Volume LIV, Number 2
April 2020

Contents

ISSN 0962-0443

The Gissing Journal

Volume LIV, Number 2, April 2020
"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

Precious Balms: A Fragment of Machen and Gissing Criticism

GEORGE GORNIAK
Grayswood, Surrey

Let the righteous smite me friendly and reprove me,
But let not their precious balms break my head.
Psalm 141:5

Authors such as Arthur Machen and George Gissing, who refused to write either for the masses or for Mrs Grundy toiled under many hardships and setbacks. The labours of Grub Street were compounded when the burden of producing books met with scant financial gain and attendant disparagement in the literary journals. Gissing was the more thin-skinned when it came to criticism of his works and early in his career temporarily gave up on his scrapbook of literary reviews.[1]

Machen, although he received his share of mixed reviews, usually negative, was far more sanguine on the matter: "Could anything be duller than a monotonous song of praise? […] Opposition, whether it be that of a mountain side or a body of critical opinion, is one of the chiefest zests and relishes of life; and so profoundly have I felt this that for the last thirty years I have hoarded up my 'notices,' with a very special eye of favour on these 'notices' which are foolishly termed bad."[2] In Machen's view only one type of notice was really bad and that was no notice at all – and from that there was no appeal! The resultant volume of his 'notices' was published in 1924 under the title of *Precious Balms* and contains a selection of the 'best bad' reviews collected over a period of thirty years. From a book of over 100 pages only a few short excerpts can be presented: the following giving a flavour of the enjoyment that he must have received. We begin with two extracts from the selection of reviews to his early novella *The Three Imposters*, first from *The Glasgow Herald* and then *Punch*:

> There are some books that produce a positive physical repulsion in their reader. Mr Machen's extremely disagreeable story is one of them. One may be fond of the gruesome, and even take pleasure in an occasional sup of horror, administered in the piquant and artistic style of which Poe and Baudelaire had the secret. Mr Machen himself, in his previous volume, led some of us to imagine that a share of the same gift might be found in him. But 'The Three Imposters' changes our view. […] Nothing

but a smart turn in brisk air can cleanse the feelings of the person who has been unfortunate enough to read this volume through. [p. 10]

For Mr Machen, though he has, it must be admitted, an occasional inspiration of the 'creepy,' is too anxious to produce 'goose-flesh' in the readers, and in his desire to do so he is apt to seek his efforts in what I cannot but consider an 'unsportsmanlike' fashion. For instance, he is too much addicted to the artifice of describing by telling you that things are indescribable. This is a device which, though perhaps not absolutely illegitimate, ought obviously to be very sparingly used. […] A writer must, of course, leave something to our imagination; but when we are continually meeting with creatures whose aspect is too hideous to be portrayed in human language, who utter words too awful to be repeated, and take part in orgies so abominable and revolting that they must for ever remain nameless, even the most indulgent readers may reasonably feel that he is getting rather short measure for his money. [p. 14]

Two further extracts are chosen from the chapter on *Hieroglyphics*, the first from *The Academy* and second from *The Morning Post*:

Enter Mr Machen in the part of Boswell to a talker both 'literary' and 'obscure,' who offers a test whereby to separate literature from 'fine' literature or, in effect, talent from genius. One listens respectfully to a reading hermit, because, on the face of it, a hermit's opinions should be matured by study and conceived in the calm of one who rolls no logs and grinds no axes. But, to get an unpleasant thing said once and for all, Mr Machen's hermit is an indolent person, careless of accuracy, who has grudged the labour of justifying some extraordinary depreciations. He is, in fact, for all his anonymity, an egoist, whose object seems to be brilliance rather than elucidation. [p. 24]

He talks (like the Walrus) of many things, of office boys, of Coleridge, of words that end in 'ings'; of Homer and Dickens, of literature, of art; of books that bore and 'lonely' books, which have 'a soul apart.' [p. 27]

The House of Souls produced a clever review from *The Sunday Sun* including this extract: "The tales strike one as the work of one who has overtasked his imagination in London streets and been overcome by nightmares produced by excessive reading of the discussions of the British Association. An unusual but not uninteresting case! Time and a rest-cure may work wonders […]"

The Hill of Dreams is Machen's first full-length novel and it brought forth a goodly number of reviews which obviously delighted the author. Here we start with a terse review from *The Daily Graphic* followed by excerpts from *The Newcastle Chronicle*, *The Daily Chronicle*, and *The Manchester Guardian*.

It is the study of the temperament of a young man, who devotes himself to literature, but his imagination is abnormal, and his mental condition diseased. The book is not of much practical interest, as one feels that his death, with which the story ends, is the best possible solution of his difficulties. [p. 57]

Mr Machen's story is all about a young man who adds to a temperament naturally neurotic a passion for examining the inner working of his own mind, and a dislike for nourishing food. This combination of qualities reduces him to a skeleton, and enables

> him to see visions and dream dreams of the most fantastic variety. […] Only Mr Machen, perhaps, would not have us believe that his hero is mad; preferring if anything to think that he is of a sanity and clear-sightedness altogether denied to the devotees of plain living and plain thinking. [p. 55]
>
> It has what Mr Machen calls 'the secret of suggestion,' but it suggests some things which we would rather had not been suggested. […] We wish the word 'sonorous' did not occur quite so often in it. 'Sonorous' is a very good and effective word in its way, but like 'sinister,' 'sombre,' and one or two others, it should be used sparingly. It does not do to make a pet of it. [p. 58]
>
> […] the unrelieved preciosity of the style is equally open to criticism, and this is the rock upon which the book finally founders. 'Only in the Court of Avallaunius is the true science of the exquisite to be found.' It would be wise to leave it unmolested there; here in these lower courts, this 'land of sin and woe,' there is nothing that more quickly tends to tedium. [p. 60]

It is of interest to note that some reviewers, of Mrs Grundy's heritage, openly stated that they thought that Machen wrote on topics that should not be aired e.g. "[the novel] suggests some things which we would rather had not been suggested." This is similar to the sort of comment that Gissing received about some of his early novels which broached equally 'forbidden' topics. For example, Gissing's *The Unclassed* was considered by the publisher George Bentley to be unwholesome and to broach "conditions of things best not dwelt upon."[3]

These short selections from *Precious Balms* will suggest that we have here a writer not up to scratch and unworthy of inclusion in *The Gissing Journal*. However, these excerpts have been deliberately chosen to highlight the negative comments; many of the reviews are equally positive on many aspects of Machen's writings. The following review from *The Outlook* on the autobiographical work *Far off Things* should specifically allay any Gissing readers' fears[4]:

> Literature and the journalist do not always rub shoulders nowadays; at all events few people look to find anything claiming to be prose in the misprinted, smudgy sheets of our raucous evening Press, unless, perhaps, in newspapers published North of the Trent. So that it does not promise well to read in Mr Machen's preface that his new book appeared seven years ago in one of the best-known London evening papers under the title 'Confessions of a Literary Man'. […] and misgiving increases when he adds that the confessions were written to editorial order when he was a reporter. It is an old truth that Fleet Street has ruined more good writers than Fleet Street has ever made. Only at a first glance does Mr Machen appear to be an exception, for in spite of the extraordinary quality and power of his present book, though it challenges comparison with Gissing's best work and surpasses it in parts, Mr Machen is quite clearly not the writer he might have been. 'Far off Things' is one of the most entertaining and familiar books one remembers; a vivid autobiographical chapter, condensed and complete in

> much less than two hundred pages, but it is without that distinctive art that makes Mr Gosse's 'Father and Son' one of the great pieces of autobiography […].
>
> Mr Machen knows what true literature is. There is a good critic in the man who can define realism as 'the depicting of eternal, inner realities' – the 'things that really are' of Plato – as opposed to the description of 'transitory, external surfaces; the delusory masks and dominoes with which the human heart hides and drapes itself.' [pp. 75-77]

If one disregards Gissing's displeasure with much of the criticism of his own writing, the impartial observer will see that there was much in the criticism that was sympathetic and often very positive. He suffered most immediate criticism and difficulties from his early publisher George Bentley and manuscript reader and editor James Payn. The published reviews were of a mixed variety although he does dwell on perceived negative or misguided comment. The review from the *Athenaeum* on *The Unclassed* is an example of an unambiguous negative review: "the arrangement of the book is very bad; there is no central narrative keeping the various parts together, and the characters are shuffled off and on the stage in a very confused way. Moreover, the style, though correct, is singularly bald and abrupt. It has no flexibility, and gives the impression of being greatly laboured."[5]

Shortly after reading this notice he wrote to his brother Algernon regarding this type of review and dismissing the effect on himself: "[…] I wanted you to be sure that I am quite skin-hardened. I know precisely the value of my work, and can read very calmly these adverse reviews. There will be more of them yet."[6] However, despite this assurance, Gissing turned out to be not quite so thick-skinned after all. Just two years later following the publication of *Demos* he asked his publisher Smith, Elder to cease sending him press cuttings about his books, "to stop that horror" and then for the next few years did not paste any reviews in his album.[7] This, in spite of good reviews such as that published in the *Spectator*:

> This is a novel of very considerable ability, […] Nothing can be more skillful than the sketch of the artisan family round whose fortunes the story of the book revolves. The chief character is very powerfully drawn, and though it is by no means a heroic character in any sense of the word, – for the fibre of his mind is essentially commonplace and poor, – there is in him a pathetic unconsciousness of the depth of his own insincerities, a power of recovery from them such as that complete unconsciousness often implies, and, again, a large mixture of course virtues, which render the sketch of Richard Mutimer a very striking and original creation.[8]

So, we can see that, if not Machen, then Gissing perhaps protested too much and that the immediate criticisms were of a mixed bag. Subsequent criticisms over the years have also been of a varied assortment. However, in the latter half of the 20th century, literary opinion slowly swung in their favour, so much so, that both authors now have literary journals dedicated to their

memory and their works. This positive view of the authors is of course by no means universal and, understandably, there will always be critics and criticism. That the situation was still volatile for these authors in the early 20th century can be seen by the examples we will conclude with.

As we have also seen, Machen's reputation was never very high and was at a low point just before the First World War. This dramatically changed when he wrote a fictional article for the papers under the title "The Bowmen." This was published at the end of September 1914 in the *Evening News* and told of the story of the British Army being saved during the retreat from Mons by the appearance of an army of bowmen whose flight of arrows downed thousands of the enemy – leaving no perceptible marks on their bodies. This story quickly spread and in the fevered atmosphere of war was soon accepted and clung to, with variations, as the gospel truth – despite Machen's protestations to the contrary. In the telling and retelling of the story the bowmen soon morphed into a group of angels and thus was fashioned the celebrated legend of the Angels of Mons. As a result of this furore, Machen was encouraged to write more articles and books over the succeeding years resulting in *The Great Return* (1915), *The Terror* (1917) and *War and the Christian Faith* (1918). Around this time in America appeared the first book of criticism: *Arthur Machen, Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin* by Vincent Starrett.[9] This sparked an interest in America which was later enhanced by Machen's autobiographical works of the early 1920s. To his bemusement Machen suddenly found himself popular in both Britain and America and lauded by established literary figures such as John Masefield and James Branch Cabell. Many of his works were now reprinted in limited collectable editions, notably by Martin Secker in the nine-volume Caerleon Edition. Robert Hillyer reviewing the works of Machen summed up his qualities in an appreciative lengthy essay in the *New York Times Book Review*:

> During the last ten years Mr Machen's art has been recognised; he is almost the only example of a fine writer rescued from oblivion in his own lifetime. Yet he has made no concession to the world in general. He has not changed a word of 'The Hill of Dreams' since he wrote it twenty-six years ago. It is the same book – a failure in 1907, rubbish in 1913, a success in 1923. Obviously, the world has made concessions to the ideas which he represents.
>
> […] His style approaches the gift of music, and will repel such readers as consider words to be utilitarian vessels for measuring out their quart or bushel of meaning. But those who find reality in 'Kubla Khan,' 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' or the 'Dream Fugue' will find it also in the books of Arthur Machen, who is of that small group of Coleridge, De Quincey, Sir Thomas Browne, Poe and Mallory – a group where each is a master. In a vision we use the language of vision, and if on waking we would interpret what we have seen in the language of waking, we can only suggest. If we state, the magic slips out between the syllables. By the marvellous orchestration

> of his prose, its undertones and overtones, Mr Machen has suggested to us his vision of the battle between Light and Darkness – a vision that is far more real than this seeming reality which shifts with the passing years. [pp. 96-103]

However, this popularity was not widespread and was not destined to last. The American writer and critic H. L. Mencken would have none of it. As an avowed sceptic of all things supernatural he refused to join the bandwagon. Here we have him in typical acerbic mood in a review from the journal *Smart Set*:

> Always in these remote colonies of the Empire, there is a new neglected genius on the mat, vociferously whooped up by a small band of earnest partisans. His shabby first editions are eagerly unearthed and sold at high prices; some enterprising publisher or other begins reprinting him in formidable uniform editions; all sorts of curious authorities are put up to testify to his rare and precious talents; to read him or about him becomes a mark of lofty and esoteric distinction, like being a Christian or not belonging to the *Legion d'honneur*. I proceed at once to the case of Arthur Machen, the English lifter of goose-flesh. For months past all the more passionate and bankrupt literary journals, both in London itself and in the colonies, have been full of encomiums upon him – some hymning his pellucid and insinuating style, others celebrating his adept evocations of the occult and horrible; yet others denouncing the human race bitterly for letting him slave away for years as a sub-editor, ie., a copy reader, in Fleet Street. He becomes the Leo Ornstein, the Picasso of literature, the Gertrude Stein of prose. To admit that one finds him dull is as grave an offence as to let it be known, in Greenwich Village, that one believes in monogamy and belongs to the Elks. Literary Chicago is with him to a man – that is, all save the minority of literati who actually sell their literature. He begins to be mentioned in the same breath with Ronald Firbank, Edgar Saltus, Walter de la Mare, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Joris Karl Huysmans, George Grosz, L. Pearsall Smith, all the other current objects of dark and ecstatic devotion. Nevertheless, I have to confess shamelessly that this Machen entertains me only indifferently – that he seems to me, indeed, to be very positively a third-rater, both when he tries to charm with his rhetoric and when he tries to alarm with his cabbalism – that he is, in the main, quite a hollow and obvious fellow.[10]

Machen does not include this review in his book; he probably received it too late for its inclusion. Similarly, negative reviews still appeared sporadically on Gissing, who thankfully was not around then to read them. We need not dwell here on Frank Swinnerton's book-length 'able depreciation'[11]: a young writer's push for recognition and the limelight – not always edifying! A prime example of a negative review is to be found in the pugilistic comments by fellow novelist and critic Douglas Goldring in a review which even manages to outdo Mencken in its *acidité*. Not for Goldring the dusty, bookish, shabby-genteel allure of Gissing. He does not temper his distaste for this journal's favourite author. His observations come in a chapter of a book of criticism, which to be savoured in all its multi-coloured splendour, needs to be reprinted more fully:

No doubt, in the 'eighties and 'nineties of the last century, London contained any number of hard-up literary men, of high ideals and defective education, who bore the motto "please kick me" suspended round their servile necks. And to such men, as to Gissing himself, normal human beings – individuals with blood in their veins instead of diluted Stephens' ink – must have looked like villains. I must confess that it is the villains who are the only characters to whom Gissing introduces us who seem to me at all tolerable. The way they spurn and ill-treat his heroes and heroines is intensely sympathetic. Anybody with a speck of intelligence would do the same. Any woman worth her salt would fly from a nincompoop like Edwin Reardon, the hero of *New Grub Street*, in six weeks, not six years. She would fly from him because her good sense would urge her instinctively to revolt against the diseased vanity and egomania which underlay his deadly virtues.

