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"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

Gissing and Exeter, Part One: A Man of Property

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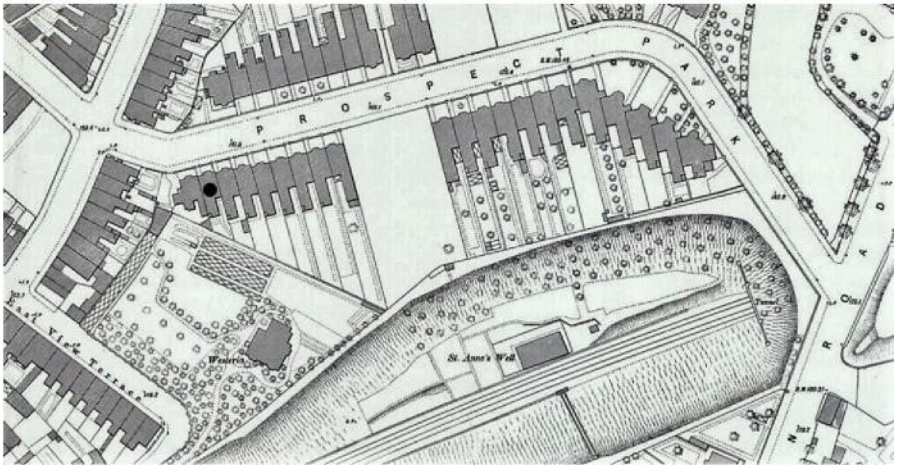
George Gissing lived in Exeter for nearly two and a half years between 1891 and 1893 (albeit with several lengthy holidays and research trips away from the city during this period). Exeter contributed substantially to two novels (*Born in Exile* and *Denzil Quarrier*). Places he visited from Exeter feature prominently in *The Odd Women* (Clevedon) and in *In the Year of Jubilee* (Teignmouth), the first of these novels completed and the second initiated while he was still based in Exeter. Nearly a decade later, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* was written as if from retirement in the Devon countryside just outside Exeter. Yet, apart from W. J. West's short booklet, *George Gissing in Exeter*, and the relevant chapters of Gissing biographies, surprisingly little examination has been made of Gissing's time there.[1] This essay explores where Gissing lived in Exeter, the kinds of neighbourhoods in which his homes were set, and the people who were his landlords. A second essay will focus on where more widely (within the city) he visited, and on the streets and sites he incorporated into his fiction, whether by name or pseudonym.

Prospect Park

As the expiry of his lease on 7K Cornwall Mansions approached, Gissing contemplated moving "either to Winchester or Exeter," claiming he wanted to set his next novel in a provincial town.[2] His reading in the British Museum in late December 1890 indicates that he had already settled on the tension between religion and science, especially geology, as a theme for the book, which in due course became *Born in Exile*. Winchester and Exeter were both medieval cathedral cities in the midst of countryside where such themes could be explored in both nature and society. By 26 December, he had decided on Exeter, although it was only on 30 December that he consulted Exeter newspapers, following which he placed identical advertisements in two of them:

> THREE UNFURNISHED ROOMS wanted in private house, Exeter, by married couple (literary man). — Particulars to "G." 7K, Cornwall Mansions, Regents Park, London.[3]

On receipt of a reply from Charles Rockett, himself employed by the *Gazette*, Gissing made a day trip to Exeter on 10 January, where he met not only Rockett but also his fiancée, Sarah Jane Cole, and her brother, Edwin Cole, who he described as "the landlord of the house," 24 Prospect Park.[4] Edwin Cole may have been the Rocketts' landlord, but it is not clear whether he owned the house himself. All the ratebooks for the later 1880s and early 1890s list Mr S [Sidney] Smith as the owner, and his name also appears on the planning application for No. 24, approved by the City Streets Committee on 22 June 1887. Between 1880 and 1887, Smith's name was recorded on at least ten building applications for sixteen houses planned for Prospect Park. Some of these were quickly owner-occupied, but others remained in Smith's ownership for several years.[5] Smith himself headed a large family (wife, five children, and uncle in 1881; wife, four children, niece and four grandchildren in 1891) at 81 Victoria Street, just around the corner from Prospect Park, a more modest house than those he was building.[6]



Prospect Park on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. No. 24 is marked with a black dot.

No. 24 seems to have been completed by the summer of 1888. By September 1888 it was occupied by Eli Hewitt, but he moved out in early summer 1890, and the house remained vacant until Charles Rockett started paying the rates in January 1891, still with Smith listed as owner.

Edwin Cole's involvement in the street is confirmed by advertisements in the *Gazette* on 9 and 12 December 1890:

> PROSPECT PARK.—Convenient HOUSE to LET; rent £23.—Apply, Mr. COLE, 17, Oxford-terrace, Exeter.

> PROSPECT PARK, Exeter—Superior 8-ROOM HOUSE, bath and every convenience, to LET; £24.—Apply, Mr. EDWIN COLE, 17, Oxford-terrace, Exeter.

He placed further advertisements in April and May 1891:

> 22, PROSPECT PARK, Exeter.—Superior 8-ROOM HOUSE, bath and every convenience, to LET; £25.—Apply, Mr. EDWIN COLE, 17, Oxford-terrace, Exeter.
>
> PROSPECT PARK.—Void Midsummer, excellent FAMILY HOUSE, beautifully situate. Rent £25; adjoining property let.—Apply, Mr. COLE, 17, Oxford-terrace, Exeter.[7]

None of these advertisements specifies No. 24. The March 1892 ratebook lists "Cole" as the owner of No. 22, but leaves the owner column blank for Nos. 23 and 24, so it is possible that he had acquired all three houses during 1890-1891. But if he did so, he did not retain them for very long. In October 1894, Nos. 23 and 24 were advertised for sale, the former "let to a good tenant at £29 18s a year," the latter "with possession" (i.e. vacant).[8]

In the 1891 census, Edwin Cole was listed as aged 42, "retired grocer," born in Teignmouth, now living as a boarder in the lodging house of Mrs Mary Wippell, 17 Oxford Terrace, a row of modest terraced housing only a few hundred yards from Prospect Park. Ten years earlier he, his sisters, Mary A. and Sarah J. Cole, and two younger brothers were all listed in the household of William Cole, widower, 28 Fore Street, Teignmouth. Edwin was then a "grocer" and it was his father who was a "retired grocer." We might surmise that, perhaps seeking a tenant for the whole of No. 24, Edwin offered to rent the house to his sister and husband-to-be, but they could only afford to occupy it if they let the top floor to lodgers. George Gissing and Edith, his wife-to-be, were the answer to their prayers!

Like 22 Prospect Park, No. 24 was an 8-room house. There were two toilets, one on the ground floor at the rear, and one on the first floor "in Bath Room," which the Gissings would have shared with the Rocketts. Rooms on the ground and first floor had 8 feet 6 inch ceilings, but the attic floor was only 8 feet high. In answer to the question, "Area of windows in respect to area of rooms," the planning form has "Sufficient" crossed out and replaced by "Top bedroom window not large enough."[9] That was where George and Edith had their bedroom. George explained the layout to his sister-in-law, Catherine:

> I have three rooms: the front one on the first floor, & two above, at the top of the house. These latter have the disadvantage of dormer windows, but—Heaven be praised—they possess competent chimneys. The little back room at the top will be my den; that in front, the bedroom; & the larger room downstairs must serve for eating, sitting, & general household purposes. Cooking of a serious nature can be done in the Rocketts' kitchen.[10]

The agreed rent was 6/- per week – less than half the rent Gissing had paid for three rooms in Cornwall Mansions.[11]

View up Prospect Park. No. 24 is on the far right (author's photograph, March 2019)

Thanks to the angled property boundary between adjacent estates, No. 24 has one of the smallest back gardens in the street, backing onto the greenhouses of a large villa, 'Westeria,' which lay between this end of Prospect Park and the cutting of the London & South Western Railway main line from Exeter to Waterloo. Farther along the street, the gardens backed directly onto the railway, a situation not very different from the one Gissing had left at Cornwall Mansions, which backed onto the Metropolitan Railway's Baker Street station.

Gissing conveyed his enthusiasm for his new situation in letters to his family and friends: "It is in the highest part of Exeter [...] not a quarter of an hour's walk from the heart of the city, yet within sight of absolute rurality. No shops in the neighbourhood. [...] I see the sun rise every morning; a wonderful thing."[12]In reality, Prospect Park slopes downhill from Old Tiverton Road, where the largest houses in the street are situated, to a crossroads just beyond No. 24, where the continuation of the street (Springfield Road) starts to climb again, lined with terraced houses with no bay windows and opening directly onto the pavement. In other words, Gissing's house was at the poorer end of the street, worse in status and in physical setting, a quintessentially fragile 'Gissingesque' foothold on respectability.

24 Prospect Park (author's photograph, March 2019)

Prospect Park had been laid out as a new estate by the Exeter Freehold Land Society only a few years prior to Gissing's arrival in Exeter. The original intention of freehold land societies had been to create a class of middle-income freeholders who were eligible to vote by virtue of their property. The 1832 Reform Act had enfranchised male owners of freehold with a minimum annual value of 40 shillings (£2) and male householders who occupied houses worth at least £10 per annum.

The Exeter Freehold Land Society was founded in 1857 to purchase large estates of freehold land (usually farms or large houses in extensive grounds) on the margins of the built-up area, subdivide them into small plots, and offer

them by ballot to members to build their own houses. During the 1860s and 1870s the society laid out several estates, notably in Alphington, on the west side of the Exe, in Polsloe Park, and on the site of Springfield Villa. [13]

View from Prospect Park into Springfield Road (author's photograph, March 2019)

The society acquired the Prospect Farm Estate in 1878, promptly inviting tenders from "roadmen and contractors" for "the formation of a new road, footpath, sewers, and fencing," and from "builders and contractors" for the erection of a "block of five houses" on what they advertised as "the Prospect Park Estate."[14] Progress was far from smooth. Initially, neither the gradient (the downhill slope from east to west) nor the proposed street name (Prospect Park) met with the approval of the City Streets Committee.[15] Next, the society narrowly avoided losing its capital invested in the West of England and South Wales District Bank, withdrawing its entire investment, about £3000, only the day before the bank collapsed in December 1878.[16] But they suffered real financial losses a few months later in a scandal worthy of a Gissing novel, when the society's secretary, Francis D. Twiggs, who had already been dismissed for drunkenness, was then discovered to have defrauded the society of "over £11,000, or more than one-fourth of the entire subscribed capital." The news was reported as far afield as Leicester, Leeds, Huddersfield, York, and Dundee, as well as in *The Times* and *Pall Mall Gazette*. The *Bristol Mercury* observed that "[t]he whereabouts of Twiggs is not at present known, but it is said that he was among the spectators at the Derby."[17]

The society recovered and development of Prospect Park continued piecemeal through the 1880s, so that by the time Gissing arrived, the last few houses on the south side were being erected, and there remained one large

vacant plot on the north side, filled only later in the 1890s with four large Arts & Crafts villas. A handful of local builders (like Sidney Smith) acquired and developed most plots, hardly the heroic artisanal self-help originally envisaged, although it should be acknowledged that from the 1890s through to World War I, the owner-occupation rate of between 35 and 45 per cent was substantially above the national average.[18]

As the street neared completion in the late summer of 1890, 'Quisquis,' the columnist responsible for 'City Chat' in the *Gazette*, suggested that planting trees in Prospect Park "would add greatly to the appearance of the neighbourhood." In October Thomas Pitts, who occupied No. 5, wrote to the Council on behalf of local residents, "offering to provide Lime Trees for planting in the Prospect Park throughout its whole length, if the Council would give their permission and plant the trees." The Streets Committee recommended acceptance of Pitts' offer, and agreed that "the Trees be planted in the Roadway outside the channelling of the guttering." By late November, Council employees were busy at work planting the trees. Gissing would have arrived in January 1891 to find new saplings lining the streets. But not for long. Less than eighteen months later, 'Quisquis' reported that "the trees are all dead, and the folks who bought them say that their death must be laid at the door of the representatives of the Corporation." Regardless of whether the trees had been planted properly, they were now "but sticks, neither useful nor ornamental."[19]

Whether or not Gissing was aware of these particular difficulties, something of the absurdity of 'Prospect Park' may perhaps have been in his mind when he despatched the Morgan family to "Something-or-other Park" in the novel he began to plan shortly before leaving Exeter, *In the Year of Jubilee*:

> A year or two ago the site had been an enclosed meadow [...] Great elms, the pride of generations passed away, fell before the speculative axe, or were left standing in mournful isolation to please a speculative architect. [...] What aforetime was a tree-bordered drive, now curved between dead stumps [...] (*In the Year of Jubilee*, Part IV, 2).

More immediately, in *Born in Exile*, Gissing was surely alluding to the street when Mr Warricombe shows the view from his house, located, we are told, "in the Old Tiverton Road, out beyond St Sidwell's, two miles away" on a good site beside "the climbing road." Mr Warricombe remarks to Godwin Peak, "But you see that the view is in a measure spoilt by the growth of the city. A few years ago, none of those ugly little houses stood in the mid-distance" (*Born in Exile*, Part the Second, III). From the putative location of Mr Warricombe's house, the most prominent of "those ugly little houses" would have been in Prospect Park.

In *In the Year of Jubilee* the Morgans' South London house suffered all the defects of jerry-building:

> At the first slight frost, cistern and water-pipes went to ruin [...] Plaster fell from the ceilings [...] not a fireplace but discharged its smoke into the room [...] Everywhere piercing draughts [...] From cellar floor to chimney-pot, no square inch of honest or trustworthy workmanship. So thin were the parti-walls that conversation not only might, but must, be distinctly heard from room to room, and from house to house [...] (*In the Year of Jubilee*, Part IV, 2).

Bear in mind that 24 Prospect Park was the newest house that Gissing had ever occupied. It does not seem to have been in the same league of awfulness as the Morgans' house, but, on 18 January, the day after moving in, he noted "[w]ater-pipes frozen" and, even with a fire in his bedroom at night, on waking he "found ice in the jug, & half an hour after washing I saw with astonishment that the towel was changed into a coat of mail." At least, he had "competent chimneys."[20] But he soon found the walls were far from soundproof: on 3 April, when he was writing the fourth chapter of *Born in Exile*, he noted that "[t]he people downstairs have—alas!—got in a piano to-day, and vigorous strumming has begun."[21] Intriguingly, in the *second* chapter of that novel we learn that Godwin Peak's evening studies in his lodgings on the outskirts of 'Kingsmill' were disturbed by his landlady's son,

> a lank youth of the clerk species, [who] was wont to amuse himself from eight to ten with practice on a piano. By dint of perseverance he had learned to strum two or three hymnal melodies popularised by American evangelists; occasionally he even added the charm of his voice, which had a pietistic nasality not easily endured by an ear of any refinement (*Born in Exile*, Part the First, II).

Presumably, Gissing inserted this passage when he was preparing a neat copy of the chapter later in April; or perhaps it was yet another of the many cases in Gissing's life of fact imitating fiction.

Hitherto, Gissing scholars have reported very little about "the people downstairs," Charles and Sarah Jane Rockett, apart from the place and date of their wedding: St James's, Exeter (geographically, the Anglican church closest to Prospect Park), on 26 February (the day after Gissing's own wedding).[22] A search through the now partly-digitised copies of the *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette* reveals that Charles Rockett was a regular performer, not of "hymnal melodies" but of popular songs. On 9 February 1891, "under the auspices of the Heavitree district of the Exeter Working-Men's Conservative Union," he "met with a well-deserved encore in the comic song, 'Sister Mary walked like that,' and, in response, gave 'The young man who used to live over the way.' He returned after the interval to sing 'Did you ever hear a girl say no,' and 'The girls and the boys,' and in each case received an encore."[23] The following month, by now married, he contributed to the entertainment following the annual married v. single shooting match of the Exeter Artillery Volunteers; and in November 1891, he performed two songs at a Primrose League monthly

social in nearby Topsham.[24] This combination of Conservative politics, volunteer soldiering, and "inane" and "amorous" music-hall songs,[25] surely contributed to Gissing's castigation of "the people downstairs" as "extremely vulgar & selfish beyond belief."[26] Another appearance by Rockett in the *Gazette* casts a different light on his character. At a lecture to the Exeter Chamber of Commerce on "[t]he Caligraph Typewriter and its advantages to business men," "Mr C. T. ROCKETT, of Exeter, asked the lecturer several questions as to the advantages of the Caligraph over the Remington."[27] One cannot help thinking that Rockett was the author of the article, or at least edited it to ensure his name appeared in capitals!

The 1891 census recorded Charles Rockett aged 25 and his wife aged 34, almost the reverse of the Gissings (George 33, Edith 24). It also neatly equated the status of Charles and George. The former returned his occupation as 'Editor Amanuensis,' which the census checker, allocating entries to a standard list of occupations, recorded as 'Author.' George returned his occupation as 'Novelist,' which was also standardised to 'Author' – two authors in one house! Had he known, this would surely have offended Gissing who, on first meeting Rockett, reported to Algernon that he was "far from intellectual (everyday I learn more decidedly how gross a trade journalism is) but genial." To Bertz, Gissing described the Rocketts as "illiterate, though decent," an explanation for why, as at 7K, he expected to be "as solitary as ever."[28]

In fact, Rockett was not just genial but, initially, George's only entrée into Exeter life. When he travelled to Exeter on 14 January 1891, it had been planned that he would stay at 'Delamore House' while his rooms at No. 24 were made ready for him.[29] 'Delamore House' was a rather grand title for 16 Prospect Park, slightly larger than No. 24 but part of the same terrace. It was occupied in 1891 by Thomas Ascott, a 65-year-old retired bootmaker and his 39-year-old wife, Mary Ann. They were used to accommodating visitors: the 1891 census lists two boarders living with them. Gissing's *Scrapbook* records: "Mrs Ascott observed to Edith: 'Oh, in Exeter the ladies don't read; only the servants.' And that with grave satisfied air."[30] What Gissing doesn't tell us is that Mrs Ascott was Mrs Rockett's sister. Thomas Ascott had married Mary Ann Cole, already resident at 16 Prospect Park, at St James's, Exeter on 14 February 1889. A couple of days after he had moved in to No. 24, Gissing wrote to his sister-in-law, Catherine, that "At present I am alone in the house. The other people, who live a few doors away, are still furnishing."[31] So it is likely that in January 1891 the Ascott household included Sarah Jane Cole and Charles Rockett, and possibly two boarders too. When, on 16 February, the form entitling Gissing to a ticket for the Free Library was signed by "Mr Ascott and Mr Cole, two owls," he was again indebted to Sarah Jane's brother and

brother-in-law.[32] An ironic footnote to Mrs Ascott's observation above is that, by 1901, the Ascotts, by now aged 75 and 50, had moved to Lutterworth in Leicestershire, where they are both listed as 'servant,' he as 'gardener' and she as 'general servant' in the household of an 80-year-old retired Church of England clergyman and his 35-year-old wife.

