

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*

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“Mr. Gissing Has Everything He Requires”
A Centenary Vignette of a Holiday in the Lake District

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In his fictionalized biography of George Gissing, Morley Roberts has him write in Wordsworthian terms towards the end of his largely unhappy life that he felt “a little oppressed by ‘the burden of the mystery,’” and often thought “with deep content of the time when speculation will be at an end.” But he added that he still found “delight in the beauty of the visible world,” and

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in literature.¹ These pleasures were uniquely combined for the real George Gissing during a fortnight’s stay in Wordsworth’s own region of England almost exactly a hundred years ago. One of the best things about that pleasant interlude was that he did not have to plan it himself – nor pay for it. He was always reluctant to devise any prolonged relief from his burden of work, and at that stage in his life he could not have afforded such a holiday at his own expense. In his fiction he often

wrote of benevolent patrons, and in the third week of July 1884 he must have felt that he had one in Frederic Harrison when, much to Gissing's surprise, he was asked by Harrison to stay with his four sons in the Lake District.²

Harrison, to whom Gissing had sent his first published novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, just four years earlier, had introduced the young novelist to the literary world and sought with friends like John Morley to start him in a journalistic career. He had also employed Gissing to tutor his two oldest sons, Bernard and Austin. Because Harrison's wife Ethel Bertha was often ill, she could no longer teach them herself at home, as was stipulated in the Positivist philosophy which Harrison represented as president of the London Positivist Committee. It was a recurrence of his wife's illness – never adequately diagnosed – that made the Harrisons in 1884 change their plans to take their boys with them to Lake Ullswater for the month of August. Mrs. Harrison was confined to bed at Sutton Place, the Tudor Mansion house in Surrey where the family was spending July with Harrison's brother Sidney, the lessee, and their mother. Since Harrison insisted upon staying with his wife, they arranged that Gissing would go in their stead, taking his pupils Bernard, age twelve, and Austin, age eleven, together with their brothers Godfrey and René, who were eight and seven.³

By this time Gissing had become almost a member of the Harrison family. On the morning in December 1880 that he first walked into the older boys' schoolroom in their London house at 38 Westbourne Terrace, he won their immediate affection. Understandably, they much preferred to be

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taught by the handsome young man with the dark wavy hair who had just turned twenty-three and who laughed heartily at their antics but could chasten them with a stare, than by their somewhat awesome, gray-bearded father, then nearing fifty and capable of exploding in a temper if he spied a blot on their copybooks. Even their mother, with the gentle, understanding manner that made her so sympathetic, could not compete with young Gissing as a companion or confidant.⁴ And Gissing, despite a lack of enthusiasm for teaching, found his pupils congenial enough. Of course, he desperately needed the salary, soon supplemented by income from tutoring he did in several households thanks in part to Harrison's introductions. Though by 1884 Gissing had separated from his incorrigibly alcoholic wife, he was still contributing to her support. His dismal lodgings and spartan diet contrasted markedly with the Harrisons well-appointed house and the nourishing meals to which they frequently invited him. According to his friend Morley Roberts, Gissing (in fictional form) was always keenly conscious of his physical surroundings and regarded food as "a very serious matter."⁵ Circumstances were even pleasanter when in the summers he gave the Harrison boys their lessons at Sutton Place, for it stood in a 1,000 acre park in unspoiled country. Even the headache caused by the thrice-weekly train journey there and back from London seemed a price worth paying for a chance to boat on the River Wey, which ran through the estate, or wander in the gardens with a book of poetry, or muse in the great hall and panelled galleries. He was once astonished that on a family picnic to which he was invited it took five servants to set out the tea.⁶

Gissing was all the more ready to stand in *loco parentis* for the Harrisons because of his own troublesome health. A few weeks before their invitation he had complained to Mrs. Harrison of neuralgia and "bilious fever," and of being overcome by exhaustion after only fifteen minutes at his

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desk. All this made him confess to her that "the conditions of my life are preposterous."⁷ In the Lake District's restorative air he must have hoped to find relief from his ailments and respite from his anxiety. It would not be his first visit. He had been there as a child at least twice, most recently on a

holiday early in 1869 with his mother and brother Algernon, the year before his father died. But they had stayed at the village of Seascale on the Cumberland coast, and he had seen few of the larger lakes, and almost certainly not Lake Ullswater.⁸

