

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
– George Gissing’s *Commonplace Book*

Volume XIII, Number 2
April, 1977

-- 1 --

The Paying Guest

C. J. Francis
Memorial University of
Newfoundland

Hilarious Gissing is not; farce he does not attempt here; but the vein of pleasing satire which he opens argues considerable humour of observation. Not that there is any distinct change from his usual work in what he observes of character or speech, nor even in the kinds of issues with which the characters are involved – money, marriage, social standing, etc. – nor is the book lacking in theme, in its scale; the tone however is different, relaxed and detached. Perhaps because of this, this slight (in size) novel, often dismissed as a potboiler, seems to me one of the very best thing he wrote.

Editorial Board

Pierre Coustillas, Editor, University of Lille
Shigeru Koike, Tokyo Metropolitan University
Jacob Korg, University of Washington, Seattle
Editorial correspondence should be sent to the editor:
10, rue Gay-Lussac, 59110-La Madeleine, France,
and all other correspondence to C.C. KOHLER,
12, Horsham Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 2JL, England.

Subscriptions:

Private Subscribers: £1.50 per annum
Libraries: £3.00 per annum

-- 2 --

It is very tidily constructed, in which its shortness helps; nevertheless there is a good deal of varied incident to encompass, and there are many characters. A number of these are kept from frequent appearance, and some do not appear at all, their existence called into our consciousness by way of conversation. The action is almost entirely in one spot, and in any case is made to be entirely dependent on the presence of one of the two main characters, Emmeline and Louise, usually of both. Its thread, though it carries many kinds of subordinate conflicts, is eminently simple and effective. Mrs. Emmeline Mumford takes Louise Derrick as a “paying guest”: she comes, she rapidly involves her hosts with her tempestuous life with ever-increasing disruption of their domestic comfort to the culminating fire in the drawing-room; then Louise as soon as she has recovered from the accident

departs. That is all, and it carries the story with pace and liveliness.

The strength of the book is its theme, which is also most of its subject matter and much of its motivation: class differentiation.

“In talking with Cobb, Louise seemed to drop a degree or so in social status; her language was much less careful than when she conversed with the Mumfords, and even her voice struck a note of less refinement.” (p. 104; quotations are from the first English edition).

Precisely: “a degree or so”; and the outer signal is speech. Gissing often delicately distinguishes class differences within those divisions normally thought of as “classes,” and notes the “middle” class’s sensitivity to those distinctions. *The Paying Guest* acquaints us with more specimens of the rising commercial middle class, of London suburbia, different again from those of *In the Year of Jubilee* – no doubt the variations are infinite. The approach is different: in the larger novel a study was being made of these phenomena in many aspects, mercantile, educational, environmental: here, as is appropriate to the scope of the work, the restriction is to manners.

-- 3 --

That illogical trick of mind which leads to the thought that, as a book is small, its contents must be proportionately less deserving of notice, has a little influenced criticism of *The Paying Guest*. Perhaps this is why Donnelly finds the characterization “simple” (174). It is as subtly conceived as any characterization by Gissing: only, first, the characters are seen in brief span only, in relation to certain incidents – much is left unhandled, but the potential may be felt; it is clear how, in a book of different intention, Gissing could have developed the subsequent course of the Mumford and Cobb marriages. Second, the handling of characters not simple in themselves may be restrained by direction towards particular thematic points (sometimes a fault in Gissing’s longer books, e.g. *New Grub Street*). Here, manners – external behaviour – is the theme; and consequently Gissing is concerned, for once, less with why people behave as they do, than how they behave. For all that, the unexplained complexities and sillinesses of Louise Derrick’s behaviour are made explicable by observation of her actions and words. I refer particularly to that afternoon of meditation on which she commences at least to bring some order to her existence, some control over her person (in what ways, events before and after make clear); in terms of the presentation, we are told nothing of her thoughts, instead receive a description by externals of her lounging and sulking about Epsom Downs. Just a page or two; a little work of art in itself.

The important thing about Louise, however, is her mobility and flexibility. The book at commencement may give the immediate impression (the only impression some critics seem to have received) that it is to be of a clash between two distinct social classes – strongly differentiated in such a way as may be marked by the newly rich Mrs. Iggins’s absent aitches. Far from it; those extremes are there, but Gissing is concerned with differences of “a degree or so,” with delineating them so precisely that we may know exactly what is meant by “a stock-broker’s clerk...the better

-- 4 --

kind of City young man”; meant, that is, both by the character whose viewpoint is being used and absolutely in view of what we know of all the characters. This is not however a gallery of character types. The book operates to create in us that sensitivity to manners, to actions and reactions, to phrases and intonations and other distinctive subtleties, until we are by imaginative cooperation with

the author reacting to intonations not expressible in print and to such things as details of taste in dress which in strict fact have not been described to us. The mechanism to achieve this is a combination of the excessively scrupulous observation of Emmeline Mumford with the amorphous flexibility of Louise as she flounders between levels of behaviour and tries to adapt.

