderer ten times over. Fortunately King's Counsel do not serve on juries; but I doubt if even this one would wish a man to be hanged on the unsupported evidence of his favourite medium however accusingly the spirit of the murdered one spoke through her voice. That would be the wrong sort of evidence; spiritual evidence in a very material case. Spiritualism, on the other hand, continually offers us material evidence in what is, surely, an affair of the spirit.

I have mentioned the burning log. I will not dwell upon the tambourines, the table-rappings, the touch of ghostly fingers, the unattractive display on the part of the medium of something called ectoplasm, all the miserable,

unlovely details of the séance. These, the Spiritualists will say, are but the preliminaries, the 'guarantee of good faith' such as editors demand from their correspondents, employers from their employees, before the business begins. Yet from an other-worldly correspondent we should surely demand something different, something other-worldly. Alas, we do not get it. 'God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit' . . . Even if, from a misunderstanding of the situation, the spirits feel that some inartistic display of conjuring is called for first, yet, when at last they speak, surely they will speak from that other world in words of unearthly beauty, surely . . . surely . . . But through the channels of spiritualism there is borne down to us no unearthly beauty, no light that never was on sea or land, but only a shallow stream of uninspired mediocrity which (like Montgomery's) 'meanders level with its fount', spiritually, morally, artistically level with the unlovely tambourine from which it sprang.

The case for communication with the dead waits, then, for some spiritual evidence. But evidence is not enough. Whether there is such a thing in the world as objective proof is doubtful. In these matters most of us believe what we want to believe. We search for our spiritual need, and, having found it, we proclaim our faith. Unless the Spiritualist's faith satisfies the needs of the soul, it will not establish itself there by the strength of its 'evidence'. But from 'I want to believe' to 'I believe' is so easy a step that even a tambourine or two in the path may prove no hindrance to it. Let us ask ourselves, therefore, if the Spiritualist's faith, apart from its reasons for that faith, brings conviction to us.

It promises us, first, another life; which, indeed, many other religions had already promised us; some, perhaps, with more authority. It gives us, uniquely, a picture of that life; a mixture, as I see it, of a Boy Scout's Saturday afternoon and a Gathering of the Clans, in a world such as might have been designed by an energetic Town Council slightly under the influence of Mr. Edmund Dulac. It assures us, lastly, and herein lies its chief appeal to the ordinary man, of a means of communication with those who have passed over into that world, that immaterial world so curiously like our own.

It is not a religion; it is not an inspiration; it is just an anodyne. Yet an anodyne so much desired by so many of us. Can one take comfort from it? Apparently one can, since so many do, but to me it seems cold comfort. I do not touch the vanished hand, nor hear the stilled voice, nor see the so-loved face . . . but I get a letter once a week, on condition that I write first, and pay

for a reply. Well, perhaps it is something. But because it is so little, there is the more need to be sure of it. This letter—who has written it?

An old man dies. His mind had died a year before, but he had lingered on. He speaks to us from that other world. Who speaks? Not the old man who has just passed over, the dotard, but the old man of the year before, when his mind was yet active? But if of the year before, why not of two years before, when his mind was keener? Or twenty years before when it was at its keenest? Or thirty years before when he was most lovable? A child of six dies, and sends messages to the bereaved mother . . . for four years. Is it now a child of ten? What child? Whose child? I see no answer. I see no bridge between that other world where there is no Time, and this world where we are the slaves of it; no way of standing at ease between the Finite and the Infinite, a foot in either world.

For if the dead speak, they do not speak in the conventional voice of the living. It is the soul, invisible, unknown, unexplored which speaks at last. Who has seen truly into the soul of another? Who, indeed, has seen even into his own soul? Who but God? Then who but God shall know that soul again when he hears it speaking?

A NOTE ON STAGECRAFT

CONSTRUCTION, stagecraft, dramatic technique, call it by a sufficiently high-sounding name and you will persuade people that they are in the presence of the mysteries. Actually, stagecraft is just the common sense of making a play acceptable by a mixed audience. A play must show the same qualities as any other piece of writing, from a thousand-word sketch to a novel—invention, imagination, form, humour, and sense of character, blended with style, which is the expression of the author's own personality. But the difference between offering this piece of writing to a gathering of eight hundred theatregoers, and offering it to a single reader at his fireside, is no less than the difference between conducting a political argument at home with a neighbour, and making a speech on the taxation of land values at the Albert Hall. Indeed, it is greater; for the Albert Hall audience has at least come to hear about land values; whereas the theatre audience has come for such various reasons as that the theatre is handy to its favourite restaurant or its favourite tube, that a good-looking actor is visible, or even that it is a wet night and it must take shelter somewhere. If such an audience is to get the best out of an author's invention, imagination, form, humour, and sense of character, it must be approached with sympathy. The author must not only be the creator of the drama, but also, imaginatively, one of its audience.

Now, not only is the audience unlike any normal entity with which we have to deal in real life, but the sample of life which the dramatist is offering is unlike the normal life of our experience. A novel may be 'realistic', but a play never. Real conversation is too inconsequent, too dull, too allusive, for the stranger at the window to follow it with comprehension for three-quarters of an hour. In real life no set of characters can provide, within two hours of their traffic, material for three acts of a play. It is not the business of a dramatist to make his play real, but only to make it seem real; and it is his business to make it seem real, not to one leisurely reader in a library, but to an audience of eight hundred on the other side of the footlights. It is obvious, then, that the stagecraft necessary for this is not a matter of fixed rules, but varies both with the audience and the author.

Consider, if you will, the stage Chinaman. I have never been to China, so I do not know if the Chinese really put their hands in their sleeves and say, 'Welly pletty lady'. Possibly they do. Probably they do. But they have done

it so often on the stage that nobody in the audience, looking at them, will believe (unless he has been to China) that he is looking upon real life; so that to create the impression of real life we must present an unreal Chinaman, who talks and behaves like an Englishman. Consider, if you will, the stage Colonel. There are hundreds of Colonels scattered about the world who have white moustaches and say 'What, what!' after every sentence, but no longer can they be put on the stage. So with stage landladies, stage lawyers, stage clergymen. None of these but is a true living type, and none but seems unreal now to the sophisticated playgoer. How true, how beautifully drawn they must have seemed once!

As with the persons of the play, so with the mechanics. A new character with the fate of the play in his hands might, before an ingenuous audience, be presented acceptably in the last five minutes of the last act; a sophisticated audience would demand that some earlier reference should have been made to him, finding an unheralded appearance in the third act unacceptable; but an audience yet more sophisticated might, by this very piece of stagecraft, find its attention distracted, and prefer even the unheralded appearance. For stagecraft, let it be said again and again, is 'a thing of custom—'tis no other; only it spoils the pleasure of the time', if it happen to be outmoded. 'As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion,' and a very good fashion then, but to-day if the curtain went up on Reggie and the butler, and Reggie began, 'As far as I remember, Parkins, the whole trouble started with this infernal will of old Uncle Benjamin's,' there would be a hoot of derision from the stalls. Let us be modern, and say it on the telephone. 'Is that you, darling? Reggie speaking. Do come round if you can. I'm in the deuce of a hole . . . Well, you know how it is. If I'm not married by the end of this month, all Uncle Benjamin's money . . .' Alas, no, we cannot even do it on the telephone now. A few of the unsophisticated in the upper circle may think that it is ingenious of us, as the stalls thought once, but now the stalls know all about the telephone. 'Oh, lord,' they groan, '*that* ancient wheeze!'

But if the stagecraft necessary to a play varies with the audience, it varies also with the play and the author of the play. We are prepared to accept a bunch of flowers from a Peer, however clumsily offered, but we hesitate to accept a white elephant, however tactfully explained, from a commoner. Soliloquy is out of date, no doubt; from the villain of a crook play we should never put up with it; but we must remember that stage-murders to-day are not done to the music of 'It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul'. Mr. Shaw and Mr. Clarence between them have put a thousand-word speech over the footlights. Was it good stagecraft? For Mr. Shaw in the

particular circumstances, yes. Because he could do it. But most of us couldn’t. The author must know, not only his audience, but also himself.

I spoke just now of ‘good stagecraft’. One might almost say that there is no good stagecraft; either it is bad, or you do not see that it is there at all. If once you say within the theatre, ‘How good the author’s stagecraft is,’ you have condemned him. Thinking it over afterwards you may say that it was adequate. He wants no more.

SPIRITUALISM—AND THE VALUE OF EVIDENCE

It seems to be impossible nowadays to write about spiritualism without bringing in the names of its two principal champions: Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It is appropriate that this should be so, for these two names can be taken as representative of Science and Faith, in between which Spiritualism stands uncertainly, waiting to declare itself. If it is a Science, does not the name of Sir Oliver Lodge carry weight? It does. If it is a Faith, does not the self-sacrifice of Sir Arthur compel belief? It does. But, on the other hand, if it is a Faith, then Sir Oliver Lodge's adherence to it means no more than that of any other man, and less than that of some poor outcast in the slums; and if it is a Science, then the fanatic faith of Sir Arthur is entirely out of place. Who, then, is to be our antagonist? What are we discussing? A Science or a Faith? This is our first difficulty.

Christianity is a Faith; we believe in it, or not. Vaccination is a Science; we believe in it, or not. But the two beliefs are different. In the one case we believe, or doubt, with our hearts; in the other case with our minds. The proofs of Christianity are subjective and spiritual, the proofs of vaccination are objective and material. An anti-vaccinationist, who has not made a faith of his belief, could be converted by overwhelming proof, if such were available, but the anti-Christian can only convert himself.

Now, is Spiritualism offered to us as an extension of the physical laws of the universe, of which we seem to know some, yet of others remain in deepest ignorance; or is it offered to us as a religion, giving us in the greatest degree that hope and that comfort without which the universe itself becomes unthinkable? Faith, says Saint Paul, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. If Spiritualism is a faith, no words could more truly describe that faith. 'The substance of things hoped for.' It is enough for the believer to proclaim that this is what he hopes for; it is enough for the unbeliever to reply that he hopes for something other. Neither is required to justify himself. No argument is possible between them. But if Spiritualism is a manifestation of certain laws of nature for which authority is now claimed, then the unbeliever may sit in judgement on that claim. He may demand, and consider the evidence.

Let us first regard Spiritualism as a Science, and consider the evidence for it.

Now the value of evidence depends upon the credibility of the witness. Spiritualists make the mistake of thinking that it depends upon the honesty of the witness. Over and over again we are told that this and that distinguished man and woman attended a séance and witnessed remarkable things. How can we possibly doubt their word as to what took place? Well, the honesty of the Pope may be considered above suspicion. We could not doubt his word. But if the Pope told us that he had seen a woman having an epileptic fit on the steps of St. Paul's at eleven o'clock in the morning, we should not consider the fact therefore established. We should ask ourselves the following questions:

(1) How does he know that it was not a man dressed up as a woman?

(2) Does he know the difference between epilepsy and other kinds of fits?

(3) Is he acquainted with St. Paul's, or has he perhaps confused it with Westminster Abbey?

(4) Did he guess the time, or consult a watch or clock?

(5) Is that watch or clock accurate?

We see, in short, that whether we accept or reject the evidence does not depend in the least on the honesty of the witness. We may trust a man's honour but remain doubtful of his medical skill, his knowledge of London and the works of his watch.

But should we, in fact, so dispute the Pope's story? No. We should not dispute it, for the reason that the story is in itself credible, and not worth disputing. If the most irresponsible man of my acquaintance tells me that he has just seen Hobbs make a century at the Oval in two and a half hours, I am ready to believe him; but if my most accurate friend tells me that he has just seen G. K. Chesterton make a century at Lord's in ten minutes, I shall assume that he is under an hallucination. The first statement is natural and credible; the second unnatural and incredible.

So it comes to this. We believe the evidence we are ready to believe, and reject the evidence we are not ready to believe. But if this is true of us who receive the evidence of Spiritualism at second-hand, it is equally true of those Spiritualists who have received it at first hand. The man who urgently wants to receive a message from his dead son will believe that he is receiving a message from his dead son; it is so easy for him.

The Spiritualist has been known to deny this; to say that he had no prepossessions either way when he began investigating. Often he claims that he was actually a sceptic—until he was convinced. It is worth while to consider just what a Spiritualist means in this case by scepticism.

I go out to dinner and am entertained afterwards by a conjuror. He performs a remarkable trick. He gives me two cards out of an authenticated pack, and lets me hide them. Then he shuffles the cards and invites me to turn up the top two. They are the two which I have just hidden. Marvellous! I go home and tell Smith about it. Smith is a complete sceptic. He does not doubt my honesty, but says that I have been deceived in some way; it was a trick pack; or the conjuror had extra cards up his sleeve; or he got to my hiding place when my back was turned. Something. The more I assure him that none of these things happened, the more sceptical he remains. He is certain that the conjuror could not bring the trick off in his presence. So I arrange that he shall try. The trick begins, with Smith taking every precaution which suggests itself to him. The two cards, let us say, are the eight of hearts and the nine of diamonds. When all the preliminaries are over, the conjuror with a confident smile invites Smith to turn up the top two cards. . . .