It was at Ullswater that members of the Harrison family had been enjoying holidays for more than two decades. On Harrison's first visit to the Lake District, in the late summer of 1860, when he was twenty-eight, he felt like "Gulliver in Lilliput" because after years of mountaineering in Switzerland he found it hard to "take in the wonderful littleness of everything." He boasted that "for a wager I could run six times up Helvellyn within the hour." But he also confessed the lake scenery was "far prettier than I ever imagined." Travelling alone, he had been annoyed by the forwardness of some "trippers" he encountered; one "Manchester bagman" even presumed to suggest walking with him, and when they passed a tap-room to ask "if I took beer or spurrit. O God think of that to me," exclaimed the Oxford graduate and Lincoln's Inn barrister to his mother.⁹ It is not surprising that in 1874, early in his marriage, Harrison, wishing to take his wife and their two infant sons to the Lake District, chose one of the more isolated spots, Bonscale, half-way along the eastern shore of Ullswater. They came there several times again in the next few years, as well as to the old Howtown Hotel just immediately south; and in 1881 Mrs. Harrison's father, a widower in bad health, found the hotel a perfect place to regain strength and spirit in the company of his sons Edward and Crawford.

Fortunately for us, the Harrisons saved the thirty letters and postcards their four sons wrote to them from Bonscale during August 1884, the first two weeks of which Gissing was with them.

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Unfortunately, not every day is accounted for. Bernard's first letter home tells of a hot train journey north from London on Friday, August 1st, and reports that Godfrey and René "could not sit down a minute in case they should miss a mountain." But their restlessness need not have disturbed Gissing, for their Governess, Emma, was along, as was another woman servant, Hammond. Gissing and the two older boys would have been free to read, chat, or peer out of the coach windows at the passing scenery, which, Bernard noted as they approached the lakes, "struck all of us a great deal after having left Sutton," for its surroundings were flat.

Their route from Preston, where they halted for an hour, cannot be known from our sources. They may have taken the train to Windermere, the Midland Railway's terminus in the southern Lake District, and travelled thirteen miles north by carriage over Kirkstone Pass, descending to Patterdale at the south end of Lake Ullswater. This is a long but spectacular route which traverses the barren fells that make the Lake District so popular with climbers. From nearby Glenridding pier, the lake steamer would have taken them to Howtown, a regular stop about half-way along its nine-mile run to Pooley Bridge at the north end. Alternatively, and more probably, they would have gone on from Preston to Penrith, northeast of Ullswater, and thence by carriage five miles to Pooley Bridge, seeing the mountains only from a distance. After taking the steamer south to Howtown pier, they had only a three-quarter mile carriage ride to their destination.

Bonscale, a typical stone farmhouse of the region, faces northward on the lake some three hundred yards up a partly cultivated slope from the wooded shoreline. The resident farmer was a Mr. Atkinson. How long he and his wife had been accepting paying guests is not clear. Nor is it clear where everyone in Gissing's party slept, but there were seven upstairs bedrooms besides two sitting rooms and the large kitchen downstairs. Bernard, who would become a landscape painter,

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wrote happily of his room's fine view overlooking the lake. Gissing, something of an artist himself, had given Bernard his first sketchbook, and now, no doubt, encouraged his attempts to interpret what he saw. Austin, destined to become a writer despite Gissing's warning that it was the "trade of the damned," demonstrated (in unremarkable diction) that he was observant too; he commented on his room's "very nice" wallpaper and the "nice" appearance of the schoolroom set aside by "Mr. Gissing" for the lessons he had promised to continue on the holiday. The younger boys were less interested in their accommodations than in the animal population: Godfrey wrote about Mr. Atkinson's "lovely colley" dog named Help and the rabbits Mr. Atkinson brought back for their dinner one day, and René reported a deer seen on a mountain and "to large cats and to little white kittens." As for Mr. Gissing, Bernard reported he was "very comfortable" in his study and "quotes Wordsworth" to them in the evenings. "We are all exceedingly comfortable here," Bernard assured his parents, "& the milk is most delicious, & the water & oatcake is *beautiful*, such is the term Mr. Gissing uses." Austin's first letter also reported on Mr. Gissing, who "has enquired about telegrams & finds there is an office at pooley brigde ... the postman takes our letters a[t] two o'clock & they catch the night mail."