Those who cannot, or do not want to, understand the “class” phenomenon are inclined with Mrs. 'Iggins to equate wealth and class directly. Important though money is in his scheme of things, Gissing has never made this simplification. Money is indeed relevant to class distinction, but in peculiar and arbitrary ways, and ways moreover which are not always clear to those intimately concerned; not that money is allowed to take a major part in their thoughts, but that they are uncomfortable about it. This is well conveyed, in many small ways; the combination of pretence and petty parsimony that characterizes Emmeline and her husband (they would have been horrified at such terms) is well conveyed in the opening pages (“The rent was heavy...” and following passages), but as revealing are the unguarded reactions of Emmeline, who, although even in the consciousness of “her husband’s desire to increase his income” which “had rather unsettled her” she would scarcely admit to herself a profit motive, does all too often think in terms of money without being wholly aware of it. Her mental comment on Louise’s clothes is, “money had been misspent in several directions.” There is much humour in the scene in which she attempts to put off Mrs. 'Iggins;

“Then, with an air of decision, she announced her terms; they would be three guineas a week. It was half a guinea more than she and Clarence had decided to ask.” (21)

-- 5 --

Emmeline, in supposing that an increase of only one-fifth in the fee would be sufficient to deter the prospective “customer,” reveals not only her innocence but also that in her own mind the original figure was extortionate although “she and Clarence” had together decided upon it: to which her final regret that she might have asked much more is a fitting conclusion.

Gissing offers a sardonic explanation of her bitter retort to Cobb after the fire in the drawing-room:

“So you are the cause of this!”
‘I am, Mrs. Mumford, and I can only say that I’ll do my best to make good the damage to your house.’
‘Make good! I fancy you have strange ideas of the value of property destroyed.’
Insolence was no characteristic of Mrs. Mumford. But calamity had put her beside herself; she spoke, not in her own person, but as a woman whose carpets, curtains and bric-à-brac have ignominiously perished.” (135)

but still her thought has formulated itself in monetary terms, and she continues to insist that Cobb shall “pay,” more for the distress he has caused her than for any actual pecuniary loss, to an extent that discomforts even her husband whose business instinct had initiated the whole affair. Of course, by this time she has been vulgarized by her experiences, of which more in a moment.

This ambivalence about cash is on a par with other hints of a slightly self-conscious failure completely to meet the self-established standards of suburban gentility:

“...the rough draft was copied by Emmeline. She wrote a very pretty hand, and had no difficulty whatever about punctuation. A careful letter, calculated for the

eye of refinement; it supplied only the indispensable details of the writer's position, and left terms for future adjustment." (8)

-- 6 --

in which, and other, sentences the contrasting values and pretensions play off against each other with admirable subtlety. Irony of this kind, and writing of this quality, turns the mind to Jane Austen; it seems probable that Gissing has taken her as a model for this book so largely composed of social conversation, and so similar in its subject matter to Jane Austen's work. There are indeed occasional reminiscent turns of phrase: "Nothing could have been more delightful" (61); "she had not thought it possible for the girl to conduct herself at such a juncture with such perfect propriety." (118).

The Mumfords' minor dissimulation about the amount of social activity they can provide for their guest chimes with the rest of their concealed hypocrisy. A great part of the comedy of the book inheres in the attempts of Louise to comply with the namby-pamby good taste of Emmeline, when her own dissimulations are so much more wholehearted and her monetary consciousness so much more downright. There is a fundamental honesty in her vulgarity which one is bound to prefer to the feeble pretentiousness of suburbia, and which one is bound to suppose Gissing preferred – he had come a long way from crude oppositions of working girls to ladies. Louise belongs to a mercantile class accustomed to making its way in the world, and foolish though she may be in many ways it is more than clear from the start that she is very well able to look after herself. As she observes, she has learnt nothing, and will never need to; she will assuredly marry a man who can keep her; about this she has no hypocrisy. The question is merely, who will it be; and as a practical woman she is prepared to contemplate all the possibilities, though it is clear, really, to her as to the reader that the choice must eventually fall on Cobb who has a force of character that can cope with her vagaries, has the promise of future prosperity, and who attracts her. There is considerable comedy in that scene in which the two of them discuss the prospect of marriage in detached and practical terms,

-- 7 --

attempting to maintain a certain distance while sharing an umbrella.

In this meeting of the classes represented by Louise and the Mumfords, the differences are subjective; both are "in business"; both are conscious of the value of money; both are sensitive to the externalities of their position, the display of their affluence. The class to which the Mumfords belong, however, is striving to conceal its mercantile foundation with a display of pretentious gentility. It is characteristic that, in exchanging references, Emmeline should provide those which had "respectable addresses" at Blackheath and West Kensington (these places still have that aura of respectability to-day, though somewhat variegated) whereas Mrs. Higgins should name "two City firms" – a much sounder reference.