And what does this confirmed sceptic suppose he is going to see when he turns up the cards? The four of clubs and the King of spades? A couple of Queens? Of course not. Yet if he is a confirmed sceptic, this is what he should expect. But he doesn't expect it, because at the moment of turning he is no longer sceptical. He is at that moment *absolutely certain* that in some miraculous way the hidden cards will be there; the eight of hearts and the nine of diamonds. 'And, by Heaven,' he cries, 'so they are.'

But they are not. That, in fact, is the trick. The cards now turned up are the nine of hearts and the eight of diamonds; but so habitually inaccurate are we all, and so easily blinded by a preconceived belief, that in every case the eight of diamonds and the nine of hearts will be mistaken for the nine of diamonds and the eight of hearts. To the good conjuror there is no such thing as a sceptic. Scepticism always gives way at the critical moment.

Or rather, it appears to give way then, but it has really given way before. Try to imagine for yourself the dialogue between an anguished and adoring mother and the alleged spirit of her dead son, a dialogue in which the mother remains coldly on the defensive, answering 'Sir' to the voice's 'Mummy darling', until it has identified the hiding place of the dead rabbit, or told her to look in the left-hand cupboard in the box-room for his old tennis-shoes; whereupon she apologizes and calls him 'Dearest'. It is inconceivable.

Evidence, then, of manifestations which in themselves seem barely credible, and which come to us through witnesses themselves not entirely credible, is not evidence which carries conviction. Is there no evidence which would be more likely to convince us? For myself, I should prefer spiritual evidence; evidence, that is, of the spiritual presence of the dead, rather than material evidence (table-rappings and what not) of the material presence of the dead. I mentioned this preference of mine once in an article written for the *Daily News*, and was promptly provided with the evidence which I wanted. It was a poem by Dryden which had just come through from the next world; a poem by one who was a great poet in his lifetime, and who now had two hundred years' knowledge of unearthly beauty to add to his earthly knowledge. All he could do with this equipment was a verse such as one might find in a schoolgirl's magazine, in which 'earth' rhymed to 'turf'. When I commented on this, I was told scornfully that, even in such worldly matters as telephonings, the operators were not always accurate; not inhumanly accurate; and that a medium was merely a very human transmitter. True, I was a very human transmitter myself once; a signaller in the Army. I admit with shame that, taking down a preface of Bernard Shaw's on the buzzer at twenty words a minute, I might have done him some injustice . . . but I doubt if the result would have looked like a short story by Miss Ethel M. Dell. Nor was a communication from Longfellow, sent to me through the same medium, more convincing. Seventy years after his death Longfellow was apparently still writing in the Hiawatha metre. I am sorry, but, speaking as an expert, I say that the one certain fact in this uncertain universe is that Longfellow isn't. There may be a million people in Heaven writing in the Hiawatha metre, but Longfellow is not one of them. That is absolutely certain. I may know nothing about Spiritualism, but I know something about writing. One doesn't. One simply doesn't.

This, it may be said, is trivial. It is. But it is also symptomatic. Perhaps my chief objection to the Spiritualists' creed is that acceptance of it seems to mean the dethronement of reason. A medium is caught cheating. Does the spiritualist reject him? No. He assures us that the medium was a perfectly honest medium—until he was caught cheating; that the strain of being a medium is very great; that many of the best mediums have to take to drink—and cheating. Indeed, the fact that he was caught cheating is almost proof that until that moment he was the most honest of mediums. . . . The doubter goes to a séance hoping for proof. He is not satisfied with the proof which he gets. That is because he doubted and created an atmosphere of distrust, in which, as is well known, it is impossible for spirits to manifest themselves; so that even his dissatisfaction is in itself a proof . . . and so on.

As a Science, then, Spiritualism seems to me just a little unscientific. Do I like it any better as a Faith? I do not believe in Spiritualism as a Faith, for the simple and sound reason that I do not want to. It does *not* offer me the evidence of things hoped for.

It is a little difficult to know exactly what it does offer, for the Spiritualist's picture of Heaven is varied. It is also a little difficult not to be ribald about some of the pictures which are drawn. It is, of course, easy, and not always helpful, to be ribald about somebody else's religion. The old Christian idea of Heaven as a place wherein one perpetually played the harp in one's nightgown offered similar opportunities. Yet ribaldry sometimes has its value. Christianity has not suffered by discarding whatever offered a target for the mockers.

The essence of the Spiritualist's creed is that there are no dead. I am afraid that I get no comfort from this assurance. To call death a passing does not make it any less bitter. It is to me merely stupid to offer that contact with the dead which the Spiritualists profess to give us as a tolerable substitute for that contact with the living which we enjoy in this world. Even that spiritual contact which Sir Arthur offers us in the next world gives me no firm foundation for faith. He tells us that time moves on in the next world contemporaneously with this; that a mother who loses her baby, a girl of three years old, and dies herself fifteen years later, will find a daughter of eighteen waiting to welcome her. The only possible question I can ask is: Why on earth or in Heaven should she want a strange daughter of eighteen?

Sir Arthur also tells us—much, if I may say so respectfully, as a showman trying to do the best for his public—that if we die old and decrepit, we find ourselves in the next world in our prime. Speaking for myself, I should like a little further assurance as to who is to decide what is my prime. Authors, in particular, are often told by their critics that they are no longer what they were. We do not always agree with our critics. Moreover, our intellectual prime, whenever it may be, rarely coincides with our physical prime. The next world is apparently physical as well as spiritual. The physical side seems to stop short at digestion and procreation, being rather more of a silhouette than anything; but, according to the Spiritualists, it is there, and we should want to make the best of it. But shall I really have survived, if I survive in a combination of body and mind which is not myself at all: which has never been in this world, and could never be recognized in the next?

If I find this new world hard to realize and unattractive to consider, it is because all my hopes of another world are of a world more beautiful than

anything I can imagine in this one. To think of the infinite in terms of the finite is beyond me. I feel myself as little competent to imagine the next world as to explain this. Nor do I demand of my Faith an infinity of existence in either. All I can ask is that some day, if only in one blinding moment, I may understand; all I can hope is that, when that moment comes, I may leave behind me in this world something which will not wholly be forgotten.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Is love necessary to a happy married life? It depends on what you mean by 'love'. My answer to the question would be that what I mean by 'love' is only experienced by the happily married. Obviously I do not mean 'married' in the technical sense. No formula of Church or State makes two people one. But it is not until a man and woman have lived together for years in utter contentment of each other that they know what love is; as distinct from passion, as distinct from affection, as distinct from friendliness, community of interest, good-comradeship; as distinct from everything else which this world has to offer. Is love necessary to a happy married life? Well, then, it depends on what you mean by 'happy'.

Married life, of course, is difficult. It would hardly offer such complete happiness if it were not. The Victorians found it more easy. The wife said 'Yes, John' and 'No, John', and went on having children. Was the husband happy? At least he was comfortable; and part of his comfort was derived from the fact that his marriage was a success. Never a disagreement between them! 'Yes, John.' 'No, John.' Was the wife happy? I know of Victorian women who spent the first five years of their married lives in an agony of fear: fear that they were going to have children, fear of the children whom they knew they were going to have. No doubt the husband had often said at the club, cigar in mouth, 'My wife has no secrets from me.' Yet I think she had this one secret. Otherwise, surely, he could not have been so comfortable.

To-day women have no secrets from us. It makes life more difficult. That is why we dislike beggars in the street; not because they pester us, but because we are reminded of their shameful secret; their poverty. How easy marriage would be if we could go on saying '*My* house', '*my* children', '*my* money', and the woman went on saying 'Yes, John', and kept her secrets to herself; just as the fox keeps his secret to himself, and enables us to assure him that he enjoys being hunted. But Woman talks to us now as man to man, and Man is suddenly in the horrible position of realizing that 'a happy marriage' in some ridiculous way has got to mean happiness for the woman also. Is it any wonder that there is this rush of unhappy marriages? What would happen to all the happy shooting-parties each autumn, if they had suddenly to include happiness for a vocal pheasant?

But are we, then, to renounce the real happy marriage as too difficult of attainment? Those who are content with what is called the ‘French marriage’ have already done so. If marriage in France is truly regarded as a means to one end only, the founding of a family, no doubt a ‘safe’ marriage—in which little of value, as between husband and wife, is given, and little asked—is the best form of marriage possible. But I confess (and I am aware that it may be a personal idiosyncrasy of mine) that mere propagation has never seemed to me an overwhelming achievement in itself. To provide the next generation seems to me less praiseworthy than to provide *for* the next generation, and even this is less important than that the present generation should do something of value with its own lives. One really happy marriage to-day is a greater achievement than the provision of human material for a thousand loveless marriages in the future. To miss the most beautiful thing in life in order that there shall be a next generation to miss it too, is a poor way of expressing one’s personality. Not for a moment do I deny that there is beauty in childhood, beauty in motherhood, beauty in the relation of parent to child. If any man or woman says ‘I love children; I have not the temperament for a happy marriage, but I could make a child happy. And I want to experience the joys of fatherhood or motherhood,’ then let him or her make a ‘safe’ marriage, convenient for the purpose. But if he says, ‘I must marry so as to keep up the birthrate,’ then honestly I do not know what he is talking about. Is he trying to help God—or the British Empire? Probably he makes no distinction.

How can the happy marriage be achieved? I think it is less a matter of choice and more a matter of temperament than is supposed. The assumption of every unhappy husband is that if he had only met Mary before he met Jane, all would have been well, and that, as soon as Jane has divorced him, he and Mary will at last have a chance of being happy together. I fancy that it is a small chance. He didn’t choose the wrong woman; he was, and will always be, the wrong man. I shall never win the Mixed Doubles at Wimbledon, however carefully I choose my partner. My form is hopeless for Wimbledon anyhow. There are thousands of men and women whose form is hopeless for Dunmow.

What, then, is the correct form? I should say it was found in an eagerness, all day and every day, to see things from the point of view of the other. It is difficult; particularly for the man, who can never quite forget that his wife promised to obey him . . . and never quite remember that he has endowed her with all his goods. It is always difficult to see the other person’s point of view; always lamentably easy to say ‘Oh, but that’s different.’ However, one gets better with practice.

And is this, you ask, what I mean by love—just seeing things from each other's point of view, making allowances for each other? Of course not. This is merely the top-dressing which gives the ache, the longing, the glory, the misery, all that you first felt when you pledged yourselves to each other, a chance to grow into real love. Love, as I mean it, can only be experienced by the happily married, but I doubt if the happily married will ever experience it unless they were 'in love' at some time first. So perhaps that is the answer to the question.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

THERE is a well-established belief among uncles that all babies like to listen to the tick-tick. Perhaps they do. After all, for the first twelve months of one's life there isn't, in the way of spiritual refreshment, very much else that offers. One either listens to a watch ticking or one listens to it not ticking. So the millionth uncle takes out his gold hunter and says complacently, 'Hark to the tick-tick'; the millionth baby is presumed to be harking; and, since no comment is made, the legend that he likes harking goes irresistibly on. The ideal baby-entertainer is the man with the watch.

In something the same way the 'children's writer' has established himself. To a child of age to read, or to be read to, any book is better than no book, to which extent any book is a children's book. And because, I suppose, the first 'children's writer' wrote in a certain way, as being the easiest way in which to write, a certain sort of book came to be regarded as the ideal children's book, and it was agreed that the writer of any such book might safely be referred to as one who understood completely the psychology of the child's mind.

'Being the easiest way in which to write.' That is the secret of nine-tenths of the Christmas Books—now so many that they demand a supplement to themselves. Inasmuch as the average father stops being a solicitor or a stockbroker (jobs at which he is an expert) in order to become, for the amusement of his child, an extremely indifferent actor, novelist or draughtsman, so is it assumed that, even in the more formal making of a book, this amateurishness, this sense of relaxation, is not only 'good enough' for a child, but is, in a way, a kind of guarantee that one really is amusing the kid, rather than exhibiting oneself priggishly, in one's own special line, as an expert. For, seeing the author so much at his ease, nobody can fail to realize that he is writing 'for the young', and not, the selfish cad, for himself.

Let us begin a story for children and see where it leads us.