Meanwhile, when Gissing arrived on 14 January, it proved impossible for the Ascotts to accommodate him. Instead, he spent his first night in Exeter in "a bedroom next door to them," the following night in a Coffee Tavern (of which there were several in the centre of Exeter) and then a night "at Mrs Cornish's." No. 17, Prospect Park was vacant by the time of the 1891 census, but in the 1889 street directory it was occupied by Thomas Rowell Cornish. Subsequently, Thomas Rowell Cornish and Mrs Cornish are listed at separate addresses in St Ann's Terrace and St James's Place, both close to Prospect Park on Old Tiverton Road. [33]

Early on in their respective marriages, the Rocketts invited the Gissings to tea. But this seems to have been an isolated event, and he was soon explaining to his sister, Ellen, that "[w]e make no acquaintances, & seem very unlikely ever to do so. The people in the house do not at all suit us, & we merely keep on civil terms with them. Intellectual converse is of course wholly out of the question."[34] Following the intense cold of January and February, when he complained that "I cannot write when I am frozen," by June it was too hot for Gissing to work in his top-floor "garret." The solution was to escape to the seaside, spending three weeks in Clevedon and ten days in "deadly dull" Burnham.[35]

By now, both Edith and Mrs Rockett were pregnant, which probably accounts both for Gissing's increasing irritation with his domestic surroundings, and for Mrs Rockett's pronouncement that "before winter, she will need these rooms of ours."[36] Predictably, Gissing blamed "the Rockett people" for "vile squabbles here in the house," accusing them of "behaving with every kind of vulgar malice." Again, he was unable to work, apart from imagining, first, "a short book, in which the Rocketts and all their kin will figure" and then a possible volume of short stories, "At a Week's Notice," "to illustrate the wretchedness of life in lodgings."[37]

Dorothy May Rockett was born at 24 Prospect Park on 4 January 1892, less than a month after Walter Leonard Gissing was born. Sadly, Dorothy died on 1 September 1892, by which time the Rocketts had moved to a similar house in Park Road, Polsloe Park, less than a mile away.[38] The 1901 census records them living in south London, in 'Gissing territory' in two rooms on Camberwell New Road, without children and with Charles still

pursuing a career as 'journalist.' By 1911, Sarah Jane was a widow, living-in as a 'help' in the home of a Bristol cabinetmaker.

A similar geographical destiny could have awaited the Gissings had George been more successful in his search for lodgings in Bristol. He inserted an advertisement in the *Western Daily Press* on 11, 12, and 13 August 1891:

> UNFURNISHED,—Wanted, by married couple, in pleasant part of Bristol, Four ROOMS; one a Kitchen; with or without attendance. Quiet house; no other lodgers.– Address G.G., 24, Prospect Park, Exeter.[39]

Compared to his advertisement seven months before, the "literary man" has been dropped, but "Quiet" and the need for their own kitchen obviously reflect his experience of sharing, squabbling, and piano-playing in Prospect Park. To no avail: rooms in Ashley Road, Ashley Hill, and Whiteladies Road (in the northern suburbs of Montpelier and Clifton Down), all proved "impossible."[40]

St Leonard's Terrace

Instead, what, at least initially, seemed amazing good fortune, gave them another twenty-one months in Exeter, in "[a] delightful house, in the pleasantest part of the town." This was 1, St Leonard's Terrace, in Mount Radford, just south-east and within ten minutes' walk of the city centre. Gissing implies – "set off to explore Mt Radford, found a house which suited marvellously" – that he lighted upon the property by simply walking the streets looking for 'to let' signs; also that he was really lucky to get it: "a great stroke of fortune, for this house was the only cheap one to let in the very best part of Exeter."[41] This was hardly the case. The house had been advertised to let in June 1891:

> No. 1, ST LEONARD'S TERRACE, Wonford-road. Eight rooms and bath. Healthy and pleasant. Rent £19 10s.—Apply No. 6.

It was re-advertised a month later, with the option of renting or buying it.[42] There was hardly a queue lining up to occupy the house!

Like 24 Prospect Park, this was one of the cheapest properties in an otherwise quite expensive locality, but, unlike No. 24, it was at the centre, not the margins. Apart from one other short terrace (Park Place), like St Leonard's Terrace a cul-de-sac running at right angles to Wonford Road, other nearby properties were elegant classical villas and terraces designed for the established middle classes. Unlike Prospect Park, which was an upstart neighbourhood of the 1880s, mostly regular, brick gothic, the Mount Radford area was long established, classical, stucco, and more random and irregular in the layout of its villas, semi-detached pairs and short terraces, suburban but picturesque.

St Leonard's Terrace, a row of eight south-east-facing houses, with front gardens running down to a footpath, dated from before the era of building permits and regulations. Indeed, St Leonard's was governed by a parish vestry,

independent of Exeter until 1877. The growth of St Leonard's peaked in the 1830s: between 1821 and 1851 the number of inhabited houses increased from 62 to 267.[43] The local press carried numerous advertisements through the 1830s offering freehold sites for the erection of "genteel Cottages" in what had been the park surrounding Mount Radford House.[44] St Leonard's Terrace appears, unnamed, on the tithe apportionment map dated 1840: each garden plot was recorded with an area of four perches.[45] Nor does it appear by name in the 1841 census, although, reconstructing the census enumerator's walk, there is a street labelled 'Mulgrave Place,' situated between Premier Place, Bellair Villas, and Park Place, precisely where St Leonard's Terrace should be. Since 'Mulgrave Place' had disappeared by the time of the 1851 census, when St Leonard's Terrace was recorded with residents in each of its eight houses, it seems probable that the name was changed in the early 1840s. An advertisement in the *Western Times* in September 1837 for "Desirable Newly Erected Freehold Houses" includes No. 2 Mulgrave Place, "[a] compact and substantially built House and Offices, with small Garden in front, and Courtlage, with Pump of excellent Water behind [...] delightfully situated, commanding varied and most extensive views of the surrounding picturesque country, and particularly well adapted for the residence of a small respectable family." Another advertisement, in July 1843, offered several houses in Mulgrave Place for rent at twenty guineas a year and noted that they had "recently undergone a thorough repair." Each contained "two good Parlours, a Drawing Room, three Bed Rooms, Water Closets, and all other necessary domestic offices, and has a Court behind, and a good sized Garden in front."[46] This was the last mention that I have traced of Mulgrave Place in the newspapers. St Leonard's Terrace first appeared by name the following year when Thomas Kinsman, Builder, was offering "an excellent DWELLING HOUSE, situate in ST LEONARD'S TERRACE, which is one of the most healthy and open parts of the Park, having every domestic convenience, with a Flower Garden in front."[47] By 1845, Kinsman was himself living in the terrace, and was advertising "commodious, open, and desirable residences" (in the plural) to "be LET to select Tenants only." "Each consists of two kitchens, two parlours, drawing-room, and best bed-room, two bed rooms over, water-closet and privy, hard and soft water, and a yard behind."[48] By 1851, the select tenants included an officer's widow (at No. 1), a retired bootmaker, a widowed proprietor of houses with her son studying at the Church Missionary Society College in Islington, a retired chemist, a bank clerk, and a 'Professor of Music' (although in advertisements he traded, more mundanely, as piano tuner and repairer).

The point of this detective work is to emphasise that the terrace was between fifty and sixty years old when the Gissings arrived there in late

August 1891, no longer fashionable or up-to-date. Advertised annual rents of 20 guineas (£21) had slipped to between £18 and £20. In 1866, five of the eight houses were offered for sale, No. 8, which had a larger garden, at £300, and the others at £220-250. In 1887, six of the houses (including No. 1) were auctioned, but only No. 5 was sold – for £220. No. 1 was withdrawn when the bidding failed to advance beyond £150; likewise the other properties, which attracted offers of only £140-170.[49] In the event, it seems that these houses sold privately after the auction, for by August 1888 Gissing's landlord, Charles Bryan, had acquired No. 1 and was advertising it to let.[50]

St Leonard's Terrace on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. No. 1 is marked with a black dot.

No. 1 was the southernmost house, adjacent to Wonford Road. The Ordnance Survey 1:500 town plan, surveyed in 1888, shows a flight of steps up to the front door, a small bay window, a path leading from a gate in Wonford Road, two trees hard against the Wonford Road wall, and a lamp post (L. P. on the map) at the entrance to the footpath leading to houses farther along the terrace. There had been gas lamps in St Leonard's since 1842 and the Vestry Minutes record a decision in August 1848 to move "the lamp now standing in the front of Bellevue Place" nearer to St Leonard's Terrace in order to improve lighting of the terrace and of Park Place, immediately across Wonford Road.[51] Following the absorption of St Leonard's into the

City of Exeter, the terrace featured in the minutes of the Streets Committee in November 1881, when the Surveyor reported that "the old sewer at the back of St Leonards Terrace had fallen in and required to be reconstructed for a considerable length at an estimated expense of £18.0.0." The work was completed by January 1882.[52] In October 1896, the City Surveyor reported again, submitting plans and costings for necessary work at St Leonard's Terrace in accordance with Section 150 of the 1875 Public Health Act, which gave local authorities the power to compel sewering, levelling, and lighting of private streets.[53] These official records provide the context for Gissing's discussion with his landlord in July 1892: "E. suffering still. We think it may be caused by bad drains, as our servant Flossie is also ill. Bryan brought the sanitary inspector to give opinion; he thought the drains bad."[54] Nothing, however, seems to have been done; and lest we might think it was extraordinarily efficient for both the landlord and the sanitary inspector to respond the same day, it should be noted that the landlord lived at No. 6 and the City Inspector of Nuisances (returned in the 1891 census as 'sanitary inspector'), William Wreford, at No. 4, so this was more like a discussion over the garden fence than a formal investigation.

How did Gissing make use of the house? He was most enthusiastic about his, and his neighbours', gardens: "a mass of garden-flowers & leafage in every direction"; "a strip of garden, about 30 ft. long & 12 ft. broad, with some laurel-bushes, ferns & marigolds." Inside, he recorded "[a] good bathroom with hot & cold water, a back door, rooms small enough to be easily warmed" and "[g]as fittings throughout."[55] He first located his study – "small, but very quiet" and overlooking apple trees – on the ground floor. Later he moved it to the front room at the top of the house (also referred to as "garret") "to be away from uproar," but feared it would be too hot in summer.[56] In due course, he first returned to his ground-floor study, then rented a room a few minutes' walk away (in Eaton Place) to serve as a study. From other comments we can infer, on the first floor, a front bedroom (with a chimney that smoked) and a back room used by Edith as sitting-room while she convalesced after giving birth. The kitchen was in the basement. There was also a servant's bedroom. But we should note that a 12 ft. wide garden implies that the house itself was only 12 feet wide, including the entrance hall. In total, we can assume a house on four levels – basement with kitchen (and servant's room?), ground floor with study and parlour, two bedrooms upstairs, and a top floor with two more rooms.

Domesticity came at a price and Gissing's *Diary* is full of references to the latest expenditure on household items. Moving in entailed "nearly ten pounds in furnishing" in the first week. In November 1891 he bought "a dinner and a tea service; 25/8 altogether;" a week later "odds and ends of

furniture." Following Walter Leonard's birth, there was 18/- to pay for a "chest of drawers for the new servant" and 23/6 for a sofa for Edith.

Bellair Villas and, behind, Park Place, across the street from St Leonard's Terrace (author's photograph, March 2019)

Equipping the first-floor back room as a sitting-room for Edith meant buying "blind and carpet": "£8 gone in less than a fortnight." A perambulator and rug cost 25/6, a baby's high chair 3/11. At unspecified prices, a cot and a gas stove.[57] In December 1892, the pipes froze and then burst, necessitating the services of a plumber. Fitting up a bedroom for his mother's visit in May 1893 (by which time he had already given notice of leaving the house) entailed further expense. When he vacated the house the following month, he spent £15 on removal costs and recouped 12/- from the sale of "a lot of old furniture."[58] Nevertheless, Gissing was clearly proud to have become a householder. He sympathised with Algernon's "miseries in lodgings." Even though, "in a house one is cursed with servants [...] still it is better to have one's own four walls, undoubtedly." Another sign of taking family life seriously was that he started to think about life insurance.[59]

But it was the servant problem that trumped all others. In Prospect Park, he paid 3/- a week to "a decent woman" to wait on him.[60] Presumably this lasted only until Edith joined him. At St Leonard's Terrace, Nelly Edwards was paid £9 a year. She promised well, but after a few weeks, "Edith has discovered that our servant's hair swarms with lice" and, as Edith's confinement approached, Nelly offered her excuses and left.[61] Several days

were taken up with visits to registry offices which functioned as employment agencies for servants, to no avail. Nelly arranged a substitute, a "little girl of 14" who did "very well" until a permanent replacement, Thyrza Easterbrook, arrived from Torrington in North Devon.[62] She lasted all of five weeks. By now, Walter's birth entailed employing a nurse, Mrs Phillips, initially "excellent" but soon "ill-tempered," "vulgar, meddlesome, and conceited"[63]

View from St Leonard's Terrace to Exeter Cathedral (author's photograph, March 2019)

When she left in early January (paid £6-13s-3d plus a half-sovereign tip), Gissing "[r]ushed to two newspaper offices, and inserted advts for someone to take child and keep him for a while":

> WANTED, a RESPECTABLE PERSON, in or near Exeter, to take charge of child (month old) at her own home. No other children.—Address, with terms, "X.," *Express* Office.[64]

Meanwhile, they relied on "little Margaret" (presumably the same "little girl" who had helped out the previous month) to help with Walter; and then contracted with another Mrs Phillips, recommended by the vicar of Brampford Speke, a village just north of Exeter, to nurse the boy at her home, for 6/- a week.[65] This arrangement lasted for three months, with Edith and George making occasional visits, but also taking a week's holiday in Cornwall. Little Margaret continued to act as a general servant, coming in for an hour each afternoon when Edith was away, and from 7.30 to 11.00 (presumably a.m.) when George, Edith and Walter were reunited in the house in April 1892.[66] They also advertised for a new nurse for Walter. In the *Express*:

> WANTED, Strong NURSE, for child of four months. £16.—No. 1, St Leonard's-terrace.[67]

For the *Western Times*, the job description was extended and the family was prioritised over the child:

> WANTED strong GIRL about 20, as nurse for a baby and to assist in house; £16. Two in family.—No. 1, St Leonard's Terrace, Exeter.[68]

None of the applicants impressed, but needs must. Within weeks there was "[u]proar in house, owing to breakage of plates and dishes" and further "domestic disturbance" when the oven ceased to function.[69] Another new servant-girl, Flossie, was employed, paid 12/- a week (equivalent to more than £30 per annum, but presumably the girl at £16 got her board and lodging, too) for daily "kitchen work."[70] The nurse who had begun in late April left in July. Her replacement, "a feeble and pretentious idiot," lasted only two days, to be replaced in turn by Flossie's sister.[71] Yet more "disturbance with servants" and daily "wrangling and uproar down in the kitchen" was ended only when the family decamped again, first to holiday in Weymouth, and then Edith and Walter going to London while George went to Birmingham.[72] Reunited in Exeter at the end of November, they hired another new servant, Ellen from Budleigh Salterton, who soon proved "filthy and lazy, like all her predecessors."[73]

Gissing tells us nothing about his neighbours in St Leonard's Terrace, apart from occasional, usually agreeable, exchanges with his landlord. Charles Bryan, a widowed schoolmaster, lived at No. 6 along with his four sons, three daughters, and resident general servant (also, at the time of the census, from Budleigh Salterton). Yet although he owned No. 1, Bryan did not own No. 6. The long-term Bryan family home was at 34 Culverland Road (just round the corner from Prospect Park). It was there that Bryan's wife, Jane Kimber Bryan, died in March 1888, and it was there that Charles Bryan was enumerated in the 1901 and 1911 censuses, and where he died in 1913.[74] So his investment, and relatively brief stay, in St Leonard's Terrace would seem to have been a response to his wife's death, aged 41. In a period when *property* was prized far more than *owner-occupation*, it was commonplace for landlords not to own the dwelling they occupied.

Bryan was a dedicated elementary school teacher. He hailed from Gloucestershire but his older children were all born in Tywardreath, near St Austell, Cornwall, where he taught at the National School until 1873 when he was selected from 83 candidates to be the master of Paradise-place School in Exeter.[75] From there he moved to the newly opened Newtown Boys' Board School, where he was headmaster from 1890 until 1905 when, on reaching the age of eligibility for superannuation, he requested permission "to continue his scholastic work." He participated in discussions surrounding the formation of a

Devonshire Union of School Teachers and served on the committee of the Devon and Exeter branch of the Church School Teachers' Benevolent Institution.[76]

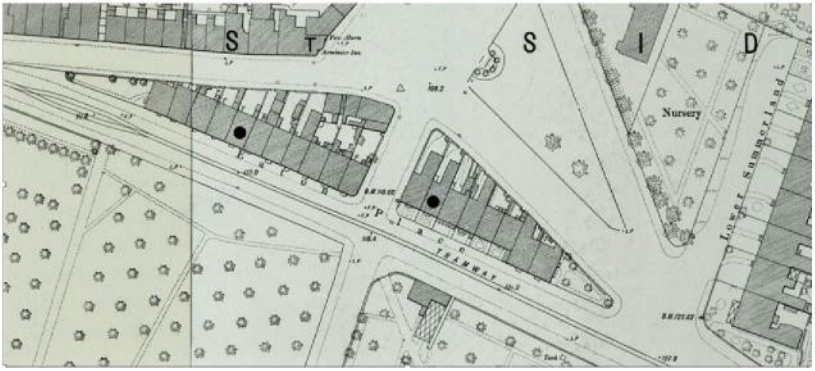
Bryan was evidently a relaxed landlord. He agreed that the Gissings could rent "from quarter to quarter" and also "do a little necessary papering."[77] Immediately after Christmas 1892, he "came to tea" at a time when all the pipes had been frozen for two nights. It seems that these two events were unconnected; the reason for Bryan's visit was to give a present to young Walter.[78] In an implicit reference to Bryan, Gissing reported to Edward Gosse that, on the day of Tennyson's funeral (12 October 1892), "I spoke of the dead poet to a live schoolmaster, a teacher of poor children." Sadly, to Gissing, Bryan "avowed [...] quite simply, that he 'couldn't stand poetry—except a few hymns.'"[79] When, on 25 March 1893, Gissing gave Bryan notice of surrendering his tenancy, he specified "at Michaelmas [29 September] or sooner."[80] Bryan advertised for a tenant in May:

> MOUNT RADFORD. One of the best situated and cheapest. £19 10s. Eight rooms; bath.—Michaelmas or earlier.—Apply 6, St Leonard's-terrace.[81]

On 14 June, Gissing received both a letter from his future landlord in Brixton, confirming that all would be ready for them to move in the following week, and a visit from Bryan explaining that there was a tenant ready to move in as soon as the Gissings moved out. As a result, he would not have to pay the quarter's rent from June to September.[82] Curiously, the new tenant proved to be the current tenant at No. 3.[83] Why he should want to move from No. 3 to No. 1 we can only speculate, but very soon afterwards the new tenant was advertising "Furnished Sitting-room and Bedrooms" to let: "Suit ladies or gentlemen, with piano and good bathroom."[84] In 1891 he had been caretaker of the Theatre Royal, but his entry in the 1894-1895 directory specifies "lodgings." Neither he nor the piano seem to have stayed very long. In 1896, the *Western Times* advertised the sale by auction at 1 St Leonard's Terrace of "the useful HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, SEMI-GRAND PIANO, by Collard and Collard, and numerous Effects, the property of Mr Spraggett."[85] As Gissing packed his books alone in the house on the evening of 22 June 1893, "Charles Bryan looked in, and I had a friendly talk with him."[86] Here, at least, was a landlord from whom he parted on good terms.