With all one's powers of empathy with the supersubtleties of Victorian propriety, it is difficult to understand wholly the gravity of the offence committed by Louise in speaking to Mr. Mumford in a railway station. It does seem, from references in other books as well as this (I think of Meredith's Clara at the railway station), that these places rather oddly combined respectability, in that a lady might with reasonable excuse be found alone in their waiting or refreshment rooms, with an opposing aura of unchaperoned raffishness like other places of public concourse. But from another point of view the importance given to this incident can be understood. There is scarcely any doubt that Louise, the realist, in appealing privately to Mumford is relying quite largely on her feminine charm to gain her ends. It is equally clear that Emmeline recognizes that. "She was not one of the most foolish of her sex," (41) Gissing observes, but the implication is of "foolishness" (jealousy)

nevertheless, and elsewhere the author adds,

“When there enters the slightest possibility of jealousy, a man can never be sure that his wife will act as a rational being.” (86)

-- 8 --

The truth is that Emmeline, Louise and Mrs. Higgins, like Kipling's ladies, are sisters under the skin. Emmeline and Louise from the start understand each other rather better than Mumford understands either of them. It is the major irony of the book that the prolonged contact which is supposed to encompass the refinement of Louise has the contrary effect of stripping the façade of gentility from Emmeline, of releasing in her some of the forces of natural vulgarity; hence her behaviour towards Cobb previously noted; and hence the pleasing reversal through which, after all the commentary on the ill-temper and quarrelsomeness of Louise and her relatives, it behoves Louise to intervene to prevent a noisy quarrel between her mother and the erstwhile restrained Emmeline.

There is little to commend womankind in this book; and when we add the minor touches of the scandalmongering of Emmeline's acquaintances and the idiocy of the female servants on the occasion of the fire, we have what looks like a general condemnation of the sex without any saving reference to ideal womanhood. This book looks towards *The Whirlpool*, which is a satire also – but with a different model not Austen, but Thackeray.

George Gissing's Birthplace

60, Westgate and 2 & 4, Thompson's Yard

Clifford Brook

[The following are the most significant passages of a report which Mr. Brook wrote on 23 February 1977. Copies were sent to the Secretary of the Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, the Chief Planning Officer, the District Archivist, the Wakefield Civic Society and the Wakefield Historical Society. This report gives so much new information about Gissing's birthplace that it undoubtedly deserves a wider circulation at a time when the fate of the buildings is still uncertain. – P. C.]

-- 9 --

It has long been known that the writer George Gissing was born at 55 (now numbered 60), Westgate, and both his birth certificate and the 1861 Census Returns (which do not give the house numbers but put them in order) confirm that he lived there. However, once I realised that there are only two rooms above the shop and little space behind it I gave it further study.

The 1861 Census Returns give the names of the following occupants:

Thomas	Waller	Gissing	31	Pharmaceutical Chemist employing two apprentices and one porter
Margaret		”	28	

<u>George Robert</u>	”	3	
William Whittington	”	1	
Algernon Fred	”	5 months	
Benjamin Shaw		18	Apprentice registered with the Pharm. Soc.
George Althorpe		17	Apprentice
Jane Peak		15	Nursemaid
Mary Wakefield		24	Housemaid

In notes written in 1896 with the title “Reminiscences of My Father”: “I was oil painting in the little spare bedroom which I used as a studio (looking out into Thompson’s Yard), one day in 1870, when father came in....”

Further, it appears that Gissing had his childhood home in mind when he wrote the novel *A Life’s Morning*. I have identified all the houses he describes in the book and here is where the Cartwrights lived:

Mrs. Cartwright and her five grown-up daughters, together with a maid-servant, lived, moved and had their being in an abode consisting of six rooms, a cellar and a lumber closet.....The uppermost windows commanded a view of the extensive cattlemarket, of a long railway viaduct, and of hilly fields beyond.”

-- 10 --

Two of the four windows above the chemist’s shop, now the Oxfam shop, have this unique view down Market Street!

I visited the shop last year and was allowed to explore upstairs and behind it and found that the shop is attached to a large Georgian house, built before the two shops 60 and 62 Westgate. This house, which has connecting doors to the shop on the ground and second floors, faces onto Thompson’s Yard. I have written “house” but at present it is divided in a strange way into two houses, numbered 2 and 4 Thompson’s Yard. Later I found that the Wakefield Metropolitan District Council had bought the whole property, that is 60, Westgate and 2 and 4 Thompson’s Yard.

Chronologically the story seems to be:

George Gissing’s father, Thomas Waller Gissing, came to Wakefield in 1856, the year before George was born, when he took over the shop and business from Matthew B. Hick (ref. Henry Hick’s *Recollections of George Gissing* by P. Coustillas). At that time he rented the shop and at least some of the house, but when they were offered for sale by auction he bought the house, the shop and also 62, Westgate.

In the deeds S4040 at the Town Hall, there is: A Conveyance of the two houses and shops in Westgate and the dwelling house in Thompson’s Yard from William Wilkinson to T. W. Gissing for the price of £2940; a Declaration that the property referred to in the Conveyance is identified as Lots 1 and 2 in the description of the lots auctioned on 3 November 1865; and a description of all the lots.