Having got the lay of the land and assured himself of contact with the outside world, Gissing lost no time leading his party on its first expedition. On Saturday August 2nd all seven set out to climb Swarth Fell, looming over the house just to the south. But, Bernard reported, "much to everyone's amusement," Hammond, after covering about fifty yards with her stick and parasol, "sat on a rock" to wait for the others' return. They were rewarded at the summit by a "most wonderful view" across the lake to the far peaks of Skiddaw and Saddleback, and nearer, Helvellyn and Place Fell appeared and disappeared in the mists. On Sunday Gissing and the boys took out Mr.

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Atkinson's boat. Austin said he was "very particular about it" – and well he should have been, for Ullswater is the scene of the famous boat-stealing episode in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. After rowing across tiny Howtown Wyke (or bay), they alighted at Kailpot Crag, from which they walked through woods and then ascended part way up the steep north slope of Hallin Fell, presumably pursued by no "grim shape ... with purpose of its own" such as had given the youthful poet bad dreams after his moonlight escapade.

The weather holding fine Monday, they rowed across the lake to see Lyulph's Tower. A castellated stone structure built decades earlier by the Duke of Norfolk as a shooting lodge, it commanded a fine view of Ullswater. It also proved a perfect spot for a picnic when the boys found a flat rock for their table, and it was near Aira Force, a locally famous waterfall. On a wooden bridge above the fall, they stood transfixed by the "vast masses of spray and foam roaring like thunder" eighty feet below. Bernard (at Gissing's suggestion?) had read Wordsworth's poem "The Somnambulist," about a knight "jumping headlong into the foam" to rescue his sweetheart, the sleepwalker, and he declared it "seems impossible that any man could have the courage to accomplish such a feat." But the sober literalness of this judgment gave way in his letter to a florid description of the sunset, which "filled all the heavens in a glow & the hills became purple, the lake reflected the yellow of the sky, & altogether it was the most beautiful sunset I ever beheld." He added by way of summing up, "We are all very happy down here."

When they were not off on expeditions, Bonscale offered various quiet pleasures. Godfrey and René fished in the lake for "minners" and "purch" and sometimes had their catch fried for tea. Bernard was happy to find that "you can sit in one of these numerous Summer houses & read, when you lift your eyes off the book there is a most beautiful view." The days were hot, but there was "always a cool wind." The teas were "very nice" and so were the abundant "Rasberies." "Mr.

Gissing,” he was quite sure, “has everything he requires.” Bernard’s book at the moment was *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which gave him such enjoyment he could not “pass an hour without reading a piece.” Yet the distractions at Bonscale kept him from reaching the end of the story’s “most wonderful plot and terrific adventures” for another twelve days. Austin, meanwhile, finished *The Three Musketeers* in three days and seemed untroubled by Mr. Gissing’s crushing opinion, that “it was worthy to be thrown in the gutter.” Their youthful taste in literature was probably not all Gissing did not share with his pupils. Their disappointment at finding no place to set up a cricket pitch nearby would have left him unmoved; according to Morley Roberts, he lacked any interest in games.

But Gissing certainly would have understood the boys enthusiasm when, in “poking about” Bonscale, Bernard found evidence that it might be older than 1820, the date Mrs. Atkinson said she heard it had been built. “This is not what I call an old house,” wrote Bernard (perhaps thinking of Sutton Place). Cut in a niche in a stone wall adjoining the house he found the initials “IW” and the date “1791.” The kitchen had a “very beautiful oak cupboard” with the date “1679.” At the front of the house, on a stone parapet set in a low wall, was a “very nice old sun dial” bearing the date “May 4th 1702” and the words “Quid stas? Lux est.”¹⁰ After conveying these details to his father, Bernard was gratified to learn from him by return post something about Isaac Williams, a former owner, who had left his initials. Harrison was just then engaged in the research for his illustrated history of Sutton Place, *Annals of an Old Manor House*, which Bernard said he hoped his father would let him read “because it can’t fail to be interesting & I know so little about Sutton & go there every year I ought to know more.”