Eaton Place

Gissing's final intervention in the Exeter property market was to rent a room away from home, to use as a study, where he could read and write without disturbance. The room he found, at 6/- per week for three months from December 1892 to March 1893, was at Mrs Couldridge's, 7 Eaton Place (now 25 Heavitree Road).[87] Of the nineteen houses in Higher and Lower Eaton Place,



Eaton Place on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Higher Eaton Place, with no. 7 marked with a dot, is to the right; Lower Eaton Place, with no. 15 marked, is to the left.

at least ten were lodging houses. However, the numbering presents us with a minor problem. Directories, ratebooks and census all locate *Miss* Sarah Couldridge as the proprietor of a lodging house at 15 Lower Eaton Place (now 9 Heavitree Road). 7 Higher Eaton Place was also a lodging house, run by Annie Farrant, a 71-year old lodging-house keeper in 1891, and by Miss Maria Louisa Tompson in 1894, but unlisted in the 1893 directory.

25 Heavitree Road (formerly 7 Eaton Place) is the second house from the left (author's photograph, March 2019)

Possibly, Sarah Couldridge had taken over responsibility following the retirement or death of the elderly Mrs Farrant.[88] Whereas, in the 1891 census, all the lodgers at Miss Couldridge's were female, at No. 7 two male lodgers occupied two rooms each. Another reason for favouring No. 7 is that it was (and still is) set back slightly from the road behind a small front garden and with a ground-floor bay window, whereas No. 15 is flat-fronted and opens directly onto the street.

Lower Eaton Place, now slightly truncated at the left-hand end. No. 15 Eaton Place is the seventh house from the right (author's photograph, March 2019)

There was also a passing loop on Exeter's horse-tramway only a few yards from the door of No. 15.[89] From Gissing's perspective, No. 7 would have been a quieter and superior location. But we should also note that street numbering was highly erratic in the nineteenth century, and No. 15, as the seventh house in Lower Eaton Place, could also have been thought of (by Gissing and others) as No. 7!

Prospect Park and Eaton Place survive today almost unscathed. The former suffered in World War II when three houses at the Old Tiverton Road end of the street were destroyed and 12 persons died; but Gissing's end of the street was unaffected.[90] In the last half-century, many of the houses have been subdivided into flats or student lodgings, including No. 24. Taking too close an interest in the exterior of No. 24, I was assailed by one of the current residents, presumably anxious that I was either a council official or a

potential burglar. He was not aware that 'somebody quite well-known' had once occupied his lodgings, but at least he was satisfied I was no threat to the neighbourhood. St Leonard's Terrace, sadly, took a direct hit in the Exeter Blitz of 4 May 1942, and no trace survives. As yet, I have failed to locate any photograph or postcard of the terrace: there is nothing online among all the countless postcards offered on Ebay, nor in any official archive.

1 W. J. West, *George Gissing in Exeter* (Exeter: Exeter Rare Books, 1979).

2 Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1996), 4, p. 250 (19 December 1890).

3 *Western Times*, 1 January 1891, p. 2; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 1 January 1891, p. 2.

4 *Letters*, 4, pp. 253-254 (11 January 1891); Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late-Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 236 (10 January 1891).

5 Ratebooks and other official documents were consulted in Exeter City Archives (in Devon Archives): *St Sidwell Ratebooks, 1879-1892*; *ECA 9/4-8*, *Exeter Urban Authority Streets Committee Minutes*; *4324-3 Exeter Planning Applications Boxes 1871-1879, 1880-1883, 1884-1887*.

6 Census enumerators' books for 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911, and Births, Marriages, and Deaths records were consulted online at https://www.findmypast.co.uk/.

7 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 9 December 1890, p. 1; 12 December 1890, p. 1; 3 April 1891, p. 4; 28 May 1891, p. 1.

8 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 12 October 1894, p. 1.

9 *ECA 4324-3 Planning Applications Box 1884-1887*: *33/1887; ECA 9/8 Streets Committee*, 22 June 1887, p. 124.

10 *Letters*, 4, p. 256 (19 January 1891). 11 *Ibid.*, p. 253 (11 January 1891).

12 *Ibid.*, p. 261 (20 January 1891), p. 263 (23 January 1891).

13 *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 22 April 1858, p. 5; 7 February 1866, p. 5; 23 March 1870, p. 8; 11 April 1877, p. 8; I am also grateful to Joanna Smith, Senior Investigator at Historic England, for sharing her notes on the Exeter Freehold Land Society.

14 *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 13 September 1878, p. 7.

15 *ECA 9/4 Streets Committee*, 15 July 1878, pp. 557-558; *ECA 9/5 Streets Committee*, 19 August 1878, pp. 23-24; 16 September 1878, pp. 39, 43; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 31 July 1878, p. 3.

16 *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 10 December 1878, pp. 5-6; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 11 December 1878, p. 8.

17 *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, 11 June 1879, p. 3, and numerous other newspapers, 15-19 August 1879.

18 Calculated from information in ratebooks for the 1890s and the Valuation Books prepared for Lloyd George's 1910 Finance Act (Devon Archives *3201 V/2/30*).

19 *ECA 9/8 Streets Committee*, 22 October 1890, p. 267; 24 December 1890, p. 272; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 17 September 1890, p. 8; 9 October 1890, p. 7; 26 November 1890, p. 8; 24 May 1892, p. 3.

20 *Diary*, p. 237 (18 January 1891); *Letters*, 4, p. 256 (19 January 1891).

21 *Diary*, p. 243 (3 April 1891).

22 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1891, p. 8.

23 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 10 February 1891, p. 8. Thankfully, there is no room to print the lyrics of these songs here, but interested readers can find them at http://www.traditionalmusic.

co.uk/songster/16-sister-mary-walked-like-that.htm; http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/songster/18-the-young-man-who-used-to-live-over-the-way.htm; http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/songster/23-did-you-ever-hear-a-girl-say-no.htm; http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/songster/40-the-girls-and-the-boys.htm.

24 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 16 March 1891, p. 2; 12 November 1891, p. 3.

25 F. Anstey, "London Music Halls," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 82 (January 1891), pp. 190-202, esp. 199-200. On the other hand, Gissing was not averse to the music hall himself, as witness his own visit to the Oxford (illustrated on pp. 193, 195 of Anstey's article) on 24 September 1890, with – or where he met – Edith: *Diary*, p. 226 (24 September 1890).

26 *Letters*, 4, p. 302 (21 June 1891).

27 *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 16 March 1892, p. 7.

28 *Letters*, 4, p. 254 (11 January 1891); p. 263 (23 January 1891).

29 *Letters*, 4, p. 255 (12 January 1891); *Diary*, p. 236 (14 January 1891).

30 Bouwe Postmus (ed.), *George Gissing's Scrapbook* (Amsterdam: Twizle Press, 2007), p. 35.

31 *Devon Parish Registers* online at https://www.findmypast.co.uk/. See also *Western Times*, 15 February 1889, p. 5; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 15 February 1889, p. 8; *Letters*, 4, p. 256 (19 January 1891).

32 *Diary*, p. 239 (16 February 1891).

33 *Ibid.*, p. 236 (14-16 January 1891); *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (London: Kelly & Co., 1889); *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire & Cornwall* (London: Kelly & Co., 1893); *Besley's Post Office Directory of Exeter and Suburbs for 1894-1895* (Exeter: Besley & Son, n.d.); all online at http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4.

34 *Diary*, p. 242 (22 March 1891); *Letters*, 4, p. 293 (29 April 1891).

35 *Letters*, 4, p. 273 (22 February 1891); *Diary*, p. 249 (19-22 June 1891); p. 252 (6 August 1891).

36 *Ibid.*, p. 252 (6 August 1891). [37] *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254 (10, 15 August 1891).

38 *Western Times*, 6 January 1892, p. 2; *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 3 September 1892, p. 5. While the Rocketts never featured by name in a book about lodgings, Gissing did use their name in a later short story, "A Daughter of the Lodge," first published in *The Illustrated London News*, 3252 (17 August 1901), pp. 235-237. Mr and Mrs Rockett are an elderly couple, working as gardener and gatekeeper, visited by their daughter, May. It seems unlikely that Gissing would have had the real Dorothy May Rockett in mind. Moreover, the family were named the Tomalins in the first draft of the story: see the introduction to "A Daughter of the Lodge," reprinted in Christine Huguet (ed.), *Spellbound, George Gissing* (Haren (NB), Netherlands: Equilibris, 2008), pp. 177-190.

39 *Western Daily Press*, 11-13 August 1891, p. 2.

40 *Diary*, p. 254 (17-18 August 1891).

41 *Letters*, 4, p. 316 (23 August 1891), p. 320 (7 September 1891); *Diary*, p. 254 (19 August 1891).

42 *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 13 June 1891, p. 4; 18 July 1891, p. 4.

43 Robert Newton, *Victorian Exeter 1837-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1968), pp. 138, 201.

44 For example, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 25 March 1830, p. 2; 22 April 1830, p. 2; 2 January 1834, p. 2; 30 January 1834, p. 2; 19 June 1834, p. 3.

45 https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/exeter-st-leonard/.

46 *Western Times*, 30 September 1837, p. 1; 8 July 1843, p. 2.

47 *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 16 March 1844, p. 1.

48 *Ibid.*, 5 July 1845, p. 2.

49 *Western Times*, 9 November 1866, p. 1; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 18 November 1887, p. 1; 1 December 1887, p. 4.

50 *Western Times*, 17 August 1888, p. 4.

51 Devon Archives, *1862 A/PV1*, *St Leonard's Vestry Book* from 1839 to 8 April 1904, 10 August 1848, p. 98.

52 *ECA 9/6 Streets Committee*, 17 November 1881, p. 15; 19 January 1882, pp. 38-39.

53 *ECA 9/8 Streets Committee*, 28 October 1896, p. 504.

54 *Diary*, p. 282 (29 July 1892).

55 *Letters*, 4, p. 318 (31 August 1891), p. 320 (7 September 1891).

56 *Ibid.*, p. 318 (31 August 1891); 5, p. 36 (11 May 1892); *Diary*, p. 280 (28 June 1892).

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 264, 266, 276, 281, 290-291 (26 November, 1, 14, 18 December 1891, 2 January, 19 April, 18 July, 30 November, 1 December 1892).

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 293, 304, 307 (28, 31 December 1892, 12 May, 15, 19 June 1893).

59 *Letters*, 5, p. 89 (9 February 1893); *Diary*, p. 307 (14 June 1893).

60 *Ibid.*, p. 237 (17 January 1891).

61 *Letters*, 4, p. 319 (31 August 1891); *Diary*, pp. 255, 258, 262-263 (29 August, 11 October, 1, 6 December 1891).

62 *Ibid.*, p. 263 (9, 11 December 1891); According to the census, Thirza [*sic*] Easterbrook, aged 16, 'dressmaker' in 1891, was the daughter of the publican of the 'Hunters Inn' in Great Torrington.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 263, 265 (11, 25, 27 December 1891).

64 *Ibid.*, p. 267 (11-12 January 1892); *Devon Evening Express*, 12 January 1892, p. 2.

65 *Diary*, p. 267 (11, 13, 14 January 1892); Susan Phillips, of Mount Pleasant, Brampford Speke, was aged 48 in 1891, when she was returned as 'laundress,' married to a 'general labourer' but, curiously, with two domestic servants also living in the household.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 272, 277 (8 March, 28 April 1892).

67 *Devon Evening Express*, 21 April 1892, p. 2.

68 *Western Times*, 21 April 1892, p. 2.

69 *Diary*, pp. 278-279 (13 May, 1 June 1892). [70] *Ibid.*, p. 279 (30 May 1892).

71 *Ibid.*, p. 282 (20, 25 July 1892). [72] *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 286 (15 September, 4 October 1892).

73 *Ibid.*, p. 295 (19 January 1893).

74 *Western Times*, 27 March 1888, p. 4; 27 June 1913, p. 4.

75 *Ibid.*, 17 June 1873, p. 3.

76 *Ibid.*, 15 June 1880, p. 3; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 22 May 1886, p. 2. During Bryan's time at Paradise-place, three children were prosecuted for breaking into the school and stealing "a number of mathematical instruments and three geography books," the former valued at 16s., the latter only 1s. 6d! See *Western Times*, 7 March 1884, p. 2.

77 *Diary*, p. 254 (19 August 1891). [78] *Ibid.*, p. 293 (28 December 1892).

79 *Letters*, 5, p. 98 (20 March 1893).

80 *Diary*, p. 300 (25 March 1893).

81 *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 13 May 1893, p. 4.

82 *Diary*, p. 307 (14 June 1893).

83 *St Leonard's Ratebook*, 27 September 1893; *Besley's Post Office Directory for 1894-1895*.

84 *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 15 July 1893, p. 5.

85 *Western Times*, 4 September 1896, p. 1.

86 *Diary*, p. 308 (22 June 1893). [87] *Ibid.*, p. 292 (15 December 1892).

88 The index to deaths shows that an Anne Farrant died in Exeter in late 1893, aged 74.

89 Julia Neville, *Exeter and the Trams 1882-1931* (Exeter: Exeter Civic Society, 2010).

90 http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/blitzcasualties.php.

What do we know of the relationship between Miss Orme and George Gissing?

HÉLÈNE COUSTILLAS
La Madeleine

Of course the acknowledged specialist on Eliza Orme, the first English woman to be granted a LL.B. in 1888, is Leslie Howsam, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, who wrote among other things an excellent article on "'Sound-Minded Women': Eliza Orme and the Study and Practice of Law in Late-Victorian England,"[1] a short piece on Miss Orme for a supplement to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, *Missing Persons* (1993), then later again the entry in the *DNB*. Professor Howsam was indeed well aware of the acquaintance of Miss Orme and Gissing, but she concentrated mainly on the brilliant woman and her many activities. Thus, it might be useful to recapitulate what we know of their relationship to accompany the only photo[1] of her known to us. Pierre Coustillas had it from a member of the Orme family in the late 1990s, and passed it on to Professor Howsam at her request; he had meant to include it, with many other photos of members of Gissing's family and friends, in the short illustrated biography he contemplated producing when all his major work was completed. It was not to be realised.

The photo was taken by the youngest son of the famous Julia Cameron, Henry Herschel Hay Cameron, who had started a studio in London, at 70 Mortimer Street in the mid-1880s, and photographed celebrities of the day. When Eliza Orme sat for him we do not know, but I feel she may have thought it a good idea to celebrate her newly acquired LL.B. by having her portrait taken in 1888. She was then forty. It offers the fine face of an intelligent, sensible person, quiet and determined as could be expected in a woman who wished to make herself useful to the women of her time. This photo certainly belies the words of Eliza Savage, a long-time friend and correspondent of Samuel Butler, when, alluding to Miss Orme, she told him in her letter of 21 September 1880 "I am happy to say that she is horribly ugly."[2] I have not seen a portrait of Miss Savage and have no idea of her own beauty; maybe she had not spotted the right person in some assembly, but she had from the 1870s been active in the Berners Club, one of the first women's clubs in London, and in 1880 was incensed by an article from Eliza Orme, which seemed to consider the Berners Club was of no interest and had better disappear.

Readers of Gissing's *Diary* are aware that he and Miss Orme met for the first time on 7 November 1894 at the Adelphi Restaurant in London where they had been invited to dinner by Gissing's publishers Lawrence and Bullen,

Miss Orme having, to all appearances, expressed a wish to be introduced to the novelist. Lawrence and Bullen had published *The Odd Women* in April the preceding year. She must have heard fairly soon after its publication of the novel which was such an earnest plea for bringing up girls so as to face life like responsible adults and certainly had read it before attending the dinner. But perhaps she had only heard recently that H. W. Lawrence, Bullen's partner, was the brother of Reina Emily Lawrence, a young woman, some 12 years her junior, who earned her LL.B. in 1893, and who became a partner in Miss Orme's conveyancing office. Reina Lawrence, I imagine, was the right person to facilitate Eliza Orme's introduction to the novelist. Gissing obviously was aware of her successful work as a conveyancer (in those days the highest position she was permitted to undertake with her Law degree since the bar was still out of the question for women), also of her already long-time and strong interest in the condition of women as witnessed by her being, among other things, a founding member of the Women's Liberal Federation in 1887, whose *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* she edited for two years; in 1892 she also became Senior Lady Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Commission investigating women's work in various places, and in 1894 member of the Departmental Committee on Prison Conditions, examining the situations of female prison staff and inmates. She also wrote many articles in journals like the *Fortnightly Review* and *Nineteenth Century*. Gissing must have been impressed. After parting from her and his publishers, Gissing reported later in his diary that on leaving the restaurant the four of them went back to the publishers' office "and smoked, Miss Orme taking a cigar as a matter of course."[3] After which he crossed out, probably when he had had time to know Eliza Orme better, half a line which he made illegible; perhaps it referred to this unladylike smoking, something he had assuredly never witnessed at home in Wakefield! At some later time she may have had an opportunity to mention at least some of the many well-known people, writers, musicians, painters, English and foreign, her family counted among their friends, for instance to name a few, Carlyle, Spencer, Thackeray, Tennyson, Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and Emerson. Gissing would have been delighted to hear about them. She may also have told him that she had been influenced as a young woman by her mother who had given her own assistance to many movements of social and political reform such as the independence of Italy, the enfranchisement of women and their higher education at the Universities, and Home Rule for Ireland.

Unfortunately for us, it seems Eliza Orme left no record of this dinner; it would have been most interesting to read her first impressions of the man she had wished to meet; obviously she must have been struck by something in him 25

which made her willing to give him the considerable help she brought him in the nine years of their acquaintance. On his part, shy as he was, and generally unwilling to disclose his private life, he clearly must have discovered early that she was the strong-minded woman to whom he could turn in difficult times. On a few occasions, Gissing described her as an "admirable woman," or an "admirable and capable person."[4] No personal papers from her seem to have survived, so all that can be consulted concerning their relationship are Gissing's *Diary* and letters to a few of his correspondents, the latter often relating in more or lesser detail what he had already entered in his diary. The only letter addressed to Miss Orme known to us is a very short one, written from Arcachon on 1 April 1902, in which, after consulting the local pharmacist, he gave her some information about the French words used in the description of the slides of a microscope!