'Once upon a time there was a little girl called—well, you will never guess what her name was, not if you had three hundred million guesses, and your Daddy and your Mummy and your Nanny all guessed too, and you read the Englishdictionary (isn't that a long word?) right through from beginning

to end, including all the twiddly-widdly bits. Because she had a special name of her very-very-very-own, which nobody had ever been called before, and it wasn't Mary, and it wasn't Jane, and it wasn't Anne, and you'll never believe it but it wasn't even Flibberty-gibbet. What *could* it have been? Can't you guess? Not even if you hold your thumbs tight, and shut your eyes, and take your very very deepest breath like you do when you're not-feeling-very-well-this-morning-Nanny, and the doctor-man comes and tells you to say "Ninety-nine"? Well, then I shall have to tell you. Her name was Yesterday. Isn't that a funny name?'

It is not unfair to take this as a representative sample of the children's-story manner. You see the advantage of it. So far the author has told us that there was once a little girl called Yesterday; a matter of eight words and a certain amount of invention. Without taxing his inventive powers any further, he has written a hundred and seventy words, and is still going strong. As I have said, it is the easiest way in which to write. There is nothing to stop you. You can go on and on at your ease, with your waistcoat unbuttoned (*mutatis mutandis*, if you are a woman), confident that the little ones are enjoying it.

Let us turn to poetry and consider a supreme example of relaxation: *John Gilpin, or, The Curate Unbends*. It is not a typical 'children's poem', though it has been sold often enough as 'suitable for a child', but it is typical of the method. Cowper was a poet; he wrote *The Task*; took it seriously, we may suppose, from ten till two each morning; but *John Gilpin* was another matter. He had been told the story by Lady Austen. It was a humorous story. One must not blame him for supposing that, if he turned it into verse, the result would inevitably, one might almost say legally, be humorous verse. At any rate it would not be serious verse, and therefore need not be taken seriously, not even by the author. 'So he jotted it down' during a 'sleepless night'. There are sixty-three verses in it; it should have taken him a month of the hardest work within the capacity of man. When we read it, we know why it did not take him a month.

> Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, 'That's well said;
> And for that wine is dear,
> We will be furnished with our own
> Which is both bright and clear.'

'Why "bright and clear"?' you ask. 'Why not?' answers Cowper. 'It helps to end the line and rhymes with "dear".'

He soon replied, 'I do admire
Of womankind but one.'

Why 'soon replied' when he obviously answered at once; why 'I do admire', when he would naturally say 'I admire'? 'Well,' says Cowper, 'you have to have eight syllables in the line, and as I only had six, I put in two more. It still makes grammar.'

I fancy that in verse, even if written for the young, there should be something more than grammar, the correct number of syllables in a line, and correct rhymes at prearranged intervals. If I write:

When Tommy saw his dog again,
A cry he then did give,
And took him quickly back to where
They both of them did live

—if I write this, it can only be because I am not bothering. Instead of spending days at it, I am working off my sleepless nights. How many children's books, one wonders, are the result of sleepless nights—the days, of course, being devoted to 'serious' work?

This brings us back to the old question, What do children like? The answer to the question concerns the writer for children as much as, and no more than, the answer to the question 'What do men and women like?' concerned Shakespeare or Dickens. In other words—and I have taken a long time coming to the obvious—a 'children's book' must be written, not for children, but for the author himself. That the book, when written, should satisfy children must be regarded as a happy accident, just as one regards it as a happy accident if a dog or a child loves one; it is a matter of personality, and personality is the last matter about which one can take thought. But whatever fears one has, one need not fear that one is writing too well for a child, any more than one need fear that one is becoming almost too lovable. It is difficult enough to express oneself with all the words in the dictionary at one's disposal; with none but simple words the difficulty is much greater. We need not spare ourselves.

This, I think, is the one technical concession which must be made: the use of simple words. It is, of course, annoying when your second line ends in 'self' to realize suddenly that you are writing a 'children's book' and mustn't say 'pelf'; many a poet has torn up his manuscript at this point and started on a sex novel, as giving him more scope. Others have said 'pelf' and not bothered. They are the ones who dash off their poems during a sleepless

night, thinking anything good enough for a child. But those who are themselves still children as they write will reject ‘pelf’ instinctively, as one of those short cuts which spoil the game. It makes writing more difficult; amazingly so, at a moment when we were hoping to relax a little from the serious work of describing Life in the Night Clubs, but alas! there seems to be no help for it.

THEIR EXITS AND THEIR ENTRANCES

In real life it may happen that we have left our handkerchief on the dressing-table; it may happen also that, while talking to the family in the drawing-room after dinner, we feel the need of blowing our nose. In this event we do one of two things. Either we make a noiseless exit by the drawing-room door, returning equally noiselessly a minute or two later, handkerchief in hand; or else we say to the rest of the company, 'I must just go and get my handkerchief; I left it upstairs'—and so, as before, to our bedroom and back again. Unfortunately, this sort of realism is denied to the charming ladies and gentlemen whom you see on the stage. However imperatively the play demands his absence, the hero may not slip away silently to his bedroom. People would say at once, 'Mr. Smith's play lacks verisimilitude.' Even if the satisfactory explanation were given, 'I am going to get a handkerchief as I want to blow my nose,' sleuth-hounds would still say, 'Mr. Smith's technique has not got beyond the elementary stage.'

A stage exit or entrance, then, depends not in the least on its naturalness for its technical soundness. What it does depend on is the state of sophistication of the audience. Suppose that you in the audience are witnessing a scene between four of the characters, and that (clever as you are) it is obvious to you, from the design of the play, that this scene must be followed by one between two of the characters only. How will the author get the other two characters off the stage? As soon as you, in your sophistication, have asked yourself this, you make it difficult for him. 'Let me show you my roses (guinea-pigs, old prints),' says Host to Guest, as many a host has said before. 'Oh, please do,' says Guest in the manner of a hundred guests. They go out together. But you in the Pit are smiling condescendingly to yourself. 'A bit thin!' you say. 'Really a bit thin.'

So the author has another shot at it. But this time he begins a long way back.

Host (*to* Mary *on her first arrival*): 'Have you come to see my roses?'

Mary: 'No. Why? Must I?'

Host (*firmly*): 'Certainly.'

Hostess (*bored*): 'Henry insists on showing everybody his silly old roses.'

Mary: 'I never know what to say to a rose.'

MARY'S HUSBAND (JOHN): 'You generally say, "What a beauty! . . . Oh, may I really? How sweet of you!" '

MARY: 'H'sh! Don't give me away, John. (*To* HOSTESS) What we really came to tell you was'—(*whatever it is. 'All is discovered.' 'William is a bigamist.' 'Have you heard about Susan?'—or what not*) . . .

Ten minutes later. They have discussed it, and discussed it, and at last a silence has fallen upon them. It is obvious to the bright ones that Hostess must now get the truth of the matter out of John. But privately. So:

MARY (*sweetly to* HOST): 'And now I think I'm ready for your roses! (*She leads the way to the door. And just outside the porch, where the pergola begins, we hear her again*) What a beauty! . . . Oh, may I really? How sweet of you!'

Which is much better, isn't it? And there are two reasons why it is better. (1) The author began removing Host and Guest ten minutes before you were ready for him. (2) Instead of shirking the difficulty of getting Guest into the garden, he coolly pretends that it is Host's difficulty, not his. 'Rather funny,' he says to you carelessly (but mopping his brow behind your back)—'Rather funny this Host's anxiety to show his guest these ridiculous roses.' And before you know where you are, you have agreed that it *is* rather absurd.

It is a trick, of course, but a trick which can always be brought off. Consider this time an entrance. X and Z are having a fond scene, and at the exact psychological moment (as we writers say) Araminta appears at the open French windows. Why? That is what the sophisticated ones are asking themselves; and will continue to ask themselves if Araminta refuses to explain. Yet how can she explain?

ARAMINTA (*hurriedly, in a low voice*): 'I just came to ask you about the picnic to-morrow. (*Loudly and fiercely*) HOW DARE YOU MAKE LOVE TO THAT WOMAN?'

Hopeless. Yet, if she say nothing, you will babble about the amazing coincidence of her appearance with Z's avowal of her love. But suppose we do it this way:

Z: 'Oh, X, what ages it seems since—(*she gives a sudden start*)—Oh!'

X: 'What is it, darling?'

Z (*in a whisper*): 'Some one in the garden!'

X (*peering through window*): 'Araminta! (*Reassuringly*) She couldn't have heard us. She's a long way off. . . . She's coming this way! (*He turns back to her.*) Quick, darling, before she comes, tell me again that you love me.'

Z: 'X!'

X: 'Z!'

(*And so on for three minutes . . . two minutes longer than you expected.*)

And then, when Araminta enters, all is well. You have been expecting her for two minutes, wondering why on earth she doesn't come. Do you want an explanation of her arrival? Good heavens, no! If you want anything at all, you want an explanation of her delay.

Tricks, yes. And, as long as you want realism, the author will always have a trick up his sleeve for you. But when you have had enough of it, then he can go back to the old method.

Enter (for no reason at all, except that the author wants him on) Hamlet.

HAM. (*for no reason at all except that the author wants you to know what he is thinking*):

'To be or not to be, that is the question.'

Let us listen to him. It may just be worth it.

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

Good King Wenceslas looked out

On the Feast of Stephen.

And for a long time, as far as I was concerned, that was all that he did do. For at this point in his story I looked out too; and there was something in the way I looked out which made the carol-singers feel that the man in the next house was fonder of music than I; so to him they went, and thence down the street; and ever and again there came faintly to me the news that Good King Wenceslas was looking out on the Feast of Stephen; but of his subsequent adventures nothing, save a confused jumble of sound, to which, never having heard them clearly, I could not now put words. Only of this was I assured: that he did look out.

It was natural that I began to ask myself, Why? Who was Wenceslas—or 'Wenceslaus', as it is often written. Probably, I said to myself, he is some relation to Santa Claus. At first I thought they were cousins . . . and then I thought they weren't. For suddenly I saw what had happened. Wenceslaus had spelt his name wrong *again*, and he was really Wenseclaus. So then I knew that they were two brothers: Santa and Wensé Claus. Santa brought the presents round on Christmas Day, and Wensé looked out on Boxing Day to see that no mistakes had been made. And on the 27th they talked to each other like this:

Wensé. All serene at 43, 44 and 45. The little girl at 46 mustn't have nougat again.

Santa. It was very good nougat.

Wensé. I know. But she can't get her mouth open. . . . There should have been a bicycle at 47. So they say.

Santa. Yes, it went to 49 by mistake. I'm sorry about that.

Wensé. 49 seems rather pleased. . . . The Father of 51 isn't complaining, but he goes about murmuring gently to himself, 'Why bagpipes?'

Santa. They all wanted bagpipes at 51. It isn't my fault.

Wensé. He doesn't say that it is. He just murmurs to himself, 'Why bagpipes?' Number 9 says the kite doesn't go up, but then kites never do.

Oh, and 31 likes the conjuring tricks and the Noah's Ark, but didn't really want the measles. That's all, I think.

Santa (timidly). It went off rather well, don't you think? On the whole.

Wensé (kindly). Not bad, not bad.

Well, that is how it was. At least, I used to think that that was how it was until I found myself at the club one day talking to a man who knows everything. I know nearly everything myself, but he knows everything, which is why he was so kindly telling me. We had got as far as W.

'Wenceslas,' he began——

'I know,' I interrupted. 'Santa Claus's brother.'

'What *do* you mean?' he asked. You know the way people say it which makes you feel rather pink just behind the ears? Well, that was how he said it. I told him, nervously, what I have just been telling you.

'But, my dear fellow,' he said, which is what he calls me sometimes, 'Wenceslas was a real person!'

'So is Santa Claus,' I protested firmly.

'You know what I mean. He really was a King.'

'Oh!' I said.

Good King Wenceslas. I went away to think about him.

Somewhere, a long time ago, I had heard about 'The Two Kings of Brentford'. Have you heard about them? No. Well, now you have. I decided that Good King Wenceslas was one of them.

Who was the other?

Obviously Old King Cole.

> Old King Cole
> Was a merry old soul,
>   And a merry old soul was he.
> He called for his pipe
> And he called for his bowl
>   And he called for his fiddlers three.

So no wonder Wenceslas looked out indignantly.

'Is that you, Cole?'

‘Yes,’ said Cole merrily. ‘Why?’

‘I would ask you to remember,’ said Wenceslas solemnly, ‘that it is the Feast of Stephen.’

‘Oh, is it?’ said Cole, rather ashamed of himself. ‘So it is,’ he said. . . . And then, after a little thought, ‘That is why I am feasting,’ said Cole with great dignity.

‘Oh!’ said Wenceslas. And the more he thought, the more he couldn’t think of anything else to say. So he shut the window.

I was so pleased about this discovery of mine—it was what learned people call ‘re-constructing history’—that I told my friend about it when next I went to the club. I knew he knew because he knows everything, but I wanted him to know that I knew too. So I began airily.

‘Interesting about Cole, isn’t it?’

‘Cole?’ he frowned.

‘Cole and Wenceslas.’