No letter by Gissing himself about the holiday survives before the one dated Tuesday August 12th, to Algernon. After exclaiming over the “amazing” weather – no daytime rain and “often

refreshing showers at night” – he characteristically finds something to grumble about: “the great heat makes it misty, and good views are not to be had.” Immediately, however, he recounts his arduous and rewarding ascent of Helvellyn, the third highest peak in the Lake District, with Bernard and Austin the previous day. They began at the southern end of the lake, having taken the steamer from Howtown. On the trail up Glenridding Beck, they passed lead mines and smelters whose pollutants had turned the swift stream “the color of dirty milk.” Gissing wished Ruskin would “lift up his voice.” By noon their climb had brought them to White Side, whose crest they mistook for Helvellyn itself, an error Austin blamed on Murray’s guide book. The heat was fierce; Austin for a time despaired of reaching the summit, and Gissing was hampered by having to carry their provisions, mackintoshes, and Austin’s coat. But reach the summit they did, and were rewarded at 3,113 feet with a panorama Gissing thought “marvellous” despite the mist: Skiddaw, Scafell Pike, Saddleback, and St. Sunday Crag, which Austin said “goes sheer down with a most horrible precipice.” After their descent, in front of the Ullswater Hotel on the way to the steamer pier, they met a Mrs. Marshall and her mother, the former probably a member by marriage of a great landowning local family whose wealth derived from the once leading flax-spinners, Marshalls of Leeds. Austin, who reported the chance encounter, must have assumed that his parents would be interested in it, but it is unmentioned in Gissing’s letters.¹¹

The next day, in another chance encounter, Gissing and the boys met some ladies named Mitton, who invited them to tea the following evening at their house, probably Bank House, near the Howtown Hotel. At the appointed time, Gissing, having returned only a few hours before from a

long day's tramp, arrived to find the Mittons and their friends "sitting overlooking the lake, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes."¹² Meanwhile, Bernard and Austin seem to have played cricket

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at the hotel with some boys about their own age, the Cooksons, friends of the Mittons. Gissing enjoyed himself thoroughly; "the Mittens," Bernard would later observe, were "trying to make friends with Mr. Gissing." They were from Durham, and had "learned Latin & quoted Virgil which he [Gissing] was (you may imagine) delighted at." Gissing himself wrote to Harrison upon returning to London about spending two pleasant evenings with the Mittons, "very agreeable people" who had "behaved in a very friendly way to us during the last week" and with whom, "for a wonder," he had found himself "able to talk."¹³

In his letter Gissing identified Mrs. Mitton as a sister of a Mrs. Sidgwick and noted that another of the Mittons' friends was the "psychical Mrs. [Edmund] Gurney." He would have known that Harrison disdained the controversial demonstrations being conducted by her husband, the psychical researcher. But Gissing probably did not know of the local tragedy that partly motivated the psychic preoccupations of Gurney's friend and fellow-believer, Frederic W. H. Myers. A Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, poet, school inspector, and acquaintance of Harrison's, he was the author of *Wordsworth* in the English Men of Letters series. In 1876 he had ended a three-year love affair carried on at Hallsteads, a house directly across the lake from Howtown, with Anne Eliza Marshall, wife of Walter Marshall, his first cousin (and no doubt of the same family as the Mrs. Marshall whom Gissing and the boys met near the Ullswater Hotel). Myers had abandoned the woman when she found herself pregnant by him, and in her despair she stabbed herself with scissors and threw herself into Lake Ullswater, leaving Myers (it has been suggested) obsessed with the hope of communicating with her spirit.¹⁴

Leaving the scene of a betrayal appropriate to one of Wordsworth's lyrical ballads, Gissing set out near the end of his holiday, Wednesday August 13th, for a long solitary walk through the poet's haunts. He caught the 9:30 steamer to Glenridding pier, from whence he climbed to Kirkstone Pass, there emerging from low-hanging clouds at the highest inn in England. He had a superb view of

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Windermere; then, descending to Ambleside and Rydal, he passed the poet's house and a cottage he had once occupied. The lodging advertisements everywhere were an annoyance, as was an innkeeper's enormous red flag in Grasmere, where Gissing saw the poet's grave. Rydal Water was "beyond doubt, the loveliest thing I ever beheld," and the scenery on the ascending Grasmere road "never to be forgotten." Returning, he took the more remote pack-horse road up to Grisedale Tarn, and descended through Grisedale glen to Patterdale. He was able to catch the 6 o'clock steamer from Glenridding and reached Bonscale for dinner at seven. Besides the satisfaction of having accomplished a climb so "stiff" that he feared he "must give way," he had had the thrill of looking up at Striding Edge "black as night" under the crest of Helvellyn and the reward of an easy descent to Ullswater. Best of all was the "perfect loneliness – save for a few sheep," which "was half the beauty of the place."¹⁵ Gissing walked, by his estimate, some twenty-six miles in eight hours – a considerable feat for an inexperienced climber. But undoubtedly his years of training on London's pavements – it was at least an eight-mile round trip between his lodgings in Milton Street and Harrison's house in Westbourne Terrace – had developed his stamina. He was able to chat amiably with the Mitton ladies and their friends later the same evening.