The appeal to pity in Gissing's books is so repellent that the ordinary reader who comes to Gissing without any *parti-pris* can only suspect that self-pity – in the author – combined with a deficient sense of humour, are responsible for it. Again and again Gissing asks you to admire some seedy clerk who studies masterpieces of literature in his attic, carries about with him that battered old stage property the "much-thumbed Horace," and yearns disastrously for higher things. Personally, as I read of his endeavours and ideals, his misfortunes, his wretched poverty and unsuccess, I feel growing up within me an awful desire to do him a mischief, and I hurry on impatiently till the flourishing and heartless villain does it for me. If I were an employer of a Gissing hero I would be tempted to sack him when he least expected it, out of sheer *méchancéte*. I should listen to his tragic outburst about his invalid wife and his eight starving children without a grain of pity; and end the interview by advising him curtly to take his family to the workhouse and himself with them.[12]

If this were not enough to chasten the average Gissing reader the final reflection may give rise to a sense of unease and pause for thought!

Gissing's people are chained far more by their idiotic sense of possession (the 'little house,' the 'few choice books'), and by their Victorian respectability, than they are by their poverty. This patent fact never seems to have occurred to Gissing himself, with the result that when he ceases merely to record, and throws the high lights of heroism on to his character's worst faults he becomes a source of moral infection. A *cordon sanitaire* should be drawn round the admirers of Gissing's heroes. Such people are a danger to the community. To be a Gissing type is to be a plague-carrier; to admire one is, perhaps, even worse.[13]

Having vented his spleen on Gissing and his admirers in general, Goldring even manages to find space to criticise Gissing's most highly praised work, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*:

To me this book has a reek of corruption and decay: it smells fouler than a rotting corpse. Faugh! Better the twilight of the drunkard and the debauchee than this sentimental death-in-life. The spectacle conjured up of Henry Ryecroft in his library makes me want to throw open every door and window in the house.[14]

Machen would have rejoiced at such criticism and certainly added it as a prized specimen to his record of 'precious balms.' Gissing would have been aghast. But at least he could have reflected that he was in good company with such criticism, when no less revered an author than Charles Dickens also faced critics who were blind to his charms. Here we have the august and respected critic Arnold Bennett with his reflections on both Gissing's and Machen's favourite Victorian author:

> Dickens was a great creative genius. I admit it, while saying plainly that since I was less than a boy than I am to-day I have never been able to read a novel of Dickens from beginning to end. With one exception, *A Tale of Two Cities*, which I undertook to read and write about for a monetary consideration. The task was desolating. My objections to Dickens are that he had a common mind and an inferior style, and that his novels were very patchy. And how should they not be patchy, seeing that he so often wrote against time?
>
> His plots are childish, his sentimentality is nauseous. That he had a kind heart and a democratic passion for justice is quite beside the point. Many hundredth-rate novelists have had kind hearts and a passion for justice. On the other hand he was a superlatively successful creator of comic characters, and nobody but a genius could have written his best scenes of comedy. These scenes are rich; they are full of the juice of English humour. But in order to get to them, what a price you must pay in tedium! I will not pay the price. The purse of my patience is too shallow. Why should I spend my time on Dickens when I can derive a pleasure almost unmixed from Thomas Hardy or George Moore?[15]

He could just as easily have added Gissing's name to those of Hardy and Moore.[16]

What can we take from this very brief survey of some precious balms of literary criticism and be it from intelligent and well-read critics? Despite the flood of books on literary criticism we can see that this is not an exact science and never will be. Modern literature and literary criticism are only newcomers to academia – and despite the ever-growing and never-ending number of books on literary criticism it remains a very inexact science.[17] The arts, unlike practical, laboratory science, will always be prone to a more subjective assessment based on the background, experience, perspective and opinion of individual readers. And so should it be; the world would be a very strange and dull place if everyone agreed with each other on what books they liked. We should welcome individuals with their own unique voice and not hold too tightly onto the received opinion of the leaders in whatever artistic fashion. What is today's fashion can end up tomorrow on the remainder shelf! *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

> Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.
> Ecclesiastes 12:12

1. Two earlier essays provide further details on Gissing and Machen. See "Fragments of Life: Arthur Machen and George Gissing," *Gissing Journal*, 52:2 (April 2018), pp. 17-27 and "Further Fragments of Two Lives: Machen and Gissing," *Gissing Journal*, 53:2 (April 2019), pp. 1-10.

2. Arthur Machen. *Precious Balms* (Horam, East Sussex: Tartarus Press, 1999), p. ix. All subsequent page numbers from the extracts refer to this edition.

3. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, 1881-1885, Volume Two* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1991), p. 189.

4. For more information on Arthur Machen see the two previous articles from *The Gissing Journal* referenced in note 1 above.

5. *The Collected Letters*, op cit., p. 234.

6. *Ibid*.

7. Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge (eds), *Gissing: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 2.

8. *Ibid*., pp. 82-83.

9. Vincent Starrett (1886-1974), a journalist and book collector, was the same fellow who went in search of Gissing's American stories in the early 1920s along with Christopher Hagerup, George Everett Hastings, and Thomas Olive Mabbott, and through whose efforts, *The Sins of the Fathers and Other Stories* (1924), which he edited, and *Brownie* (1931), to which he provided an introduction, were published. Starrett is more famous today for his 1920 pastiche of Sherlock Holmes, "The Adventure of the Unique 'Hamlet,'" and for his later book, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1933). He also wrote much weird fiction for pulp magazines.

10. H. L. Mencken, "Biography and Other Fiction" in *Smart Set*, August 1923, Vol LXXI, No 4, pp. 141-142.

11. Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1912). Some of the later works by Swinnerton such as the novel *Nocturne* (1917) and the non-fiction work *The Georgian Literary Scene* (1937) have stood the test of time.

12. Douglas Goldring, "An Outburst on Gissing" in *Reputations: Essays in Criticism* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1920), pp. 126-127.

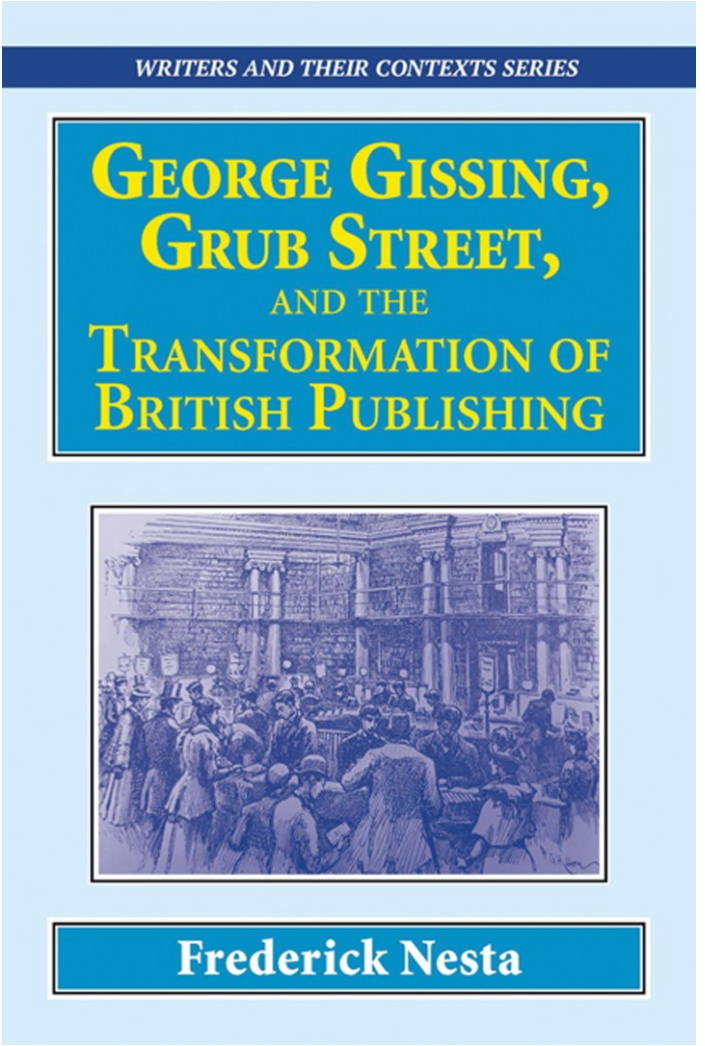
13. *Ibid*., pp. 128-129.

14. *Ibid*., p. 131.

15. "Candour about the Great Victorian Novelists" in Arnold Bennett: *The Evening Standard Years 'Books and Persons' 1926-1931* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1974), pp. 68-70. Arnold Bennett was both a great novelist and critic, notwithstanding his unusual take on Dickens. He had a very wide knowledge of world literature and refused to be confined to the 'sacred' boundaries of Victorian literature or indeed English literature in general. Not many readers, acquainted with Russian literature, would wish to argue with his assessment that the twelve finest novels in the world are all Russian. See "The Twelve Finest Novels," Arnold Bennett (op cit), pp. 32-34.

16. In his 1901 book *Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities*, Bennett devotes a full chapter to Gissing and evinces a strong liking and sympathy for the author – and especially citing *Demos*. It is striking that he only mentions Gissing once, and that merely in passing, in all his many subsequent book reviews and literary criticism. Perhaps his ardour cooled over the years or perhaps Frank Swinnerton's 'able depreciation' had an influence. After all Swinnerton was a very close friend and colleague of Bennett.

17. For more thoughts on book reviewing and literary criticism in general see Philippa K. Chong, *Inside the Critics Circle: Book reviewing in uncertain times* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2020)



Writers and Their Contexts series, no. 12.

George Gissing, Grub Street, and The Transformation of British Publishing
by Frederick Nesta

ISBN 9781913087494 Hardback £85.00 256pp.
ISBN 9781913087500 eBook £39.99

Available October 2020
See: http://www.eerpublishing.com/nesta-george-gissing.html

Further Update of Algernon Gissing's Literary Output

BOUWE POSTMUS
University of Amsterdam

I. British Isles

"An Idea of the Rector's," *Bristol Observer,* 5 March 1898, p.?

"The Marriage of Rhoda," *Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal*, (in two parts), 22 and 29 July 1910, p. 15; *Hereford Times*, 15 July 1911, p. 9; *Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser and General Intelligencer*, p. 9.

"The Miller's Surprise," *Bristol Observer*, 4 July 1908, p.?; *Staffordshire Sentinel,* 4 July 1908, p. 3; *Oxford Weekly News,* 27 August 1919, p. 4.

"Joel's Defeat," *Irish Weekly Independent*, April 1903, p.?

"The Parson's Text," *Newcastle Chronicle*, 15 September 1900, p. 4; *Faringdon Advertiser and Vale of the White Horse Gazette*, 5 September 1903, p. 6; *Weekly Irish Times*, 6 December 1905, p. 5.

"The Girl at the Ferry," *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 23 July 1904, p. 15; *Stroud News and Gloucestershire Advertiser*, 14 July 1905, p. 6; *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, 29 July 1905, p. 7; *Kinross-shire Advertiser*, 15 June 1912, p. 4; *Barrhead News*, 9 August 1912, p. 4.

"Aa'd Nick," *Nottingham Evening Post*, 6 September 1901, p. 1.

"Kiss of a Snow Flake," *Evesham Standard & West Midland Observer,* 26 December 1908, p. 7; *Drogheda Independent*, 26 December 1908, p. 7; *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, July 1910, p.?

"Dr. Lyon's Last Prescription," *Birmingham Daily Echo*, 29 November 1921, p.?

"The Man from the North," *Nottingham Evening Post,* 14 May 1900, p. 1.

"Foggin's Heir," *Queen*, *The Lady's Newspaper*, 9 July 1910, pp. 48-49.