‘What about them?’

So I told him.

‘My good man,’ he said, which is a way he often has of addressing me, ‘you didn’t think Wenceslas was an English king, did you?’

‘Didn’t I?’ I said weakly.

‘Wenceslas ascended the throne of Bohemia in 927.’

‘927 what?’ I asked.

‘What do you mean, what?’ he said. ‘I’m telling you, 927.’

I still didn’t quite see. Somehow 927 doesn’t sound like a date at all. I thought of Wenceslas ascending the throne in 927 seconds (a record), or in 927 different costumes, or in 927 steps; or, indeed, anything but the year A.D. 927. It was one of my dull days I suppose.

‘He came to the throne in 927, and after a short reign of eight years——’

‘Oh, now I see!’ I said.

‘See what?’

‘Nothing, nothing,’ I said hastily. ‘Go on.’

‘He was killed by a band of conspirators, led by his brother, on a September morning on his way to church. Afterwards he was canonized as a saint. He is buried in the cathedral of Prague. Talking about Prague——’

But I left him talking about it, for I wanted to consult even greater authorities than he, to make sure that this was true.

And, sure enough, it is true. Good King Wenceslas he was, indeed; perhaps the most beloved and most Christ-like King who ever lived. In a time when war was the commonplace of a peasant’s life and the sole glory of a king’s, he was a Prince of Peace, living only to preach his gospel of goodwill; and when death fell upon him he would allow no hand to be raised in his defence, lest, through him, injury might be done to a fellow-creature. So he died in his simple faith, with his face to the stars; and a thousand years later they keep his day holy in his own country.

And a thousand years later we in England still sing of him. Sometimes I feel, a little sadly, that I would rather he had been a brother of Santa Claus . . . and sometimes I dream, a little wistfully, of him and Old King Cole together . . . and sometimes I think that to have lived so long ago, and ever since to have been a song on the lips of the world, just because he was gentle, is rather a wonderful thing to have happened.

AN IMMORTAL NAME

I SUPPOSE that every one of us hopes secretly for immortality; to leave, I mean, a name behind him which will live for ever in this world, whatever he may be doing, himself, in the next. There was a time when I saw myself in the happy company of Keats and Shakespeare; immortal as they; writer of deathless poetry and plays. But there were technical difficulties in the way; trifles with which I need not trouble you now. Moreover, I said to myself, 'Was even Shakespeare sure? Was Keats?' And I wondered if certainty could come to any man on his death-bed that ten, fifty, a hundred years hence his name would be in the mouths of all.

So wondering, I walked one day among my flowers. And I looked at my dahlias, at the lobelia cardinalis, at the fuchsias, the rudbeckias, the camellia, the magnolia, the buddleias, all the commonplaces of the cottage garden, and I said to myself: 'There is your immortality!'

For we may be sure that Dr. Lobel, who had the distinction, if it was no great pleasure, of being physician to King James the First, had already given up hope of immortality when immortality fell upon him. His new method of blood-letting brought him little comfort. His closed-window cure for diseases of the lung died with its victims. His bedside manner might be a memory for a generation, but no longer. And then he invented the lobelia. For once his bedside manner failed him. A lifetime of bowings and scrapings and washings of hands urged him to call it the jamesia, but the craving for immortality which works in us all was too strong for him. James was going into history anyhow; but here only was the chance of Dr. Lobel. So he called his flower the lobelia . . . and three hundred years later we are still talking of him.

Pottering round my garden with the watering-can, giving a drink here to the dahlia of M. Dahl and a drink there to the fuchsia of M. Fuchs, I have dreamed of a Milnia which the world will be watering three hundred years hence. Throw a stone into the sea and there is a splash, yes, and a widening ripple, but the ripple grows ever fainter as it travels, and in a little while it is as if the stone had never been cast. So, it may be, with our books. How little will it mean, all that I have struggled to write, to the cottager of the twenty-second century who has decided to transplant his Milnia from the back garden to the front. 'How are your Milnias doing?' they will ask each other,

and I shall straighten myself proudly in my grave if they answer, ‘Well.’ For I feel that I should do well; yes, I have that feeling. Even in a north border ‘Milnia grandiflora cerulia, an interesting growth of neat habit’, would do well.

Shall I ever achieve this immortality? I do not know. It should be easier, surely, to produce a new kind of flower than to produce a new kind of book. How does one begin? A nursery-gardener, called into consultation last summer, stopped in his tour of inspection and said, pointing to a group of flowers, ‘That’s a curious sort of poppy you have there. I’ve never seen one like that anywhere else.’ I answered ‘No’, with a faint touch of distance in my voice, as if I also had never seen one like it anywhere else, and had been compelled, therefore, to make it for myself.

I did not make it, however. It just came; some sport of earth and air and water and sun. Perhaps this is how all the new flowers come. Dr. Lobel did not grow the lobelia out of his own head; his share in it was no more than the easy naming of an accidental bloom. He was at the bedside of King James, during one of those small indispositions which are forced upon royalty, having brought with him the usual courtly bunch of flowers. ‘And what’s that?’ asked James, pointing to one he didn’t know. Whereupon Dr. Lobel, who had been wondering too, answered on the impulse of the moment, ‘The—er—lobelia, sire’ . . . and the lobelia it was ever afterwards. Alas! it is too late now to tell my nursery-gardener that the poppy he admired was *papaver Milnia accidentalis*; yet so it should have been if I had had the readiness of Dr. Lobel.

For even to have one small shoot of the family named after us would be something; would, indeed, be much if the flower were common enough. One often introduces a geum to the visitor without going into particulars, but one never limits oneself to the observation, ‘This is a rose climbing up the pergola.’ Some further explanation is customary. Is it Albertine, Carmine Pillar, or Lady Gay?

Or is it Dorothy Perkins? She, surely, is immortal, no less than Dr. Lobel. Perhaps she herself is still of this world.[1] How thrilling to shake hands with her—(‘Let me introduce you to Miss Perkins. Dorothy, dear—this is Mr. Milne’)—and to say to her, ‘Are you *the* Dorothy Perkins?’ How does she feel when she walks round a garden, incognita, and hears people whispering about her? A little *blasé* perhaps now; not as feels the author whose first book has been mentioned casually in a railway carriage, and he blushing unknown in the corner. For there is something in one’s name which seems so private to oneself that any mention of it by others brings for the

moment a vague sense of discomfort, as if a liberty were threatened. But Miss Perkins has outgrown all that. I dare say she talks to her gardener of the green-fly on the Dorothy Perkins with complete indifference now; and if you were to say to her: 'Are you *the* Dorothy Perkins?' she would answer: 'You mean the flower? Yes, I was called after it.'

[1] She is. She has written to me; as prettily as she grows.

To return to the Milnia, which we have neglected a little; I imagine it as something like Sweet William in shape and texture, but blue in colour. Who was William, by the way? I am jealous of him. I doubt if he was as charming as all that. Probably he was just William Sweet, one of two brothers living in Sussex, publicans by profession, but doing a bit of gardening in their spare time. Having discovered this new flower, they called the June-flowering variety William, and the autumn-flowering variety, now out of fashion, John. Sweet (William) survives, and is thus written by the pedantic. Let us be grateful to him that we don't have to call it the Sweetia.

Which reminds me of the hard case of Professor Magnol, the only begetter of that beautiful tree, the magnolia. All his life Professor Magnol was irritated by two sorts of stupid people; those who mistakenly credited him with the invention of the magnol-wurzel, and those (like you and me) who thought that the magnolia was so called because it had a very large and magnificent flower. In a sense he is an immortal, or will be when I have finished writing about him, but he has missed some of the rapture of it in the last two hundred years. Possibly he was a bad man, and this is his punishment. Each time you have looked admiringly at a friend's magnolia, his ghost has been there at your elbow, reading the thought in your mind, gnashing, as it were, its teeth at your stupidity. 'What a lovely large flower,' you have thought; 'no wonder they call it the magnolia'—and at that moment you have felt a faint cold breath at the back of your neck, and have shivered, and told yourself that already there was a touch of autumn in the air. You are wrong. It was the ghost of Professor Magnol hissing at you.

THE ART OF GIVING

VERY few women understand the art of giving presents. They say to themselves: 'What does Archie want? He smokes, doesn't he? What does he smoke? John Cotton? Then let us give him a pound of John Cotton.' Now that is a silly present, because, if Archie smokes John Cotton, he has been buying John Cotton for years; which proves that he is well able to buy yet one more pound of John Cotton for himself. It is useless to give a man a present which he can buy for himself; you are giving him no more than a twenty-five shilling postal order. The art of giving men presents is to give them something which they cannot buy for themselves; something which, without your co-operation, they would never be able to possess.

Let us look at this question frankly. What is the average man's position in the home? What is he doing there at all? Observe this small but well-appointed house. If we open the door, what do we find inside? We find one wife, one cook, one house-parlourmaid, one nurse, and one girl-baby. Five females, and all as happy as happy together. Why are they so happy? Because somewhere, in another part of the town, there is a man earning money. And is not the man also happy? Certainly he is. Why? Because all these five females are spending his money in the way which will give him most happiness. Bless them!

The fact is, then, that man has a genius for making money, and woman has a genius for spending it. This fact should always be remembered when Christmas comes round. It is foolish for women to say: 'My husband (uncle, brother, father, cousin) is a poor earner; what can I give him?' The thing to say is: 'My husband (father, brother, cousin, uncle) is a hopeless shopper; what can I, with my genius for shopping, buy for him?'

Now this is where all the comic papers, which make their annual fun of a wife's presents to her husband, seem to me to be absurdly wrong. A woman gives a box of high-coloured *Cabajos* to a husband who smokes *Coronas*, and is ridiculed by the Press for it. How unimaginative! That woman knows much more about the art of present-giving than does the *Corona*-buying wife. She understands that to give a *Corona* to a man who is long-practised in the art of buying *Coronas* is to give him no surprise, no thrill, no pleasure; but to give him a *Cabajo*, which he is physically unable to demand himself at a tobacconist's, is, at any rate, to bring something new into his life. And

who knows? He may for years have wanted *Cabajos* for his friends; or, if not for his friends, for people like policemen on whom, it is assumed, a better brand would be wasted. How many times have we men said nervously to each other, looking sidelong at some third party: 'I wonder if he expects a tip?' and how often we have felt that the difficulty would be resolved, could we but offer him a *Cabajo* from our well-fitted case, with the friendly, if slightly misleading, phrase, 'Have a cigar?'

Consider also this other stale property of the comic draughtsman—the highly coloured tie. What a dull present to the City-going husband would be one of those dear old black ties which he has always bought for himself, and always worn, this twenty years past! And what a thrilling present the purple and scarlet effect which you are knitting for him! More than women realize do men long for a little romance, a little colour in their lives. Could old Brown, that steady-going gentleman, buy a purple and scarlet cravat for himself? Never! The stares, the ridicule! But if he can say, 'Well, you see, my wife made it for me, and I don't like to hurt her feelings,' how splendid is his position! He foots it down Cheapside feeling himself a toreador and a blessed martyr all in one.

But there is another type of present which a woman may well give a man; something which, in theory, he is able to buy for himself, but, in practice, never does buy. The most obvious examples are found among the jewelled decorations which, as unobtrusively as possible, he wears about his person. No man ever bought anything but the plainest rolled-gold studs and links for himself; the woman who can afford it may step forward with her mother-of-pearl and enamel. Another good example is the walking-stick or the umbrella. One cannot have too many of these, nor too beautiful. And if I am getting beyond the reach of your purse, let me put in a word for the homely braces. Probably no woman has ever considered seriously the startling fact that not one man in ten of her acquaintance has a spare pair of braces. There is a mysterious something, I know not what, which seems to prohibit a man from buying a second pair, so firmly does he trust to the pair in use. Yet a reserve pair, presented by some friend, would not only be useful, but would lift him so high in his own esteem above his acquaintance, that he would feel the whole world to be at his feet. Forgive me for touching upon this delicate subject, but blue is the best colour, and they are quite cheap.

Next we approach the matter of golf balls. This may be a personal idiosyncrasy, but I hold that a box of golf balls is almost the best present of all. But, you will say, are you not always buying golf balls for yourself?

Always. But never in boxes. A man buys golf balls in the professional's shop on his way to the first tee; he puts a couple in his pocket. How could he buy a box then? Yet no golfer, I think, but longed to have a box of his own, over which he could gloat lovingly, telling himself that this or that one would be the first to do the long seventh in three.

Almost the best present, I said. For the best present of all is books. I speak not only as a writer whose books are waiting in the best shops to catch the eye of the generous giver, but also as a lay-reader who can never have too many books given to him. There is no pleasure to equal the pleasure of opening a parcel of books; to buy them for oneself is to lose all the wonder and half the thrill. 'But how shall I know what books he likes?' you ask. 'Madam,' I answer modestly, 'is it for *me* to—er——' and then I look on the ground, and cough a little, wondering privately what the woman is making such a fuss about. 'Oh, but he's read all yours,' she says quickly. 'I mean, what others?' Then let me suggest, Madam, that you give him the books which you think *you* will like.