At one o'clock on Friday August 15th, his last full day in the Lake District, Gissing and the

Harrison boys (probably only Bernard and Austin) headed south for Hawes Water on an ambitious itinerary. Climbing Swarth Fell, they traversed High Street, a Roman road, and then took a trail to the southeast. Approaching the lake, they encountered a country girl in a dirty apron whose “very dark, large eyes” and “quantity of black hair” reminded Bernard of William Morris’ wife; but the way she withdrew and called her dog to her side, and her ignorant speech, convinced him that she “evidently had never seen a civilized individual before.” Hawes Water, which they reached by four

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o’clock, seemed ““very wild,” its shores uninhabited; and flights of ravens added to the sense of desolation. The return route took them northeast through Bampton, a “quaint and rustic” village with a blacksmith and lots of geese; on to Butterwick, bordered by miles of “fertile valley” with many more geese and grazing cattle; and so to the most interesting place, Askham Common, near Helton, with its “Tumuli & standing stones where our forefathers, the ancient Britons offered sacrifices.”

On the steamer from Pooley Bridge to Howtown they rested after their walk of some twenty miles, and, Bernard claimed, arrived at Bonscale “without being fatigued.” Indeed, Gissing was still fresh enough to call on the Mitton ladies after dinner – the second time in three days he would see them after a strenuous day’s excursion. It was “for the last time,” Bernard reported dramatically. The next morning Gissing had to set out for London. He took the steamer to Pooley Bridge, and then an ancient stagecoach to Penrith, where he spent an hour before boarding the train. In his Milton Street lodgings that night, sleep did not come to him immediately, nor was it, when it came, any longer the Wordsworthian “sleep that is among the lonely hills.” On Sunday he wrote Algernon that “Ullswater and Helvellyn are already fancies – irrevocably gone. But they were glorious at the time.”¹⁶

Thanking Harrison for his “delightful holiday,” Gissing declared that it had left him “refreshed amazingly & with energy unlimited” for the “fearful” task ahead – revising “Mrs. Grundy’s enemies,” a novel that would in the end be sacrificed to the lady of the title. The publisher, George Bentley, an old school friend of Harrison’s, had given Gissing the option of removing its offending passages or not publishing it. Gissing was eager to have it off his hands in order to “commence in downright earnest the combat with the beasts at Ephesus, – otherwise, with publishers in London.” He therefore declined Harrison’s request that he take on Godfrey and René as pupils in place of

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Bernard and Austin, who were to begin as day boys at St. Paul’s School in Hammersmith after they returned home in September. Gissing was careful to point out that he considered tutoring Harrison’s sons “a privilege,” and to predict that “someday I shall of course look back with sad amusement at these initial struggles, – and with keen enough feelings to all who helped me.”¹⁷

While Gissing was readjusting to London’s “uproar,”¹⁸ at Bonscale his role as surrogate father to the Harrison boys passed to George Crawford Harrison, a younger brother of Mrs. Harrison (who was her husband’s first cousin and hence had not changed her surname upon marriage). When Crawford had joined his father at the Howtown Hotel in the summer of 1881, he had just completed his second year at Oriel College, Oxford, and William Harrison predicted that his son would do well in his examinations if he studied for them as successfully as he studied maps of the Ullswater region, for he seemed to know “every nook and corner.”¹⁹ In the summer of 1884, Crawford had just taken his degree, and would embark on a career as a schoolmaster. He arrived at Bonscale in the company of a sixteen-year-old schoolboy, Geoffrey Cookson, who would take his degree at Balliol and in

later years publish verse translations of Aeschylus and Goethe, and poetry on literary themes.²⁰ He was coming to the Howtown Hotel to join his uncle and aunt, Montague and Blanche Cookson, and their three sons, Hubert (“Bertie”), age fourteen, Dayrell, age thirteen, and Oliver, eight. Thus Geoffrey Cookson would be in somewhat the same relation to his cousins at Lake Ullswater as was Crawford Harrison to his nephews.