Serialisations of Algernon Gissing's novel *Hidden Fire*:

Coatbridge Express – 17 October 1917 – 9 January 1918; 13 instalments.
Jedburgh Gazette – 19 December 1919 – 7 May 1920; 21 instalments.
Northampton Chronicle and Echo – 1 September 1921 – 3 October 1921; 28 instalments.
Burnley News – 20 February 1926 – 29 May 1926; 15 instalments.

II. Australia and New Zealand

"The House o' the Dead," *Queanbeyan Observer* (NSW), 26 October 1900, p. 6.

"Chimes at Midnight," *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser* (Toowoomba, Queensland), 15 October 1904, p. 2.

"Twice Blessed," *Canterbury Times* (Christchurch, NZ), Christmas number, 21 October 1914.

"The Rusty Key," *Avon Argus and Cunderdin – Meckering – Tammin Mail* (Western Australia), in three parts, 17, 24 April and 1 May 1925, p. 4; again: 30 October, 6 and 13 November 1925, p. 4; 25 June, 2 and 9 July 1926, p. 4; and again: 6, 13, 20 August 1926, p. 4.

Serialisation of *Hidden Fire*:

Waikato Times – 28 October – 17 December 1929; 35 instalments.

***

George Gissing and Caradoc Evans, "one of the most remarkable Welshmen of his time"[1]

CHRISTOPHER BAGGS
Rhydyfelin,
Aberystwyth

Like George Gissing, Caradoc Evans was essentially a writer of novels and short stories, although short stories were probably Evans' preferred format. Yet for over twenty years he also had a career as a journalist, working on a variety of publications as an editorial assistant, a sub-editor, and finally an editor. These publications included a national newspaper, the *Daily Mirror* (1917-1923) and various weeklies, such as *Chat* (1906-1908), *Ideas* (1913-1917) and *T.P.'s Weekly* (1923-1929).[2] Born in 1878, Caradoc Evans (he was christened David but became known as Caradoc whilst at school), was brought up in rural Welsh-speaking south Cardiganshire (now Ceredigion).[3] His childhood was not over-happy, and aged fourteen he left the countryside to become a draper's assistant, first in Carmarthen, then Cardiff and finally, probably in 1899, in London. In 1906 he abandoned the drapery trade to devote himself to his writing and, in particular, to his new career in journalism, having secured a job as an apprentice sub-editor on *Chat*, "the really new weekly for home and train." During the

period 1904 to 1908 he also had more than a dozen individual short stories published in a variety of periodicals and magazines.

Evans' most productive and successful period was between 1915 and 1930, when he had various items published, including three volumes of short stories, *My People* (1915), *Capel Sion* (1916) and *My Neighbours* (1919); a play *Taffy* (1923); and a novel, his first and probably best known, *Nothing to Pay* (1930). Apart from *Nothing to Pay*, in which the drapery shop trade in London figures large, Evans' works focus almost exclusively on Wales, and in particular, rural south Cardiganshire. Therein lies the problem. Evans' view of everyday life in this part of Wales was bitter and harsh, savage even at times, and invariably included trenchant criticism of the 'big men' of the local society, the chapel minister, the chapel elders, and the schoolmaster. In addition, the dialogue used in the narratives was written in a bizarre style, invented by Evans, in which he tried to reproduce, in English, the structure, forms, rhythms, and vocabulary of the local Welsh-speaking populace. Even this concocted language caused offence, as, taken overall, Evans was deemed to be taking aim at and mocking rural, Welsh-speaking, Liberal, Non-Conformist Wales; and they hated it.

Evans was called a "traitor," a "liar," his short stories described as "foul garbage," "the literature of the sewer," and pornography.[4] One particularly galling element for his critics was that by washing Wales's 'dirty linen' in public in English, it gave the latter even more reason to look down their noses at the former. He was physically surrounded and jostled by a group of angry nationalist students when delivering a talk at Bangor University in November 1924.[5] His play *Taffy* was booed off the stage at a performance in London in February 1925 "by an audience consisting mainly of London Welsh, who saw in it a libel of their homeland."[6] In 1930, a portrait of Evans by the up-and-coming young Welsh artist, Evan Walters, was turned down by Swansea's Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, simply because it depicted Evans. The National Museum of Wales did not want to take it either.[7] When it was eventually hung in the bar at the Grafton Theatre in London in 1938, "an inflamed patriot […] dexterously slit the canvas over the throat,"[8] symbolically on 1 March, St. David's Day. In 1933, the Chairman of Barry Council seized a copy of *Taffy* from a library borrower and threw it into a Council dust cart, hoping "to consign that infernal volume to the ashes of Hades,"[9] – note the date; in Germany the new National Socialist government was soon to start its book-burning activities. The attitude of much of Wales to Caradoc Evans and his writing is neatly summed up by fellow writer Glyn Jones: "He [Caradoc] was regarded in Wales as the enemy of everything people of my upbringing and generation had been taught to revere, a blasphemer and a mocker, a derider of our religion, one who by the distortions of his paraphrasings

and his wilful mistranslations had made our language and ourselves appear ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of the world outside Wales."[10] George Gissing's earlier novels certainly shocked many readers in their subject matter and their directness (especially those readers who obtained their reading material via the cosy atmosphere of the circulating library), but he was never personally vilified in the way that Caradoc Evans was. How is this author, the "best hated man in Wales,"[11] connected to Gissing? Some links are direct and clear; others more indirect, even tentative.

According to John Harris, the following was one of Evans' favourite quotes, which he knew off by heart: "Put money in thy purse; and again put money in thy purse; for, as the world is ordered, to lack current coin is to lack the privileges of humanity, and indigence is the death of the soul."[12] It is taken from Gissing's novel *A Life's Morning*, when the narrative voice is musing about the elderly Hood couple, whose lives had been blighted by a simple lack of money.[13] One personal connection between Evans and Gissing was an affinity with other writers who, like Evans himself, had also been poor and had struggled in their lives, something that Gissing had certainly done early in his writing career. Money, or usually the lack of it, was on Gissing's mind for much of his life, even if he can be accused of overstating the problems at times.

Evans was clearly very familiar with at least one of Gissing's novels, and Gissing's name is given prominence on a list of Evans' favourite authors. Although Evans was largely reticent about his art, his writing processes (he was not a theorist about literature) and about those writers who may have influenced him, his long-term friend Duncan Davies wrote in a letter to Evans' second wife, Marguerite, in November 1946, after Evans' death, that: "for a long time, Caradoc had confined his reading to the great realistic writers, Ibsen, Zola, Chekhov, Shaw, George Gissing, etc.: and he had deliberately made up his mind to keep his stories drab and sordid."[14] This statement is noteworthy, not just for itemising those authors" who influenced Evans, even if it does not specify when "for a long time" actually was.[15] Gissing was often critically well received, but he was never a very popular author; ironically the last of his works to be published while he was alive, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), was commercially his most successful. Nor was he very well-known after his death, and certainly not at the time of Davies's letter.[16] Yet, Davies specifically mentions Gissing as amongst the authors, "the great realistic writers" that Evans was reading, and, perhaps, was influenced by.

Evans himself wrote further how, through regularly reading *T. P.'s Weekly,* he was "led to Tolstoy, Gorki, Turgenev, Maupassant, Flaubert, Hardy, W.W. Jacobs and The Bible."[17] Other contemporary authors he mentioned positively included Arthur Machen, J. M. Synge, and H. G. Wells. Dickens was another

firm favourite. In the early years of Evans' writing career, after he had first moved to London, he and Duncan Davies would go on walking tours of Dickens' sights in London (they also visited Thomas Carlyle's house in Chelsea). According to Harris, Evans knew Dickens' novels and was "well acquainted with his life";[18] he had a portrait of Dickens in his study; and the opening sentence of his first published piece, "A Sovereign Remedy" (1904), is said to echo the opening of Dickens' *Bleak House*.[19] Elsewhere, Evans had urged another writer, Jack Griffith, to "[s]oak yourself in the Russians. Read all you can of them. Soak yourself in the Russians."[20] As the editor of the popular weekly *Ideas*, Evans was able to showcase his literary preferences for French realist writers by including fourteen short stories by Guy de Maupassant between January 1915 and the end of 1916, as well as other stories by Daudet and Gorky. On his death-bed in Aberystwyth Hospital in January 1945 he asked his wife to bring in his copy of Balzac's *Droll Stories*. Even if the above names do not include any from the classical Greek and Latin literatures which were always Gissing's first and abiding love, many of these broadly contemporaneous authors would have struck a strong chord with Gissing. Whereas, however, there is scant detail on what Evans read and what he thought of what he read, there is a wealth of information contained in Gissing's letters and *Diary*, itemising what he read and, sometimes, his thoughts on what he read, delivered in short, pithy comments.[21]

Gissing's own thorough knowledge and enjoyment of Dickens is confirmed by his two publications, *Dickens, A Critical Study* (1898), his edition of Forster's *Life of Dickens* (1903), and his introductions to editions of Dickens' works. In his *Diary* for 23 January 1888, Gissing wrote that he was reading Forster's original *Life of Dickens* (1872), because it was "a book I constantly take up for impulse, when work at a standstill."[22] Evans shared his love for Forster's biography, having spent one annual leave from the draper's shop in London reading it in Kensington Gardens.[23] According to various individual entries from Gissing's *Diary* and letters, he had read at least six novels by Dickens, including *Edwin Drood* and *Barnaby Rudge*.[24] Gissing wrote in a letter to his brother Algernon that he had read *Martin Chuzzlewit* "for refreshment," whilst in a letter written to his sister Margaret almost seven years previously he noted that the novel was "very fine, though I do not relish it quite as much as some others of Dickens."[25] Dickens apart, there are other significant overlaps between Gissing's and Evans' tastes in reading and their potential influence, especially in relation to nineteenth-century French and Russian realist writers.

In a letter to Edith Sichel dated 8 June 1889 Gissing wrote "my own masters are the novelists of France & Russia"; in another to his brother Algernon of 13

October 1885, Gissing wrote "happily you need purchase no books: of classical & French literature we can together muster abundance," as those literatures formed part of his own library. In a letter to his sister Margaret, dated 31 July 1886 he had commented: "The writers who help me most are French & Russian; I have not much sympathy with English points of view." The fact that Gissing knew French greatly facilitated his access to that particular literature, as he was not dependant on waiting for translations. Examining entries from Gissing's *Diary* and letters shows that he had read numerous works by French realist authors in the original French, including George Sand (whose novels he met for the first time when he was living in the United States),[26] Alphonse Daudet, and Guy de Maupassant. Maupassant was listed by Evans as an author he had come into contact with via *T. P.'s Weekly* and he had promoted both Maupassant and Daudet by publishing items by them in *Ideas*, when he was that journal's editor. Daudet's works are frequently mentioned in Gissing's letters and *Diary*, usually in a very positive fashion. For instance, in a letter to Algernon of 22 September 1885, Gissing describes Daudet as delightful, "the style is admirable & the characters intensely real. Few French novelists have written more humanly." He continued to mention works by Daudet over the next thirteen years. On 23 July 1888 he wrote in his *Diary* that he had "(b)ought Daudet's new book, *L'Immortel*, and glory in thought of reading it." Indeed when Gissing travelled to Paris later in the year he attended a lecture on and readings from Daudet.[27] Later, however, on 12 May 1895 he commented negatively on Daudet's novel *La Petite Paroisse* that it marked "a sad falling from the old Daudet. No character that is a creation."

Gissing's *Diary* shows that he had also read a number of Maupassant's novels, but the entries reveal no critical comments on them apart from the following aside in an entry dated 20 June 1888: "[…] Maupassant['s] *Pierre et Jean*, the first of this author's books that I have seen," although he had apparently read a "disgusting story of his in the 'Figaro.'" Emile Zola is another interesting case. Early in Gissing's writing career, Frederic Harrison, having read *Workers in the Dawn*, had asked him whether he had read any Zola, because Harrison wished to warn him against writing in a similar manner; Gissing had not.[28] Over the following years Gissing certainly did read a number of Zola's novels, and his comments on them were mixed. In a *Diary* entry for 16 February 1896, Gissing wrote that he was "(t)rying to read (Zola's *La Debacle*), in intervals of rage." Later in the same year he called Zola's *Rome* "an immense book."[29] Gissing was also clearly familiar with Balzac's works. When he finished reading Balzac's *Parisiens en Province*, he noted in his *Diary* for 15 February 1889 that the work had become "more and more unsatisfactory to me. I wish I had some of George Sand's"! Oddly perhaps, the only work by Flaubert, (another French

realist listed by Evans), which Gissing mentions is not a novel but his *Letters* – however, he does refer to him in his critical study of Dickens in a way which suggests that he had read some of his novels.[30]

Of the Russian authors of importance to Evans, Gissing had read at least eight specific titles by Tolstoy whom Evans had called the "perfect story teller."[31] Apart from writing in a letter of 20 July 1889 to Edith Sichel that he had enjoyed *Anna Karenina* and other works by Tolstoy, he has nothing to say directly about the author. Turgenev ("the man is glorious")[32] on the other hand is very highly praised in Gissing's letters and *Diary*. In one letter dated 6 December 1887 to Ellen, to whom he had sent one of Turgenev's novels, Gissing confirmed that Turgenev was "a man I glory in."[33] Indeed, when he had heard of Turgenev's death in 1883, Gissing had written in an earlier letter to Ellen that he was "without doubt the greatest living writer of fiction."[34] Once again Gissing took advantage of his ability to read both French and German to gain early access to Russian writers not yet translated into English.[35] Of the remaining Russian authors Evans mentions,[36] no Chekhov or Gorky items are noted as having been read by Gissing.[37] Another of Evans' "great realistic writers," Ibsen, was a writer Gissing also read with great pleasure, calling his plays "extraordinary productions."[38] Again, he used his knowledge of German to gain early access to Ibsen's plays, ordering four of them in June 1888 in Reclam's series of German translations.[39]