Description:

“Lot 1. Two dwelling houses with two shops, Frontage 35’ 4” to Westgate and the Corn Market, comprising sitting and bedrooms, altogether 202 sq.yd. The shops have excellent cellar kitchens under them and are now in the several occupations of John McCabe and T. W. Gissing.

Lot 2. A good Family Dwelling house in the yard behind lot 1 consisting of Dining room, Kitchen

and Scullery on the ground floor with cellars under; Drawing and best bedrooms [note the plural] with dressing room and water closet (over the front door) on the first floor; and four bedrooms in

-- 11 --



the attics; now in the occupation of Wakefield Charities [which moved to the present premises in Market Street in 1867], R. Linfield and T. W. Gissing.

Lot 3. A large and commodious Warehouse in the occupation of Samuel Flatman etc.”

The sale was reported in the *Wakefield Journal and Examiner*, 10 November 1865, p. 2. “Sale of Property in Westgate. Last Friday a large number of persons were present in the Bull Inn, to witness the sale of Mr. Gissing’s and Mr. McCabe’s Shops in the Corn-market and certain other properties in Thompson’s Yard. The property was put up for auction by Mr. Charles Dixon, and after some spirited bidding raised some very high prices. The first lot, the houses and shops occupied by Mr. Gissing and Mr. McCabe and covering 202 sq. yd. was bought by Mr. Gissing for £2440. Mr. Gissing was also the purchaser of the second lot, the large house at present occupied as the offices of the Wakefield Charities and their under-tenants, the price for which the lot was

-- 12 --

“knocked down” was £450. The third lot, the wool warehouse and counting house occupied by Mr. Samuel Flatman was bought by that gentleman for £500. Lot four etc....”

T. W. Gissing died on 28 December 1870 and Mrs. Gissing leased the whole property to J. L. Chaplin in May 1871, later selling it to him, in January 1874 (ref. Deeds S4040, Wakefield Town Hall). At the time of the making of the lease, a Schedule was drawn up giving a valuation of fittings, and it is relevant in that it names each room that contains any fittings. Most of them were Gaslight Brackets, Window Blinds or Water taps. Here is a list of the rooms:

Top Bed Room	Staircase
Mr. Gissing’s late Bed Room	Water Closet over front door
Sitting Room over shop	Front Passage and Staircase
Spare Bed Room	Kitchen
Boys’ Bed Room	Scullery
Passage	Cellar
Water Closet	Breakfast Room

Servants' Room
Study
Passage
Nursery

Office
Shop
Cellar under Shop
Middle Laboratory
Italian Warehouse

I haven't been able to relate this Schedule to the actual rooms because, as I have said above, the house in Thompson's Yard is divided, with two of the upper rooms on the left of the main staircase bricked off and made to be part of the smaller apparently single-fronted house, now 4, Thompson's Yard. This house was badly burnt some months ago and so I have been apprehensive about attempting to climb its debris-covered stairs. Oxfam, which is occupying T. W. Gissing's shop, uses the Dining Room on the ground floor of 2, Thompson's Yard as a store-room, and all the other rooms in it are empty.

-- 13 --

After Mrs. Gissing left the property and went to live in Stamp Office Yard, the Chaplin family continued to own the property until firstly they sold 62, Westgate to the Britannic Assurance Company on 22 December 1932, and then all the other to Boots the Chemists, who in turn sold it to Wakefield M.D.C.

I am satisfied that George Gissing spent the first thirteen years of his life at 60, Westgate and in part of, then all of 2 and 4 Thompson's Yard, where his two brothers and two sisters, including his less well known novelist brother Algernon, were born after him.

One last point is that there are windows, which are part of the shop properties, overlooking Thompson's Yard. All these windows belong to 62, Westgate which has rooms over the passage leading from Westgate into Thompson's Yard, and others in that irregular portion which links the shops to the house as a result of Thompson's Yard not being at right angles to Westgate. That Mr. McCabe had all these rooms is supported by the 1861 Census Returns; as well as his family residing there he let two rooms as the entry shows.

John McCabe	56	Bookseller, Stationer. Employs one apprentice
Ann	56	Wife
Harriet Dunford	18	House servant
Richard Grice Aked	62	(lodger, occupier of two rooms) Landed Proprietor

The Deeds

The following arises from a search through documents held by the present owners of T. W. Gissing's shop and the house behind it. Wakefield Metropolitan District Council bought the property from Boots Chemists in February 1974, and the documents are in a packet marked "Old Deeds, 60, Westgate. S.4040," held at Wakefield Town Hall.

The purpose of my search was to try to determine how much of the property in Thompson's

-- 14 --

Yard was owned and occupied by T. W. Gissing at least by the time of his death. Briefly, I am now satisfied that as well as occupying the Chemist's shop (now 60, Westgate), he owned and occupied

both what I have called earlier the Georgian double-fronted house (now 2, Thompson's Yard) attached to the rear of his shop, and also what is now a single-fronted house (now 4, Thompson's Yard) on the far side of the larger one, and built as part of it though its front is a foot back from the front of the other. He also owned the shop which is now 62, Westgate.