The Cooksons had even stronger ties to Ullswater than did the Harrisons, for they were a branch of the Wordsworth family. Harrison’s association with them went back to his earliest days at King’s College School in the 1840s, when Montague Cookson’s brother Charles became his first friend. At Oxford it had been Charles who had introduced Harrison to Comte’s philosophy of

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Positivism,²¹ of which Harrison later became England’s leading advocate.²² Charles Cookson entered the diplomatic service and lived abroad most of his life, but Montague Cookson, Q.C., was a Lincoln’s Inn barrister like Harrison and they and their wives saw each other from time to time socially. Both Blanche Cookson, as Mrs. Crackanhorpe, and Ethel Bertha Harrison, attained a modest reputation in the 1890s by writing on women’s issues.

With their Uncle Crawford and Geoffrey Cookson at Ullswater, the Harrison boys could indulge their interests in organized sports more fully than they had when Gissing was acting *in loco parentis*.²³ It is improbable that he would have taken the trouble it cost Crawford and Cookson to get the boys to the Annual Sports Day at Grasmere on August 21st. Some days before, Bernard reported anxiously to his parents that carriages for the big day were in short supply, but in the end Crawford got himself and the Harrison boys taken in the Cookson carriage. There turned out to be so many in the party that the Harrisons had to get out and walk on the steep ascent to Kirkstone Pass. They arrived in time for the exhibition of the Cumberland-Westmorland style of wrestling for which the annual gathering was famous. That year, George Lowden, the fattest man Bernard had ever seen, gained the victory over the legendary George Steadman, who would end his thirty years of competition only in 1900.²⁴ The sight of the brawny wrestlers in their tights, the officials in their best outfits and bowler hats, and the local gentry and lesser folk packing the grandstands might well have provoked a derisory comment from Gissing.

And he would hardly have shared the Harrison boys’ excitement over the Howtown Sports Day held for the second year by the Cooksons on August 28th. Hearing something of the plans soon after Gissing’s departure, Bernard worried whether he and his brothers would be included. The Cookson boys had been blowing hot and cold – pointedly ignoring them at times in order to work on their hand-written family paper, *The Howtownian*, and once jeering at Bernard as he stood

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“looking at the minnows”; but at other times handing over their own unusually large catch and playing cricket with them while Gissing sat with the Mittons and their friends. The plans for the sports day were finally disclosed on August 19th, when Mr. and Mrs. Cookson came over to Bonscale to tender an invitation. *The Howtownian* and the Harrison boys’ letters agree on the success of the day despite some rain.²⁵ The “Bonscalers” took no part in the morning’s “regatta” in Howtown Bay, in which all four competing boats suffered collisions. In the afternoon contests, held in front of the hotel with many guests in attendance, Dayrell, about Bernard’s age and huskier than his older brother, proved the over-all prize winner. But Bonscale was not disgraced: Bernard came in fourth in the 100-yard “flat race,” Austin took the first prize of two shillings sixpence in the cricket ball throw, and Godfrey tied with G. Dury of the Mitton party in the three-legged race,

presumably splitting the £2 prize. No Harrison placed in the 600-yard open handicap, but Bernard came in fourth again in a “scratch race” reported by him but not by *The Howtownian*. After the events, supper in the hotel was followed by a display of juvenile “histrionic talent” – an imitation of a waiter. Then the Bonscalers trooped home “in mackintoshes to the lights of their several lanterns.”

The Howtownian later reported the departure, on August 30th, of the Bonscale party from Lake Ullswater. Its destination was Sutton Place, where Mrs. Harrison was steadily improving in health. After a few days, Bernard and Austin were taken to London to be subjected to a last cram by Gissing before their examinations at St. Paul’s School. In mid-September they learned from a master there, J. W. Shepard, an old school friend of Harrison’s, that both boys had been accepted, Bernard with a Foundation Scholarship, though he had not been strong in either Latin or Greek. As for Austin, Shepard tactfully (but erroneously) suggested that the boy would do better when he had more practice in taking examinations (Did Gissing not give them?). Shepard added that Austin had

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displayed an unexpected acquaintance with American geography by translating “in Rhode insula” as in “in Rhode Island” (Had Gissing ever talked to the boys about his sojourn in America?).