As far as contemporary English-language authors were concerned, Gissing wrote in the letter to Edith Sichel mentioned above that "in comparison" (to French and Russian authors) he had "given small study to those of England," whilst in a second letter to Sichel dated 30 June 1889, Gissing said he was only interested in Thomas Hardy and George Meredith of contemporary English novelists.[40] His letters and *Diary* show that he had read many of the contemporary popular authors, including Rhoda Broughton, Grant Allen, and Hall Caine. Hardy, another author listed above by Evans, became a friend, whom Gissing visited and with whom he corresponded – he also read at least fourteen of his novels and collections of short stories, and was not above commenting critically on them. Gissing read Hardy's *Woodlanders* "with much delight," called *The Hand of Ethelberta* "old Hardy's poorest book," and reacted ambivalently to *Jude the Obscure.*[41] Meredith, who was Chapman and Halls' reader when Gissing submitted *The Unclassed* and *Isabel Clarendon*, was another acquaintance, whom he visited. He had read at least ten of Meredith's novels, (*One of Our Conquerors,* twice), and thought that only Meredith's novels could be "taken seriously,"[42] although by the mid-1890s Gissing had revised his opinion of Meredith's novels. Evans on the other hand does not seem to have thought enough of Meredith to mention him amongst his select listings. H. G. Wells, whom Evans praised as "the only thinking writing Englishman,"[43]

was yet another friend of Gissing's, to whom Wells frequently sent his latest publications, and who was very close to Gissing at the time of his death. Of Shaw's works published before Gissing's death in 1903, he seems to have read only *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), perhaps not such a strange choice given Gissing's obvious interest in the Norwegian. Gissing's letters and *Diary* do not show that he had read any Jacobs, Synge or Machen, a fellow Welshman whom Evans associated with for a while and whom he thought highly of.[44] But then many of their most successful works were published after Gissing's death.[45] Nevertheless, overall, the overlap between those authors mentioned briefly by Evans, which were also both read and cited by Gissing as influential, is striking. The common denominator between Gissing, Evans and these writers, would appear to be the stylistic approach of realism.

In a letter to his brother Algernon, dated 3 November 1880 Gissing explains his realistic descriptions of slum life in London in *Workers of the Dawn*: "I mean to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental & moral) of our poor classes […]" Such a description could as easily be made of Evans' approach to his subjects and the value of his fiction as social documents – the essential difference being that Gissing's locations were the slums of London (certainly in five of his earliest novels), whilst Evans' location was normally, if not initially, rural south Cardiganshire. Although contemporary critics and commentators considered Gissing to be a realist,[46] Gissing did not see himself unreservedly as one, but rather as belonging to the school of strict veracity, which was how he viewed the French and Russian realist writers he admired.[47] This lack of total commitment on Gissing's part has led to some critics describing him as ambivalent in his realism.[48] A similar blurring of lines can be seen in Evans' work. Evans considered himself a realist as did Andrew Melrose, the publisher of *My People* and *Capel Sion*.[49] Many of his critics disagreed. One called Evans a realist employing non-realistic techniques, whilst critics in Wales "argued that if realism meant a sense of proportion and believable natural speech, then (Evans) was never a realist."[50]

Eleven of the first fourteen short stories Evans had published between October 1904 and February 1908, dealt not with Wales, but with London, where he was then living (the so-called 'cockney' tales). His first published words were "there is a curious, slimy mud in some parts of London that a few hours' rain works into a sinister paste […]"[51] The working-class slums of the capital seemed to fascinate him, perhaps because in one way they mirrored his view of peasant life in West Wales, whilst in another they were diametrically opposed – urban poverty as against rural poverty. Through *T. P.'s Weekly* Evans became acquainted with the writing of Arthur Morrison, whose two works of fiction, *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894) and *A Child of the Jago* (1896) feature the squalor of London's

East End slums.[52] Gissing had also read Morrison's two novels, describing *A Child of the Jago* as "[p]oor stuff."[53] Given Evans' interests in slum life in London, it is not difficult to see how he might be attracted to those five early novels of Gissing's which dealt with similar content (i.e. *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), *The Unclassed* (1884), *Demos* (1886), *Thyrza* (1887) and *The Nether World* (1889)). Gissing's last novel to deal with London slums, *The Nether World*, focuses almost entirely on the inner London area of Clerkenwell, and, interestingly, sometime in 1907 (Harris lacks an exact date), Evans moved lodgings from Munster Square, off Regent's Park, to 65 Cavendish Buildings, Clerkenwell Road. Clerkenwell Road is specifically mentioned once in Gissing's novel, whilst Clerkenwell Close and Clerkenwell Green, which are frequently mentioned in the novel, were a mere stone's throw away from Evans' lodgings. It is not clear how long he stayed in Clerkenwell.

As well as the direct literary links between the two authors, there are other connections between them, more personal and also more tentative connections, but often involving *T. P.'s Weekly*.[54] Evans wrote that he did not know "(w)hat made me buy my first copy of *T. P.'s Weekly* [...] There was much in it I did not understand, but thereon I bought a copy of it every week and in every copy I found […] a new message for me. The study of it exercised my brain and heated my imagination."[55] It was via *T. P.'s* that Evans was introduced to many of those authors discussed earlier, and in 1912 it provided a direct link with Gissing. In that year *T. P.'s* published some of the correspondence between one Mary Carter (a very minor author of the time) and Gissing – Carter had been a friend of the family and in one letter had asked him to read her latest novel.[56] It would seem unlikely that Evans, given his regular habit of reading the magazine, would have missed these letters.

Over a decade later, after Evans had become editor of *T. P.'s*, he published in the April 1926 issue of the magazine Austin Harrison's recollections of Gissing. Harrison had been tutored by Gissing in the early 1880s,[57] and had already written two other pieces on Gissing, one in the literary journal *The Nineteenth Century* in September 1906 and the second in the *Contemporary Review* for July 1925. Harrison was personally known to Evans[58] – they both frequented the world of Fleet Street as journalists and editors – and it was *The English Review*, of which Harrison was then editor-in-chief that published some of Evans' short stories, subsequently collected for publication as *My People* in 1915. Further stories appeared in *The English Review* in 1916, 1917, and 1918, with the journal justly claiming "to be the discoverer of this remarkable author."[59] The *Review* stood by Evans despite all the controversy surrounding his stories, and he owed much to it. According to Harris, Austin Harrison "accepted controversy as intrinsic to his editorial mission" and in

"Caradoc he met a kindred spirit."[60] Given Evans' acknowledged interest in Gissing, perhaps he and Harrison discussed him directly.

Another more tenuous personal connection may have been provided by Frank Swinnerton, who was six years younger than Evans. Swinnerton was another editor, who became a full-time author – he worked with J. M. Dent, and Chatto & Windus, as well as being a literary critic for *The London Evening News* and *The Observer*. In 1912 he had published the first book-length critical study of Gissing,[61] and some critics have detected echoes of George Gissing in Swinnerton's own novels.[62] Evans certainly knew Swinnerton well enough to describe him as "that pince-nezed pussy-cat, but he's a clean penman,"[63] whilst Swinnerton was an Evans enthusiast. He commended Evans' *Wasps*, found his contribution to the 1937 Faber collection *Welsh Short Stories* ("The Way of the Earth") "powerful and effective," and even thought that the critically maligned collection of short stories *Pilgrims in a Foreign Land* (1942) contained "seventeen artful, poetic, ruthless episodes […] rich in devilish glee." He even made it his book of the week in *The Observer* (27 December 1942).[64]

Gissing and Evans can both be seen at times as outcasts. They were cut off from the milieu they were born into, Evans from the rural Welsh-speaking world of his childhood, Gissing from the aspiring, intelligent lower-middle to middle-class society in which he was brought up, and from which he distanced himself for much of his life. Yet, there is an essential difference between the two. Evans had deliberately chosen his role of social critic and rather liked the embattled position he found himself in. For many years Gissing however felt that, as a result of his criminal activity and subsequent brief imprisonment in Manchester, he had to exclude himself from that social world to which he could have belonged. He found that positioning difficult and frustrating. In the last years of his life he became geographically isolated as well, living as a health exile in southern France. Evans by contrast returned to his Welsh roots – not the harsh reality of rural southern Cardiganshire, but the rather more conducive and benign atmosphere of the university town of Aberystwyth on the West Wales coast.

Gissing and Evans shared a similar style of writing in its realistic tenor, and their unwavering depictions of poverty were initially a common thread running through their subject matter. Gissing, however, moved away from such scenarios in his later fiction to an extent that Evans did not. They had similar tastes in the literature they felt meant most to them, especially French and Russian realist novelists. In Austin Harrison there was a direct personal connection. There is clear evidence that Evans read and enjoyed Gissing. It would be interesting to know what Gissing would have made of Evans' work.

[1] Meic Stephens (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 186.

[2] Gissing also worked briefly as a journalist early in his career. In a letter of 20 August 1880 to his brother William, Gissing wrote "I have done nothing of late in the way of journalism." Later that year in November he was contacted on behalf of the Russian writer, Ivan Turgenev, who was looking for someone to write "a quarterly article of some thirty pages on the political, social and literary affairs of England" for Turgenev's periodical *Vestnik Evropy*. Gissing undertook the task for a short while but his foray into journalism was as nothing compared to Evans.'

[3] The bulk of the factual information about Caradoc Evans' life and works is taken from the definitive biography by John Harris, *Caradoc Evans: the Devil in Eden* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 2018). Harris has been researching Evans' life and works for a number of decades and has written numerous articles about him, as well as editing a number of re-issues of his works. (Referred to as JH hereafter.) I am grateful to Dr. Harris for looking over a draft of this article.

[4] JH, various.

[5] JH, pp. 144-146.

[6] *The Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 268.

[7] JH, pp. 208-209.

[8] JH, p. 278.

[9] JH, p. 228.

[10] JH, pp. 232-233. Glyn Jones was another Anglo-Welsh writer, twenty years or so younger than Evans, who had come to know him in the 1930s, visiting him together with Dylan Thomas in 1934.

[11] Included in JH, p. 147.

[12] JH, p. 46.

[13] George Gissing, *A Life's Morning* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1888), vol. I, p. 230.

[14] JH, p. 357 n7.

[15] Davies had known Evans since the latter's early days in London, but they had lost contact after 1925.

[16] George Orwell's 'rediscovery' of Gissing dates from around this time.

[17] "The Road with One Fingerpost," *T. P. and Cassell's Weekly*, 26 July 1924, quoted in John Harris (ed.), *Fury Never Leaves Us: a Miscellany of Caradoc Evans* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), p. 121.

[18] JH, p. 49. Both Evans and Dickens "bore the scars of childhood suffering."

[19] JH, p. 46.

[20] JH, p. 230.

[21] For the letters see Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 9 vols, 1990-1996); for diary entries see Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: the Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978).

[22] Diary entry for 23 January 1888.

[23] JH, p. 36.

[24] Paul Delany, *George Gissing: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2008), p. 263, suggests that whilst in Budleigh Salterton in early 1897, Gissing read all of Dickens' novels in preparation for his upcoming critical study of them.

[25] Diary entry for 29 February 1888 and letter to Margaret dated 10 July 1881.

[26] In a letter to Ellen of 20 August 1886 Gissing said that he had read between ten and a dozen of Sand's novels, which he had borrowed from Boston Free Library.

[27] Diary entry for 4 October 1888.

[28] Letter to Frederic Harrison of 23 July 1880.

[29] Diary entry for 2 June 1896.

[30] Diary entry for 7 December 1890.

[31] JH, p. 38.

[32] Letter to Algernon of 29 May 1884.

[33] See also note 2 above.

[34] Letter dated 14 October 1883.

[35] In a diary entry for 16 March 1890 Gissing noted that he was reading the German translation of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* for the sixth or seventh time, as little was available in English. Constance Garnett's translations of Turgenev only began appearing in the mid-1890s.

[36] It is perhaps surprising that Evans does not mention Dostoevsky at all, whereas Gissing's *Diary* and letters show that he had read a number of his works, some of them more than once.

[37] Few works by these two Russian authors had been published in English by the time of Gissing's death.

[38] Diary entry for 17 June 1888.

[39] Diary entries for 4 and 10 June 1888.

[40] At the end of his life Gissing came into contact with the early works of Joseph Conrad and was clearly impressed. In a letter to Clara Collet, dated 24 December 1902, He wrote: "Read Conrad's new book [*Youth: A Narrative*]. He is the strongest writer […] at present publishing in English."

[41] Diary entry for 15 March 1888; diary entry for 10 January 1891; and two letters to Henry Hick dated 28 November 1895 and 7 January 1896.

[42] Letter to Algernon from October 1885.

[43] JH, p. 163. Wells, like Evans, had worked as a shop assistant and had much praise for Evans' novel *Nothing to Pay*, which centred on the drapery shop trade.

[44] See in particular JH, pp. 136-137 and pp. 217-218.

[45] Note however the recent articles published in *The Gissing Journal* discussing Machen with reference to Gissing.

[46] The *Spectator* review of *New Grub Street* called it a work of "relentless realism," whilst a review in the *Daily Chronicle* of *Born in Exile* was headed "Our One English realist."

[47] Gissing did object to being called the English Zola. He never saw himself as belonging to the school of naturalism.

[48] Aaron Matz, "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 59:2 (September 2004), pp. 212-246.

[49] JH, pp. 84 and 95.

[50] JH, p. 120, and see above for the language used in much of Evans' fiction.

[51] As quoted in JH, p. 46, originally published in *Reynold's Newspaper*, 23 October 1904. Curiously, in a letter to his sister Ellen from 30 January 1881, Gissing had written: "It is terrible just now walking about London streets; everything is covered with slush & mud"!