Gissing kept his diary regularly, if briefly sometimes (entries reduced for instance to "Letter from Miss Orme," or "Wrote to Miss Orme"), but one is surprised to discover that there is no reference to Eliza Orme between the dinner on 7 November 1894 and 30 September 1895. Perhaps they had said "Let's keep in touch" on parting, but had taken their time to do so. On this first occasion she was forwarding to him a letter she had received from the widow of a former Radical member for Leicester "an old woman of 84; she has been reading 'The Odd Women', and wants more of G. G.," he entered in his diary.[5]

Then we have to wait until 2 June 1897, when he wrote in his diary "driven from home; things having come to an intolerable pass [...] In the meantime, I had called upon Miss Orme, at her house at Tulse Hill. I told her my troubles, and she promised to go to Epsom, and do what she could."[6] In fact this fairly long entry summarises what happened between early February and 2 June, and while there had been no mention whatever of Miss Orme since their meeting in 1894 in letters to his family or close friends the events of the first few months of 1897 occasioned her appearance in his correspondence notably with Clara Collet, his brother Algernon, and his old friend Henry Hick. Eliza Orme and Gissing must of course have exchanged some correspondence and had at least a few opportunities to meet between 1894 and 1897 but the progress of their friendship remains obscure. At least it is clear that by this time he definitely knew how much he could rely on his new friend.

His wife had been making things intolerable for him since early February, and he had first spent a night at the Charing Cross Hotel in London, then stayed about a week in Romney with his old friend Henry Hick, who was a doctor. After examining his chest, Hick took Gissing to London to see Dr. Pye-Smith who advised him to go and rest for some time in South Devon, and found him

much better on his return from Budleigh Salterton three and a half months later. Meanwhile Eliza Orme had visited his wife a number of times, and been visited by her about once a week, and thus she was able to give him reassuring news of Edith and of his little son Alfred, about a year and a half old by then. Soon after his return to Epsom in early June, Gissing was telling his friend Hick that Miss Orme's influence seemed to have been beneficial, and assuring his brother that "things are going very much better here [...] Miss Orme has been vastly useful."[7] On 4 June he noted in his diary "Miss Orme and her sister Beatrice came over from Tulse Hill to tea. Admirable people."[8] A most exceptional thing to happen in Gissing's home, where visitors were scarce, as we know. He must have felt he owed it to them for all their help and kindness. But the Gissings' summer holiday which took place from 24 July to 27 August at Castle Bolton in Yorkshire, put an end to this brighter picture of family life. Edith behaved like a termagant, threatened to throw a plate at him, and he there and then decided he would leave her and, as soon as could be arranged, he would travel to Italy and there devote his time in peace to the writing of his book *Charles Dickens: a Critical Study*, which was to be published by Blackie & Son on 15 February 1898. However, considering he was unable to leave England before 22 September, and had to wait until the 30th to have a small desk to work on in his room in Siena, this did not leave him much time to get his book ready for the printers, but he had managed to do much preparatory work, notably in Devon, before leaving England, and so was able to be ready in plenty of time.

On 14 September, before crossing the Channel, on his way to Italy through France and Switzerland, he had called on Eliza Orme, who proposed that Edith and Alfred should go and live at Tulse Hill with her and her sister, instead of going into lodgings, since he was giving up his house at Epsom. He would pay £50 a quarter and the Orme sisters would be able to keep an eye on mother and child. This was not what Eliza had suggested to Edith a few days earlier on a visit to Epsom, for then she had said she was willing to find three furnished rooms for her and a nurse-girl for Alfred, but Gissing obviously preferred her second proposal. From his arrival in Siena, he and his admirable friend were in regular touch by mail practically every week until his return to England in April 1898. At first things seemed to go well enough, and he was able to write in his diary on 15 October "Very satisfactory news of little Alfred from Miss Orme," and on 31 October recorded the arrival of a new version of his will, sent by his friend and solicitor George Whale, with his brother Algernon and Clara Collet as executors and guardians of his children.[9] By December, when he had already moved from Siena to Rome, news from England was not so good, amounting

to a "bad account of state of things. Infinite worry from that vicious idiot."[10] The Orme sisters could no longer put up with Edith's unpleasant behaviour, and by February 1898 Eliza was recommending to Gissing a legal separation, to which he consented. She promised him the services of her own solicitor, S. N. P. Brewster. Meanwhile she was arranging for Edith to have lodgings in North-West London in the house of a woman who had been her nurse, and could be trusted to keep an eye on Edith. In March the latter's behaviour was "more outrageous than ever" and she and her little boy at last moved on 4 April from Tulse Hill to 90 Mansfield Road to the relief of the Orme sisters.[11] Only it did not take Edith long to make herself unbearable to Mr. and Mrs Watts, her landlord and landlady.

Gissing came back to England on 18 April 1898, after a short visit to his friend Bertz in Potsdam, and by early May was settling in a house he had rented in Dorking, Surrey. On the recommendation of Miss Orme, he engaged as the housekeeper he needed a Mrs. Boughton, who gave him entire satisfaction, and who he may have remembered, at least partly, when he mentioned Ryecroft's excellent housekeeper some years later in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Meanwhile things went on from bad to worse through the summer in Mansfield Road, Gissing quoting in his diary on 11 June a "[c]heerful" letter from his friend Eliza telling him that Edith had attacked her landlord and his wife with a stick, and a policeman had had to be called.[12] Mr. and Mrs. Watts had been very patient, but in early August, their patience entirely exhausted, they at last turned Edith out of their house, the violent woman destroying their front garden before she left. Later in the month she wrote an "insulting and threatening postcard to Miss Orme, addressed 'Bad Eliza Orme.'"[13] The correspondence between Eliza and Gissing and his entries in his diary became scarcer from then on, but Edith still supplied matter for communication. Brewster, Eliza's solicitor, who paid Edith the monthly allowance Gissing had agreed upon, kept her informed of Edith's movements, frequent enough since patient landladies aren't necessarily the norm. In late January 1902 she was thus able to inform her friend that after more violent conduct at her lodgings his wife "has been removed to the [County] Asylum"—indeed she had suspected for some time that Edith, who had recently threatened to kill Eliza and her sister, was going mad.[14] There was now the fate of young Alfred, just turned 7, to settle and efficient Eliza came to the rescue. After sending the child to hospital for "a slight disease [...] necessitat[ing] an operation," she arranged with one of her sisters, Mrs. Howard Fox, wife of the English consul at Falmouth, in Cornwall, for him to stay with a farming family at nearby St. Budock, near Mabe, where he would be under Mrs. Fox's kind supervision.[15] And there he was taken about mid-March, Gissing being glad of

Eliza Orme in 1888
(© Orme family late 1990s)

the reasonable cost he would be charged. Alfred was to spend the next few years there, the happiest ones of his childhood. He thoroughly enjoyed his new life on the farm, and got on well with the family with whom he remained in touch for many years.

Before all this had come to pass, however, a new page had been turned in Gissing's life. In early July 1898 he had had a visit from Gabrielle Fleury, a Frenchwoman who wished to translate *New Grub Street*. She came again to spend the day with him on the 26th. They were soon in regular correspondence, and in October, when she came to England again, they decided to live together in France in the Spring— which they did. Clara Collet, that most steadfast friend of his, was the first person he told in February 1899 about the forthcoming event, and while on a visit to Paris in October she met Gabrielle for the first time. They were to remain in touch at least till the beginning of the Second World War. At some later date Gissing also informed Eliza of his "marriage" and henceforth that he was living in France, but all we know is that on 10 April 1900 he was writing to Clara Collet "One of the things I had to tell you was that Miss Orme already knows the story. She wrote to me some time ago, speaking of rumours—& I answered in the only possible way."[16] In other words he had not hastened to send her the news of Gabrielle's presence at his side, fearing perhaps she would have objections to make. He had received a letter from her on 8 April, "with good news of little Alfred, in Cornwall."[17] The last record in his *Diary* (which ceases on 1 November 1902) is of a letter from her dated 2 May 1902 to which he replied the next day. But there must have been some more exchanges between them before he died; for instance after she received a copy of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in early 1903: on 26 January he had asked his Agent James B. Pinker to send on to Constable's the list of 12 persons, of whom she was one, to whom he wished to have copies sent at his expense, his six author's copies being addressed to him at St. Jean de Luz.

Of course, Gabrielle had heard from Gissing as early as January 1899 about Eliza Orme and the wonderful help she had given him in the last few years, but they had never corresponded and never met. When he died on 28 December 1903, Gabrielle received many letters of condolence from family members, friends, and admirers of Gissing's work, but none from Eliza Orme appears among those still in Gabrielle's possession when she died in 1954. Did she receive one? Did it get lost? Gabrielle remembered her nonetheless, and in a letter of 3 January 1925 to her good friend Clara Collet we find her writing that she had recently "made the acquaintance of [...] a Belgian lady, sister of the socialist député Debrouckere who married an Englishman, and was v. intimate with Miss Orme (who, it seems, spoke about me to her, tho' she did not know me at all); & that lady told me that Miss Orme is in a most sad condition, having lost her head. Did you know that?"[18] Perhaps not. She may have retired about 1910, at which time she was 62 and still been living at her Tulse Hill address. In 1916 Eliza and her sister Beatrice still appeared in the Post Office Directory, but no longer the following year. This may have been the time when Eliza entered the Mental Home of Fenstanton, Christchurch Road, Streatham, S.W.2, where she died on 22 June 1937—she had outlived Gissing by 34 years.

Destiny is unaccountable of course, so there is no need to try and understand why Gissing had to put up with two unsatisfactory wives, and was to receive considerable help from two intelligent, cultured, able, and generous spinsters, recognised in their own day as talented women, Clara Collet and Eliza Orme. The latter's assistance in the last nine years of his short life proved invaluable. After Gissing's death it seems Clara Collet was the only one of the two to deal with problems of all kinds in his family.

1 Leslie Howsam, "'Sound-Minded Women': Eliza Orme and the Study and Practice of Law in Late-Victorian England," *Atlantis*, 15:1 (Fall/Autumn 1989), pp. 44-55.

2 Geoffrey Keynes and Brian Hill (eds.), *Letters Between Samuel Butler and Miss E.M.A. Savage, 1871-1885* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 234.

3 Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 353.

4 *Ibid*., p. 445, and Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Six, 1895-1897* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 246.

5 *Diary*, p. 390.

6 *Ibid*., p. 435.

7 *Letters*, 6, pp. 298 and 300.

8 *Diary*, p. 436.

9 *Ibid*., p. 449.

10 *Ibid*., p. 477.

11 *Ibid*., p. 485.

12 *Ibid*., p. 495.
13 *Ibid*., p. 500.
14 Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Eight, 1900-1902* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1996), p. 324.
15 *Ibid*., p. 338.
16 *Ibid*., p. 30.
17 *Diary*, p. 540.
18 From an unpublished letter, present location unknown.

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Chit-Chat

It is exactly 130 years since Hurst & Blackett published Algernon Gissing's second novel, *Both of this Parish*, in two volumes. Unfortunately, it was a struggle for Algernon to write it, to find a publisher for it after both Macmillan and Bentley rejected it, and for me to find a review of the novel in which anything positive was said about it. Here is, at any rate, a review with a few encouraging remarks from *The Morning Post* of 12 September 1889, p. 6.

BOTH OF THIS PARISH*

The last feature of this "Story of the Byways" is found in Mr. Gissing's excellent rustic sketches. These compensate in a great measure for a plot that is feeble, confused, and devoid of interest. None of the characters appear to be really in earnest. Their different parts are played with a too artificial indifference, unless, indeed, it be that of the gambling old rector, whom nothing can deter from following the downward road. As a story, "Both of this Parish" is unpleasant and limp, in spite of the tragedy which overshadows the rector's life. It is more satisfactory to turn to the carefully-studied portraits of Mr Gissing's village worthies, whose likings, prejudices, and manner of speech are rendered with graphic fidelity. Antony Beard, the old sexton, is a host in himself, and one of the few glimpses of humour in the book consists of the scene in which, surprised by the long absent Harold at night in the church, he mistakes him for a spirit. There is tenderness, too, underlying the old man's simplicity, which, in its way is touching. The innkeeper, Timbrill, is not less well drawn.

*Both of this Parish. By Algernon Gissing. 2 vols. London: Hurst & Blackett.

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Thrills and Stills: The Making and Screening of *Demos*, the 1921 Silent Film

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In the January 1977 issue of *The Gissing Newsletter*, Pierre Coustillas and Clifford McCarty published a short article on the 1921 silent movie of Gissing's 1886 novel, *Demos, A Story of Socialism*, (surprisingly, still the only full-length film ever made of a Gissing work) which in Britain was given the title "Demos" and in America "Why Men Forget." McCarty, a Los Angeles bookseller and film critic, was able to find two contemporary reviews which seemed to confirm W. H. Hudson's opinion about the film, who wrote in a letter to Morley Roberts: "Just what I thought myself when I saw it yesterday – G. G. would have been mad at the way his story is treated – its jerkiness. The only good thing is the end when he [Richard Mutimer] is killed by the mob."[1] We can surmise from Hudson's letter that Roberts also disliked the film. The two negative reviews, it is worth noting, were recovered from the files of American newspapers, *Moving Picture World* and *Motion Picture News*. In 2004 Pierre Coustillas reported in these pages that "Frederick Nesta recently discovered a highly favourable review in *The Times*" from 2 May 1921.[2] Six years later Coustillas noted that I had

> discovered a hitherto unknown notice of the film which was made from *Demos*. The text, entitled "A British Triumph," reads: "Demos," an ideal British film, based on the late George Gissing's powerful story of the passions which seethe below great industrial troubles, reveals some extraordinarily fine acting by Mr. Milton Rosmer, Miss Evelyn Brent, and others. It is shown until Wednesday next at the Stoll Picture Theatre.[3]

As a film buff and connoisseur of old movies, saddened by the fact that the film is considered lost, I have undertaken some new research at the British Film Institute Reuben Library and British Library in recent years both to find out as much as I could about the film and whether it really was deserving of Hudson's negative judgement. Further to this, it occurred to me that, even if none of us will ever be able to see *Demos* in its full glory on a cinema or television screen, it may still be possible to recover the film in some other way for posterity, and that is what I have set out to do.

As I undertook my research in the libraries and online, focusing on the period 1920 to 1925, I soon learned that a simple search for the word "Demos" in thousands of pages of magazines, journals, and newspapers could bring up any of the following: Gissing's novel, the Greek word for "the people," the populace or the masses, the same word referring to a state of democracy, the pen name of a journalist, the pen name of a correspondent writing to the press, a maddeningly successful racehorse, the outer moon of

Mars, the plural of demo as in a political "demonstration," the plural of demo as in a musical, artistic or other kind of demonstration, an optical character misrecognition of "demon," the first part of the name "Demosthenes," and the silent film itself. Despite being diverted on many occasions by these variations and especially by the horse, I did after all find enough references to the 1921 silent film of Gissing's novel to piece together its history. The following, consequently, is the story of the making and screening of *Demos* from its original conception to its last-known showing in a cinema.

The Making of *Demos*, the 1921 Silent Film

Historical context of *Demos* in the silent era

In 1920 when the Ideal Film Company decided to make a film of Gissing's *Demos*, the silent movie was already two-thirds through its three decades of ascendancy. At this time stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Edna Purviance, Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, John Barrymore, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Lilian Gish, Conrad Veidt, Norma Talmadge, John Gilbert, Ivor Novello, and 'Fatty' Arbuckle were already well established. Whereas Arbuckle's film career virtually ended in 1922 following an accusation of rape (he was acquitted but thereafter was *persona non grata* in Hollywood), scarcely any of the above stars were able to make a successful transition to the so-called "talkies." Apart from the obvious lack of sound and colour (although colour had been repeatedly trialled from 1895 up to the early 1920s, it continued to be rejected by film-makers because it was too expensive to produce), silent films were noted for studio-based shooting or rigged outdoor set-ups (such as fabricated towns on the studio lot serving a succession of films), the exaggerated and expressive style of acting, the excessive make-up, and intermittent dialogue cards, while cinemagoers, in the film theatres, also had the enjoyment of an orchestral or piano accompaniment. The British film industry boomed in the early-to-mid 1910s, but by 1916 went into decline for a few years because many of its stars, Chaplin and Ronald Colman among them, had left England to find fame and fortune in America, and owing to its inability to compete with American productions showing at the West End and High Street picture palaces.

The Ideal Film Company and the origin of *Demos*, the film

The Ideal Film Company or Ideal Films, as they were usually known, which eventually produced *Demos*, was founded in 1911 by the Jewish brothers Harry Moses Rowson (1875-1951) and Simon Rowson (1877-1950) – the name was anglicised from Rosenbaum) – both born in Manchester. At first the company functioned purely as a distributor of films. But, in 1916, the brothers began to produce their own films. Having put a number of well-known theatre acting

talents under contract, including Gerald du Maurier and Lilian Braithwaite, the Ideal Film Company soon became the literary film buff's *ideal*. That same year the first film they produced was Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* and this was followed by John Galsworthy's *Justice* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Hence, up until 1923, Ideal Films was one of the most successful and popular British film companies. During this period, they produced close to 80 films, predominantly productions of classic and lesser-known plays and novels. However, in 1924, because of the company's inability to compete with the ubiquitous American film, the brothers closed down the studio and returned to distributing films until 1927, when they merged with Gaumont-British. The brothers continued to distribute under their company's own name until 1934.

After the success of their first modest literary adaptations in 1916, Ideal Films endured a couple of lean years, although they were still able to produce Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* and Dickens's *Dombey and Son*. By 1919, however, the British film industry was enjoying a post-war boom, and that same year the brothers acquired the film lots at Elstree Studios in Borehamwood. Keen to increase distribution of their films across Britain and to counteract the loss of several major stars and directors to America, they were quick to announce to the press a major new production plan. The *Lancashire Daily Post* reported the brothers' project as follows:

> A BIG TEN
>
> The Ideal Films announce an ambitious programme of ten big pictures, which will make a wide range of appeal and link up the classics with the essentially modern. It will be interesting to see how some of their promised productions work out. For instance, the first on the list is Sir Walter Besant's "All Sorts and Conditions of Men." The reader of to-day, it is feared, is a comparative stranger to the greatest work of one of the most earnest and prolific authors of Victorian days, which is a pity, for it deals with many of the problems which are agitating the post-war world, just as they did prior to 1914, though we are sometimes led to imagine that all our troubles are the growth of the last few years. The novel had tangible social results, and the film, if it fulfils its mission, ought to be stimulating and helpful. Another almost forgotten story with a moral for 1920 is Lord Lytton's "Money." This is also to be filmed. George Gissing's "Demos," with the struggle between capital and labour is another up-to-date theme, and other features of the series will be "The Diamond Necklace" (Guy de Maupassant), one of the greatest stories ever penned; "The Rotters," a social satire by H. F. Malby; Walter Howard's "The Prince and the Beggarmaid"; Dion Calthrop's "The Old Country"; J. Buckstone's "Single Life" and "Married Life"; and Dickens' "Pickwick Papers." The last-named will be an interesting attempt, and it is the intention of Ideal to produce it in a manner worthy of its great author and of the place the famous book holds in the affection of the public throughout the English-speaking world.[4]

As the report indicates Ideal Films had set their stall out to make ten blockbuster films, each intended to be a faithful adaptation. With the new

studios at Elstree ready for filming, they immediately started preparing the first of these productions, Maupassant's short story "The Necklace" which was filmed in the autumn under the title "The Diamond Necklace." Upon release in January 1921 the film proved to be a major hit.