The literary use that both Austin and Frederic Harrison later made of their association with Gissing is not part of this story; nor is Gissing’s use of his Lake District experiences in his fiction. But something more can be said about Gissing’s connection with the Cooksons.²⁶ In the letter Gissing wrote to Harrison just after returning from Bonscale, he mentioned that “Mr. Cookson was on the boat to Pooley [and] ... said some pleasant things about ‘The Unclassed.’” This was, of course, Gissing’s second published novel, which had appeared only the previous June. Harrison had criticized its “anti-social” spirit, which perhaps explains why Gissing went on to elaborate: “When he [Cookson] got the 1st vol. from a library in Belgravia, a *special* request was sent that he would not keep it more than five days. ‘Belgravia, too!’ he exclaimed, & chuckled with a dry relish of the joke.”²⁷

There is no hint in the letters of Gissing or of the Harrison boys that Gissing ever met the Cooksons before August 1884 at Lake Ullswater. Four years later, in December 1888, Montague Cookson and his immediate family changed their name to Crackanthorpe as a condition of inheriting Newbiggin, a 700 acre estate some twenty miles east of Lake Ullswater. When Gissing jotted down in his commonplace book (undated but probably 1887 or 1888) the names of “young aristocrats” he had taught, he included “sons of Montague Cookson, Q.C.”; but Austin Harrison wrote of Gissing in 1906 that “through us [the Harrisons] he taught a son of Mr. Montague Crackanthorpe, K.C.”²⁸ The changes in the father’s names and honors are easily explained; but whether Gissing actually taught one or more than one of his sons – specifically Hubert – remains uncertain. Yet it is probable that he tutored the precocious journalist of *The Howtownian* sometime

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between September 1884 and March 1886 (after which time, according to Professor Coustillas, Gissing did little tutoring). The likelihood that Hubert was his pupil is increased by Gissing’s diary account of a meeting with Austin in late August 1896, when he was “amazed” to learn from Austin that Hubert had “apprenticed himself for a year to *George Moore* – to learn English style! His father paid £200 for the privilege!”²⁹ It is the indignant reaction of an ill-paid former tutor. By this time Gissing knew Crackanthorpe’s *Wreckage*, stories of dark irony and sordid Bohemianism; within four months Crackanthorpe’s own unhappy life ended in disaster: his marriage broke down and his body was found in the Seine at Christmas, a probable suicide.³⁰

The copy of Hubert Crackanthorpe's *Wreckage* in the library of the University of California, Irvine, has inscribed on the inside cover "March '93," the year this collection of his short stories in the decadent mode was published. Above is an autograph signature, "G. E. Mitton" – very possibly one of the ladies with whom Gissing had tea at Ullswater.³¹ Tipped into the volume is a newspaper cutting about the memorial service in January 1897 for Hubert Crackanthorpe under which is written, in the same hand, "G.E.M." and the comment: "the most tragic tragedy of all the 'wreckage.'" Surely Crackanthorpe's death confirmed the paradox of the greatest decadent of them all: "Life imitates art." The maxim has often been applied also to the miseries and missteps of Gissing's life. Contemplating the sad and untimely ends of both writers is made more bearable by remembering the sunny days they enjoyed at Ullswater, Gissing between his two disastrous marriages, and Crackanthorpe's tragedy far in the future. Already ambitious to be a writer, it was probably Crackanthorpe who predicted in *The Howtownian* of August 18, 1884, that the forthcoming issues would "eclipse in brilliancy those of all preceding years."³² Gissing, on the contrary, was savoring his brief freedom from having to write anything at all. He could stride over

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the fells, row on the lake, or read his beloved Wordsworth amidst the scenes he depicted. The views were inspiring, the air invigorating, the food plentiful, and there was even conversation with congenial women. For a moment, then, Bernard was right when he so innocently reported that "Mr. Gissing has everything he requires."

NOTES

1. *The Private Life of Henry Maitland: A Record Dictated by J. H.*, revised and edited by Morley Roberts (London 1912), p. 264.
2. George Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 24 July 1884, in *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, ed. Algernon and Ellen Gissing (Boston & New York, 1927), pp. 143-44 (hereafter cited as *Letters*).
3. See our "Gissing's Friends: More Light on the Gaussens," *Gissing Newsletter*, XII (Oct. 1976), pp. 6-14, for events at Sutton Place that summer.
4. Austin Harrison, *Frederic Harrison: Thoughts and Memories* (New York & London, 1927), pp. 80-83; "George Gissing," *Nineteenth Century and After*, LX (Sept, 1906), pp. 453-63, rpt. in *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, ed. by J. P. Michaux (London & New York, 1981), pp. 22-36; and "Memories of Gissing: London Rambles with My Unconventional Tutor," *T.P.'s & Cassell's Weekly*, 24 Apr. 1926, p. 23 (a source we owe to Pierre Coustillas).
5. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
6. Gissing to Margaret Gissing, 12 July 1882, in *Letters*, p. 118; Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 13, 22 June 1883, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library, partly in *Letters*, pp. 127-28.