[52] Evans wrote his own Cockney stories "after the manner of Arthur Morrison," JH, p. 47.

[53] Diary entry for 25 December 1896.

[54] In a letter written from France to H. G. Wells on 27 November 1903, little more than a month before Gissing's death, he showed that he too had seen the still relatively new magazine (it started in 1902), commenting it was "a most respectable paper."

[55] "The Road with One Fingerpost," p. 121.

[56] Letter to Mary Carter dated 19 March 1889, and diary entry for 12 April 1889, in which Gissing called Carter's novel "poor stuff" and noted he would have to "lie about it," presumably in his reply to her.

[57] Discussing this time in his biography of his father Frederic, Austin wrote that Gissing referred to journalism as "degrading" and "preposterous trash." See note 2 above. Austin Harrison, *Frederic Harrison: Thoughts and Memories* (London: William Heinemann, 1926), p. 84.

[58] Verbal note from JH.

[59] JH, p. 98.

[60] JH, p. 108.

[61] Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1912).

[62] H. G. Wells, "Concerning Mr Swinnerton," in *Frank Swinnerton: Personal Sketches* (New York: George Doran, 1920), p. 22. See also Swinnerton's "Obituary," *Times*, 10 November 1982.

[63] JH, p. 273.

[64] JH, pp. 216, 273, and 302.

***

Chit-Chat

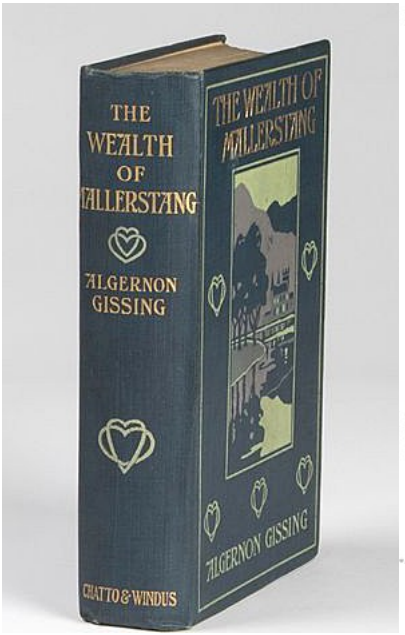
Flowers for Algernon

On 30 December 1903 many people woke up in cities across the world to learn from their local newspapers, for example in Launceston, Tasmania, from the *Launceston Examiner* in this instance, that: "The death is announced of Mr. Algernon Gissing, the well-known novelist. Algernon Gissing was born at Wakefield on Nov. 25, 1860; third son of Thomas Waller Gissing, botanist. Educated – Wakefield; private school near Manchester. Was a solicitor and followed that profession for a few years; since 1887 lived almost entirely in the country – amongst Cotswold Hills and the hills of the Northumberland border." The report even provided a list of some of Algernon's novels up to the end of 1902 with the last given as "Kittens in the Sun" – the reporter who cabled the news item either did not know his Shakespeare or he was in too much of a rush to pass on his story (I would like to think the latter for he also named one novel as "The Wealth of Matterstang"). Of course, it was not Algernon who had died, but his brother, George, a fact which the *Launceston Examiner* was quick to clarify the next day on two different pages, firstly as follows: "MR. GEORGE GISSING. LONDON. Dec 29. The death is announced early this morning of Mr. George Gissing, novelist, and not of Mr. Algernon Gissing, as previously announced" and then thus "Mr. George Gissing, the novelist (and not Mr. Algernon Gissing, as cabled yesterday) is dead." Curious though all this may seem, one can always forgive such reporting because, as everyone knows, "to err is human."

Algernon Gissing in Focus: The Life of a Novel from 1901

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

There are doubtless few people who can say that they own a copy of *The Wealth of Mallerstang, an Upland Tale*, a novel by Algernon Gissing, which was published in one volume in October 1901. I have ten of his thirty books and fortunately one of them is a copy of this particular novel – a copy that is by far neither as bright nor as beautiful as the one Jarndyce Booksellers curently have for sale at £650.



(© Jarndyce Booksellers, 2020)

Photo. Russell

THE AUTHOR OF A LONG-PROMISED NOVEL: MR. ALGERNON GISSING.

Having recovered from a breakdown in 1899, Algernon spent the best part of 1900 writing *The Wealth of Mallerstang* whilst under all sorts of financial strains. Although he does not seem to have been happy with James B. Pinker's efforts on his behalf as his literary agent, he must have been delighted to hear that he had sold serial rights in Wales and Australia. As far as I have been able to discover, the novel was serialised simultaneously in the *Cardiff Times and South Wales Weekly News* and across Australia in various newspapers from 6 July to 2 October 1901. In the event, though one of his best novels and despite directly following his most popular novel, *A Secret of the North Sea* (published in 1899), *The Wealth of Mallerstang* had a fairly short and disappointing life: little more than six months from July 1901 to January 1902. There was no second edition or

continental or colonial edition and after this latter date the novel was only ever mentioned as one of the novels by Algernon whenever he had a new novel appearing or else on the few occasions when lending libraries made press announcements of books added to their lists. During these dates there were occasional mentions of the book in the press and half a dozen book reviews, some good, some bad. Chatto & Windus advertised the novel weekly from 6 July 1901 – in the *Athenaeum*, the *Bookman*, the *Academy*, the *Speaker*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Dundee Courier*, the *Queen*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, *Field*, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Pall Mall Gaz*ette, *Truth*, the *Middlesex Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette*, the *Globe*, the *St James's Gazette*, the *Times*, the *London Evening Standard*, the *Worthing Gazette*, the *Sketch*, the *London Daily News*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Scotsman*, and *The Morning Post* – until 9 January 1902, and then no more. George saw one of the earlier advertisements in August as he informed his brother. But Algernon had to wait a long time for any reviews of his new book. There was finally a brief notice in the *Academy* on 26 October 1901 merely introducing the opening of the story:

THE WEALTH OF MALLERSTANG. BY ALGERNON GISSING.

> "An Upland Tale" of north-country people. It opens well with the ride of Mr. Thorpe from York to Carlisle. He "always rode on horseback by the dales instead of taking the coach." As Mr. Thorpe was preparing to start a parcel was placed in his hands. "The string was cut, and a quarto volume unfolded, bound in grey cardboard, with rough untrimmed edges to the pages and a snow-white label on the back." The title was *Marmion, a Tale of Flodden Field*, in six cantos, by Walter Scott." (Chatto. 6s)

The first book reviews appeared in the *Athenaeum* and in the *Illustrated London News* on 23 November. The *Athenaeum* review reads as follows:

The Wealth of Mallerstang. By Algernon Gissing. (Chatto & Windus.)

> MR. GISSING has the true feeling for romance, and, were this his first book, one would say with little hesitation that he would one day make the public feel romance with him through the work of his pen. As it is, one may safely and cordially say that his workmanship is thorough and careful, his style cultured, and his personality, as betrayed in the pages of this novel, refined. The Mallerstang of the title is a valley among the mountains of Cumberland, and our author is here concerned with characters who fought out their arduous lives there in Walter Scott's day. The plot hinges upon the futile banding together of young men to prevent the establishment of manufacturing industries among the dales. The broad question involved, however, Mr. Gissing merely grazes, without involving his readers' sympathies on either side. He appeals strictly on behalf of individuals, the holders and dwellers in Mallerstang; and even here his appeal is by no means impassioned, not at all that of the impulsive partisan. And this brings one "haunch-down," as the Arabs say, to what must needs be the crux of any serious criticism passed upon Mr. Gissing's work. The men and women of his fancy loom but vaguely and with ghostly impersonality across his pages.

> We should never recognise his fair heroine, his manly hero, or his saturnine young brigand of a villain if we met them on their native dales. To the last they remain but characters – never persons. One says this with the more regret because it means a vital fault, a fundamental weakness, such as must ever withhold the breath of life from a work of fiction. And because Mr. Gissing is an able and conscientious workman, in many respects worthy the reward which the knowledge of life in his creations brings to an artist, we point out that one at least of the causes contributing to the absence of vital qualities in this book is the fact that those of its characters who represent educated men and women talk invariably "like a book." The descriptions of scenery and the general atmosphere in "The Wealth of Mallerstang" are excellent.

The review in the *Illustrated London News* appeared under the rubric "Some Minor Fiction," a term which must have made Algernon wince. The reviewer deemed it practical to contrast the novel with one entitled *Mr Elliott* by Isabella Ford (1855-1924: an English social reformer and suffragette who lived most of her life with her two sisters at Adel Grange in Leeds). Algernon, however, would have been delighted to read that her portrait of a mill owner "is depressing to a degree, and it is pleasant to turn to Mr. Gissing's glowing pages." Further reviews were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 4 December 1901 and in the *Westminster Gazette* on 23 January 1902. The first of these I print below:

TRAGI-COMEDY*

> MR. ALGERNON GISSING'S latest novel is difficult to classify; it is a mixture of real strength and melodrama, and it has also a quality which lifts it so far above the commonplace that one is, at first, rather inclined to overpraise it. That quality is hardly one of style, though the story is told with a businesslike confidence which is full of character. The limits of the book are narrow, and its characters few, but Mr. Gissing has invested it with atmosphere, a sense of bigness, and a kind of mystery which is all of the imagination, since there are no carefully-kept and cunningly-revealed secrets. The scene is laid in the wild hill country on north-west Yorkshire, about a century ago, a period when the agitation born of the French Revolution and the growing spirit of industrial enterprise at home were stirring the poorer classes to grave discontent, and often to actual riot. Mr. Gissing does not treat the period largely; he is content to write a domestic story which has for chief actors the remarkable Humphrey Garrett, who is, indeed, an agitator against the encroachments of capital, but chiefly because his father, whom he hates, is himself a capitalist. All the characters are vividly presented, but Garrett overshadows the rest. There is an heroic ferocity about him and all his actions which suggests no less a name than that of Emily Brontë. With all the elements of tragedy in its persons and its plot, "The Wealth of Mallerstang" yet contrives to work out as a comedy, but it is one of the grimmest we have read for many a day.
>
> * "The Wealth of Mallerstang." By Algernon Gissing. (London: Chatto and Windus.)

Whilst he witnessed the moderate reception his latest novel received in the press, Algernon was carrying on the good fight *nolens volens*, and already at

work on his next book. At this point he gave up on James B. Pinker's services and went his own way for several years. He sold his new novel, *The Keys of the House*, which he patterned on the plot of Ibsen's play "The Doll's House," to Methuen, and they rushed it into publication hard on the heels of Algernon's previous one in March 1902. Sadly, the novel was almost completely overlooked by the critics.

***

[As we are experiencing in real life on a world scale what we normally only see in disaster movies, I thought it would be appropriate to print below one of Morley Roberts's most popular stories from the pages of the *Strand Magazine*. No doubt, the story would have given Gissing nightmares! Ed.]

The Fog

THE fog had been thick and threatening for many weeks, but now it fell on the town like a black pall. The lights that guided the world were put out; the nearest were almost as invisible as the stars: a powerful arc-lamp overhead was but a blur. Traffic ceased, for drivers were blind: screams were heard in the streets, and cries for help, where none could help themselves. Men cursed horribly and then fell into an awed silence which was almost a prayer. They held to each other darkly as if drowning, for all direction was lost to them, and they were afraid, though some spoke boldly to encourage their own hearts.

"I'm blind," said Tom Crabb, as he leant against the pillar outside the Café Français in Regent Street. He said it with a chuckle, for he, alone of a streetful of the lost, did not feel lost. "I'm blind, but know my way home! Is it as bad as they say? Aye, it must be, there's a choke about it that makes me cough."

Day by day, and night by night, he patrolled the street with a placard upon his breast marked in big letters, "Blind." People with eyes saw him. Out of a thousand one gave him a penny. Out of ten thousand one gave him sixpence. The millionth, or some charitable madman, made it half-a-crown. The red-letter day of his blind life was when he found a sovereign in his palm, put there by a soft little hand, that touched his. He heard a gentle girl's voice say, "Poor blind man." He had a hard life, and was a hard and lonely man, but he remembered that voice as he did all voices. He knew a thousand by their tongues. So the senses lean on each other and grow the stronger out of loss.

As he stayed by the pillar a man stumbled against him.

"Damn! I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it," said a voice he knew.

"That's Mr. Bentley," said Tom Crabb.

"Who are you?"

"I'm blind Crabb, sir, bless your heart. You've given me many a copper, haven't you?"

Bentley was a chauffeur and engineer. He drove for Lord Gervase North, the balloonist and motor racer, and was forever about the West End and Regent Street, as Lord Gervase often dined at the Français.

"To be sure, I know your voice," said Bentley. "It's an awful night, Crabb."

"Must be," said Crabb. "But fog or sun's the same for an eyeless man. To hear the folks it might be the end of the world, sir."

"There never was such a fog," replied Bentley; "it's just awful. I can't see you, no, nor my hand before my face."

"You can't get home, then. What are you doing?"

"I've come for my boss and the lady he's to marry. They're dining here with her mother. But we'll never get home."

At the entrance of the café there was a grey glare high up. That was all that showed of the mighty lights above the door.

"Bentley!" called a voice.

"Yes, my lord," said the chauffeur.

"What are we to do?"

"Don't know, my lord."

"It's the worst fog I ever saw," said the voice.

"Never was such a one, my lord. The street's full, but no one can move."

So they spoke in the thick darkness.

"Can you put the car anywhere and help us to walk?" asked Lord Gervase.

But no one could move the car. In front of it and behind it were other vehicles, other cars, motor 'buses, horse 'buses and vans. As Lord Gervase spoke there was a crash of glass and loud cries.

"Impossible, sir."