At this time I have not been into every room in the two houses: two doors onto the central staircase of the larger house have been bricked up as their rooms are now part of the accommodation of 4, Thompson's Yard, and another one nailed up to keep out vandals; and the staircase in the smaller house is deep in debris as a result of fire damage, so it is possibly unsafe.

Some of the documents were registered (but not copied) at the West Yorkshire Registry of Deeds, Margaret Street, Wakefield and in such cases I have quoted their reference numbers, e.g. Vol. ZA/page 154/item 183.

List of Documents:

- 2 Dec. 1862. T. W. Gissing's will by which he made Margaret Gissing and William Medley, Pharmaceutical Chemist of Derby, the trustees of his estate.
- 9 Jan. 1866. ZA/154/1 83. Conveyance of the two houses and shops in Westgate, and the dwelling house in Thompson's Yard from William Wilkinson to T. W. Gissing, for the price of £2940. Declaration by William Wilkinson that the property referred to in the Conveyance is identified as Lots 1 and 2 in the description of Lots auctioned on 3 Nov. 1 865. Description of all the Lots sold on 3 Nov. 1865. Sale plan showing all the Lots sold on 3 Nov. 1865.
- 11 Jan. 1866. ZA/155/184. Mortgage on T. W. Gissing's property whereby William Wordsworth of West Ardsley near Wakefield loaned him £1750 at 5% interest per year.
- 15 --
- 29 March 1866. YZ/354/382. Further mortgage on the same property, by which William Wordsworth loaned T. W. Gissing an additional £1000 at 5%. This time T. W. Gissing, Fred Thompson and R. B. Mackie were named as joint sureties.
- 8 April 1868. Codicil to T. W. Gissing's will by which his brothers George and John Foulsham Gissing were named as additional trustees of his estate.
- 7 July 1871. Lease of the property by Mrs. Gissing and George Gissing to John Lambert Chaplin at a rent of £80 per year; and mention of the sale at an earlier date of the goodwill of the Business for £300 and the stock in trade at valuation, to Joseph Barker. In this lease, Joseph Barker was said to wish that J. L. Chaplin should be tenant in his stead on payment of £300 to Mrs. Gissing and George Gissing for the goodwill of the business, and £1000 to Joseph Barker for the stock in trade. In this, a Schedule names many, if not all, the rooms.
- 20 April 1873. Deed Poll by which William Medley and John Foulsham Gissing "renounced and disclaimed any Real and Personal Estate" bequeathed to them by T. W. Gissing.
- 28 Nov. 1873. Abstract of the Title of Mrs. Gissing to the property in Westgate and Thompson's Yard.

- 8 Jan. 1874. 699/473/584. Conveyance of the property from Mrs. Gissing and George Gissing, and their mortgagee [William Wordsworth] to J. L. Chaplin on payment of ten shillings each to Mrs. Gissing and George Gissing, and £2750 [the total of the mortgage] to William Wordsworth.
- 9 Jan. 1874. 699/478/585. Mortgage on the property by which R. B. Mackie and his brothers, Edward Alexander and John, loaned J. L. Chaplin £2000 at 4%; and signed statements saying that Chaplin repaid sums of £500 on each of the dates: 14 Jan. 1882, 10 Nov. 1883, and 9 Oct. 1886.

-- 16 --

- 13 July 1888. 20/571/326. Reconveyance, by which it was acknowledged that J. L. Chaplin had fully paid off the £2000 loan by a fourth instalment of £500 on 9 July 1888.

Later deeds will be in existence showing that Edward Mitchel Chaplin sold 62, Westgate to the Britannic Assurance Company on 22 Dec. 1932, and that the chemist's shop and the house in Thompson's Yard were first sold to Boots the Chemists and then, in February 1974, to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.

Notes on *The Emancipated*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the AMS reprint of the first English edition in three volumes.]

Volume I

- p. 43, 1. 8
“But Goethe – you remember he says that the desire to see Italy had become an illness with him.” Also referred to in *Ryecroft*, Autumn XIX.
- p. 72, 1.8
“...to aim at Herrick's ‘fine distraction’ and ‘sweet disorder,’ without being able to compass the corresponding ‘wild civility.’” Referring to R. Herrick: *Delight in Disorder*.
- p. 74, 1. 4
“...going up to the wall of Casa Guidi and kissing it.” A reference to the Brownings' stay in Italy.
- p. 74, 1. 11
“...less given to the melting mood than Barbara...” Shakespeare: *Othello*, V.II.348: “Allbeit unused to the melting mood”.
- p. 83, 1. 17
“...gazing with lack-lustre eye at a shop-window...” Perhaps inspired by “looking on it

-- 17 --

with lack-lustre eye” (Shakespeare: *As You Like It*, II.VII.21).