This has two advantages. For, first, you can read them through quickly before you send them off to him, thus getting them practically for nothing; and, secondly, you can find out in this way if the fellow is really worth any consideration at all. There are books which a kindred soul *must* like, or lose for ever his claim to kinship. As soon as you have read them, you will know, and by that shall you test his claim. Does he applaud them enthusiastically, then you shall marry him; or, being already married, shall visit him; or, calling yourself his aunt, shall address him still as 'Dearest nephew'. But if he neglect to read them, or, reading them, dismiss them with a 'Not bad', then shall you jilt him, cut him, disinherit him. And next Christmas you shall buy two boxes of cigars, one *Coronas*, one *Cabajos*. And you shall take the labels off the *Coronas* and put them upon the *Cabajos* for him. And, being a snob, as is now obvious, he will smoke them all to the bitter end, the oh! so bitter end, thinking them *Coronas*. And the other box you shall send to me, if you like, for having warned you.

CERTAIN FINANCIAL MATTERS

TO-DAY is my day for going to the bank. I wonder if I shall have the courage this time, which I have lacked on every previous visit, to ask to see the Manager. I want an explanation from him; two explanations. Obviously he is the man to give them.

I know the Manager quite well. He sent for me once. I was terrified. As I faltered into his room, I tried to think of all the things I had done which might annoy a Manager; my way of writing cheques; my way of paying in cheques; my manner, a highly suspicious one, in the bank itself. I could think of a hundred things. They offered me a chair and told me that the Manager would be with me directly. I sat down and perspired. Perhaps, I tried to reassure myself, he was only going to tell me that my name had been forged to a cheque for £10,000, and I was now ruined. I could face ruin like a man. But, at my age, I cannot face being told that I really mustn't do this, and definitely mustn't do that. At least, I can face it, but not like a man. Like a small boy. It is a detestable feeling. I sat there miserably.

The Manager came in. He said he was sorry to have bothered me, but he did want to tell me how much he liked some book which I had just written. I said in amazement, 'You read books?' It appeared that he did. I always thought that they didn't. I thought that they just balanced them. It was an astonishing discovery. The Manager and I talked to each other as man to man; not as master to small boy. If there was any patronizing done, I did it. I practically told him how to write. He was enthralled. He loved me for the proofs that I had passed, and I loved him—I forget why. Anyhow, I know him quite well.

Yet, so far, I have not dared to ask him my questions. Perhaps this is just why; this admiration which he must have for me. To ask him my absurd questions would be to put myself back in my small-boy character which I play so uneasily, and from the heights of his knowledge he would look down upon me instead of up to me. So I shall put my questions to you instead. If you who read this are editor, stockbroker, miner, painter, or electrician, take it that I know all about editing, stockbroking, mining, painting, and electricity . . . but it just happens that I don't know these two little points about banking. Nor do you probably. Silly little points, what do they matter anyway? However, let us consider them.

Why do my cheques have an 'M' in the left-hand corner? For years and years I thought that it stood for 'Milne'. I don't mean that it stood specially for me; it would stand equally for Morrison or Matthews; but I did think that, when I asked for a cheque-book, the cashier selected an 'M' one for me, in the same precautionary spirit as that in which he selected a 'S' one for my friend Smith. A precaution against fraud. What sort of fraud, and how committed, I do not know. I never do know with banks. But I always seem to approach the cashier's desk through a cloud of unformulated suspicions. Probably bank-managers do not, even to themselves, put their suspicions into definite thoughts, but they feel vaguely that if I gave my 'M' book to Smith, and Smith gave his 'S' book to me, I should be at least one step nearer to touching his bank-balance, and he one step nearer to mine. Somehow or other.

Well, as I say, I had believed this; and then one day I noticed—how unperceptive some people are—that my agent, on whose cheques my life had been supported for years, apparently spelt *his* name with an 'M' too, although I had always elided it in conversation with him, and he had always omitted it in his signature. In other words, his name was Brown. How dare he have an 'M' book, when he wasn't One of Us?

As you have gathered by now, I am a quick and intelligent thinker. I said to myself at once: 'This man, this agent, has many clients. Andrews, Baker, Carruthers, Dennison, Edwards, and so on, and so forth—all these great writers live on his bounty. Obviously he has special cheque-books for each of us. When he writes a cheque for Andrews he gets one of his 'A' books out; when for me, one of his 'M' books. To prevent fraud. And the reason why I myself don't prevent fraud by having, for instance, a special 'Z' cheque-book for my yearly cheque to the Zoological Gardens is that—is that—dash it, why don't I, and what about the danger of one of the Zambras getting hold of my bank-balance if I did? No, no, I must think of something else.'

I am still thinking. To-day I am paying in a variety of cheques, some from business people, some from private persons; their names range lightly over the alphabet; all, all have the magic 'M' as their sign-manual. What is the explanation? Can it be that 'M' merely stands for Money, thus making any possibility of fraud still more unlikely? I do not know.

And now, as I sit here, endorsing these cheques, I am in the presence of my other problem. My paying-in-slip has at the top the word 'Credit', followed by a blank space in which I write my name. 'Credit A. A. Milne'; Me: there is going to be no mistake about this. But down below there are the

words ‘Paid in by’, followed by another blank space, and in that space also I write my name. Paid in by Me. Here I am doing it. Watch me. But I feel uneasy. Have I, all these years, been making a gentle idiot of myself in the eyes of the banking world? Should that space have been filled, not with a name, but with some qualification of the word ‘paid’? I don’t suggest ‘Paid in hopefully’, or ‘Paid in quickly before the editor changes his mind’, or, in the case of an old cheque discovered in a summer suit, ‘Paid in at last’. But would it not guard more carefully against this ever-present danger of fraud, if a note were taken of the actual way in which the money was paid in?’ Paid in by hand,’ in the one case, ‘Paid in by letter,’ in the other. Sometimes I send my month’s cheques to the bank by post; sometimes by deputy; most often I pay them in myself. But there is no variation in my filling-in of the ‘Paid-in-by’ space. Should there not be?

For if not, why, unless he collects them, should the Manager want my autograph twice on the slip? Is it a perpetual surprise to him that I go on, month after month, paying my money into my own account instead of into somebody else’s? Perhaps it is. He waits for the glorious day when he shall read. ‘*Credit* John D. Rockefeller . . . *Paid in* by A. A. Milne,’ and shall hasten to tell Rockefeller who is financing him, so that the latter may thank me directly, instead of trusting precariously to the Personal Column of *The Times*. When that day comes, he will feel that the whole elaborate machinery of the banking world has been justified; much as I should feel, too, at a sight of the magic words ‘*Credit* A. A. Milne . . . *Paid in* by John D. Rockefeller.’ But I suspect that both of us will go on waiting.

These, then, are my difficulties which I fear to put before the Manager. I suppose he would know the answers. But it would not surprise me if he said with a laugh somewhat embarrassed, ‘Well, do you know, I have often wondered too,’ and we fell to discussing books again. In youth one is certain that one knows everything; the years go by, and one realizes sadly that one knows nothing; yet more years go by, and one discovers with quiet satisfaction that other people know even less. The world is full of things which nobody knows. For a year I have been asking everybody what ‘gross’ and ‘net’ mean as used in reports of the deceased’s will. Nobody knows. I even asked a K.C. He hadn’t the faintest idea. So if, this afternoon, I lack again the courage to ask for the Manager, it may well be that he himself will summon me to his presence. ‘Yes, yes, my dear fellow,’ he will say, ‘tell me about your new book another time. But what I wanted to ask you now was this. Do *you* know why they put “M” on all the cheques, and make you sign your name twice on the paying-in slip? You don’t? Ah, well, then, I don’t suppose anybody does.’

A VILLAGE MATCH

The game with Radbrook is timed to begin punctually at two p.m., and at five minutes past a Sabbath calm rests over the village green. But the horses and cows, the ducks and geese and chickens seem to know that the stumps and freshly-marked creases portend a match, for they keep themselves to the outskirts of the green, instead of straying over the middle of the pitch as is their wont on another day. At a quarter past two three of our team stroll leisurely up, and finding that nothing is doing, stroll leisurely across to the Fox and Hounds. By two-thirty the scene is more animated; there are now several babies and small boys in position near the wickets. The scorer, too—our chief authority on cricket—may be seen coming through the churchyard. Soon the players emerge from their different places of refreshment; the umpire, white-coated and grasping his faithful stick, limps slowly across the road; and then, just as the church clock strikes three, the Radbrook team drives hilariously up.

Harry wins the toss for us with his lucky penny. Accompanied by the postman he goes to the wicket, his jovial whiskered face all smiles. Postman can hit a full-pitch as well as anybody, but he is not a good runner, his official duties having taken all that out of him long ago. So when Harry offers to run for a hit to cover, Postman sends him back, and Harry, who is too heavy to turn quickly, finds himself well outside the crease as the bails go down. 'How's that?' cried Radbrook as one man. 'Not out,' says the umpire, equal to the occasion; 'the batsman hadn't crossed.' Radbrook looks a trifle sheepish that its ignorance of the rules of cricket should be thus exposed; save for cover-point, the only one entirely in flannels, who seems inclined to expostulate with the umpire. He is evidently a visitor to the neighbourhood; when he has been here longer he will understand that there are higher authorities than M.C.C. in the world of cricket.

Harry is in luck to-day, for he survives a loud appeal for a catch at the wicket.

'Where did it 'it you, 'Arry?' says our umpire.

'On the leg,' says Harry.

'Ah, I thought it 'it you on the 'and. *Not* out.'

And so Harry remains to make 30 good runs, including a glorious 6 into the churchyard.

One wicket for 50 is good, but we are all out for 80. Our tail begins too soon for us to be a strong team. Each one goes in amid encouraging shouts from his friends under the trees, determined to do his best, and after at most an over returns to hand the bat to the next comer.

'Now then, Sam,' the onlookers shout, as the bowler runs up to the crease, 'you play careful, you keep your wicket up. Never you mind the runs.'

Sam leaves his bat in the block and the ball misses it.

'Well played, Sam,' they shout.

'Oh, I ain't going to 'it un,' says Sam, 'I ain't going to 'it un; I'm just a-going to keep in.'

However, the next ball is too much for him. He slogs blindly and is bowled. There is loud laughter as he runs back to the tent.

We have made 80, but there were 30 extras and probably 30 overthrows. If we field decently well, we ought to win. Harry starts the bowling to the young man in white flannels. He bowls the old-fashioned underhand very fast along the ground. On the eighth pitch it is a good length ball and on the tenth a yorker. The young man in white flannels decides to play back to it at the ninth pitch, but it shoots up suddenly and removes his bails. However, he still has his white flannels.

We manage to get five wickets down for 30, and then our fielding goes suddenly to pieces. Where the batsman got one run for a straight hit to mid-off, he now gets three, two of them wild overthrows. 'Throw un at my head,' says Harry to mid-off; 'I can't get down to un at my feet.' So next time mid-off hurls the ball at his head, and Harry puts up a great hand and stops it.

Seventy for seven, and the spectators cheer every run, and shout advice at every player. Seventy-five for eight—'Put the old man on,' comes from the ring, and Fred, who is not so old as all that, laughs back at them. Seventy-seven for nine—'Steady, Bob, don't you 'it un.' 'That's aw rite. I ain't going to 'it un'; a wild appeal for leg before, a moment's hesitation from our umpire and then—'Out!' And whether he is out or not I cannot say from my own position in the field; but the general feeling is that he was a fool to let the ball hit his leg at such a moment, and that he deserves to be out.

Our victory is a narrow one, but how narrow we only discover in the tent.

‘Ah,’ says their umpire, ‘if only I’d no-balled ’Arry as I ought to ’a’ done, we should ’a’ won.’

‘No-ball Harry?’ we say in astonishment.

‘Yes, he wasn’t pitchin’ un ten feet from the wicket ’e was bowlin’ from. That’s a no-ball, that is. You look in the rules.’

This is too much, even for a village which knows no M.C.C. There is a fierce discussion, which adjourns later to the Fox and Hounds. At eleven o’clock that night I hear the last desultory exchanges out of my bedroom window.

‘That’s a no-ball, that is. Well, good-night, all.’