Pre-production on *Demos*

In September 1920 Ideal had engaged the American novelist and screenwriter, Denison Clift, to direct the Maupassant film. Although Clift had no previous directorial experience, he had previously worked with the great Cecil B. DeMille on several monumental films and written a number of screenplays for American productions. He had just arrived in England from a tour of European film studios, where he had observed all the processes of film-making, when he was headhunted by the Rowson brothers and given his first project. As soon as work on "The Diamond Necklace" was finished, the brothers turned their thoughts to producing the film of Gissing's *Demos*. Their first step was to sign up Clift, whose quietly commanding method of direction had impressed the brothers on the set of the Maupassant film, to write an adaptation of Gissing's novel and to direct the film. As production values were high for the intended film, two big stars of British and American films were recruited to play the main roles, Milton Rosmer and Evelyn Brent. Rosmer was a charismatic English leading man who had recently had a great success as Heathcliff in the 1920 film version of *Wuthering Heights*, and in the sound era would have prominent parts as a character actor in *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, with Robert Donat, and in other classic films with Michael Redgrave and Ralph Richardson. Brent was an American leading lady, a dark-haired, sultry beauty known for her roles as a temptress or vamp alongside John Barrymore in such films as *The Millionaire's Double* and *Raffles, The Amateur Cracksman* (both 1917). She had taken a sabbatical from films in 1920 to travel to England to play a role in George Bernard Shaw's *Ruined Lady* on the London stage, when she was contracted by the Rowson brothers to act the part of Emma Vine in *Demos*. On returning to America, after her success in England, she had further starring roles before gaining special plaudits in 1926 for her role as the iconic Louise Brooks' sister in *Love 'Em and Leave 'Em*. Within a year she was being groomed for stardom at Paramount Studios by Josef von Sternberg, who later discovered Marlene Dietrich. Under his direction she starred in several classic silent films, including *Underworld* in 1927 with George Bancroft and *The Last Command* in 1928 alongside the great Swiss-German actor, Emil Jannings, who won the first ever best actor Oscar for his performance. Brent is absolutely stunning in the film, and, according to the film critic of *Kinematograph Weekly*, she "has never put up such a good performance as Natalie, an actress

revolutionary."[5] The same year she played Gary Cooper's love interest in *Beau Sabreur* and in real life too, as it happens. Then, adapting well to the sound film from 1929, she starred in several major Hollywood productions alongside such early Hollywood greats as William Powell, Joel McCrea, Randolph Scott, and Maurice Chevalier. In the 1930s Brent's star might have shone as bright as those of that trio of Hollywood glamour queens, Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, and Barbara Stanwyck, but, apparently lacking ambition, she settled into a happy marriage, and by the early 1940s her film career had petered out.

The cast of *Demos* was filled out with some fine character actors including the dapper Warwick Ward as Willis Rodman, who was later to find success as Bulldog Drummond, Vivian Gibson as Alice Mutimer, a seductive damsel who became a star of German films after 1923, and Haidee Wright as Mrs Eldon, who was a member of the distinguished English Wright theatrical family.

Whilst working on the the script, Clift and his camera crew travelled to Bedfordshire and north to South Yorkshire scouting locations for some of the showpiece scenes they planned to shoot once the camera started rolling. Actual filming was to start in late January 1921 and to be completed by early March.

The filming of *Demos*

On the first day of shooting the film crew and actors gathered together in Borehamwood at the Elstree Studios on Eldon Avenue, 12 miles to the northwest of central London and easily reachable from there via a good, regular train service. Most of the filming of interior scenes was done on the innovative 70ft windowless stage (the first "dark stage" in England), which, instead of depending on natural light as at other film studios, relied on electricity from a gas-powered generator for lighting. Denison Clift worked with two cameras in order to produce one negative print for British cinemas and one other for use in America. As Ideal Films had promised a major production of Gissing's novel, there was tremendous interest in the making of the film, and journalists were always on the set to follow the shooting of scenes. In a late February issue of the *Bioscope* film magazine, one reporter describes his experience watching Milton Rosmer, who was playing the leading part as Richard Mutimer, getting into his role at Elstree Studios:

> The technical mastery of his art demanded in the modern film actor was brought home to me last week while watching Milton Rosmer making close-ups as Richard Mutimer, the hero of George Gissing's "Demos," writes a BIOSCOPE representative. Only a player with perfect self-control could have achieved the delicate effects of facial expression involved in these intimate "thought pictures."
>
> "Hold that look," cried Denison Clift, the producer. Without breaking for an instant the emotional continuity of the scene, Mr. Rosmer responded like a highly-strung instrument to the touch of a player.

At one moment, the actor stood grumbling to me dismally of his worn condition after a sleepless night *en route* from a charity function in the North. Then came the camera call, and, as he stepped into the dazzling circle of light, his whole personality was electrified with sudden passion. "Do you take your oath that what you say is true," he demanded of the faithless Adela. Lines of torturing doubt curved his lips and harassed his eyes as the woman, giving no answer but a piercing look, turned and moved proudly from the room.

Bettina Campbell, who appears as Adela, will also give an exceptionally fine performance, judging by what I saw of it in the studio. Her emotional intensity thrilled even the passion-proof studio hands. As she left her sorrowing husband, you could have heard a tear drop.

I was interested to watch Denison Clift at work, and to learn something of his methods. He is his own scenario writer, and knows his picture by heart down to the last detail before he enters the studio. The result is that in actual production, he is able to concentrate his mind on getting exactly the effects he wants from his artists. Throughout the scene he describes the emotions passing in the minds of the characters, and constantly directs the slightest changes of pose and gesture. He is methodical, but very exacting, and will continue to rehearse without wearying until he secures a perfect result. An intensely vital man, he sizzles with efficiency, and, although invariably quiet and courteous in manner, one instinctively recognises his strength and tenacity of purpose.

"Demos," which is, of course, an Ideal production, will have a very distinguished cast, including Mary Brough, Haidee Wright, Warwick Ward and George Trevor. The scenes in which the hero harangues large crowds of workers are to be staged, I understand, on a very big scale.[6]

When the actors and film crew transferred to nearby St Albans to realise some of the thrilling crowd scenes Gissing describes in *Demos*, one reporter gave his readers a look at the problems Denison Clift encountered in trying to manage the shooting of outdoor scenes. He writes:

The troubles of the sorely-tried producer are many. Not the least are the curious crowds who clamour to be included in "exteriors." And in connection with *Demos*, it is rather amusing to hear the way in which Denison Clift foiled the inhabitants of St. Albans, when he was there with his principals and two hundred "supers," taking scenes for the Gissing photoplay. A corps of special detectives, obligingly supplied by the Metropolitan Police, lured the crowds from the spot where the camera was situated, and kept them carefully out of "shooting" range. We believe this is the first time that the arm of the law has been appealed to on behalf of the movies; although, in America, lavish producers have been known to supply a town with a circus in order to keep the people from some sacred corner which the camera desired to film in solitude.[7]

Again, when Clift took his leading actors and crew up to Sheffield to film a few of the more spectacular scenes of the novel, another reporter was there to give a brief account of one dramatic effect, staged at a steelworks factory, "in which," he writes, "50 tons of molten steel flow from the open hearth into a gigantic ladle in the pit of a great iron foundry."[8]

In an interview given to *Bioscope* after completion of the film, Milton Rosmer described his experience of working under Clift's direction in the film:

> Milton Rosmer, the brilliant British film actor, who has scored so great a personal success by his powerful performance in the film version of George Gissing's novel, "Demos," has been overwhelmed with congratulations upon his splendid work. With characteristic modesty, however, he is inclined to attribute at least half the credit to Denison Clift, his producer, who was responsible both for preparing the scenario and directing the production.
>
> Discussing the matter with a BIOSCOPE representative, Mr. Rosmer said that he knew of no other producer, unless it be George Loane Tucker, who combined the same power of tremendous concentration, boundless enthusiasm, and invariable good temper, and who was thus enabled to get the best out of his players all the time.
>
> "If I were asked," said Mr. Rosmer, "what was the supreme quality which made Denison Clift so successful as a producer, I think I should say it was his remarkable gift for vivid stage direction. It is a great inspiration to an actor to work with a producer who can trust his technique, and whose inmost feelings he can share."[9]

Once filming was over, Denison Clift gave his own thoughts to the press on Gissing's novel and the resulting picture he had produced.

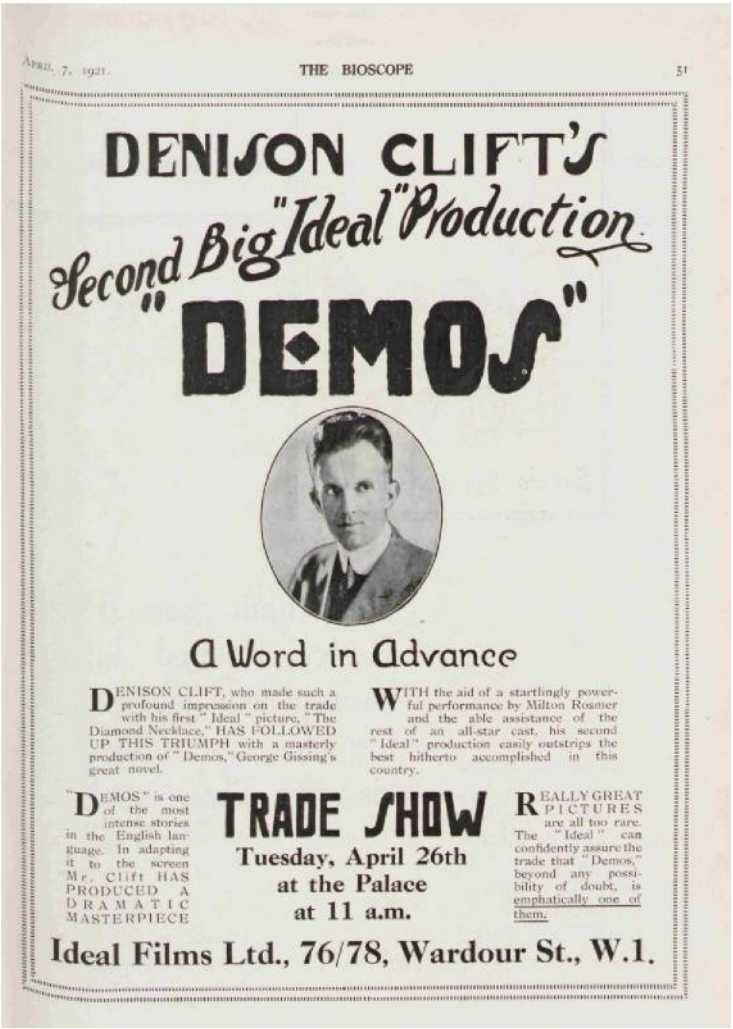
> The producer and writer of the scenario, Mr. Denison Clift, says "'Demos,' as a story thrilled me as I read it. George Gissing infused into this wonderful novel all the qualities that move the human heart: drama, pathos, laughter, infinite tenderness, and supreme tragedy. In its understanding and sympathy with the world's toilers it is immortal. The great question in producing 'Demos' was: Shall we be true to Gissing? Shall we alter the denouncement and significance of the drama, to meet a supposed demand for a sentimental happy ending? You who love Gissing will realise that to alter the story would have been to be guilty of sacrilege."[10]

The Screening of *Demos*

Film promotion and trade shows

Before the director and principle actors could move onto new projects, now that *Demos* was in the can, they were obliged to take part in the promotion of the film. This was a serious advertising campaign that could last for up to two or three months and meant that a film was not released for public viewing in cinemas until five or six months after the director had said "that's a wrap" for the last time. For, in the silent era, all new films had to be advertised in trade magazines and exhibited at numerous trade shows to which film distributors across the country and managers of the big High Street and West End picture palaces were invited as well as journalists and VIPS. Prominent advertising and a positive showing of the new film at each of the trade shows in big cities across England, where film critics could meet the director and the leading actors, would result in enthusiastic reviews in the trade press and pre-release paragraphs being written about the film in the national press and cinema magazines, which in turn would have cinemagoers anticipating its ultimate release with bated breath. Or at least that was what all film companies such as the Ideal hoped would be the result of their extended advertising campaign.

As the film of *Demos* was deemed to be a major production with well-known actors in the leading roles and a talented director, Ideal Films invested in an expansive promotional tour. The drive to promote *Demos* began on 7 April 1921 with a full-page advertisement in *Bioscope* announcing the first trade-show screening of the film on 26 April at the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus on the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue.



APRIL 7, 1921. THE BIOSCOPE 51

DENISON CLIFT'S

Second Big "Ideal" Production

"DEMOS"

A Word in Advance

DENISON CLIFT, who made such a profound impression on the trade with his first "Ideal" picture, "The Diamond Necklace," HAS FOLLOWED UP THIS TRIUMPH with a masterly production of "Demos," George Gissing's great novel.

WITH the aid of a startlingly powerful performance by Milton Rosmer and the able assistance of the rest of an all-star cast, his second "Ideal" production easily outstrips the best hitherto accomplished in this country.

"DEMOS" is one of the most intense stories in the English language. In adapting it to the screen Mr. Clift HAS PRODUCED A DRAMATIC MASTERPIECE

TRADE SHOW

Tuesday, April 26th

at the Palace

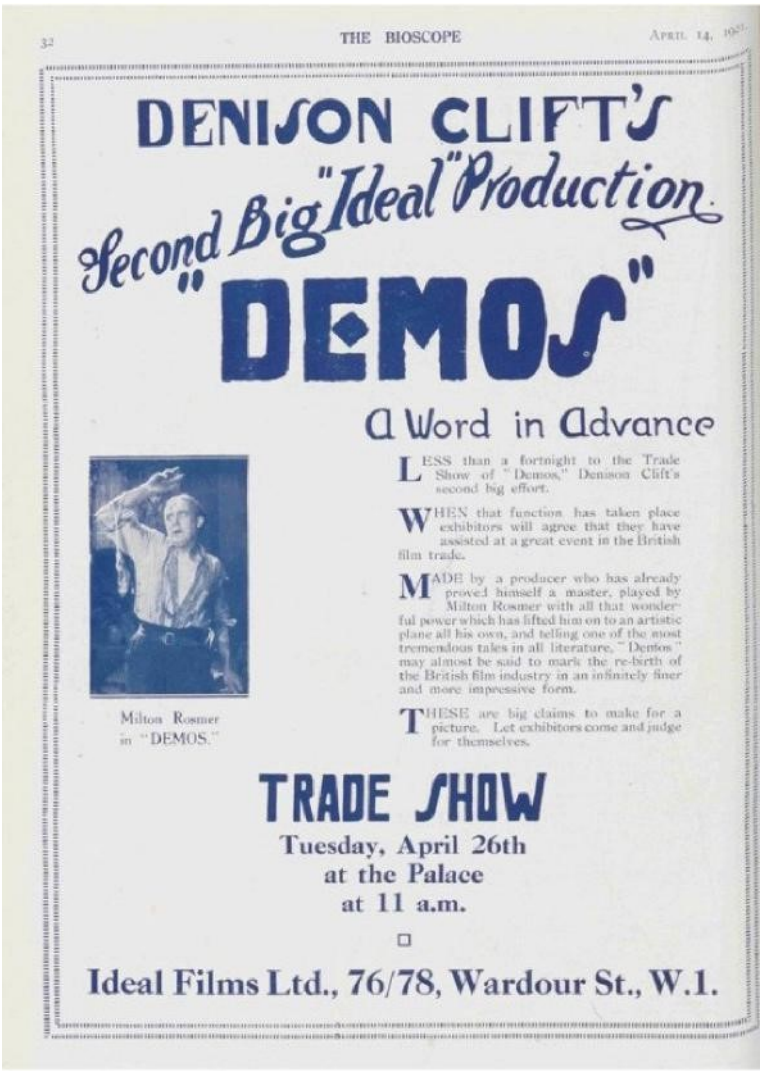
at 11 a.m.

REALLY GREAT PICTURES are all too rare. The "Ideal" can confidently assure the trade that "Demos," beyond any possibility of doubt, is emphatically one of them.

Ideal Films Ltd., 76/78, Wardour St., W.1.

Full-page trade-show promotional advertisement with inset of Denison Clift (*Bioscope*, 7 April 1921, p. 51)

The film was advertised again a week later with a picture of Milton Rosmer as Richard Mutimer trying to ward off the angry mob in the film's finale.



32 THE BIOSCOPE April 14, 1921

DENISON CLIFT'S

Second Big "Ideal" Production.

"DEMOS"

A Word in Advance

LESS than a fortnight to the Trade Show of "Demos," Denison Clift's second big effort.

WHEN that function has taken place exhibitors will agree that they have assisted at a great event in the British film trade.

MADE by a producer who has already proved himself a master, played by Milton Rosmer with all that wonderful power which has lifted him on to an artistic plane all his own, and telling one of the most tremendous tales in all literature, "Demos" may almost be said to mark the re-birth of the British film industry in an infinitely finer and more impressive form.

THESE are big claims to make for a picture. Let exhibitors come and judge for themselves.

Milton Rosmer in "DEMOS."

TRADE SHOW

Tuesday, April 26th
at the Palace
at 11 a.m.

Ideal Films Ltd., 76/78, Wardour St., W.1.