- p. 86, l. 4

“In what region were the kine of Sir Grant Musselwhite unknown to fame?” Echoing Gray’s *Elegy* (XXX): “A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.”

- p. 97, l. 8

“Why didn’t you marry me a year ago, Mad?” “Because I should have been mad indeed to have done so...” A pun or a coincidence?

- p. 98, l. 18

“...she becomes the millstone about their neck...” St. Matthew, XVIII, 6: “. . . it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck...”

- p. 109, l. 6

“...the conflict between the children of this world and the children of light.” St. Luke, XVI, 8: “. . .for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”

- p. 140, l. 14

“Possibly he belonged to the unclassed and unclassable...” As Gissing is closely associated with the use of *unclassified* this passage may be of interest.

- p. 144, l. 13

“The last refuge of a scoundrel.” Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, April 7, 1775: “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.”

- p. 144, l. 16

“And is Miriam killing the fatted calf?” A reference to St. Luke, XV.23: “And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it.”

- p. 145, l. 7

“I feel like a giant refreshed...” *The Book of Common Prayer*, Psalm LXXVIII, 66: “So the Lord awaked as one out of sleep; and like a giant refreshed with wine.”

- p. 152, l. 15

“...carelessness of what might come hereafter.” Swinburne: *The Garden of Proserpine*:

-- 18 --

“Of what may come hereafter.”

- p. 197, l. 15

“All hail!” Referring to Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, I.III.48.

- p. 202, l. 6

“... in your hand a mantling goblet!” As a goblet can hardly be “mantling,” this may be a slip

for “mantling vine” (Milton: *Paradise Lost*, IV, line 258).

- p. 202, l. 14
“...nunc est bibendum!” From Horace: *Odes*, I .XXXVII.1
 - p. 219, l. 10.
“...that slough of despond.” Of course a reference to Bunyan: *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.
 - p. 226, l. 10
“‘Company, villanous company,’ is the first thing to be avoided.” Shakespeare: *King Henry IV*, Part I, III.III.10.
 - p. 234, l. 5
“Shall I the spigot wield?” Shakespeare: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I.III.21.
 - p. 253, l. 8
“...he spoke not in anger, but in sorrow.” Probably inspired by Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, I.II.231.
“A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.”
 - p. 285, l.4
“...and wait peacefully for marriage in the ninth year after...” This may be a reference to the story of Jacob (*Genesis*, XXIX), who, however, waited seven years for Rachel.
 - p. 285, l. 13
“...shun the poet and all his works...” *The Book of Common Prayer, The Catechism*:
“...renounce the devil and all his works.”
 - p. 289, l. 13
“Amor ch’a null’amato amar perdona.” Dante : *Inferno*, Canto V.103.
 - p. 299, l. 15
“...ore rotundo...” From Horace: *Ars Poetica*, 323.
- 19 --

Volume II

- p. 34, l. 8
“...the faith that would have bidden him write himself a miserable sinner.” Gissing may have thought of the General Confession in *The Book of Common Prayer*: “But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.”
- p. 34, l. 15
“...after the high Roman fashion...” From Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.XIII.86.
- Chapter heading p. 118
“On the wings of the morning”: from *The Book of Common Prayer*, Psalm CXXXIX.8: “If I take the wings of the morning.”
- p. 132, l. 9

“Your love is very different to mine...” In *New Grub Street* (ch. VII) Alfred Yule condemns the use of *different to* as a “modern vulgarism.”

- p. 156, l. 8

“... of being able some day to find rest for the sole of his foot...” *Genesis*, VIII.9 : “But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.”

- p. 165, l. 13

“... you remind me of the woman whose price is above rubies.” *Proverbs*, XXXI.10: “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.”

- p. 174, l. 12

“...you are of the salt of the earth.” St. Matthew, V.13: “Ye are the salt of the earth.”

- p. 217, l. 2

“...with the love that conquers everything...” Virgil: *Eclogue* X.69: “Omnia vincit Amor.”

Volume III

- p. 5, l. 11

“These stones, have they not echoed to Hellenic speech?” Letter to Bertz, Dec. 6, 1888 : “These columns here have echoed to the sound of Hellenic speech...”

-- 20 --

- p. 36, l. 6

“These are the kind of oxen that Homer saw, and Virgil.” Letter to Bertz, Jan. 3, 1889 : “Such oxen as these did Homer see, and Virgil.”

- p. 41, l. 11

“You mean Mount Soracte?” “Yes. You don’t know Latin, or it would make you quote Horace.” A reference to “Vides ut alta stet nive candidum | Soracte – ?” Horace, *Carmina*, I.VIII. 1-2. Also quoted in a letter to Bertz (Dec. 7, 1888).

- p. 51, l. 10

“Servetur ad imum”. From Horace, *Ars Poetica*, line 126.

- p. 65, l. 3

“...the sense of having chosen the wide way instead of that strait one which is authoritatively prescribed.” A reference to St. Matthew, VII.13 : “Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”

- p. 96, l. 9

“For verily there is no creature more afflicted than man, of all that breathe and move upon the earth.” Homer: *Odyssey*, book XVIII, l. 130.