A GROUP OF SILVER BIRCHES

My friend Walters tells me that he has repented, and will be a miser no longer. This surprised me, for I had never thought of him as a miser. He has his faults, as most of our friends have, but of all men he seemed to me the least careful about money. I do not mean that he was in any danger of being Knighted for his benevolences, nor even that he was notably generous; but he would lend you a fiver as carelessly, and as forgetfully, as he would lend you a box of matches, and if you took the trouble to find his cheque-book for him, he would say: 'Good cause, is it? Well, I'll take your word for it,' and write you a cheque for your favourite charity. If he lost the return half of his ticket, he didn't make a bother with the Railway Company; if he wanted to read a book, he didn't borrow it, but went into a book-shop and bought it. While there, he would buy three or four other books which he didn't really want, 'just to encourage trade'. If his wife wanted anything, he said: 'Well, of course. What's money *for*?' If he wanted anything himself, he said the same.

To behave like this, one has to have the money first. Walters was what a poor man would call rich, and a really rich man would call poor. In other words, he made a bigger income than he spent; but it was a varying income; and he always had the feeling at the back of his mind, as so many of us have, that in some mysterious way it would stop suddenly, and he would have to live on his savings. He didn't consciously save, not being that sort of man, but the excess income was there, and grew, and from time to time he would pull himself together and invest it in 'something safe', by which he meant something that wouldn't worry him. Up to the moment when his income would 'stop suddenly', he could be described with literal truth as 'comfortably off', for he knew neither the discomforts which are forced upon the poor man, nor the discomforts which the rich man heaps upon himself. To him money was not an end, but a means to an end—the end being the pleasure you got or gave by spending it now.

It was a surprise to me, then, when he told me that he would be a miser, a grudger of money, no longer.

'You?' I said. 'Ridiculous!' And then, thinking that perhaps he said it only to receive my flattery, I changed the subject. 'How's the marvellous garden?' I asked.

‘I’m selling it. Selling the cottage.’

I stared at him.

‘It’s what I was saying just now,’ he went on. ‘Well, I’d better tell you.’

So he told me.

You were down this summer, weren’t you? (said Walters). You saw the garden—looking lovely, wasn’t it? Of course it wanted a group of silver birches on that little hill by the—— Well, I’ll tell you. I mean, you mustn’t think—— It was still unfinished, if you know what I mean. And, of course, it would be a good many years before that yew hedge—— Don’t think that we thought—— Well, I’ll tell you.

I’d never had a garden before. Mary, on the other hand, had lived in one, and for one, and with one, until she married me. So we were both keen. I don’t think you saw the cottage when we first bought it. We had been looking for it for years, and then we found it, the perfect cottage. But no garden. Only fields. ‘All the more fun,’ said Mary. ‘We’ll make one.’ So we made one.

We began with herbaceous borders and things, and brick paths between them, and gradually we found ourselves going on to terraces, and steps up and down, and walls and so forth. Walls are great fun. All the jolliest things grow in walls. Aubrietia, for instance. I became a fool about aubrietia. I used to think that the only thing I could steal, if no one was looking, was a box of new golf balls. I was wrong. I see now that it would be wicked to steal golf balls; but aubrietia . . . Well, then Mary discovered a spring in one of the fields, so it seemed silly not to have a water-garden. And then it seemed silly not to have a rock-garden, with a waterfall going down it . . . and then it seemed silly not to have lily-pools, and bog-gardens, and so on. Silliest of all was not to have them really well done, if they were done at all. I remember talking to our expert once about rock for the rock-garden. Sandstone or limestone, that was the question. I asked him which was the better, the more beautiful. He said that sandstone was cheaper . . . and you could see what he thought of sandstone. So we had limestone.

It was great fun. We loved it. Whenever we were in London we were thinking of our garden, and whenever we were in the country we were purring over it. Mary said, Could we afford a dovecot? I asked if they were as expensive as all that. She said, Oh no, this one would be about twenty-five pounds. ‘Then how do you mean, can we afford it?’ I asked. ‘I must *have* twenty-five pounds in the bank, and we should see much more of it, and enjoy it much more, if it were turned into a dovecot than if it just stayed

there. So why hesitate?' 'I don't,' said Mary promptly. 'Let's turn it.' So we turned it.

Later on, we had a Dutch-garden, and a rose-garden and a bowling-green. You've no idea how easily they came—I mean how easy it was to find oneself giving the order for them. And there was a good reason for them too. The rose-garden was my Christmas present to Mary . . . Hers to me was the bowling-green.

It just happened that, when the bill for the walled-in fruit garden came, business had been a bit slack for some months, and I suddenly wondered if I had enough money in the bank to meet it. Luckily this was in July, so that I had my information straight from the stable, and didn't have to go worrying about with old cheque-books. There was my pass-book, just back from the bank, and there was my balance. Enough, luckily. And then, just to fill in an odd ten minutes, I began adding up the money I had already spent on the garden. . . . 'Golly!' I said, and added it up again . . . and again. . . . At last I went to look for Mary. She was leaning against the sun-dial. I told her, and she said 'Golly!' too.

'The fact is,' I said, 'that only millionaires could go on like this.'

'It's my fault,' said Mary, which wasn't true. 'I'm awfully sorry. I really will be sensible now. I'll think of every penny.'

'We both will,' I said. 'I'm as bad as you.'

I don't know if you noticed, when you were down in the summer, that we wanted a group of silver birches on that little hill by the—— You did? You can get quite a decent-sized one for about fifteen shillings. It isn't much, but of course it adds up if you get a lot, and we had decided to go slow for a bit. So we didn't. Well, what I mean is, a fellow I know, who's running some awfully good show in the slums, always comes to me in August for a fiver. Day in the country for the kids, and so forth. Or is it a fortnight? Well, anyhow, he comes, and he came this year, and I wrote him his cheque.

Do you know what I generally think when I write a cheque like this? I think, 'Any fool can write a cheque. I ought to be down in the slums doing the work too, but I sit here comfortably and write a cheque, and dammit, he's grateful to me.' That's what I think. And do you know what I thought this time? I thought, 'Five guineas. A hundred and five shillings. Fifteen into a hundred and five goes seven times exactly. I could have got seven silver birches for this. Seven pretty trees on my little hill.'

That's what I thought. I was so ashamed that I tore the cheque up and wrote it for ten guineas instead. . . . And even as I wrote, I found myself saying, '*Fourteen* little trees on my hill.'

A few days later I dropped into my book-shop. I love buying books. I mean I always used to love it. I love wandering round and saying, 'I'll have that one . . . and that one . . . and that one,' and leaving it to the shopman to add up the bill. I wandered round, and I took my books home. Six altogether. Mary had suddenly discovered an adorable thing in blue called cyananthus. About seven-and-six each. She didn't say anything aloud; but, as she looked at the books, her eye was placing those six cyananthuses on the wall behind the sun-dial . . . and so was mine. The perfect place for them.

I knew then that I was no better than the miser I had always despised so much. To him every shilling spent is a good coin thrown away; to me it had become a rock-plant or half a dozen bricks or a packet of seeds wasted. A cheque for a hospital was a bed of azaleas gone wrong; a Christmas present to a nephew meant throwing away aubrietia by the armful. Horrible. It was the thought of Christmas, really, which decided us. Mary and I have always rather chucked our money about at Christmas, what with tips and presents and things. We simply couldn't face it this year. Whatever we did, we should be miserable. As far as I could see there was one way of escape, only one way of being decent people still. We decided to take it. . . .

Walters was silent, and his eyes were fixed on the wall behind me.

'That's a new picture, isn't it?' he asked suddenly.

'It is,' I said. 'But I'm not going to tell you the price, so you needn't bother to turn it into limestone.'

He blushed, and muttered that that was all over now.

'It's really in the market, then?'

'It is.'

'And the silver birches on the little hill?'

He blushed again.

'Well, you see, both Mary and I thought—I mean, we should get a better price—what I mean——'

'What you mean is that they're planted?'

He nodded. 'We're going down to-morrow to see them.'

‘And to say good-bye to them?’

‘Well, of course, the right man mightn’t come along, I mean——’

But I knew exactly what he meant. Poor fellow.

THE UNINVITED GUEST

I once spent a curious Christmas in a little tavern in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, the Gateway of the West, as it is so romantically called. . . .

THIS was to be the opening sentence of a Christmas article. I had written it down, and was wondering a little how I should go on; not anxiously, for an essay writes itself after one has got the first sentence on to paper; with interest, rather; wondering, perhaps I should say, how *it* would go on. For myself I hoped that it would describe my knifing of the Norwegian sailor, but I quite understood that the public might prefer the episode of the abandoned baby, and I made a note on the margin of the paper that, in this case, the ambiguous word 'abandoned' had better be avoided. Yet somehow I was not altogether happy about that opening. I had an uncomfortable feeling that I had made the wrong choice of words. It was not the feeling that when I called San Francisco the Gateway of the West I was probably thinking of some other town; nor was it the feeling that I had never been in the Chinese, or any other, quarter of San Francisco. These are small matters to an artist. No, it was something more personal. A memory of some unhappy experience in the past . . . a warning . . . a—— And then I remembered.

Many years ago I wrote a poem about a man called Jones. It was, as you deduce from the name, a comic poem; and, if you agree with me further, you will also deduce an offensive poem. Of that great brotherhood, Smith, Jones, Brown, and Robinson, Jones and Robinson have always seemed to me the comic characters; but whereas one laughs *with* Robinson, one laughs *at* Jones. Jones for jeers, Robinson for rags. Brown I see in Switzerland with a Baedeker, the typical Briton; a gentleman's gentleman on a holiday, trim, stoutish, patriotic. And Smith is just a name, an *alias*, in itself without character. So, then, I called my hero Jones because I was going to be rude about him. Funny, you understand, but rude. An undergraduate poem for an undergraduate paper. It began quite mildly like this:

Jones was a man who looked all wrong
From the boots (too tight) to the hair (too long).

That was the first verse. Each succeeding verse was delivered on the same note of faint praise. For instance:

> Jones was the typical humorous bore
> Whose 'good little things' had been said before.

And so on. Gradually, as the poem went on, I gathered strength, until, towards the end, I was saying things like this:

> Jones was a man of repulsive habits,
> Whose brain was the brain of a third-class rabbit's.

The truth about Jones, as I saw it.

There were some ten or twelve verses altogether. A lesser writer might have achieved a false but happy ending to the affair, but I preserved throughout my impartial attitude, and my last verse was but a summing-up of what had gone before, with a glance, of necessity pessimistic, at the future:

> Jones, in short, was a hopeless rotter,
> Just 'one of the Nots' . . . and got much notter.

Such was the poem. Of its merits I do not speak—fortunately they are not in question. I wrote it out in a fair hand, and sent it to a paper with which I had some connexion. In a sense it was my valedictory contribution. With these verses I took my leave of the Alma Mater for whom I had done so much and who had loved me so well. No, it should have been the other way round—the Alma Mater who had done so much for me. But there was one thing which she had not done. She had not made my handwriting legible.

So these verses appeared, but with the usual misprint. A misprint, however vital it seems to the writer, is usually of little account to the reader. There is still much genuine matter left on which he can form his opinion of us. It can hardly ever have happened before that the misunderstanding of one word by the printer should have altered the whole meaning and spirit of a poem. Yet it was so in this case. The printer misread my 'Jones' as 'I once'.

The poem, therefore, began like this:

> I once was a man who looked all wrong
> From the boots (too tight) to the hair (too long).

That was the first verse. Each succeeding verse was delivered on the same note of faint uneasiness:

> I once was the typical humorous bore,
> Whose 'good little things' had been said before.

And so on. Gradually, as the poem went on, I became morbid, until, towards the end, I was confessing things like this:

> I once was a man of repulsive habits,
> Whose brain was the brain of a third-class rabbit's.

The truth about myself as I saw it.

There were some ten or twelve verses altogether. They might have ended on a note of hope for the future; such—alas!—I was; but 'after one of your University courses' look at me now! Unfortunately it was not that sort of poem. The last verse made it clear that as I had been, so I should go on:

> I once, in short, was a hopeless rotter,
> Just 'one of the Nots' . . . and got much notter.

And to this confession, to this orgy of morbid introspection, I gave the authority of my own name, signed in full.

From that day 'Jones' became a forbidden word to me. It is a little hard on a young writer, at the threshold of his career, that he should be so handicapped, and I have had to do what I could with Smith. My polemics have been directed (how much less effectively) against the Smiths of this world. But if the word 'Jones' was denied to me, equally so was the opening 'I once'; and it was this which I remembered so disconcertingly as I began my Christmas article. For with the memory came the realization that the article must never be written.

'Why not?' you may ask. Turn 'I once' into 'Jones' and the article will be no duller, no more untruthful. It may be so, but there is more to it than that. The personal and impersonal articles have each their separate manner, their separate mode of attack. That an essay, conceived in the spirit of the first-person singular, should be turned by the whim of the printer into a Jones article is as shocking to the true artist as would be to you the sudden realization that you were dining at Buckingham Palace in your shirt.