Second trade-show promotional advertisement (*Bioscope*, 14 April 1921, p. 32)

The trade-show film premiere of *Demos* at the Palace Theatre on Tuesday, 26 April 1921, proved to be a big triumph. As reported in *Motion Picture News*:

> "Demos," a great tragedy by the late George Gissing, has made a great impression upon the London picture trade. Denison Clift wrote his own scenario and produced the picture,

which was trade shown at the London Palace on April 26th. Many celebrities were present, including Beatrice Harraden [the novelist]. Sir Rider Haggard led in the ovation that was given the presentation of the picture, and declared it faultlessly artistic, and the greatest British photoplay that has yet been made."[11]

The *Bioscope* reporter at the Palace Theatre, who went under the unfortunate pen name "Dangle," was able to interview Sir Henry Rider Haggard, the famous author of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1886), after the showing of the film. He writes,

> Sir Rider Haggard, who attended the Trade Show with Miss Beatrice Harraden, congratulates the production on defying the film convention which insists on the happy ending and resisting the temptation to tone down the finale of Gissing's work. "It would have been madness," he remarks, "to give the story any other termination. The natural ending is perfectly obvious, and the producers have given it, in the picture, its proper climax. The picture is a fine, consistent performance, well developed from certain elementary situations to a necessary and ultimate conclusion. I particularly liked the last scenes, in which the wife and former sweetheart meet over the dead body of Richard Mutimer. I thought they were very wisely introduced. The whole production is, in my opinion, extremely artistic."[12]

An *Era* reporter was also at the trade presentation of *Demos* and had some interesting things to say about the film:

> The trade show of Mr. Denison Clift's fine adaptation of this novel was given at the Palace Theatre on Tuesday, April 26, and a large audience gave it a good send off. This grim tragedy, almost like a Greek play in its intensity and realism, was magnificently interpreted by an unusually powerful cast. Mr. Milton Rosmer surpassed himself as the weak dual-natured hero, Richard Mutimer, at first the idol of the people, and then the victim of their vengeance. His happy insouciance as the careless young workman contrasts sharply with his final downfall and death at the hands of the infuriated mob. Miss Evelyn Brent gave an ideal representation of Emma Vine, the sweet-natured, pure-minded woman of the people, whom Richard basely deserted to marry an aristocrat in former years. Miss Bettina Campbell was an admirable foil as his patrician spouse; Miss Mary Brough and Miss Haidee Wright were inimitable as the representatives of the low-born and the aristocratic mother respectively. Miss Vivian Gibson was pretty and plaintive as Richard's sister, Alice. Mr. Olaf Hytten gave a powerful portrayal as Dan Dabbs, Richard's enemy, and eventual murderer. Mr. Warwick Ward was appropriately cynical as Willis Rodman, and Mr. Gerald McCarthy a dignified Hubert Eldon. The photography by Mr. William Shenton was particularly good, and the many thrilling incidents and the expressions on the faces of the infuriated mob were most realistic.[13]

Following the successful showing of the film at the Palace Theatre the next issue of *Bioscope* included a lengthy review of the film:

> "Demos"
>
> *Dramatic rise and fall of a workman who inherits a fortune — interesting and artistic production of a sombre but powerful tale by George Gissing — Admirable staging and excellent photography.*

Ideal 6 Reels

The fatal rise to fortune and the wretched death of a weak-willed demagogue form the subject of this dramatic story, adapted and produced by Denison Clift from a novel by George Gissing. It is a sombre tale, but it is saved from being sordid by the vigour of its action and by the nobler human qualities of the secondary characters.

Olaf Hytten as Daniel Dabbs, Evelyn Brent as Emma Vine, and Milton Rosmer as Richard Mutimer (*Bioscope*, 28 April 1921, p. 62)

The wealth and power suddenly acquired by Richard Mutimer, a workman, through the death, intestate, of a distant relative bring out every bad quality he possesses. Transformed from a contented labourer into a clumsy snob and cunning tyrant, he jilts his workgirl sweetheart, to marry a "lady," to whom he is odious, and forces his sister to give up her humble lover. Just as he is about to stand for Parliament, his wife discovers a lost will, under the terms of which Richard loses everything. Compelled, against his first instinct, to renounce his fortune, he becomes a workman again, and is persuaded by his brother-in-law to organise a "saving club." The brother-in-law disappears with the funds, and Richard is beaten to death by the angry investors, who have lost their former faith in him. He expires in the arms of his only remaining friend—the girl he heartlessly jilted.

As we have not read the Gissing novel, we are unable to say how closely it is followed by the film, though we should imagine the latter to be a very accurate interpretation. There could be no other reason for picturing the hero as a weak, mean, dishonest blusterer, for whom one loses all sympathy, and even interest, quite early in the story. As comparatively few of those who see the picture are likely to have read the book, we think Mr. Clift would have been wise to modify this singularly unattractive character-sketch which, although it may be justified artistically, can hardly be said to make pleasurable entertainment. It would have been possible to bring into greater prominence the fortunes of the real heir, a very fine fellow (splendidly played by Gerald McCarthy), and his autocratic old mother (an all-too-brief role, in which the great talents of Haidee Wright are wasted).

Richard's miserable end lacks the dignity of tragedy, and scarcely stirs one's pity. Under the circumstances, the obvious implication of his final exclamation, "Forgive them; they don't know—" (titled in ecclesiastical type) is not merely bathos, but in rather doubtful taste.

In elaborating the psychology of Richard, Mr. Clift has jumped altogether several potentially strong situations, such as the return of the property to the true heir. These rapid transitions give the play a somewhat episodal nature.

Although it does not exclude openings for criticism, the production is in many respects a fine and intelligent piece of work, which commands one's attention throughout. Milton Rosmer, as Richard, fills an exacting part with a great deal of skill. A certain lack of sincerity in the characterisation is probably due to the role, though one feels that Mr. Rosmer has been tempted to exaggerate in some of the more emotional scenes. However, the performance is undoubtedly a noteworthy exhibition of powerful acting.

The figure of Richard has been made to dominate the story to such an extent that smaller parts fall into an insignificance they do not, in many cases, deserve. Bettina Campbell gives a very restrained, sensitive study of Richard's unfortunate wife, and the ever-delightful Mary Brough is glimpsed briefly as his wise working-woman mother. A similarity of type among some of the ladies in the cast creates momentary difficulty in identifying the characters they play.

The film is admirably staged, and there are several effective mob scenes. A trifling defect is Richard's search for male fashions in a well-known paper devoted exclusively to women. Generally speaking, however, the detail work is careful and realistic. The photography throughout is splendid. Apart from unsympathetic features of its subject-matter, "Demos" should make a very wide appeal, for it pictures graphically and fairly both ends of the social scale—with perhaps, a trace of bias towards the upper classes. Problems of capital and labour loom discreetly in the background, and are suggestive, in an interesting way, without being dangerously controversial. Technically, the picture is a credit to the British studio by which it was produced.[14]

This review, certainly one of the fullest descriptions of the silent film of *Demos* to be passed down to us by someone who actually saw it in 1921, reveals quite clearly that Denison Clift produced a truly faithful version of Gissing's novel.

A reporter of *The Times* reviewed the film on 2 May, six days after the trade showing, as follows:

GISSING'S "DEMOS."

Mr. Milton Rosmer is fast making a name for himself as one of the most promising of the British actors working for the screen, and his performance in the Ideal adaptation of Mr. George Gissing's *Demos* is probably the best piece of work that he has yet given us. One is grateful that the producers have not shrunk from developing the story to its inevitable melancholy conclusion. The idea of any other ending to the story is unthinkable, and Mr. Dennison Clift [*sic*] has followed Gissing as faithfully as the most critical could desire.

Mr Rosmer's part is that of the working man, a born leader of the people, who inherits a fortune, and vows that he will reform the world. But money talks, and he quickly forgets the class from which he has sprung. He throws over the poor girl to marry one from the class to which he has been admitted, and generally turns his back on Demos. Then fate plays a cruel trick on him, for his wife discovers a missing will, which makes

him again a pauper. He is dissuaded from burning the will, and goes back to the people. But he is now a suspect. He is persuaded to launch a wild-cat scheme of investment for the working classes, and when his partner disappears with the proceeds the mob turn in their anger against the man who was once a god to them. In the most impressive part of the picture, he endeavours to convince a meeting boiling with indignation of his innocence, but they decline to listen to him, and he is hounded through the streets. He takes refuge in a cellar, but is discovered by the mob, who slay him in their fury, and as he dies he is comforted by the presence of his wife and of the girl whom he had thrown over.

It is not Mr. Rosmer's fault that the part is so drawn that one really has little sympathy with the man who forgets the stock from which he is sprung. The process of forgetting the past is so instantaneous and complete that one cannot help feeling that the man is not the born leader he was supposed to be. Mr. Rosmer's performance is always good; but in the closing scenes, wherein he realizes that he has forfeited the good opinion of those he had hoped to lead, it is brilliant. The gradual change from certainty that he will convince his sullen listeners to the agony of realizing that he is being hunted to his death is surprisingly well depicted, and the closing scene of all is as good as one could possibly ask for. Mr. Rosmer has the support of many clever players, among them Miss Mary Brough, Miss Evelyn Brent, Miss Haidee Wright, and Mr. Olaf Hytten.[15]

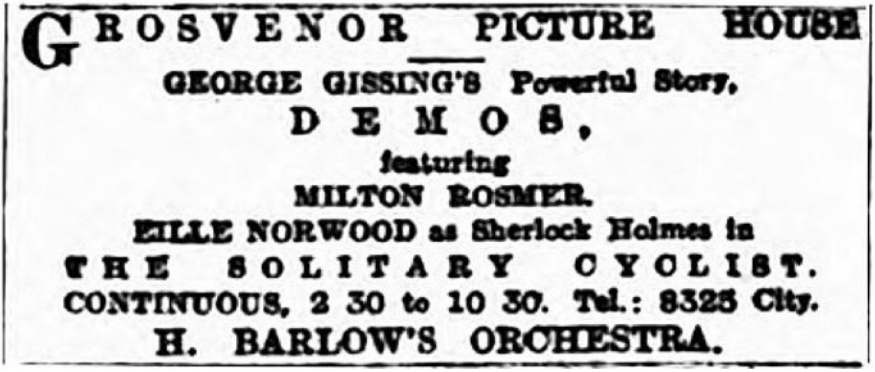
A few days after this review, *Bioscope* announced: "I. Davis is expecting to do particularly good business with Ideal's latest brace of films. 'Demos,' of which excellent reports are to hand of its London show, will be screened in Birmingham on May 20, and the Henry Ainley film, 'The Prince and the Beggar Maid [*sic*],' will follow after a short interval."[16] A week after this, on 12 May 1921, a *Bioscope* reporter told readers that "Mr. B. Rose, who has charge of Ideal's interests in the Four Northern Counties, informs me that 'Demos,' which was on view in London last week [*sic*], was booked out to upwards of 500 halls before the private exhibition. The subject is to be screened to the Trade in the north to-morrow, 13th inst."[17] Thus, before the first trade showing, the film was already set for release in 500 cinemas across the country later in the year. Meanwhile, the second trade show was to take place at Newcastle's Stoll Picture House on the 13 May. Further trade previews were planned at Sheffield's Wicker Picture House on the 17 May, where there was reported to be great interest in the film because of the several scenes filmed at the city's steelworks, then at the Birmingham Futurist Theatre on the 20 May, and in Liverpool and Nottingham towards the end of the month.

All these showings of *Demos* were favourably received by the trade audiences. Concerning the last of these at Nottingham, *Bioscope* announced on 2 June that "Mr. Browne, of the Ideal, has got a real top-holer in 'Demos.' All the good things said about this film in the trade press were amply verified by those attending the Nottingham Trade Show last week. In spite of bad times there is a keen demand for 'Demos.'"[18] A few weeks later, at the end of the trade-show run in the north, *Bioscope* summed up the impression the film had made as a "distinct success."[19]

Cinema release in the UK

The film of *Demos* was finally put on general release in London's West End and across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, from October 1921, four months after the last trade showing. For several weeks prior to its release, *Demos* was announced in the press and on billboards outside picture palaces as a coming attraction. The film's premiere was held at the Stoll Picture Theatre in Kingsway, Holborn, on 10th October, to coincide with the institution of a dinner service at the cinema. *Bioscope* reported on the occasion that this

> was celebrated on Monday evening by a private dinner party, at which members of the Press were invited to meet Denison Clift and Milton Rosmer, producer and star respectively of "Demos," [...] The occasion was further distinguished by the appearance of Kathleen Mason, M.A., the talented journalist, who has been appointed Press Director of the Kingsway house.
>
> The new Stoll dinners, under the direction of Miss Steel, are served every evening between 6.30 and 9.30 at a fixed price of 3s. 6d. or à la carte. As they are intended solely for the convenience of patrons, they will be available only to customers who have already taken tickets for the performance. Judging by Monday's specimen five-course menu they should rapidly become famous as the cheapest "quality meals" in town.[20]

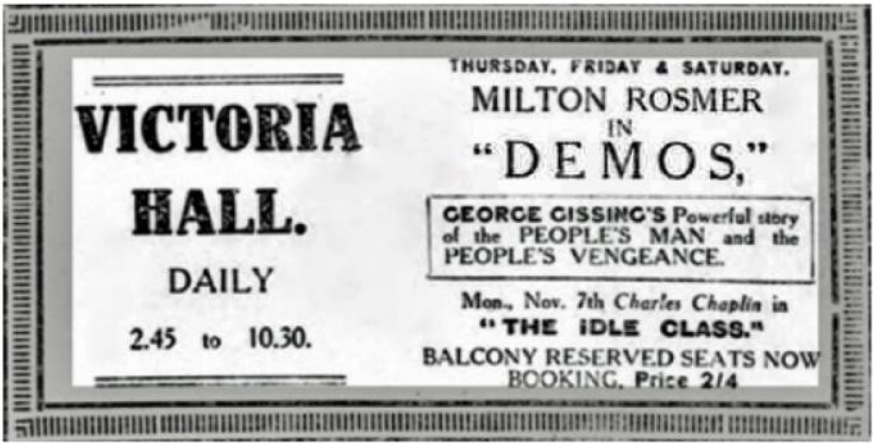

GROSVENOR PICTURE HOUSE
GEORGE GISSING'S Powerful Story,
DEMOS,
featuring
MILTON ROSMER.
EILLE NORWOOD as Sherlock Holmes in
THE SOLITARY CYCLIST.
CONTINUOUS, 2 30 to 10 30. Tel.: 8325 City.
H. BARLOW'S ORCHESTRA.

Manchester Cinema listing (*Manchester Evening News*, 19 October 1921, p. 1)

Everywhere the film was shown in October 1921 and thereafter, during the ten months of its cinema release up to July 1922, as the numerous advertisements in the regional and national press reveal, *Demos* was described variously as "the main feature," "the chief attraction," or "the big film." In anticipation of its first showing in its city, the *Sheffield Independent* wrote: "As the heroine of the new Ideal film 'Demos,' which is released this week, Evelyn Brent, the charming American actress, makes her fifth appearance in British films. The part of Emma Vine gave Miss Brent her first big chance in British pictures, of which she has made the most."[21] Over the next ten months there were many such vignettes about *Demos* and its stars in the local press. During the film's gradual release across the country, for example, in Hull, Mansfield, Taunton, and Hastings, it is

interesting to observe that *Demos* was often paired with Charlie Chaplin's re-release *Charlie, the Perfect Lady* in a double feature of tragedy and comedy. As the *Devon and Exeter Gazette* commented on 14 March 1922:

> An extra-long programme has been secured for patrons of the Palladium this week—Milton Rosmer in his great dramatic success, "Demos." The picture portrays in vivid fashion the rise and fall of the people's man, and is an admirable adaptation of George Gissing's world-famous novel. The film is considered by critics to be one of the best character studies ever yet screened. Diversion is provided by the one and only Charlie Chaplin in the re-issue of his great success from 1915, "Charlie, the Perfect Lady."[22]



Portsmouth cinema listing (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 2 November 1921, p. 1)

Exeter Cinema listing (*Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 13 March 1922, p. 2)

Because the trade promotion of *Demos* was so successful and the film so popular, as hundreds of newsprint pages of cinema listings confirm, it had a long run in British cinemas and was shown in the picture palaces of, among other places, Dundee, Cardiff, Manchester, Coventry, Liverpool, Belfast, Birmingham, Dublin, Bristol, Airdrie, Dover, Ripley, Banbury, Shields, Hartlepool, Todmorden, Nelson, Trowbridge, Boston, and Wells.

Ideal Film Company advertisement (*Bioscope*, 5 January 1922, p. 64)

Cinema release in America

Midway through its run in British cinemas, in January 1922, Ideal Pictures sent a 5-reel copy of *Demos* (in the early cinema era the length of films was denoted by the number of reels: hence the British version, which consisted of 6 reels of 35mm film, had a length of 5698 feet according to the official BFI estimate and a duration of ninety-five minutes) to its American representative and distributor, the Robertson-Cole Pictures Corporation in New York (aka R-C Pictures), to be registered for copyright with the Library of Congress. *Demos* was duly registered under the somewhat ambiguous title *Why Men Forget* on 14 January 1922. At this time, copies of films were returned to the film companies, so there is no surviving copy in the Library of Congress archives.

On the day of the film's official registration, *Motion Picture News* were quick off the mark with the following report:

> Scheduled for release during February is "Why Men Forget," presented by R-C Pictures, which promises to the reviewers and photoplay-going public something new in the form of screen productions. The play, "Why Men Forget," is adapted from the novel "Demos," by George Gissing, an English writer.
>
> A fine cast was engaged by Director Clift to produce "Why Men Forget." Milton Rosmer, in the leading role, that of Richard Mutimer, has gone from success to success on the British stage and screen, but in "Why Men Forget" he has outstripped all his former efforts. The cast also includes Miss Haidee Wright, who is described as having a wonderful gift for unforced pathos. She is a natural screen mother and one of the most likeable characters that ever appeared on a screen. Gerald McCarthy, who has a large following in Great Britain and Continental Europe, has a role that gives him opportunity to display his histrionic talents to the best advantage. Others in the cast are Vivian Gibson, Evelyn Brent, Irene Foster, Bettina Campbell, Daisy Campbell, Olaf Hytten, James C. Butt, Leonard Robson, Warwick Ward, George Travers and Thomas E. Montagu-Thacker.[23]

In this report, the writer names the film four times in the first four sentences. Furthermore, he says that the film "promises to the reviewers and photoplay-going public something new in the form of screen productions" without actually describing what this is. Meanwhile, note the use of the word "photoplay," which was frequently used by film critics of that era, and the description "histrionic talent," which was another way of describing the exaggerated art of acting in silent films. As we can see from the reviews of *Demos* in this essay, the language of critic's describing silent films was still evolving and had not yet hardened into the concepts we recognise today.

By 21 January R-C Pictures were distributing bill posters of the production to future exhibition venues, the following being one example which seems to suggest a story taking place far away from the slum streets of Islington:

Film poster (*Motion Picture News*, 25:8, 11 February 1922, p. 952)

On 22 January the *Cairo Bulletin* at Cairo, Illinois, announced one of the first exhibition showings of "Why Men Forget" in an American cinema – a screening at the Opera House with the Vincent's Orchestra providing musical accompaniment.[24] The same day, as R-C stepped up promotion of the film in America, a reporter at the *Baltimore Sun* was pleased to give readers some interesting details about the biography of the American "producer" as he was often referred to when that word was essentially interchangeable with "film director" as we understand the term today:

> Denison Clift, who in 1917 was "discovered" by Cecil B. DeMille, and who worked on that producer's staff for some time, has achieved singular success in the British

motion picture field as a producer. After working with DeMille for some time Clift joined the forces of Thomas H. Ince, and then went to the Fox organization as production editor. He also wrote and produced a number of film stories in this country, and then heard the call to go abroad.

His first production in England was "Why Men Forget," from the novel, "Demos" by George Gissing, which attained splendid success in Europe, and which is to be presented to American theatregoers by R-C Pictures. "Why Men Forget" is a thrilling screen portrayal of the drama of a labor leader who turned his back on his fellow workers when fortune seemed to smile on him, and when he went back to the ranks of the toilers was attacked for his perfidy to them, and destroyed.[25]

The film critic of *Variety* magazine, "Hart." by name, like his counterpart at *Motion Picture News*, also made some strange comments, after attending an early exhibition showing of *Demos* in late January:

Robertson-Cole released "Why Men Forget," a screen version of the George Gissing novel, "Demos," written and directed by Denison Clift. The production was made in England with an English cast and released in this country under the "All-Star Cast" billing.