- p. 144, l. 7

“...the Scarlet Woman throned by the Mediterranean...” A reference to Revelation, XVII.

- p. 269, l. 22

“The proverb says that after godliness comes cleanliness.” From John Wesley: *Sermons*, no. XCIII, *On Dress* (“Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness.”)

- p. 308, l. 15

“Bocca baciata non perde ventura; anzi rinnuova, come fa la luna.” Boccaccio : *Decamerone*, end of the 7th story of the 2nd day.

-- 21 --

Book Review

George Gissing : *The Unclassed* (The Harvester Press, Hassocks, 1976). Edited with an introduction by Jacob Korg.

Apart from an expensive American edition in 1968, this handsome volume is the first reprint of *The Unclassed* since it appeared in Benn's Essex Library in 1930. The text adopted is that of the novel as revised by Gissing in 1895. In his interesting introduction, Jacob Korg refers to something like 1,000 alterations and deletions which the author made when converting the original three-decker of 1884 into a single volume. Some of the deletions consist of whole paragraphs of reflections and conversations which, while they may give a valuable picture of Gissing's feelings on social questions about twelve years earlier, do not bear any important relation to the plot of the story, which is brimful of dramatic incident.

What seemed to shock some pious critics in 1884 was the presentation of a reformed prostitute as heroine of the novel, which was regarded as a subject “which had by general consent been excluded from English fiction.” One reviewer maintained, somewhat arbitrarily, that “a long continued platonic attachment between a normal young man – even of aesthetic tastes – and a London prostitute is an incident hardly within the range of probability, to say the least.” Yet George Meredith, whose advice for amending certain passages was accepted by Gissing, did not appear to see anything outrageous in the situation, and we should not forget that the much revered Mr. Gladstone was at the time leading a crusade for the redemption of “fallen women.” It would be wrong, however, to show contempt for the reviewers of the eighteen-eighties, for they had not the (perhaps questionable) advantage of living in our present “permissive society,” in which things are ordered rather differently.

The story of the young rebel Osmond Waymark, of his friend Julian Casti and the latter's

-- 22 --

abominable wife Harriet, of the heroine Ida Starr and her “fellow traveller” Sally Fisher, of poor Maud Enderby made to become a victim of fanatical religious austerity by a dedicated (or should we say desiccated ?) aunt – all of these and of other colourful characters – made exciting reading, at times saddening and at others humorous, even verging on the farcical. The modern reader may well enjoy the antics of Mr. Tootle, his imposing wife and their “academy of learning,” which appears on the point of collapse after the defection of the three assistant masters, Waymark, the garrulous stage Irishman O'Gree and Herr Egger, the ponderous and bewildered Swiss, who protests “I have made

my possible. I can no more.” If such scenes are not so memorable as Dotheboys Hall, they are in the Dickens tradition, and we are invited later to a hilarious party in the parlour at the back of O’Gree’s chandler’s shop, which is presided over by his wife née the aforementioned Sally Fisher. The guests are Waymark and Egger, who has become a waiter.

Although Professor Korg does not refer directly to these humorous interludes, he does raise a question which is of considerable interest. He writes: “. . .this friend, the German expatriate Eduard Bertz, resembled Egger rather than Julian Casti” (page xiii). This is a point which puzzled me when I first read the novel some years ago, for Bertz read and praised the 1884 edition and provided no evidence of being offended. On the other hand, Julian Casti is depicted as a delicate Latin type, and Bertz was unmistakably Teutonic. It was Bertz who put an advertisement in a newspaper asking if he could find a friend who would be willing to converse with him on “ancient and modern literatures, a freethinker in religion, a lover of art in all its forms, a hater of conventionalism,” and it was Gissing who replied to this appeal. In *The Unclassed*, Gissing makes Osmond Waymark the advertiser and Julian Casti the respondent.

One of the surest tests for re-evaluating fiction published ninety odd years ago is to be able to judge whether events and characters are sufficiently interesting and plausible to rivet the reader’s

-- 23 --

attention and for him to find pleasure, after finishing the book, without any temptation to be patronising or with any feeling of tedium. *The Unclassed*, for the present reviewer, passes this test with the greatest ease. – C. S. Collinson.

A Forgotten Anecdote

Pierre Coustillas

Alfred Slotnick, of Brooklyn, reports the following anecdote which he found in Thomas Burke’s *Son of London*, a volume of reminiscences published by Herbert Jenkins in 1946. It seems to have been hitherto overlooked by Gissing scholars:

Sherard always talked of literary life as though it were some sort of mêlée or wrestling-match. I never could see it as any kind of competition, and anyway I never could compete or struggle. I never ‘struggled for recognition’ or tried to draw attention to myself. I just did my work. But he was, I think, a rather disappointed man who had had a few backhanders in his career, and had not enough protective covering of humour to take them with resilience. I remember his telling me of a backhander he received (unmeant) from George Gissing. He was returning to France, his regular home, and at Charing Cross, from which the boat-train then started, he met a friend. The friend had Gissing with him. They were introduced, and Gissing said, “Oh – Robert Sherard, is it? I’ve wanted to meet you for *so long*.” Most of us, however modest, have a spark of vanity which will glow to such a remark, and Sherard duly glowed. Until Gissing continued,

-- 24 --

“You knew Daudet, and I’ve so much wanted to meet somebody who knew him.”