For we may be dull; we may be, we often are, untruthful; these are trifles. What is important in an essay is to exhibit ourselves (not Jones), and

to preserve our sense of form while doing so. In a tavern, whether Chinese or other, which I had designed exclusively for myself, Jones, I am sorry to tell him, is an anamorphism.

THE HONOURS LIST

I APPROACH every Honours List with a certain half-fearful expectation. One never knows. They tell me that you are offered the thing first, some days before the news of your acceptance is flashed round the Empire, so that the publication of the list, with your name in it, is no surprise to yourself, however great a one it be to your friends. But accidents happen; or, at least, I tell myself that they happen. I have a conviction that if my knighthood ever comes, it will come upon me suddenly; I shall open the paper, just as I opened it this morning, and there—there!—will be my name. How I shall tremble!

My pleasure is to look down the list letter by letter, rather than to make quick work of it by a glance at the headlines. In the old O.B.E. days I would give up the morning to the 'M's', my breath coming fast and more fast as I progressed laboriously from the Masons to the Meads, and from the Meads to the Millers. At the Millers we were near to knowing the worst; another dozen names and we were on to it. No, not this time. Spurious Milnes there might be, but I took no interest in them. If my name was not first among them, I should not be there at all. Well, well, perhaps next time—on Mr. Lloyd George's birthday, or whenever these things happened.

How will the sub-editors announce it? 'New Year's Honours—Five New Peers—Mr. A. A. Milne Knighted'; it is because I fear the suddenness, the crudity, of this that I prefer to travel slowly down the list, savouring the names of some of my companions-at-arms first. Perhaps I am unduly fearful. The news, after all, may be announced obliquely; 'Literature Honoured' for instance. This would leave the thing pleasantly vague. It might be Thomas Hardy, or it might be me. Or should I say 'It might be I'? Perhaps I ought to get this point settled before I accept the knighthood. For an esquire to make a mistake in grammar is no great matter, but for a knight——!' It might be Thomas Hardy or it might be——' Yes, I see now that it was stupid of me to have dragged in Thomas Hardy at all.

I have an acquaintance, as rich as he is cynical, and some say as mad as he is rich, who scoffs at my ambitions. He says that the whole Honours system is a joke. When I protested, he told me what he called the true story of that excellent knight, Sir John Mallord. You shall judge for yourself.

Perhaps you have forgotten the wild excitement produced by the name of 'John Mallord, author,' in a recent Honours List. There was a rustling of reference books in editorial offices, a hasty sending-out for the *Literary Year Book* and other helpful works. Who was John Mallord? What had he written? People questioned each other in drawing-rooms and clubs; none could answer save the man-who-always-knows. 'John Mallord?' said he. 'Yes, he's the fellow who wrote—what was it called? And that other book—you know the one I mean. Dashed clever, though I don't know that I care for that style.' But of more detailed information, none.

Here, however, is the 'true story':

In the year 19—, in the month of ——, this friend of mine, whom I will call Smith, although that is not his real name, wrote to the Chief Whip of the Government then in power, and expressed for the body of intellectual men who at that time composed the Cabinet an admiration such as must have surprised even the Chief Whip himself. But he desired also to put this admiration into as practical a form as possible, and with this purpose in view he ventured to enclose banknotes for £10,000. And he had the honour to remain the Chief Whip's humble obedient servant, John Mallord.

Two days afterwards, a gentleman called at Smith's house, and inquired if Mr. Mallord was at home. In answer to the usual question, he gave the apparently assumed name of Sir Benjamin Guggenheim, and was shown into the library.

'Mr. Mallord?' said Sir Benjamin. Smith, outwardly calm, though wearing a false moustache and beard, bowed, and indicated a seat.

For some time after this there was silence in the room, broken only by a remark of Sir Benjamin's—an attractive-looking young man to those who like that style—that it was a fine day. Gradually, however, his reserve left him, and before he took his leave, he had indicated that if Mr. Mallord had another £10,000 at his disposal, there was a certain patriotic use to which this money also could be put. Need he say more?

I shall not follow these two men—Smith with his false name and beard, Sir Benjamin Guggenheim with (apparently) *his* false name, and what Smith says was a false nose—I shall not follow them through all their negotiations. It is enough to say that during their final interview in the month of —ember it was definitely promised that Mr. John Mallord should become Sir John.

'How would you wish to be described, Mr. Mallord?' said Sir Benjamin, taking out his gold pencil and preparing to make a note of it. 'We like the

public to know just why these titles are given. Shall I say "Public services" or "Local charities" or "Organizing work"?'

'I am an author,' said Smith on the spur of the moment.

'Excellent,' said Sir Benjamin. 'An author in the list gives it a note of distinction which is most desirable.' He hesitated and then went on, 'I am afraid I—one doesn't have much—er—— Could you—that is to say——'

'I beg your pardon?' said Smith, a little puzzled.

'One has so little time—naturally one had been looking forward—but—er——'

Smith realized suddenly that he was being asked what books Mr. Mallord had written, and, not having decided as yet, replied that he would be very glad to send Sir Benjamin a copy of his best-known work.

'Thanks,' said Sir Benjamin. 'That will be charming. Naturally the Prime Minister—we shall all look forward to reading it.'

When Sir Benjamin was gone, Smith began to ask himself what book John Mallord had written, and how it was possible to have it printed in the time. After a little thought he decided that this famous author was an economist and had written a book called *The Wealth of Nations*. In design it would be similar to the similarly named book by that other worker in a similar field, Adam Smith, and, as it happened, similar also in execution, and in the actual length, shape, substance, and arrangement of the sentences. In fact, the only discernible difference between these two masterpieces would be in the author's name on the cover and the title-page. But, as my friend Smith reflected, the cover and the title-page were the important matters; all indeed that a busy man reads; all that Sir Benjamin or the Prime Minister, those busy politicians, would have time to assimilate.

The Wealth of Nations, then, 'by John Mallord,' was dispatched as soon as possible to Sir Benjamin Guggenheim. Its reception was all that Mr. Mallord could have wished for his book, and much more than Smith could have expected. For both the Prime Minister and Sir Benjamin wrote that they had read the book from cover to cover with the deepest interest, and that, while venturing to differ from the author's conclusions in Chapter IV—(in Sir Benjamin's case, Chapter V)—they none the less regarded the book, taken as a whole, as a monument of thoughtful industry and a masterpiece of lucidity. Sir Benjamin even hinted that it would survive when many other books of inferior merit had been forgotten. All of which pleased Smith very much.

But, of course, the editors and the sub-editors and the ordinary men in the clubs could not be expected to guess at Mr. Mallord's recent literary activities. So when the Honours List appeared, they naturally asked each other: 'Who *is* John Mallord?'

My friend Smith, no doubt in order to soften my disappointment at being omitted again from the Honours List, tells me what he calls the true story. Fortunately we need not believe it.

THE LITTLE MORE

I WROTE a play. The play was produced in America, and subsequently published there. Some copies of it came over to England a few weeks ago, and it seemed to me, looking at them in their pretty mauve dresses, that I had solved the problem of What to give one's Aunts at Christmas. So to an aunt I sent my play, suitably inscribed.

But now my aunt must wait for a little while I digress. This matter of giving and receiving books, how is one to deal with it? If Keats had sent you his collected Odes, you would have lit your pipe after dinner, and read them through; and then you would have sat down at your desk, and written to him encouragingly, 'Splendid, my dear fellow, splendid. Quite the best thing you have done. Stick to it.' And Keats would have taken heart, and stuck to it. But supposing Johnson had sent you his Dictionary? Weeks would go by; you would only be up to G; and there would be Johnson saying nervously to himself, 'Why doesn't he write? I suppose he doesn't like it.' Impossible to leave him in this state of anxiety. You would have sent him an immediate acknowledgement, followed by a succession of *interim* reports. 'Thanks very much for the dictionary. I am eagerly looking forward to reading it.' . . . 'Dear Johnson, I am up to D. First-rate as far as I have gone.' . . . 'Dear J., Just a line to say that I am now in the L's. You do this sort of thing better than anybody I know.' And so on. Or wouldn't you? Not you. Of course you wouldn't. You would content yourself with that one first letter of acknowledgement and thanks, and Johnson would never hear from you again, would never know your praise.

How many an author has been fobbed off thus with a 'Thank-you, thank-you', or an 'I am so delighted to have it', and never been told properly, as he was waiting to be told, that only Shakespeare and Aeschylus, and perhaps not Aeschylus, could have equalled his masterpiece? Sometimes he is foolish enough to present his book to the lady in person, instead of sending it through the post. Foolish, for now he cannot even hope. She will smile and look prettily embarrassed, and say 'Is it really for *me*? You *are* kind,' but however he wait, no letter now will come for him. No word of praise. It is a copy (and we get only six free ones, you know), a copy thrown away. Surely we should be guaranteed these six little sops to our vanity.

But this is a digression, for my aunt (up to a point) has the right ideas. She read the play before she wrote to thank me for it. She extolled it lavishly. Up to a point she came out of the ordeal well. Indeed, she might have given me a really happy breakfast, and sent me to my desk with that sense of inspiration and power which only comes upon me after violent praise, had she not put in one wrong word.

She wrote, 'Your fascinating little play.'

'Little!' Why little? It is the ordinary size. Longer than usual, in fact. Little in theme, perhaps, you suggest? On the contrary, the theme is tremendous. Speaking as the man who has mangled it, I can say so with confidence. Tremendous. 'Little,' you try again, as the opposite of 'big'; you can hardly, my dear sir, expect us to believe that you have written a *big* play? All right, then, I haven't. But permit me to reply that *your* last book is not to be described as 'immortal', is it? No. And a fair 'opposite' to immortal is 'perfectly deadly', isn't it? Yes—No. And do you agree that your last book was perfectly deadly? No. Well, then, don't be foolish. And tell me again, why 'little'?

They all say it, these others who are not writers. I wrote a book 8 by 6 (the average is about 7½ by 5½) and a carpenter, called in to put up some shelves for me, looked at it casually and said that it seemed a 'nice little book'. I wrote a play with the most horrible murder in it, and a doctor told me that it was an 'interesting little play'. Chauffeurs, gardeners, lawyers, clergymen, politicians, and stockbrokers have all said pleasant things about my works; I mean my 'little' works, curse them. It seems that they cannot mention any example of literary art, nor of pictorial art either, I suppose, without dragging in a disparaging 'little'. 'Pretty little picture, isn't it? Picked it up for a couple of guineas. Effective little thing.'

Little. But, of course, I know why they say it. From the beginning of time the world's workers have condescended to the artist, and until the end of time so they will do. It is a subconscious habit with them now. They don't mean it, bless them. Many of them would be proud to say in their drawing-rooms or at their club that they knew Orpen and Shaw quite well. Even if they didn't. But it is always at the back of their minds that 'these fellows are wasting their time when you come to look at it, foolin' around, what? If you see what I mean? I mean to say they aren't *working*. Though *how* they do it gets over *me*. S'pose it's a gift, what? Well, after all, it takes all sorts to make a world.'

I knew a Pillar of the Stock Exchange when he was a small boy at his preparatory school. I was at Cambridge then, and I used to pat his head, or smack it, as occasion demanded. No doubt he admired me a good deal, for I had achieved something beyond him at the moment; manhood. Fifteen years later I came across him suddenly in the City. He told me—but, indeed, I could see it for myself—that he was a Pillar of the Stock Exchange. After we had commented on this for a little time, he said kindly, 'Well, and what about *you*? Still at the scribbling?' I admitted it humbly.

It may be that my sort is particularly a victim of such condescensions. It may be that one who writes comedy rather than tragedy, light verse rather than serious verse, is more continuously 'belittled' than one of the Gloomsbury school. The fact that in modern light verse the author does all the hard work, and that in modern serious verse he leaves it all to the reader, is a trade secret, unknown to a public which still supposes that *Macbeth* is a 'bigger' performance than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. So, although authors may have their 'little joke', and may even from time to time achieve a 'really good joke', it will never be admitted that one of them has given the world a 'big joke'. There is no such thing. It is only among ourselves, in the privacies of the theatre, that we keep our courage up by asseverating that this or that line will get a 'big laugh'. But what are two big laughs, or a hundred, if they fail to make more than an amusing little play?

So, friends (and enemies), spare us your littles. If, after mountainous labour, we bring forth no more than a mouse, call it, if you will, a 'ridiculous mouse', but not a 'little mouse'. What do you expect a mouse to be?' Brown's new Comedy is portentously dull.' Thank you. That's the way to talk. 'Smith's new Comedy is an amusing little trifle.' *Fool!*

AN UNLUCKY GOLFER

I AM the world's unluckiest golfer.