The screen version is not in many respects sufficiently interesting to hold the attention of the average American audience. The story has its effective parts, but in the screening loses in comparison with the American program picture.

The story deals with the acquisition of sudden wealth by a man of the working class, the money causing him to forget his former friends and to fall in line with other capitalists rather than to help the lower class as he had promised to do.

The success of a picture in this country is largely based upon the popularity of its players. It is in this respect that "Why Men Forget" will experience difficulty, as the cast, regardless of its value in acting, contains no players of any prominence over here, although known to a large degree in England. "Why Men Forget" is a foreign picture of insufficient pretentiousness to gain recognition in this country. [26]

What is one to make of the statement: "The success of a picture in this country is largely based upon the popularity of its players" and that this is the case "regardless of its value in acting"? And to refer to a British film with an American director who previously made a name working with Cecil B. DeMille and a leading actress from Florida who had starred with John Barrymore in several Hollywood films as "a foreign picture" is crass.

On Friday, 3 February, *Why Men Forget* was given a final pre-release showing to critics and potential exhibitors at various venues across the country. The next morning, *Moving Picture World* and *Motion Picture News* published the two negative reviews[27] which Pierre Coustillas and Clifford McCarty printed in these pages in 1977, and which read as follows:

"Why Men Forget"
Nothing to Redeem This English Picture
Released by R - C
Reviewed by Fritz Tidden

If the Robertson-Cole Company felt that it just had to release another bad picture it might be said that it could have found one or two in this country without going abroad

for one. However, this enterprise in finding poor pictures seems lately to have become a habit with the firm, so it evidently wished to point out that it would not play favorites in nationalities. "Why Men Forget" is an English importation that has nothing to redeem it, nor anything that would justify more than the slightest consideration.

It makes a great to do concerning characters about which the most interested spectator could not find anything to claim his interest. They are utterly negative. It is morbid and never for a moment holds the attention, but the fault does not lie with the original material upon which the picture has been founded but in the treatment. "Why Men Forget" is said to be an adaptation of George Gissing's novel "Demos."

A good exploitation stunt might be to have patrons guess the connection between the title and the story.

The Cast

Richard Mutimer	Milton Rosmer
Mrs. Mutimer	Mary Brough
Alice Maud Mutimer	Vivian Gibson
Emma Vine	Evelyn Brent
Kate	Irene Foster
Adela Waltham	Bettina Campbell
Mrs. Waltham	Daisy Campbell
Hubert Eldon	Gerald McCarthy
Mrs. Eldon	Haidee Wright
Daniel Dabbs	Olaf Hytten
Jim Cullen	James C. Butt
Stephen Longwood	Leonard Robson
Willis Rodman	Warwick Ward
Keene	George Travers
Cowes	Thomas E. Montagu-Thacker

Adapted from George Gissing's Novel
"Demos"
Scenario by Denison Clift.
Director, not mentioned.
Length, 5 Reels.

The Story

The story concerns Richard Mutimer, who is discharged for taking up the time of the men in a factory while listening to his socialistic utterances. He becomes suddenly wealthy through the death of an uncle. Then he proceeds to forget his old sweetheart, Emma Vine, and marries a society girl. The uncle's will is found and the estate, it is disclosed, belongs to other heirs. Richard returns to his poor home, where his former friends mob him, and at last he finds comfort in the arms of Emma, although he has been seriously injured.

Fritz Tidden's nationalistic condemnation of *Why Men Forget* is questionable as it is, but his critique is put all the more into question by the fact that he does not seem to have seen the film to its bitter end, if at all, according to his synopsis. For every other review I have found describes a different ending, not one in which Mutimer "finds comfort in the arms of Emma" after being "seriously injured," thus seeming to imply that he lives on, but one in which

he is "mortally" wounded, and, at the last, dies. Moreover, Tidden makes no mention of the saving fund for the workers or that it is because they think Mutimer has stolen it, after the Company secretary had decamped with the money, that the mob fall on him.

"WHY MEN FORGET"

(R-C Pictures)

In Factory Localities This May Get Over

THE labor note in this picture may interest those patrons who belong to factory communities, but owing to a lack of punch and action of any romantic or dramatic nature, even these spectators may not find it a means of entertainment. It is a British-made feature with players unknown to audiences on this side of the water. Hence it has its drawbacks as far as carrying some personality appeal. The story originally known as "Demos," written by George Gissing, may have contained some sound virtues, but translated for the screen it reveals stock situations and an orthodox line of development which never intrigues the imagination. However, it has a certain lesson which will undoubtedly have its effect with impressionable laboring classes.

It purposes to show that one of their members should not forget his balance when he suddenly becomes wealthy. He forgets because of his newfound fortune—forgets his ideals—forgets his promises—even forgets his sweetheart in his worship of the dollar and the manner in which it introduces him to society. The plot lacks a single outstanding scene of vitality, the interludes being filled with platform speech-making by the central figure and the little intimate details of his new home. There is nothing new or novel in the treatment. The capital-versus-labor formula is usually rich enough in situation and climax to interest the average patron. "Why Men Forget" never takes the spectator into any dramatic sequence. You do not identify yourself as a part of the story—you do not assume the identity of the hero because he does not make you feel his tragic circumstances when he climbs to the heights and fails in the end.

The characterization is poorly worked out, the feminine figures being almost negligible. It seems strange to see the discarded sweetheart take him up again after his brutal treatment. The climax reveals a storming of the mob to get at their erstwhile leader who has been entrusted with their savings. They pursue him through various byways and highways before they punish him in the home of his former fiancee. The story contains but a single character of any dramatic value, the others providing the background. Since there is no novelty of situation, it is easy to guess the outcome. The photography is rather uneven and the acting is uninspired. However, there is a lesson in the story which will be grasped by many. It shows that money is a curse when it destroys ideals. The title and the workingman's problem sugggest an angle for exploitation. It should score in certain communities where the program feature is the thing.—Length, 5 reels.—Laurence Reid.

In contrast to these two unfavourable reviews, that same day the *Exhibitors Trade Review* was far more positive about the potential appeal of the British

production to American cinemagoers in a full-page review which also gave a list of the cast, a synopsis, and included four (now faded) stills from the film:

> This picture will get over. It is interesting and will hold the attention throughout. There is very little padding and no objectionable sex situations. But it is a much-mooted question among exhibitors as to whether the English ideal of married life "gets over" in this country. The fact that the acting of principals is true to the life, and that the situations are taken from real life in England, will not save the different scenes from appearing "forced" and unreal to the theatregoing public in this country. With the newspapers of to-day full of marital troubles, the first remark from the women in the audience would be "What does she stand it for?" And they would be right. For Americans could not treat their women folk in the manner portrayed and get away with it.
>
> **Points of Appeal**—A most interesting story. Beautiful camera work. The love element, from an English standpoint, is O.K. The fact that the picture is based on the stage play, "The Agitator," that was a hit in England, will help a lot.
>
> **The Cast**—Milton Rosmer, a favourite stage and screen star in England has the leading role, and does a clever bit. Evelyn Brent and Bettina Campbell deserve high honors in the supporting cast. The balance of the cast is well chosen and together offer a most life-like rendition.
>
> **Photography, Lighting, Direction**—There is everywhere apparent a most exacting care of the minutest detail in the interior settings. They are truly beautiful examples of the high art of making a setting look real. And the photography is remarkably clear and all scenes are sharp and full of detail. The continuity is well worked out and the story goes along smoothly. [28]

In this review one is at once struck by the baffling remark the critic makes about the different way Americans supposedly treat their wives compared to Mutimer in *Demos*. Even with the false attribution of the story to an 1895 play by Mrs Oscar Beringer, he must have observed that the story takes place in the patriarchal world of the late-Victorian era when the marriage situation was far different for women, and hence not to be compared to married life in the 1920s. As it happens, in Frank Norris's 1899 novel, the eponymous McTeague exasperates and abuses his wife Trina and yet she stays with him until he steals from her and ultimately abandons her. Was divorce any easier to obtain in America in 1899 (when there were 3 divorces to 1000 marriages) than in Britain in the 1880s?

On 11 February *Motion Picture News* also had better things to say of the film:

> Booked for pre-release exhibition at Loew's State theatre, Broadway, and other houses of that circuit in the New York City territory, "Why Men Forget," created widespread interest among exhibitors of the metropolitan district last week, according to Charles R. Rogers, general manager of distribution for R-C Pictures by which the production is being released.
>
> "Why Men Forget" also is reported to have received a most enthusiastic reception in other cities, especially in the East and Middle West among the industrial centers. It was directed by Denison Clift, who formerly was associated with Cecil De Mille [*sic*]. Milton Rosmer is featured.[29]

From top to bottom: Milton Rosmer as Richard Mutimer with Evelyn Brent playing Emma Vine; Rosmer and Brent again; Rosmer and Bettina Campbell as Adela Waltham; Olaf Hytten as Daniel Dabbs, Rosmer, Mary Brough as Mrs Mutimer, and Evelyn Brent again (*Exhibitors Trade Review*, 4 February 1922, p. 717).

After the exhibition showings in the Midwest and New York State, R-C Pictures made sure that *Demos* was widely distributed and it was finally launched before the paying public under its alternative title on 4 February 1922. Using the trade magazines to spread the word about the film, R-C Pictures composed ready-made press notices, suggested cinema programme write-ups, and provided catchlines for all potential cinema outlets. The two proposed catchlines were:

> Why do men forget? Is it because of money? If a man becomes suddenly wealthy isn't he apt to forget his old friends? See "Why Men Forget."

> A stirring story of mills and mill workers is "Why Men Forget" which comes to the theatre next ————.

Due to its much publicised and positive reception on its exhibition run, *Why Men Forget* was a highly anticipated film in America prior to opening. On release, it was at once screened in Arizona, California, Kansas, Maryland, Texas, and in Honolulu, Hawaii.

On 11 March *Motion Picture News* gave an update on the film's run on the West Coast:

> Following its New York premiere at Loew's theatres, "Why Men Forget" is setting a spirited pace in bookings throughout the country, according to Charles R. Rogers, general manager of distribution for R-C Pictures by which the production was recently released.
>
> A recent report received at the R-C Home Office from James Carrier, West Coast exploiter, brought the information that "Why Men Forget," when screened at the R-C exchange in San Francisco, caused no end of favorable comment among exhibitors who reviewed it and that it was widely booked in that territory as a result. What impressed West Coast exhibitors, according to Mr. Carrier, were the numerous practical exploitation angles in the production.[30]

A fortnight later, the *Courier-Post* in Camden, New Jersey, also had only good things to say about the film prior to its showing at the Garden Theatre:

> This photoplay is a presentation of a powerful dramatic theme—a tragic romance set in an industrial background in which most of the characters are plain, rugged folk, who work out their destinies in the mills and factories of a simple English town.

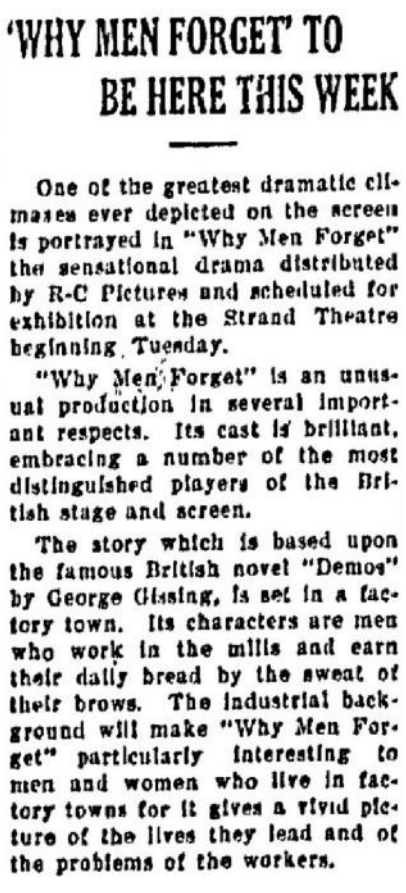
> Another outstanding feature that promises to make "Why Men Forget" of wide appeal in this country is the fact that it presents some of the finest dramatic acting ever seen on the screen. A cast of British players do brilliant work in the big scenes in which the production abounds. Milton Rosmer, widely known as a stage and screen star in Europe, has the leading role. He appears as Richard Mutimer, a factory worker whose enthusiasm and persuasive personality make him the leader of the other mill hands. He is regarded as a hero by his followers. His sweetheart, Emma Vine, idolizes him and he is very happy despite his lowly position.
>
> The fortune suddenly makes him a rich man. A relative dies and leaves Richard Mutimer his vast estates. He has riches and begins to spend his money. The sudden affluence changes him completely. He forgets his old friends of the factory, forgets Emma Vine and becomes a social climber. His wealth enables him to climb high and he forsakes Emma Vine and weds a young woman of wealth and social standing. He is proposed for Parliament and likes the idea. He gives brilliant banquets in his palatial home.
>
> The pendulum of fate swings the other way for Richard Mutimer. His wife, who dislikes his pretentious sham, unearths another will while rummaging through their home and according to the document the riches Mutimer had inherited should have gone to another. In an instant his wealth is swept away.
>
> Among the players is Evelyn Brent, who has the role of Emma Vine, to whom Mutimer goes at last for shelter from the mob. Miss Brent is an American girl who has won fame in England on the stage and screen. She was born in Tampa, Florida.[31]

In the next few months *Why Men Forget* showed in Missouri, Louisiana, South Carolina, Nebraska, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Montana, Kentucky, and Oklahoma. On the film's arrival in Norfolk, Virginia, on 11 July 1922, the critic of the *Norfolk News* was not too hopeful about its reception:

> It is safe to predict lots of folk won't like "Why Men Forget," which opened here Monday and repeats tonight, with Milton Rosmer, Bettina Campbell and Evelyn Brent sharing the honors. The play, adapted from the novel "Demos," does not end happily, which is against all the best movie tradition. But it is a strong film and hits facts squarely, while the acting is better than average. The plot deals with a laboring man, a leader of his fellows, and his loss of ideals following the sudden acquisition of great wealth. He is recalled to his duty by a butterfly he has married, who proves to be a thoroughbred. The rather harsh ending follows a mob scene full of thrills.[32]

In the second half of 1922 the film reached Ohio, Illinois, Wyoming, the District of Columbia, Vermont, Georgia, Texas, Kansas, Indiana, Delaware, New Mexico, and South Dakota. On 7 July, at the American Theatre in Laramie, Wyoming, it was the main feature in a double bill with *Custer's Last Charge*. Perhaps, on this occasion, the cinema ought to have renamed the film *Mutimer's Last Stand*. Incidentally, 46 years earlier, on 10 September 1876, when Gissing arrived in America, the country was still very much in a state of shock following the recent massacre of five companies of the 7th Cavalry and in particular the death of General George Armstrong Custer at Little Big Horn. Indeed, the papers were still full of the personal tragedies of the fallen soldiers.

A month later, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, a reporter of the *Aberdeen American*[33] boomed the film, in anticipation of its arrival, as follows (see left): Soon after the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* in Utah also advertised the film positively using similar language:



'WHY MEN FORGET' TO BE HERE THIS WEEK

One of the greatest dramatic climaxes ever depicted on the screen is portrayed in "Why Men Forget" the sensational drama distributed by R-C Pictures and scheduled for exhibition at the Strand Theatre beginning Tuesday.

"Why Men Forget" is an unusual production in several important respects. Its cast is brilliant, embracing a number of the most distinguished players of the British stage and screen.

The story which is based upon the famous British novel "Demos" by George Gissing, is set in a factory town. Its characters are men who work in the mills and earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brows. The industrial background will make "Why Men Forget" particularly interesting to men and women who live in factory towns for it gives a vivid picture of the lives they lead and of the problems of the workers.

"Why Men Forget" Shown at the Utah Theatre Today

"Why Men Forget," a brilliant dramatic production, replete with action, heart interest and one of the biggest climaxes ever depicted on the screen, will be shown at the Utah Theatre today. It is being distributed in the United States by R-C Pictures.[34]

At Christmas 1922 the film was running simultaneously in Greenfield, Indiana, in Burlington, Vermont, in Lafayette, Louisiana, and in Elmira, New York. In the early months of 1923, it was thrilling cinema audiences in Florida, Tennessee, Connecticut, and North Carolina. On 22 March, some days before the film was shown in Little River, Kansas, the manager of the Majestic Theatre, Clara V. Jennings, came up with the following moral for the drama of Gissing's story in the *Little River Monitor*: "'Why Men Forget' is a drama that tells the story of a workman who fell heir to a million dollars and lost his friends, but later found that friends and a clear conscience are more precise than gold. After you see this picture you probably wouldn't forget your friends if you inherited the earth."[35]

As the hundreds of listings in the press reveal, the film of Gissing's *Demos* had a wide circulation in the United States, with its main run lasting from February 1922 until December 1923 by which time it had been shown in every state in the country. Even at this late date some newspapers were publicising the film with imaginative and interesting illustrations. For example, in May 1923, the film showed in Calexico, California, on the Mexico-United States border with the following advertisement in the local newspaper[36]:

The film was still being screened in some American towns, for instance in Tucson, Arizona, as late as 22 January 1925. Because of this wide circulation, one can always hope that a copy may have survived the sands of time, and will eventually surface.

Cinema release in Australia

To modern cinemagoers it will seem astounding that *Demos* (the British title was used) did not reach Australia until March 1924, two years after opening in America and thirty months after its release in Britain. The explanation is that there was a queuing system in cinemas Down Under with American films having precedence on all screens, so British films had to wait their turn. At this time 94% of films exhibited in Australia were US productions, for, although the home industry had boomed in the 1910s, after the First World War there was little investment in films – the arrival of home-grown stars such as Peter Finch, Chips Rafferty, and Marshall Thompson was still 15 to 20 years away, whilst the most notable Australian actress of silent films, Enid Bennett, had left for America in 1917, as the later Hollywood legend, Errol Flynn, would in the 1930s after a brief stint acquiring early acting experience in Northampton (UK) of all places. For this reason, Ideal Pictures had decided to compete against the American monopoly, as the *Sydney Sun* announced on 28 May 1923:

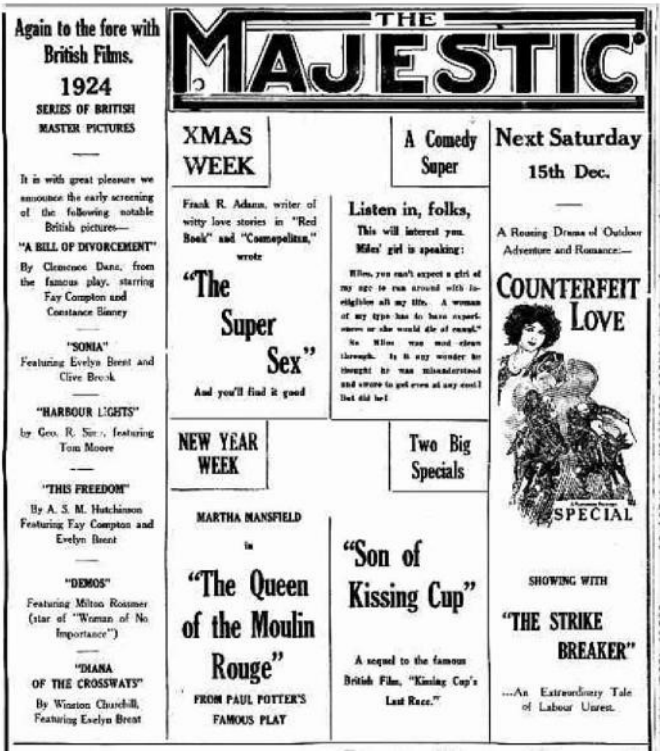
> A big blow is soon to be struck at the American film market in Australia, according to Mr. A. Barnett, a representative of Ideal Films, Ltd., who has just arrived in Sydney. "I'm really the thin end of the wedge," he confessed today. "I am bound to be followed by the whole British market. The supremacy of the American-made film in Australia is to be challenged, and I believe that we have productions in our studios which will make the public insist on seeing films which have been made in Britain. We are getting right away from the U.S.A. atmosphere. We do not intend to concentrate on 'he-men' stories or sex triangles. I believe the public is sick of them. Our scenic efforts are not so complicated or overdone, and our photography is incomparably better.