Thanks to Gissing’s diary, the anecdote can be dated with accuracy. The entry for November 19, 1894 records a dinner at the Authors’ Club, attended by some forty writers. “A mere gathering of tradesmen, and very commonplace tradesmen to boot,” he lamented. It was on that day that he first met Anthony Hope (Hawkins), the honoured guest, a cousin of his former pupil Walter Grahame and of the author of *The Wind in the Willows*. Oswald Crawford was in the chair and Gissing did not enjoy his “ludicrously feeble” speech. In the doorway of the club (not at Charing Cross) Gissing met Robert Harborough Sherard (1861-1943) and was introduced to him, “a walking skeleton, tall, upright, ghastly, with warts on face and neck.” Sherard must have been a cousin of Alfred Yule. The *Dictionary of National Biography* ignores him, but the British Museum Catalogue shows that he was a prolific novelist and critic whose production extended from 1880 to 1930. He was the author of such novels as *A Bartered Honour* (1883), *The American Marquis* (1888), *After the Fault* (1906), and wrote lives of Wilde, Zola, Daudet and Maupassant. He also translated and edited Pierre Loti.

Notes and News

The reference to the short article on Alfred Slotnick’s visit to Wakefield which appeared in the *Wakefield Express* (Newsletter of January 1977) was incomplete: it was published in the number for October 8, 1976.

The June 1976 number of *Victorian Studies* contains a short section on Gissing in its annual Victorian bibliography, p. 630, as well as references to the writer’s novels available in inexpensive editions in America.

A review by Jacob Korg of Adrian Poole’s *Gissing in Context* and Michael Collie’s *George Gissing: A Bibliography* is to appear soon in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

-- 25 --

Notes and Queries for September 1976 contains an interesting article on Thomas Hughes and Eduard Bertz, pp. 405-06.

In the 1977 catalogue of English literature published by the Harvester Press nearly four pages are devoted to Gissing. Eight novels have now been reprinted by this firm and two more are announced, *The Whirlpool* and *The Emancipated*.

Recent Publications

Volumes

In the Year of Jubilee, with an introduction by Gillian Tindall and textual notes by P. F. Kropholler. The Harvester Press, 1976, £5.95; pp. xx + 457. Blue cloth. The editorial material includes a bibliographical note on the publishing history of the book and a bibliography. The American edition

is published by Associated University Presses, Cranbury, New Jersey 08512. The text reprinted is that of the 1895 Lawrence & Bullen edition.

Our Friend the Charlatan, edited with a new introduction and notes by Pierre Coustillas. The Harvester Press, 1976, £5. 95; pp. xxv + 453. Blue cloth. The editorial material also includes a bibliographical note on the publishing history of the book, a study of the manuscript (pp. 435-50) and a bibliography of the novel. The American edition is published by Associated University Presses. The text of the novel is that of the first English edition (Chapman & Hall, 1901). The illustrations have been preserved.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Margaret Harris, "The Influence of Meredith on Gissing: *One of Our Conquerors* and *In the Year of Jubilee*," *Notes and Queries*, February 1976, pp. 66-67.

-- 26 --

- Francesco Badolato, "Introducendo Gissing," *Italia Intellettuale*, April-September 1976, pp. 5-6.

- Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing: Three Missing Stories," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, December 1976, pp. 130-31.

- William S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic : Mrs. Humphry Ward's 'Robert Elsmere'*, Leicester University Press, 1976. The 'Robert Elsmere' notebook shows that Mrs. H. Ward read *Demos* to inform herself about the working-classes.

- George Moore, *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals: a Polemic on Victorian Censorship*. Edited with an introduction by P. Coustillas. Harvester Press/Humanities Press, 1976. Contains the letter written by Gissing to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (December 15, 1884), p. 44-45 and a discussion of Gissing's attitude to the problem dealt with by Moore (pp. 20-22).

- Martin Hall, *The Blue Plaque Guide to London Homes*, Queen Anne Press, 1976. The Gissing Plaque is mentioned on p. 21.

- John Turner, "Bibliographical Notes," *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, January 1977, pp. 33-34. Review of Michael Collie's bibliography.

- Kate Taylor, "Home of Heroine in Gissing Novel," *Wakefield Express*, p. 4. On *A Life's Morning* and the Gissing's home in Stoneleigh Terrace, with a photograph.

- Patrick Parrinder, "Reviews," *Yearbook of English Studies* 1977, pp. 315-16. Review of *Gissing in Context*.