Yes, I know what you are going to say, but I don't mean what you mean. Of the ordinary bad luck which comes to us all at times I do not complain. It is the 'rub of the green'. When my best drive is caught by cover, or fielded smartly by mid-on with his foot; when I elect to run a bunker ten yards away and am most unfortunately held up by blown sand (or, as I generally call it, dashed sand); when I arrive at last on the green, and my only hope of winning the hole is that my opponent shall pick up a worm which he ought to have brushed away, or brush away one which he ought to have picked up . . . and there are no worms out this morning; on all these occasions I take my ill-luck with a shrug of the shoulders and something as nearly like a smile as I can manage. After all, golf would be a very dull game if it were entirely a matter of skill.

It is in another way altogether that I am singled out by Fate. Once I have driven off the first tee, she is no more unkind to me than to the others. By that time she has done her worst. But sometimes it is as much as I can do to get on to the first tee at all, so relentless is her persecution of me. Surely no other golfer is so obstructed.

I suppose my real trouble is that I take golf too seriously. When I arranged many years ago to be at St. Margaret's at 2.30 on Wednesday, I *was* at St. Margaret's at 2.30 on Wednesday. I didn't ring up suddenly and say that I had a cold, or that my dog wanted a run, or that a set of proofs had just arrived which had to be corrected quickly. No, I told myself that an engagement was an engagement. '*Wednesday, St. Margaret's, 2.30*'—I turned up, and have never regretted it. If to-day my appointment is '*Sunningdale, Thursday, 10.45*', it is as certain that I shall be there. But these other golfers, one wonders how they ever get married at all.

I am not saying that they are careless about their promises; not all of them; but that, in their case, the mere fact of making an important appointment seems to bring out something: spots or a jury-summons or a new baby. I suppose that, when they play with each other, they hardly notice these obstructions, for if A has to plead an unexpected christening on the Monday, B practically knows that he will have to have his tonsils removed suddenly on the Thursday, when the return match is to be played; wherefore

neither feels resentment against the other. Only I, who take golf seriously, am surprised. 'Tonsils, juries, christenings,' I say to myself; 'but I thought we were playing *golf*.'

But not only am I a serious golfer, I am, as I have said, the world's unluckiest one. The most amazing things happen to the people who arrange to play with me. On the very morning of our game they are arrested for murder, summoned to Buckingham Palace, removed to asylums, sent disguised to Thibet, or asked to play the leading part in *Hamlet* at twenty-four hours' notice. Any actor out of work would be wise to fix up a game with me, for on that day he would almost certainly be sent for to start rehearsing. Of course, he might have a fatal accident instead, but that is a risk which he would have to take.

However, it is time that you saw my golf in action. Here, then, is a typical day, unexaggerated.

On a certain Wednesday I was to play a couple of rounds with a friend. On Tuesday afternoon I rang him up on the telephone to remind him of our engagement, and in the course of a little talk before we hung our receivers up, I said that I had just been lunching with an actor-manager, and he said that he had just been bitten by a mosquito. Not that it mattered to the other in the least, but one must have one's twopennyworth.

Wednesday dawned, as it has a habit of doing, but never did it dawn so beautifully as now; the beginning of one of those lovely days of early autumn than which nothing is more lovely. That I was to spend the whole of this beautiful day playing golf, not working, was almost too good to be believed. I sang as I climbed into my knickerbockers; I was still singing as I arranged the tassels of my garters. . . . And, as I went down to breakfast, the telephone bell began to sing.

I knew at once, of course. With all the experience I have had, I knew. I merely wondered whether it was the man himself who was dead, or one of his friends.

'Hallo!' said his voice. So he was alive.

'Yes?' I said coldly.

'Hallo! I say, you remember the mosquito?' (*Which mosquito?*) 'Well, my leg is about three times its ordinary size.' (*Does that matter? I thought. None of us is really symmetrical*.) 'I can hardly move it. . . . Doctor. . . . Nurses. . . . Amputate. . . . In bed for a year. . . .' He babbled on, but I was not listening. I was wondering if I could possibly find somebody else. It is a

funny thing, but somehow I cannot write in knickerbockers. Once I have put them on, I find it impossible to work. I *must* play golf. But alas! how difficult to find another at such short notice. As a last hope I decided to ring up Z. Z is almost as keen a golfer as myself. No such trifle as a lack of uniformity in his legs would keep *him* from his game. I cut off the other fellow as he was getting to the middle of his third operation, and got on to Z. Z, thank Heaven for him, would play.

I called for him. We drove down. We arrived. With each succeeding minute the morning became more lovely; with each succeeding minute I thanked Heaven more for Z. As we walked over to the caddie-master I was almost crying with happiness. Never was there day more beautiful. All this mosquito business had made us late, and there were no caddies left, but did I mind? Not a bit! On a morning like this, I thought to myself as I stepped on to the first tee, I couldn't mind anything.

The moment that Z stepped on to the first tee, I knew that I was mistaken. You will never believe it, but I give you my word that it is true. Z stepped on to the wrong bit of the first tee, uttered one loud yell . . . and collapsed on the grass with a broken ankle. . . .

You say that I might have left him there and played a few holes by myself? I did. But it was necessary to give instructions for him to be removed before others came after me. I forget the exact rule about loose bodies on the tee, but a fussy player might easily have objected. So I had to go back and tell the secretary, and one way and another I was delayed a good deal. And of course it spoiled my day entirely.

But I was not surprised. As I say, I am the world's unluckiest golfer.

THE END OF A CHAPTER

I HAVE been asked by an Editor to explain how it comes about that he has printed the last Christopher Robin story. In these cases it is generally the Editor who offers an apologetic explanation to the author; and though I am proud that it is not so now, I feel a little diffident about putting what is really a personal matter before a probably uninterested public. However, one can't go on defying an Editor . . . so here goes.

To begin at the beginning: When Christopher Robin was born, he had to have a name. We had already decided to call him something else, and later on he decided to call himself something still else, so that the two names for which we were now looking were to be no more than an excuse for giving him two initials for use in later life. I had decided on two initials rather than one or none, because I wanted him to play cricket for England, like W. G. Grace and C. B. Fry, and if he was to play as an amateur, two initials would give him a more hopeful appearance on the score-card. A father has to think of these things. So, one of us liking the name Christopher, and the other maintaining that Robin was both pleasing and unusual, we decided that as C. R. Milne he should be encouraged to make his name in the sporting world.

'Christopher Robin', then, he became on some legal document, but as nobody ever called him so, we did not think any more about it. However, three years later I wrote a book called *When We Were Very Young*, and since he was much in my mind when I wrote it, I dedicated it to him. Now there is something about this book which I must explain; namely, that the adventures of a child as therein put down came from three sources.

1. My memories of my own childhood.

2. My imaginings of childhood in general.

3. My observations of the particular childhood with which I was now in contact.

As a child I kept a mouse; probably it escaped—they generally do. Christopher Robin has kept almost everything except a mouse. As a child I played lines-and-squares in a casual sort of way. Christopher Robin never did until he read what I had written about it, and not very enthusiastically then. But he did go to Buckingham Palace a good deal (which I didn't), though not with Alice. And most children hop . . . and sometimes they sit

half-way down the stairs—or, anyway, I can imagine them doing so . . . and Christopher Robin was very proud of his first pair of braces, though I never heard that he wanted a tail particularly. . . . And so on, and so on.

Well, now, you will have noticed that the words 'Christopher Robin' come very trippingly off the tongue. I noticed that too. You simply can't sit down to write verses for children, in a house with a child called (however officially only) Christopher Robin, without noticing it.

> Christopher Robin goes
> Hoppity hoppity—

Practically it writes itself.

But now consider:

> Christopher Robin had
> Great big
> Waterproof
> Boots on . . .

Hopeless. It simply must be John.

So it happened that into some of the verses the name Christopher Robin crept, and into some it didn't; and if you go through the book carefully, you will find that Christopher Robin is definitely associated with—how many do you think?—only three sets of verses. Three out of forty-four!

You can imagine my amazement and disgust, then, when I discovered that in a night, so to speak, I had been pushed into a back place, and that the hero of *When We Were Very Young* was not, as I had modestly expected, the author, but a curiously-named child of whom, at this time, I had scarcely heard. It was this Christopher Robin who kept mice, walked on the lines and not in the squares, and wondered what to do on a spring morning; it was this Christopher Robin, not I, whom Americans were clamouring to see; and, in fact (to make due acknowledgement at last), it was this Christopher Robin, not I, not the publishers, who was selling the book in such large and ridiculous quantities.

Now who was this Christopher Robin—the hero now, since it was so accepted, of *When We Were Very Young*; soon to be the hero of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and two other books? To me he was, and remained, the child of my imagination. When I thought of him, I thought of him in the Forest, living in his tree as no child really lives; not in the nursery, where a differently-named

child (so far as we in this house are concerned) was playing with his animals. For this reason I have not felt self-conscious when writing about him, nor apologetic at the thought of exposing my own family to the public gaze. The 'animals', Pooh and Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, and the rest, are in a different case. I have not 'created' them. He and his mother gave them life, and I have just 'put them into a book'. You can see them now in the nursery, as Ernest Shepard saw them before he drew them. Between us, it may be, we have given them shape, but you have only to look at them to see, as I saw at once, that Pooh is a Bear of Very Little Brain, Tigger Bouncy, Eeyore Melancholy and so on. I have exploited them for my own profit, as I feel I have not exploited the legal Christopher Robin. All I have got from Christopher Robin is a name which he never uses, an introduction to his friends . . . and a gleam which I have tried to follow.

However, the distinction, if clear to me, is not so clear to others; and to them, anyhow, perhaps to me also, the dividing line between the imaginary and the legal Christopher Robin becomes fainter with each book. This, then, brings me (at last) to one of the reasons why these verses and stories have come to an end. I feel that the legal Christopher Robin has already had more publicity than I want for him. Moreover, since he is growing up, he will soon feel that he has had more publicity than he wants for himself. We all, young and old, hope to make some sort of a name, but we want to make it in our own chosen way, and, if possible, by our own exertions. To be the hero of the '3 not out' in that heroic finish between Oxford and Cambridge (Under Ten), to be undisputed Fluff Weight Champion (four stone six) of the Lower School, even to be the only boy of his age who can do Long Division: any of these is worth much more than all your vicarious literary reputations. Lawrence hid himself in the Air Force under the name of Shaw to avoid being introduced for the rest of his life as 'Lawrence of Arabia'. I do not want C. R. Milne ever to wish that his names were Charles Robert.

Now for the second reason; for I would not have you think that I am a model of unselfishness and parental duty, who never comes to a decision save in the interests of another. No doubt you who read this will remember the occasion when you first met Mr. Snooks, the famous author, at a party. He had just published *Woodlice*. You smiled graciously upon him, you said a few nice things about his books . . . and you came away with the feeling that Snooks was the most rude, intolerable and boorish fellow you had ever met. 'My dear,' you said to your friend, 'I simply *fawned* on the man, and he looked as if he wanted to *bite* me!'

Well, that often happens. But authors are not really so vain and so self-conscious as you think. Your fault was not in praising Snooks too little or too much, but in praising him for the wrong thing. If you told Snooks that you adored *Slugs*, I am not surprised that he scowled at you. If you committed the unforgivable sin, and said to him, ‘Why don’t you write some more books like *Centipedes*?’—then I am not surprised that he looked like biting you. The wonder is that he didn’t actually do it. I certainly should have. But if you had praised *Woodlice*, he must have trembled with inarticulate gratitude.

For all an author’s hopes and fears and interests are centred in his latest book. As he writes ‘The End’, he is saying to himself, ‘The best thing I have done.’ In his heart he may know it is not the best, but he longs to think it is, and will love you for helping him to persuade himself.

Can I go on writing these books, and persuade myself that each is better than the one before? I don’t see how it is possible. Darwin, or somebody, compared the world of knowledge to a circle of light. The bigger the circumference of light, the bigger the surrounding border of darkness waiting to be lit up. A child’s world of the imagination is not like that. As children we have explored it from end to end, and the map of it lies buried somewhere in our hearts, drawn in symbols whose meaning we have forgotten. A gleam from outside may light it up for us, so that for a moment it becomes clear again, and in that precious moment we can make a copy of it for others. But when the light has gone, to go on making fair copies of that copy—is it worth it?

For writing, let us confess it unashamed, is fun. There are those who will tell you that it is an inspiration, they sing but as the linnet sings; there are others, in revolt against such priggishness, who will tell you that it is simply a business like any other. Others, again, will assure you (heroically) that it is an agony, and they would sooner break stones—as well they might. But though there is something of inspiration in it, something of business, something, at times, of agony, yet, in the main, writing is just thrill; the thrill of exploring. The more difficult the country, the more untraversed by the writer, the greater (to me, anyhow) the thrill.

Well, I have had my thrill out of children’s books, and know that I shall never recapture it. At least, not until I am a grandfather.

THE END

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *By Way of Introduction*, by A. A. Milne.]