Crabb put out his hand and touched Bentley.

"Where does he want to go? Perhaps I could lead you."

It was a strange notion, but then the blind know their way.

"Aye, perhaps you could. The ladies live in Eccleston Square, and my lord in Pont Street."

"I don't know either of them. But I could take them and you to your place in the square. I come through it every day, Mr. Bentley."

"My place!" said Bentley.

Then his master spoke.

"Who's that with you, Bentley?"

"A blind man, sir. He thought he might take you all home, but he doesn't know Eccleston Square. All he knows is my place."

"Better be there than in the street," said Crabb. He had a sense of power in him. All the rest of the world were blind. He alone had sure sight.

"We must go somewhere," said Lord Gervase. "There's no room here, not a bed. They want to shut up now. And they've telephoned to a dozen hotels which are crammed! I'll speak to the ladies."

"Good bloke that," said Crabb. "He gave me a shilling once, and said a kind word. But I never knew he was your boss. What's his name?"

The darkness was thicker than ever. It was incredibly thick and choking. It made the useless eyes ache. It was a threat, a terror. So might the end of the world come. The voices of the fog had a terror in them as they spoke out of it.

"Bentley," said Lord Gervase once more.

"Yes, sir."

"Come here."

Bentley found him, and his employer put his hand upon his shoulder.

"Can you trust this man? If so, the ladies will come to your place till it clears, if you'll take us in?"

"My wife will do her best, sir. I know this Crabb to speak to. He says you once gave him a shilling. I'm sure he'll lead us right. But what about the car, sir?"

"You must leave it, or get him to bring you back. I want you with us. Come, Lady Semple. Come, Julia."

The mother and daughter, who had been close behind him, moved timidly.

"Let me lead her ladyship, sir," said Bentley.

"Thank you, Bentley," said Lady Semple. There was a painful shake in her voice. She was never strong, and the fog alarmed her. Julia clung to her lover and did not speak.

"Crabb, take us to my place, then, if you can," said Bentley.

"I'll give you a fiver if we get there all right," said Lord Gervase.

"You gave me a shilling once, my lord, and for that I'd take you for nothing," said Crabb. "'Tisn't often I get so much."

He led the way, and Bentley took hold of his coat.

"Keep close, all of you," said Crabb. "The Circus is packed terrible, but if I can get across Piccadilly 'twill be easy."

They were on the west side of Regent Street, and went down Air Street into Piccadilly. Out of the darkness wandering folk came and met them. Some wailed, some asked for help, some seemed daze, or half mad. And every now and again there was a crash of glass.

"They're looting the shops already," said a voice by them. It was the voice of a policeman that Crabb knew. So Crabb answered him.

"But you've a holiday, constable," said Crabb.

They came to Piccadilly and heard the trampling of horses. People in carriages spoke. The darkness was a visible, awful darkness, and in it a mad world was buried.

"Here's the way across to Eagle Place," said Crabb. "But can we get across?"

It was a passage of such peril as might be found in war, or upon an unknown mountain in heavy snow, or in a wreck upon a shore of sharp rocks. They heard the dreadful cry of a hurt man. Crabb's foot came upon one who lay on the pavement. He was dead, or so Crabb averred when he stopped and felt him.

"I've seen many dead when I was in the service, in India," said Crabb.

Julia trembled to hear him say so.

"Can we get across?" asked Lord Gervase in a sharp voice, which showed the tension of his mind.

"We had better get further down, my lord," said Crabb. "Perhaps there are fewer carriages by Duke Street."

There were many people in the street. A few were drunk, and many wild, but most were fearful. But the darkness released some from fear, and let loose their devilry. It seemed that two men in front of them smashed every window as they passed, and laughed wildly. Once Julia called out, and her lover said, "What is it?"

And she said, "Did you kiss me, Gervase?"

There was horror in her voice. He had not kissed her.

"My God!" said Gervase; "my God!"

There was a strange laugh in the darkness. He leapt at the laugh, caught it by the throat, and dashed the laughter on the pavement. And Julia's cry brought him to her. But they crossed at Duke Street, and wondered how they did it. More easily might they have traversed an unknown peak.

Yet Crabb said, "Now it's easy. We're as good as there, my lord."

In St. James's Square there were few people, and they rested. Julia spoke again.

"Did you – did you hurt him?"

But Crabb heard her speak.

"Who spoke?" he said suddenly.

"'Twas Miss Semple spoke," answered Bentley.

"Young lady, did you ever give a poor blind man a sovereign?" asked Crabb, in a strange, far-off voice.

"Yes, once, many years ago," said Julia, wondering.

"And you said, 'Poor blind man.' God bless you, miss. I knew your voice just now," said Crabb. "'Twas the fifth of July, five years ago. I never forget a voice."

He went on in silence, and led them by way of Pall Mall and the Square, down Parliament Street, going through many perils, till the Houses of Parliament were on their left and the Abbey on their right.

"We're close now," said Crabb. "'Tis strange it should be the same to me as any other night. Is it better now?"

"It's worse," said Bentley gloomily.

But they came to the square, to the stairway of the flat that Bentley lived in.

"Is this it?" asked Bentley, in surprise. He could see nothing.

"You live here, or I'm a fool," said Crabb. "I've led you straight. Go up and see."

On the first floor his flat was, and Bentley's young wife opened the door, and cried out as she took hold of him. Though her lights burnt their figures were dim and obscure; they were shadows.

"A blind man led me, dear," said Bentley; "and I've brought Lord Gervase North and Lady Semple and Miss Semple. They couldn't get home. We must keep them till to-morrow, when the fog goes."

So shadow spoke to shadow, and she whom they could not see spoke to them and bade them welcome in a trembling voice, and found chairs for them. But Bentley and Lord Gervase went out again to Crabb, who took his five pounds gratefully.

"Will this fog last?" asked Lord Gervase. But none could answer him. Ere Crabb went off to his solitary home close by, Bentley said to him–

"If the fog's like this to-morrow, come in and see us, Crabb."

They shook hands, for the danger brought them close, and Crabb went off murmuring to himself. Bentley ran up-stairs again. And it seemed to him that the fog was thicker still. In the room was lighted darkness; the lamps showed the night feebly.

"There never was such a fog," he said cheerfully.

But Lady Semple moaned and shed tears, and nothing they could say consoled her. To be in her own home in such a fog would be bad enough, but to be here!

Poor Mrs. Bentley, only lately married, was terrified to think she had three such folk to deal with. But she had sense and some initiative. She took her husband aside.

"The Thompsons are away," she began. These people lived in the opposite flat on their landing. "Why shouldn't we break in there and take their beds for these ladies?"

"Break in!" said Bentley. "Suppose they came back!"

"They've gone for a week, and how can they come back in this fog? Besides, what can we do?"

"It's a notion, after all," said her husband. "I'll propose it to his lordship."

As a result of the proposal he and Lord Gervase put their heads and shoulders together and turned house-breakers inside five minutes. They lighted fires and lamps, and mitigated the horrid darkness as much as they could, and sent Lady Semple and Julia to bed. Mrs. Bentley soon retired, and left her husband and his employer together.

"This is a queer situation, Bentley. I wonder if it will last," said Lord Gervase.

"It's a rum start, my lord," replied Bentley; "and, to look at it, it might last for ever."

"Then what will become of London, and of us?"

"We'll have to leave in your balloon, my lord," said Bentley, with a grim laugh. "But let's hope it will be better in the morning."

Lord Gervase slept in the Bentleys' spare room, and slept soundly. When he awoke it was pitch dark. He looked at his watch by the light of a match, and could not discern the figures. It seemed as if he was blind. But on opening the watch and feeling the hands he found it was eight o'clock in the morning. The fog was worse than ever. The gloom that was outside settled in their hearts. They had breakfast together and hardly spoke. Lady Semple cried continually, and Julia could hardly restrain her own tears.

"It's like the end of the world," sobbed Lady Semple. "We – we shall die of it."

In truth Mr. Bentley wondered where food was to come from if it continued. She had nothing left after breakfast but a loaf of bread. And they could not see each other. When they opened a window the outside fog was as thick as a black blanket. It inspired a helpless, hopeless horror. They sat about till ten o'clock, and said nothing. At ten Crabb came to the outer door and knocked. When they let his dark shadow in he put something down.

"It's grub," he said. "I thought you might want it."

He came to them from the outer world: they asked him for news.

"Things are awful, my lord," he said quietly. But there was a strange ring in his voice. "They're awful. I can't tell you what's going on. 'Tis madness. There's awful things being done; fires and murders and horrible screams about. Terror is in us all, but many have broken into liquor shops and are drunk; the town's mad."

"Oh, will it last?" asked Julia. "What do the papers say?"

There were no papers: there was nothing, said Crabb. The very electric lights were out: it seemed no one worked, no one could work. Already people were hurrying: there was a blind rush in the streets, and all were lost. They sought to escape, and knew not which way to run. When he had finished Lady Semple fainted, falling into her daughter's arms. Julia and Mrs. Bentley took hold of her, and Crabb and Bentley and Lord Gervase went apart.

"What's to be done?" asked Lord Gervase, in a kind of despair.

"Nothing but wait, my lord," said Bentley.

"Could you lead us out of London, Crabb?" asked Lord Gervase.

"I don't know more than my beat and a bit over," said Crabb; "what I know I know like the inside of my hat, but beyond it there's a sort of blackness for me. But I'll get you food!"

"How did you get what you brought?" asked Bentley.

"Out of an open shop," said Crabb. "There was a dead man in it."

They said nothing for a time.

"Folks are going mad and jumping into the river," said Crabb. "And I heard women shrieking awfully. Wicked people are about. There's fires already here and there."

"What can we do?" asked Lord Gervase.

"It can't last," said Bentley.

"Why can't it?" asked Crabb, after a silence.

"It might last a week, eh?" said Bentley; "or – or more?"

"Where's London's food to come from? Where are folks to find it?" asked Crabb. "In three days they'll be eating each other. I heard horrid things said in the dark by blind voices, my lord. They gave me the shivers and shakes."

"Where's that balloon, Bentley?" asked Lord Gervase, in a shaken voice. "Could we – could we use it?"

It was in a shed close by the gasworks, but Bentley couldn't find it. Crabb said he knew the gasworks if Bentley could find the place where the balloon was.

"But what will you do with it, my lord?"

"Go up in it and out of this, and drift away," said Lord Gervase. "It could be done."

"Will there be any gas left?" asked Bentley, and then he slapped his thigh as if he thought of something.

"What is it, Bentley?"

"There'll be none working at the gasworks, my lord!"

"No?"

"Crabb and I will go down and turn off the supply, if we can," said Bentley; "turn it off before it's gone."

"Do it," said Lord Gervase; "this is horrible. My eyes ache. It's driving me mad. Poor Julia!"

"Will you help me, Crabb?" asked Bentley.

So they went out together, and passed murder in the streets, and saw the glare of fires, and heard awful things. And Bentley was blind. But Crabb had eyes in his mind. So at last they came to the works and smote on the door to see if by any chance there was any one there. The watchman came to them: he had lost his nerve and cried as he held on to them.

"What gas have you left?" they asked him, and when he could answer he said that one gasometer was half full, but that it went quickly.

"Come and turn it off, so that it can't waste any more," said Bentley.

And they turned it off, knowing they brought bitter darkness to many. But Crabb said he would bring food to the watchman, and he was easier in his mind.

"London's being destroyed," said the watchman. "I hear dreadful things."

"Dreadful things are being done," said Crabb. "But dreadful things are always being done, my lad. I'm not so blind I can't see that."

"This is blindness," said the watchman. "I can't smoke, even. 'Tis dreadful. Shall we all die?"

"Some day," said Crabb. "I can see that."

And he and Bentley tried to find the shed where the balloon was, and in trying Crabb once got lost, and said so. Bentley's blood ran cold, for Crabb was his sight, his life, and the life of those he loved. For he loved not only his wife but Gervase North and Miss Julia, for they were made to be loved, both of them, and Bentley was kindhearted.

But Crabb found himself again, and they went back to the square without discovering the balloon shed.

"We'll try again," said Crabb.

They tried next day, and failed.

They tried the next day, and still failed. But Crabb brought them food, very fine food, wonderful things in pots and jars.

"I went up to Piccadilly and smashed a window for 'em," said Crabb. "God's truth I did. I hope they're food. Is it too dark to see?"

They, too, had no gas.

"We can taste!" they answered. But they tasted fog, fog thick, inspissated, yellow, a pasty fog. And they tasted horror, for there were lamentable voices in the streets, voicing Death and Murder.

"What's this in the bottom of the sack?" asked Bentley, when he had taken out the jars and the fine glasses of preserved foods.

"Jewels, I think," said Crabb, in a strange voice. "I thought the ladies might like 'em. I found 'em on the pavement in an open bag, and by the feel of 'em thought they might be di'monds. And I passed another shop I knew and smashed the window and grabbed a handful. Why not? Who wants 'em? London's dying. But you've your balloon."

Again a heavy silence fell on them. Crabb went away; he wanted news, he said. So he went lightly through the gloom, the paste of darkness and night. London was like the Pit; it was silent, but in the silence were cries. Horses lay dead, others wandered loose. There were fires in the streets made of smashed vehicles; gloomy shadows burnt themselves and cooked horseflesh by the leaping hidden flames; some danced drunkenly and fell in the fires. Many offered golden loot for food; jewels for a mouthful, and went about hunting. They said, voices said, that the river was thick with floating corpses already; and fires increased. Out of the night came the mad shrieks of women and the evillest laughter. Dying men played with death, and fell in fire and crime and the awfullest disasters. Some went madly crying for their wives and daughters, their little children and their old people who were lost. In churches they prayed; a blind organist made mad music to heaven in a church that Crabb passed.