"Films produced by my company have been shown with great success in the United States themselves, and also in South Africa. Soon Australia, too, will have a chance of seeing such pictures as 'A Bill of Divorcement,' 'The Battle of Jutland,' 'Demos,' 'Harbour Lights,' 'Through Fire and Water,' and 'Old Bill Through the Ages,' 'Sonia,' 'This Freedom,' 'The Hawk,' 'Mary Queen of Scots,' and 'Charley's Aunt,' for which a record price was paid.

"In these productions our stars will be such artists as Fay Compton, Evelyn Brent, and Milton Rosmer, and with them will work well-known American actors, such as Tom Moore, Charley Hutchinson, and Constance Binney.

"We intend to fight the system of film-leasing, which forces an exhibitor to book his whole programme for 12 months ahead, without knowing in the least what he is getting. We want to give the exhibitor here absolute freedom, such as he possesses in England. He should have the right of choosing his own films for his own audiences, and to do that, we are prepared, if necessary, to open our own exchange."[37]

Six months later *Demos* was given prominent promotion, along with several other productions by Ideal Pictures, in the *Call* newspaper (Perth, WA),[38] to whet the appetite of filmgoers, months before the film's release. Note, bottom left, the attribution of *Diana of the Crossways* to the greatest Englishman of the 20th century. And no, he did not write the screenplay, and neither did the American author of the same name. George Meredith would have turned in his grave!



When *Demos* eventually opened in Australia, on 15 March 1924, the first report of the film was a short positive mention in the *Sydney Sun* the next day:

> Ideal Films Ltd are responsible for the production of "Demos," adapted from George Gissing's novel, which opened at the Piccadilly yesterday. The picture is capably produced, and the scenario-writer is to be congratulated on his close following of the story; there has been no mangling of the plot to produce the usually inevitable "happy ending." The significance of the drama remains unmarred. The cast is filled by leading English players, including Milton Rosmer, Mary Brough, Vivian Gibson, and Evelyn Brent.[39]

The film was still on view at the Piccadilly, "SYDNEY'S COOLEST THEATRE" (literally), eight days later, where it had an extended run.[40] By this time, *Demos* was playing in other parts of New South Wales, but it would take nine months to complete the full circuit of the state's towns and cities. Indeed, the film's distribution across the Australasian continent was so slow that it was still going the rounds until at least May 1925.

In many Australian cinemas, *Demos* was paired in a double feature with *The Battle of Jutland*, a classic short film, for example at the Colosseum theatre in Lithgow, NSW on 30 May 1924.[41] By August the film had reached the King's Theatre at Newcastle, NSW, where it was headlined as "The Picture that set all London talking."[42] In January 1925 the film played in Queensland and Western Australia. In early February the film critic of the *South Western Times* at Bunbury, WA, wrote:

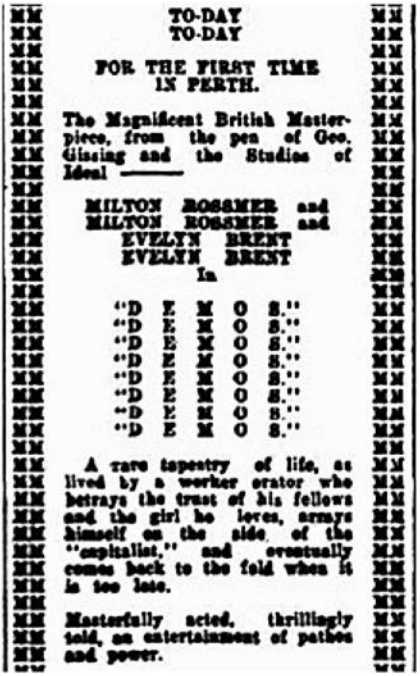
> To-morrow evening Lyric management will present George Gissing's powerful tale of the people's man—and the people's vengeance—"Demos." This is the tale of Demos—the people—and their idol, Richard Mutimer. When it opens, Richard was one of the multitude of hands in the Longwood Iron Works—so many cogs in the wheels,

unconsidered items in the great producing machine that too often scraps human hopes and desires.

There were murmurings at times among the toilers. But no one voiced the discontent of Demos more eloquently than Richard, mounted, as was his want, on a great steel crane in the yards. He had a likeable nature, and his magnetism drew the crowd; his comrades trusted him, for he loved them sincerely and yearned to help them.

One day, the owner of the works, incensed beyond toleration by Richard's growing power, summoned him to his presence. There was an angry encounter between the two men and Mutimer was discharged. But the blow, which would have unnerved most workmen, only stirred up Richard's innate vanity. His dismissal meant that his employer held him in fear. The discovery filled Richard with savage exultation. It gratified that personal pride, which later was to harden into utter selfishness. "Demos," as a drama should thrill you. It is a British-made picture with Milton Rosmer, Mary Brough, and an all-star cast, and is a remarkable visualisation of lovers of middle-class life.[43]

On 18 February the film's arrival at Perth's Majestic Theatre was celebrated in the *West Australian*[44] – with the leading actor's name being misspelt (see left).



TO-DAY
TO-DAY

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN PERTH.

The Magnificent British Masterpiece, from the pen of Geo. Gissing and the Studios of Ideal

MILTON ROSSMER and
MILTON ROSSMER and
EVELYN BRENT
EVELYN BRENT
In

"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."
"D E M O S."

A rare tapestry of life, as lived by a worker orator who betrays the trust of his fellows and the girl he loves, arrays himself on the side of the "capitalist," and eventually comes back to the fold when it is too late.

Masterfully acted, thrillingly told, an entertainment of pathos and power.

The next day it was to be shown in Brisbane, where the *Daily Standard* announced the film as follows: "Majestic Theatre.—To-day all new pictures will be screened at the Majestic, the principal picture being the English production "Demos," released by Turner Films, and featuring Milton Rosmer."[45]

ENTERTAINMENTS.

MAJESTIC.

Direction .... Union Theatres.
For the First Time in Brisbane.
In 8 Massive Reels.
Written by George Gissing.
And Starring Milton Rosmer.
The World's Greatest Living Picture.
DEMOS.
A Sublime Medley of Pathos and Humour.
Comedy and Tragedy.
The Story of a Girl's Unwise Love.
Also:
The Astounding Adventures of "Charles the Bold,"
Featuring
CHARLIE CHAPLIN.
Uncle Ned saw it in Melbourne, and he says it's a
"Blooming Stinger."
And on the Stage,
WIN FAN SUN.
(Short Tuck Sam)
And the Majestic Follies Revue.
Together with the
Ladies' Hair Fashions Competitions.
Third Division Semi Finals.
CHILDREN'S ADMISSION, DAY & NIGHT:
6d. SIXPENCE; ONLY SIXPENCE.

The film's run in Australia, apparently, came to an end in Warwick, Queensland, on 16 May 1925, almost four years after its original release in British cinemas.

Conclusion

The negative assessment, one finds in W. H. Hudson's comment in a letter to Morley Roberts – "Just what I thought myself when I saw it yesterday – G. G. would have been mad at the way his story is treated – its jerkiness"[46] – and in the two damning American reviews Pierre Coustillas and Clifford McCarty printed in these pages in 1977, that the silent film of *Demos* was "an English importation that has nothing to redeem it, nor anything that would justify more than the slightest consideration," can now be placed in the wider context of a far more positive reaction in most other film reviews. For, as we have seen, the majority of contemporary critics considered the film to be a successful cinematic adaptation and interpretation of Gissing's novel with some fine performances by an undoubtedly distinguished cast of theatrical veterans and rising star talents.

Indeed, reading between the lines of the many reports on the silent production of *Demos*, it seems a great loss to posterity, if it is true that not a single copy of the film has survived. Certainly, in view of both the fact that the film had a wide distribution in three countries and that several supposedly "lost" silent films have been rediscovered recently, such as the 1928 production "The Mating Call," which also starred Evelyn Brent and was found by chance in the archives of Howard Hughes' memorabilia by curators at the University of Nevada, it is still possible that a copy of "Demos" might have survived the sands of time and yet be unearthed in similar circumstances. If so, it would be fascinating to be able to compare the film with Erich von Stroheim's, *Greed* (1923), his epic version of Frank Norris's naturalistic novel, *McTeague*, which also has the resonance of a Greek tragedy in its depiction of the flawed hero.

1 W. H. Hudson, *Men, Books and Birds* (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1925), p. 307.

2 Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing Commemorated in the Basque Country and Elsewhere," *Gissing Journal*, 40:1 (January 2004), p. 8.

3 Pierre Coustillas, "Notes and News," *Gissing Journal*, 46:1 (January 2010), pp. 35-36.

4 Anon, "A Big Ten," *Lancashire Daily Post*, 20 June 1920, p. 5.

5 See Lionel Collier, "Vintage review," *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 March 1928, p. 19 in accompanying booklet in Eureka Entertainments Ltd: The Masters of Cinema Series, Blu-Ray DVD, #146, "The Last Command," 2016.

6 Anon, "Making 'Thought Pictures.' Milton Rosmer in 'Demos': Scenes of Passion at Elstree," *Bioscope*, 24 February 1921, p. 6.

7 *Picturegoer*, May 1921, p. 49.

8 "Cinema Notes: Gissing on the Screen," *Freeman's Journal*, 24 February 1921, p. 1.

9 Anon, "A Happy Combination. An Illuminating Producer. Interview with Mr. Milton Rosmer," *Bioscope*, 5 May 1921, p. 6.

10 Anon, "Amusements," *Daily Standard*, 19 February 1925, p. 2.

[11] Lilian R. Gale, "Live Notes from the Studios: About Players," *Motion Picture News*, 11 June 1921, p. 3578.

[12] 'Dangle,' "Studio Notes," *Bioscope*, 5 May 1921, p. 39.

[13] Anon, "'Demos,'" *Era*, 4 May 1921, p. 16.

[14] Anon, "Film Reviews: Demos," *Bioscope*, 28 April 1921, pp. 61-62.

[15] Anon, "The Film World: Gissing's *Demos*," *Times* (London), 2 May 1921, p. 6. The review was discovered by Frederick Nesta as noted in *The Gissing Journal*, 40:1 (January 2004), p. 8.

[16] Anon, "Birmingham & Midlands," *Bioscope*, 5 May 1921, p. 71.

[17] Anon, "Four Northern Counties," *Bioscope*, 12 May 1921, p. 77.

[18] Anon, "Notts and Derby," *Bioscope*, 2 June 1921, p. 71.

[19] Anon, "Four Northern Counties," *Bioscope*, 23 June 1921, p. 53.

[20] Anon, "Dinners for Picturegoers. Novel Service at Stoll Theatre," *Bioscope*, 13 October 1921, p. 24d.

[21] Anon, "Men and Women of To-Day: A Film Sportswoman," *Sheffield Independent*, 17 October 1921, p. 1.

[22] Anon, "Exeter Cinemas: Chief Films for the Week," *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 14 March 1922, p. 6.

[23] Anon, "'Why Men Forget' Set for February Issue," *Motion Picture News*, 14 January 1922, p. 526.

[24] See *Cairo Bulletin* (Cairo, Illinois), 22 January 1922, p. 2.

[25] Anon, "American Producer has Success Abroad," *Baltimore Sun*, 22 January 1922, p. 8 (Pt 6).

[26] Hart., "Why Men Forget," *Variety*, 27 January 1922, p. 39.

[27] Fritz Tidden, "Why Men Forget," *Moving Picture World*, 4 February 1922, p. 553; Laurence Reid, "Why Men Forget (R-C Pictures)," *Motion Picture News*, 4 February 1922, p. 903.

[28] Anon, "Why Men Forget," *Exhibitors Trade Review*, 4 February 1922, p. 717.

[29] Anon, "'Why Men Forget' Gets Pre-Release Showing," *Motion Picture News*, 11 February 1922, p. 1022.

[30] Anon, "'Why Men Forget' is Widely Booked," *Motion Picture News*, 11 March 1922, p. 1511.

[31] Anon, "Garden," *Courier-Post* (Camden, NJ), 27 March 1922, p. 18.

[32] Anon, "Strand," *Norfolk Post*, 11 July 1922, p. 5.

[33] Anon, "'Why Men Forget' To Be Here Next Week," *Aberdeen American*, 6 August 1922, p. 13.

[34] Anon, "'Why Men Forget' Shown at the Utah Theatre Today," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 13 August 1922, p. 11.

[35] Anon, "Majestic," *Little River Monitor* (Kansas), 22 March 1923, p. 1.

[36] Anon, "Why Men Forget," *Calexico Chronicle*, 2 May 1923, p. 4.

[37] Anon, "'THIN END.' Coming to Australia: British Films," *Sydney Sun*, 28 May 1923, p. 8.

[38] Anon, "The Majestic," *Call* (Perth, WA), 14 December 1923, p. 3.

[39] Anon, "George Gissing," *Sydney Sun*, 16 March 1924, p. 20.

[40] See *Sydney Sun*, 24 March 1924, p. 10.

[41] See *Lithgow Mercury*, 30 May 1924, p. 5.

[42] See *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 23 August 1924, p. 8.

[43] Anon, "Lyric Theatre: Wednesday," *South Western Times* (Bunbury, WA), 3 February 1925, p. 1.

[44] Advertisement in *West Australian* (Perth, WA), 18 February 1925, p. 2.

[45] Anon, "Amusements," *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 19 February 1925, p. 2.

Notes and News

Wulfhard Stahl has sent news of a short review of Eduard Bertz's *The French Prisoners* from 1884, which he discovered in *The Spectator* (8 November 1884, Vol. 57, No. 2941, p. 1490). It reads:

> The French Prisoners. By Edward Bertz. (Macmillan and Co.) —
>
> This "story for boys" has much merit. It looks like a faithful picture from life, and its characters have that natural look which it seems especially difficult to give to boy-figures. We have no fault to find with it, except, perhaps, that there is an unnecessary melancholy about its ending.

It would be useful to have a modern scholarly edition of Bertz's scarce short novel, which Macmillan republished in 1902. A few years ago, there was a brief moment in time when two copies of it in two different bindings were for sale on *Ebay*. Whilst rereading the second volume of Gissing's *Collected Letters* a few months ago, I was interested to learn that Bertz overreacted to the one single bad review he had read of his first published book. Gissing remarked on the matter in a letter to Algernon on 2 January 1885: "Poor Bertz writes a letter of eight pages of lamentation, because the *Daily News* has spoken rather harshly of his book. Ye Gods, & yet every other review praises him highly. How would he take a real scarifying?"

In a recent half-page commentary in the *Times Literary Supplement* (12 April), J. C. refers to the article in the January issue of our *Journal* on the newly-discovered reviews of Gissing's early novels. Taking sides with the beginning novelist's work of the 1880s, he is particularly pained by "the unmerciful lash" of the contemporary critic, especially that of the *Pall Mall Gazette* critic who "held up" *The Emancipated* "as an example to any young 'commencing novelist'" of a novel which "will win its author neither fame nor fortune ... six months hence it will be forgotten." *It was not*. There were further editions of the novel in 1893, 1894, 1895, 1897, 1901, 1911, 1969, 1977, and 1985. Moreover, it is a favourite of mine among Gissing's novels.

Mitsuharu Matsuoka recently informed me that his *Gissing in Cyberspace* website is now to be found at http://victorian-studies.net/GG-Journal.html. The complete contents of *The Gissing Newsletter* and *The Gissing Journal* from 1965 to 2008 are now located at http://victorian-studies.net/gissing/newsletter-journal/contents.pdf. Matsuoka's homepage is now http://victorian-studies.net/matsuoka-e.html.

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Recent Publications

Volumes

Heather Tilley, *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture). Cambridge University Press, 2019. PB. 298 pp. ISBN 9781316645444. £22.99.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Geoffrey G. Hiller, Peter L. Groves, and Alan F. Dilnot (eds.), *An Anthology of London in Literature, 1558-1914,* "*Flowers of City All,*" London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. The book has 145 excerpts of between 250 and 2500 words from writers on London divided into four periods. Gissing is represented in the section entitled "Period 4: London – Capital of Empire, 1871-1914" by four extracts (only Charles Dickens is represented by more) from his novels set in London: "A Struggling Writer," pp. 199-200; "The Crystal Palace Park," pp. 205-206; "The Women's Movement," pp. 215216; and "Supreme Ugliness in the Caledonian Road," pp. 221-222.

J. C., "Rough Reviewing," *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 April 2019, p. 36.

Sara Lyons, "Secularism and Secularisation at the Fin de Siècle," in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Fin de Siècle, Culture and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), Chapter Six, pp. 124-145. Part two of this chapter (pp. 132-138), 'Fin-de-Siècle Naturalism and the Crisis-of-Faith *Bildungsroman*,' is devoted to a study of the crisis of faith in Gissing's *Born in Exile*, Mary Augusta Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure.*

Richard Menke, "*New Grub Street*'s Ecologies of Paper," *Victorian Studies*, 61:1 (Autumn 2018), pp. 60-82.

Kyler Merrill, "'The Experience of Mrs. Patterson-Grundy' as Proto-Baudrillardian Parable," *Modernist Short Story Project*, 25 (Winter 2019), online at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mssp/25. This is an article on a short story by Morley Roberts.

Kathy Rees, "Book review: *Blindness and Writing: From Wordsworth to Gissing* by Heather Tilley," *Dickens Quarterly*, 35:4 (December 2018), pp. 385-388.

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The Gissing Journal publishes essays and book reviews on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with bibliographical, biographical, critical, and topographical subjects. They should be sent as a Word document to the editor, Markus Neacey, either by email to forfarmarkus@fastmail.co.uk or by post to:

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