"'Tis an awful strange world," said Crabb. "Darkness fell on me years ago. But this city's blind."

Some he spoke to were quiet and some wild. They told him rumours: the strangest. It was wonderful how rumours went in the dark. Wild crowds were walking east and west and south and north, or trying to. But few had any guidance. 'Twas said one man had a compass and led a thousand to the river, and these fell in. The parks were full of wanderers. Rich people offered thousands from windows, and were slain for money that the slayers could not find. One man lighted a fire with bank-notes. A voice said that men were in the Bank, in all the banks, starving on sacks of gold. The pavements were slippery with a thick fluid, and the dead lay everywhere. Folk drank at the river and fell in. They threw themselves from windows and fell on blind wanderers.

The railways were quiet: nothing moved there. Ships were deserted on the lower river. The telegraphs were quiet, men fled from them. The telephonic exchanges were empty. The outside world had deserted London and cut it off. It was sunk in a pit: it lay at the bottom of a well. And these things Crabb gathered up and, going back to his friends, told them. But he brought them food and they ate in the darkness. He took them wine and they drank in the night. And they lost count of the days and the nights. But every

day (or night) Bentley and Crabb sought for the place where the balloon was stored.

On the tenth day they found it. That day Lady Semple seemed near to death.

With infinite labour, though they had the help of the watchman, they took the balloon to the gasworks, and then Lord Gervase came with them, leaving Julia with her sick mother.

"It's our only chance, my darling," he said, as he left her.

He kissed her in the darkness and kissed the dying woman, for, indeed, unless they got her out of darkness she was dead, and went away with Crabb and Bentley.

With blind eyes they worked: their eyes ached and saw nothing: their hearts laboured, for the air was thick and foul, and ever fouller and thicker, since the fires of the town grew by the folly and madness of lost men. With the help of the watchman, now their slave and the slave of Crabb, who did the work of many and was the calmest of all, they started the inflation of the great balloon. In the blackness of things they had to use infinite care, lest they should wound the gigantic ship which was to save them. Yet at last they began to inflate the monster, and it commenced to grow wonderfully, like a huge toadstool in the night. As it grew it straightened out the gear, and they felt its proportions and recognised this and that, and felt easier.

"We shall get out," said Lord Gervase. He yearned to live. He was young and loved a woman, and the world was big for him, and fine. But he found Bentley a bigger man than himself, and Crabb was bigger than either, though he had been no more than a soldier, wounded in a foolish fight in far-off India. He gave them courage to drink, he held up their hearts. For he loved the voice of Julia Semple, and remembered her gift, and was glad to help her and her lover.

"You shall want nothing after this, Crabb," said Gervase.

"I shall want much, or little, always," returned Crabb, in a strange exaltation. For he had never loved a woman till now, though he had kissed many. And her whom he loved he could never kiss.

The world outside was not their world. They were lost in London, in the darkness, and were cut off. But the balloon grew, and grew. And then it ceased to grow. There was no more gas.

That night (for it was night, though they knew it not) the four men laboured in the works and got the retorts going and made more gas. Crabb was a man of strength, and ever he grew more strong. He held them up and laboured, and made the watchman, who was a poor creature, do all that he should do. He made him feel brave. This is the gift of the strong: the gift by which men know them. And at last the balloon stood up and tugged upon its ropes, made fast to an old boiler in the open space.

"It will carry – how many?" asked Crabb. This was a thing none had asked. It was a great balloon, built for a special great race and purposes of science, but it could not carry them all, and they knew it.

Lord Gervase whispered to him.

"Five at the most, Crabb."

Including the watchman, they were seven.

"I'll stay, my lord," said Crabb. "I can get on by myself. I can see."

"You're a brave man," said Lord Gervase.

He was more than a brave man, this poor blind fellow. But for him, what would they have done? By now they would have been dead. Through him they had one chance.

But if Crabb stayed, who was the other to be?

They fought it out that night in the flat among the three: Lord Gervase, Crabb and Bentley. The women stayed apart in another room.

"I'll stay, of course," said Crabb.

They understood him. He could live. For him it was not dark. He had, as he said, eyes, and his strong and quiet mind could endure the horrors of which he told them. They knew he never told half, but their minds told them the rest.

"Let it be so, Crabb. You've saved us," said Lord Gervase. "When this is over, ask what you like and you shall have it."

"I'll stay with Crabb, sir," said Bentley. He, too, was brave, but his heart sank as he spoke.

"Your wife won't go then!"

"She must," said Bentley.

"What about the watchman?" asked Crabb.

"If I stay he can go," said Bentley. "He has helped. But for him we couldn't have filled the balloon. Let him go."

Bentley called to his wife. She came from the other flat and went to his voice, and leant upon him while he told her what they meant to do. She was a young girl still, no more than nineteen, and her soul was her husband's in this hour.

"I'll stay with you, Will."

They could not move her. For when they spoke urgently she laughed at them in scorn. Every reason they urged for her safety was one for her man's.

"I'd rather die with him. Don't say any more. Let the watchman go," said she.

Bentley kissed her in the darkness, which was lighted for him by her faith and love, and she wept upon his breast.

"Take poor Lady Semple out of this hell quickly," she said, "or she will die."

They knew it was the truth. Lord Gervase spoke.

"Then it's Lady Semple and Miss Semple, myself and the watchman. Yet the balloon might carry five. It's a pity."

"So much the better chance for you, my lord," said Bentley.

The higher they could rise, the greater chance there was of getting an air current to carry them away from London. But they knew there might be none.

"Lose no time," said Crabb. He was the strongest there. They needed a strong man, for if the fog could be worse it now was worse indeed. The heavy smoke of many fires ran along the ground; nothing but the calm that destroyed them kept them from being destroyed.

"Let's go now," said Crabb. He carried Lady Semple to the works in his arms, and as they went she spoke to him.

"Save my daughter, Crabb. I shall never get out alive."

"We'll save you both, and all of you, my lady," said Crabb cheerfully.

"Oh, it's dreadful," she moaned. "Am I blind, Crabb! I see nothing, nothing. I choke."

"You'll be in sunlight, God's sunlight, in half-an-hour, my lady," said Crabb. "Up above this there's light, there must be. Think of it! fine sunlight shining such as I've not seen these ten years, since I saw it out in India. 'Tis a sun there, my lady. I remember shining temples, gold and marble. Oh yes, there's sunlight up above."

They came to the works, and entered. The watchman greeted them nervously.

"You must take me, gentlemen, you must take me," he said.

"Shut up," said Crabb. "You're going to be taken. Don't act the cur."

But the watchman was half mad. There were thousands mad that hour in London, and tens of thousands would be. Yet there was "sunlight up above," said Crabb. Oh, the brave man he was! Could there be sunlight, or had the sun been put out?

They laid the sick woman in the car, and she rested her head on Julia's knees. The watchman held to the basket-work and leapt in hurriedly. But Gervase North spoke with Crabb and Bentley.

"Stay here, if you can, Crabb. You, Bentley, go back to your wife. She'll be lonely. You're both brave men, the bravest. I feel a cur to leave you. But you stay, Crabb. If there's no wind up aloft we shall come down, here, here! You understand?"

They understood, and shook hands.

"I'd like to shake hands with Miss Julia, my lord," said Crabb, in a queer, strained voice.

"Yes, yes," said Lord Gervase.

So Crabb spoke to the girl.

"Will you shake hands, miss?"

Julia cried softly.

"Oh yes, you're a brave man."

"You said, years ago, 'Poor blind man,'" said Crabb. He kissed her hand gently. "Good-bye, miss."

Gervase was in the car.

"You can let go, Crabb," he said. "Good-bye Bentley. Good-bye, Crabb."

"Good luck and God's sunlight to you all," said the blind man.

He and Bentley let the rope run slowly, easing it off round a heavy pipe of iron that lay by the big boiler.

"I'm at the end of the rope," said Crabb. "Stand clear, Bentley. Good-bye, sir. Good-bye, miss."

The balloon was invisible: the car unseen: the world was blank and awful.

"Let go," said Gervase.

He heard a far dim voice below him cry "good-bye," and knew the earth had dropped away. He grasped Julia's hand. Lady Semple fainted and was quiet. The watchman laughed. But Gervase looked up – up!

Above him he saw something, a dimness, a blur, a space. It was almost black, but visible. It was brown: it was yellow, and then grey. There was a dash of wonderful blue in it, and then they shot out into a magic and intolerable day of noon! The sun shone upon them, and far below them lay a wonderful cloud with sunlight on it.

And the watchman giggled strangely. Julia shrank from him and held out her hand to her lover. They saw each other again: their sight was their own again. But Gervase was grimed with the labour he had done: she hardly knew him. Even his voice was strange.

"Thank God. It's wonderful," he said. He bent and kissed her.

"My dearest," she answered. And Lady Semple moaned and woke.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"In the daylight," said Gervase.

"The poor man we've left!" said Julia. She had never seen this Crabb with her eyes: she only knew him as a big shadow, a voice that was strong, and yet trembled when he spoke to her. She knew he was a hero, and knew, as women must know, that he loved her. He was in the hell beneath them.

But how wonderful the world was! The sun was glorious, the heavens above a perfect blue. The far cloud below was white, and yet in places a strange dun colour. It heaved and moved, and rose and sank. Out of it came strange pillars of yellow cloud.

"What are they?" asked Julia, pointing into the void.

"Fires," said her lover. He wondered if they moved: and could not see that they did. There was no speck of cloud above them to say if the air moved.

Far away from the city, to the east and west, they saw a shining gleam of the river. The great cloud rested only on the town. They saw far off blue hills: and the far far country adorned with happy little towns. Wrath lay only on the city: far away was peace. The lower river was full of ships. The outer world wondered at the end of things.

They rose no further. And they did not move. Gervase grasped Julia's hand.

"You're brave, my dear?"

It was a question, and she knew it.

"What is it, Gervase?"

"We don't move, Julia, neither up, nor away from here."

"What does that mean?"

She saw how grave he looked.

"What does it mean?"

"You're brave, and will be," he said. So she understood. He knew the balloon was slowly sinking. Perhaps there was a little leak in it. They came slowly, very slowly, from the heights. But still the watchman chuckled, for he watched no longer. The golden cloud heaved closer beneath them.

"We're going down, down," said the lovers. It was as though a ship sank in a turbid sea. A little grey cloud gathered about them. The sun lost its golden clear sharpness, and the watchman saw it and watched, and ceased to laugh.

"Do we go down again, sir?" he asked.

"Aye," said Gervase.

Lady Semple heard him, but said nothing. The light of day grew dim. It was as though night fell about them. The sun went out, and darkness gathered where they sank. They breathed uneasily, and once more their eyes smarted. They sank into utter darkness.

Down below Crabb waited, quietly wondering. He had taken Bentley home, and come back to the works by himself. He sat quiet as a stone, hoping, happy and unhappy. She was at any rate in sunshine. He thanked what gods there were for that. The time went. Perhaps a wind blew high up in the sunlight.

As he waited he heard a little sharp cry, like that of a bat, and then a sudden rushing sound, and the flat sound of something striking earth, close by him. It was very horrible, for what fell was soft, humanly soft, and he knew it. He groped his way to where the thing fell, and his hands were wet when he touched it, and his heart failed him. But he felt again and knew it was a man, or had been one, and not a woman. He felt a beard. It was the

watchman. He sat by the body, by the wreck of the body, and wondered. Had Lord Gervase thrown him out? That was possible. Anything was possible. Or perhaps the man had gone mad. He knew he was unbalanced. There were few wholly sane in the great city. But if the balloon had been coming down it must have ascended again.

"I'll wait," said Crabb. How long he waited he did not know. No clocks chimed. He had no sense of the hours, there was no light for him or for any. But at last, at last, he heard a far dim voice. It was not in the street, for now none came there, or if they came they cried lamentably. It was far above him. As he stared up, as if he had his eyes, a dangling rope touched him. The next moment he heard the faint light impact of the car, heard it rebound lightly and come down again.

"Is that you, my lord?" he asked.

A voice within two yards of him answered–

"Yes, Crabb."

"I'm very sorry, my lord."

"It can't be helped," said Gervase. "Did you hear anything fall, Crabb?"

"Aye, my lord."

"The watchman went mad and jumped out. We rose again, but sank once more. There's no wind up there, Crabb. And Lady Semple's dead, Crabb."

Crabb heard Julia Semple weeping quietly. But he found a sheet of iron and dragged it over the hollow in which the watchman's body lay before he went to the car.

"Make the ropes fast, Crabb," said Lord Gervase. Then they lifted Julia and her dead mother from the car. They laid the body apart.

"God help us," said Gervase. "Where's Bentley?"

"With his wife," said Crabb.

"We must keep the balloon full and try again," said Gervase.

Crabb brought Bentley, and his wife came with him. The men fired the furnace and made more gas with infinite labour. Once more the balloon, which had become limp and flaccid, stood up boldly. There were five of them left. The car could carry five, but even with four they had done nothing. Before they did anything else they buried Lady Semple, and heaped earth upon the battered watchman. They thought then that it must be day once more.

"We must go," said Gervase.

Crabb stood apart once more, but Julia Semple spoke strangely.

"Let Crabb come."

"Oh – no, miss."

"You must come. Or I will not."

She took the blind man by the arm.

"Yes, come, Crabb. We owe everything to you," said Gervase.

"I'll come then," said Crabb. His voice was strained. They remembered it afterwards. Some folk have gifts in their voices; they mark the power of their nature, the strength of them.

Before they went up they lightened the car of every superfluous thing, and cut away the guide rope. They took little food with them, and even cast away their boots.

"It's our last chance, Bentley," said Lord Gervase. "We can't make more gas, Crabb says. Oh, but it was wonderful to see the sun, Bentley!"

"It must have been, my lord! This is terrible. It grows worse. It will kill my wife," said Bentley.

"We'll get away this time."

Thus hope works in man.

They got into the car again.

"I'll cut the rope, my lord," said Crabb.

"Aye," said Gervase.

"Are we ready?"

"Yes."

Crabb cut the rope, and they rose. But overhead the darkness was intense.

"We came through black and dun and yellow and grey before," said Gervase. "And then the light, the light!"

Now they breathed again and saw a faint greyness and then stars sparkling suddenly in deep dark blue, and far away to the east a thin, thin moon. It was night, the dark hour before the dawn. Towns shone with lights far below them, sparkling on the horizon.

"It's night still," they said.

Even as they spoke they saw in the east a little grey flame of dawn, a faint whiteness, a growth as of a lily opened.

"There's the day."

"I wish I could see it," said Crabb.

"Poor blind man," said Julia, and she pressed his big hand.

"That's better than gold, missy. Oh, if I could see your face," said Crabb.

"I've never seen yours," she said softly.

But the dawn rose like a magic palm in a desert. There was gold in the flame of it, and a heart of gold, and the upper limb of the sun grew out of the east, and she saw Crabb at last. Grimed though he was by labour, he had a strange carved face, which was very calm and strong. The lids upon his sightless eyes were full, and hid them. His mouth was like that of some strange Egyptian. It had power in it. And resolution.

"I see you now, Crabb," she said to him.

The others looked at the dawn. Mrs. Bentley wept softly.

"If I could only see you. May I touch your face, missy?" He raised his hand to it, and he felt its sweet, soft contours. "You must be very beautiful," he murmured. Then he said to Lord Gervase–

"Do we still rise, my lord?"

"I think so, Crabb," Gervase answered.

They saw the dawn travel from the east and flood the land and the river, and light the great cloud beneath them. Out of it pillars of cloud grew, for the fires burnt and still increased.

"Do we yet rise?" asked Crabb.

"We rise – I hope," said Gervase.

"Is there any wind?"

"I do not know, Crabb."

"Look up, my lord. Is there a cloud above us?"

High in the zenith there was a faint wisp of vapour in a cool current.

"That cloud above moves, my lord," said Bentley.

"We don't move," said Gervase dully. "'Tis a thousand feet above us."

"Can we cast out anything?" asked Crabb, in an eager voice.

They cast out some clothes, aye, and some food and water.

"It's not enough," said Gervase. "But there's a strong current high above us."

"Oh, there's enough," said Crabb. But they only stared at him.

"You're blind, Crabb."

"I can see things," said Crabb. "I see if we go down we shall not rise again. I see that. And more."

He bent his head to Julia.

"You see me, missy? Will you remember me?"

"Oh yes, Crabb."

He stood up and held the edge of the car.

"Sit down, man," cried Bentley.

But Crabb stared at the warmth of the sun which he felt upon his pallid cheek.

"Oh, the sun's good, though I cannot see it! And I've a sense of light in me! Good-bye, missy."

He said that to Julia, and ere they knew what he did he threw himself from the car. They saw his body fall, and Julia shrieked vainly. He fell into the cloud, but the balloon rose and entered the great wind of the upper air, and the heavy cloud below them slipped to the east.

***

John Spiers informs me that Edward Everett Root, his publishing company based at Brighton, will be issuing Frederick Nesta's new book on Gissing, entitled *George Gissing, Grub Street, and The Transformation of British Publishing*, in September. Spiers has also sent me an image of the cover of the forthcoming book (see page 10 of this issue).

You can find out more about the book at the following link: http://www.eerpublishing.com/nesta-george-gissing.html. The publishers also produce an online newsletter (*The EER Gazette*) and a colourful catalogue listing all the books they produce, many being reprints of classic works on working-class and political subjects. But lots of other fascinating topics are also covered including cultural history, literary history, Socialist fiction, Charles Dickens, railway history, and Irish literary themes. The catalogue can be located at www.eerpublishing.com.

Morley Roberts' fictional works are almost completely forgotten nowadays, although Victorian Secrets did publish a volume of his best short stories in 2015 edited by the current editor of this journal. For a brief time after his death in 1942, however, some of his shorter works lived still, mostly on the radio. In 1947, meanwhile, the wonderful Hungarian-British film producer and director, Alexander Korda, scripted Roberts' comic short story, "The Promotion of the Admiral" (1903), for production. He cast Ralph Richardson, the distinguished English actor, to play the admiral who is shanghaied onto an American ship off the Barbary Coast and yet, upon the ship's arrival at its destination, having so completely turned the tables on captain and crew by means of cunning and fisticuffs, sails into port in command of the ship. Unfortunately, the idea advanced no further and the film was shelved. Five years later, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, the director duo whose fame went before them after such glorious productions as *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947), *The Red Shoes* (1948), and *The Small Back Room* (1949), wrote a screenplay of the same short story and engaged the Hollywood greats, Gregory Peck (as the admiral) and Bette Davis, along with Roger Livesey (who had played Blimp in the earlier film), in the leading roles. The film was all set to be a major production when the project was unaccountably dropped. In later life Powell said that it was one of his greatest regrets that he never made the film. Personally, I think Ralph Richardson would have been a perfect fit in the role of the rumbustious and pugnacious English admiral, as he proved later when playing Captain

Lingard in the 1951 film version of Joseph Conrad's *Outcast of the Islands*, certainly more so than Peck (although admittedly he was excellent as Captain Horatio Hornblower in the film of C. S. Forester's novel that same year and later as Captain Ahab in the 1956 film of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*).

In the July 1991 issue of our journal, Helen R. Munro described the contents of The Paterson Collection, which the Lilly Library had recently acquired. Some fifty years earlier James Paterson, who then intended to write a biography of Gissing, had, as Munro writes, "commissioned the architectural photography firm of Bedford Lemere & Company to photograph particular buildings in London – buildings that all had associations with the Victorian author George Gissing." Among these fascinating photographs are exterior views of houses in which Gissing had lived, including 5 Hanover Street and 22 Colville Place. Naturally, London after the Blitz looked much different to how it looked in Gissing's day. Nevertheless these images offer Gissing scholars and social historians a valuable record of surviving Victorian buildings associated with him.

Recently, at Lyon & Turnbull in Edinburgh, some manuscripts concerned with James Paterson's research on Gissing came up for auction. On 19 February, Lot 280, was offered for sale, described as follows:

Paterson, James: work relating to George Gissing
An archive of research material, many manuscripts

Including typed copies of Gissing's letters, a copy of Paterson's bibliography of Gissing with manuscript corrections and alterations, notes relating to H. G. Wells's memories of Gissing and a telegram from H. G. Wells to Paterson, and several letters from Ellen Gissing relating to her father [*sic*], all seemingly gathered in the process of writing a PHD thesis.

Estimate
£120 – £180

The lot sold for £162. This collection of manuscript papers will be a useful complement to the photographic material.

Wulfhard Stahl, who has been very busy and productive lately, informs me that he has just published a new scholarly German edition of Wanda von Sacher-Masoch's *Confessions* (see "Recent Publications"), the story of her life and marriage to Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the once famed Austrian nobleman, novelist, and short story writer. Wanda, a personal friend of

Gabrielle Fleury, had met Gissing in Paris, much admired him, and at one time contemplated translating one of his novels. Stahl has undertaken some dedicated research to uncover new information about Wanda, her social circle, and many of the places she lived in and visited. Perhaps one day her correspondence with Gabrielle Fleury will be translated into English.

At the same time as producing his book Stahl has organised an exhibition celebrating Wanda's 175th birthday, which was planning to open in Graz (Austria) at the Steiermärkische Landesbibliothek (Styrian State Library) on 18 March and to remain on display until 30 April. The exhibition is entitled "Schreiben im Schatten: geistvoll, talentvoll, pikant. Wanda von Sacher-Masoch zum 175. Geburtstag." The display is complemented by an accompanying booklet of circa 70 pages. Further to this, Stahl published in February an illustrated article in *Aus dem Antiquariat. Neue Folge/New Series 18*, Nr. 1/ 2020, pp. 12-19 under the title "Wanda von Sacher-Masoch (1845-1917?). Eine kurze illustrierte Bio-Bibliographie. Anmerkungen zum 175. Geburtstag." Lastly, he is preparing for publication later this year in the bi-monthly German literary periodical *Sinn und Form* several hitherto unknown letters from Wanda to Carl Spitteler, the Swiss novelist, poet, and 1919 literature Nobel Prize winner. It is thus good to see, thanks to Stahl's major contribution, Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, whose year of death remains a mystery, coming back into the limelight in the year of her 175th anniversary.

The Gustav Holst Museum at 4 Clarence Road in Cheltenham has been hosting a monthly Victorian book group in 2020. In future months it is intended that the following classics will be discussed.

Wednesday, 6 May: *Wives and Daughters* by Elizabeth Gaskell
Wednesday, 3 June: *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James
Wednesday, 8 July: *New Grub Street* by George Gissing
Wednesday, 5 August: *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
Wednesday, 2 September: *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon
Wednesday, 7 October: *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot
Wednesday, 4 November: *Phineas Finn* by Anthony Trollope
Wednesday, 2 December: *Under the Greenwood Tree* by Thomas Hardy

Each session will take place in the Victorian kitchen with plenty of tea, coffee, and cake, as well as a coal-fire in the winter months. Participation is free with an annual admission ticket. The Book Club would also welcome a small donation towards refreshments. There is no need to book – just turn up! For the exact times the contact telephone number is 01242 524846.

Those interested in attending please contact the museum to see if these dates will be kept to. The museum celebrating the life of the famous composer of *The Planets* orchestral suite is also well worth visiting in its own right.

***

Recent Publications

Volumes

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857-1888*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2019. Paperback. Pp. 366. ISBN 9780367875893. £39.99.

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part II: 1888-1897*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2019. Paperback. Pp. 363. ISBN 9780367875909. £39.99.

Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part III: 1897-1903*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2019. Paperback. Pp. 373. ISBN 9780367875916. £39.99.

William Henry Hudson, *Müßige Tage in Patagonien* [*Idle Days in Patagonia*]. Translated into German by Rainer G. Schmidt. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz Verlag, 2019. Paperback. Pp. 239. ISBN 9783957577931. €22,00.

Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, *Meine Lebensbeichte.* Memoiren. (biografiA – Neue Ergebnisse der Frauenbiografieforschung), ed. by Wulfhard Stahl. Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2020. Paperback. Pp. 375. ISBN 9783706910095. €33,00.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Robert Clark, *My Victorians: Lost in the Nineteenth Century* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2019). The Iowa Press website describes the book as follows: "My Victorians is a hybrid in both form and content, part memoir/extended lyric essay but also a work of biography, photography, and cultural, literary, and art history. This is a travelogue of writer Robert Clark's attempt to work through a sudden and inexplicable five-year-long obsession focused on Victorian novelists, artists, architecture, and critics. He wends his way through England and Scotland, meticulously tracking down the haunts of Charles Dickens, George Gissing, John Millais, the Bloomsbury Group, and others, and documenting everything in ghostly photographs as he goes.

As Clark delves deeper into the Victorian world, he wonders: What can its artists offer a twenty-first century writer by way of insight into his own life and work? His obsession with Victoriana bleeds into all aspects of his life, even the seemingly incongruous world of online dating. My Victorians is in the spirit of Geoff Dyer's *Out of Sheer Rage* and Rebecca Mead's *My Life in Middlemarch*. This book considers what happens when heartbreak, eros, faith, and doubt drive us to take refuge in the past."

Emmanuela Ettorre, "Deconstructing Natural and Post-Natural Binaries: Thomas Hardy, George Gissing, and the Places of Unfitness" in *Perspectives on Ecocriticism: Local Beginnings, Global Echoes*, ed. by Ingemar Haag, Karin Molander Danielsson, Marie Őhman, and Thorsten Päplow (Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2019), pp. 213-224.

Alexandra Gray, "Deconstructing the Drunkard's Path: Alcoholic Bodies in New Woman Fiction," in *Self-Harm in New Woman Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 134-180. In this third chapter of her book, Gray "explore[s] representations of alcoholism in texts written by and about the New Woman including George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), George Egerton's 'Gone Under' (1894) and Mary Angela Dickens's 'So as by Fire' (1896)."

Richard Menke, "New Media, New Journalism, *New Grub Street*: Unsanctified Typography," in Richard Menke, *Literature, Print Culture, and Media Technologies, 1880-1900, Many Inventions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 72-92.

Ida Maria Olsen, "Outlines of Ecological Consciousness in W. H. Hudson's Environmentalism," *English Literature in Transition*, 63:2 (2020), pp. 193-210.

Vincenzo Pepe, "Una fermata a Nocera" in *In punta di stilografica. pagine sottratte a un diario* (Venosa, Italy: Osanna Edizioni, 2020), pp. 65-71. This Chapter concerns itself with Gissing's description of his train stopping at the Nocera train station about 28km south of Naples.

Michael Tilby, "Balzac décadent: l'auteur de « La Comédie humaine » vu par la fin de siècle anglais," *L'Année balzacienne*, 20 (January 2019), pp. 317-333. Essay looks at the influence of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* on late-Victorian British writers including Gissing, Robert Louis Stevenson, George Moore, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Subscriptions

The Gissing Journal is published four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

Rates per annum are as follows:

Individuals (Europe):	£17
Libraries (Europe):	£19
Individuals (ROW):	£21
Libraries (ROW):	£23

Payment can be made in sterling to thegissingjournal@outlook.com via Paypal, by cheque made out to Markus Neacey, or by bank transfer (regarding which please contact the same).

***

Information for Contributors

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:

Markus Neacey, Editor, The Gissing Journal,
Hohenstaufenstrasse 50, Gartenhaus, 10779 Berlin, Germany

***

Editorial Board