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7. Gissing to Mrs. Harrison, 6 July 1884, Carl H. Pforzheimer Library (either the day or month has been misdated by Gissing).
8. Frank J. Woodman, "Gissing and the Lake District," *Gissing Newsletter*, XVI (Oct. 1980), pp. 1-11,
9. Frederic Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, 2 vols, (London, 1911), I, 219-20, slightly altering the text of two letters, Sept. 1860, in the Harrison Family Collection, which is cited hereafter as FC; held by the present family, FC contains letters by various members of Frederic and Ethel Bertha Harrison's family quoted or paraphrased in the text, intentionally without "sic" marking youthful misspellings.
10. The initials, cupboard, and sundial were all still at Bonscale when we visited it last in 1972.
11. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 12 Aug. 1884, Yale U., in *Letters*, pp. 144-45. See W. G. Rimmer, *Marshalls of Leeds, Flax-Spinners 1788-1886* (Cambridge, Eng., 1960), for the thesis that the firm shut down two years after our story because the third generation of Marshalls preferred Lake District society to Leeds industrialism.
12. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 14 Aug. 1884, Yale U.
13. Gissing to Harrison, 17 Aug. 1884, Pforzheimer Library; *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Part II, 1752- 1900*, compiled by J. A. Venn (Cambridge, Eng., 1940), lists a Henry Arthur Mitton, b. 1837, and a Lancelot Edgar Dury Mitton, b. 1880, father and son, both Durham clergymen with Lake District addresses, the son named for his mother, née Dury (see below for a G. Dury in the Howtown sports).
14. Trevor H. Hall, *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney* (London, 1980), pp. xxxii, 51-52, 196-99; Harrison to Myers, 28 Jan, [1880], Trinity College Library, Cambridge U., congratulating him on his marriage.

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15. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 14 Aug. 1884, Yale U., partly in *Letters*, pp. 145-46, and to Harrison, 17 Aug. 1884, Pforzheimer Library.
16. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 17 Aug. 1884, *Letters*, pp. 146-47.
17. Gissing to Harrison, 17 Aug. 1884, Pforzheimer Library.
18. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 17 Aug. 1884, Yale U., in *Letters*, p. 146.
19. William Harrison to "Berta" Harrison, 12 Aug. 1881, FC.
20. For titles, see entry under "Barton, James," pseudonym, in *The British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*; Frederic Harrison reviewed James Barton, *Denys of Auxerre*, in

Austin's *English Review*, XII (Sept. 1912), 333-34, as did a good friend of the Harrisons, Charles Tennyson, in the *Contemporary Review*, CII (Sept. 1912), 452-53.

21. Harrison, *Autobiographic Memoirs*, I, 37-38, 55, 57, 105, II, 165-66, 251; and Harrison's "Sir Charles Cookson," *Positivist Review*, XIV (1906), 69-71, rpt. in *Realities and Ideals: Social, Political, Literary and Artistic* (London, 1908), 402-05.
22. Gissing, largely in deference to Harrison, had joined the London Positivist Society, a discussion group, and though no longer a member by Aug. 1884, in May of that year he sent a parcel of Positivist pamphlets to his brother because of their educational value. Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 15 May 1884, Yale U.
23. There is some irony in the fact that when Gissing died in 1903 the Harrisons suggested that his two sons be sent to Fettes College, Edinburgh, a school noted for sports; of course, they knew it also had a good academic reputation – Crawford Harrison had taught there the decade before his death in 1900.

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24. Hugh W. Machell, *Some Records of the Annual Grasmere Sports* (Carlisle, 1911), p. 40 and *passim*; J. D. Marshall & M. Davies-Schiel, *Victorian and Edwardian Lake District from Old Photographs* (London, 1976).
25. We are indebted to David Crackanthorpe, grandson of Dayrell, for a transcription of passages from *The Howtownian*, and also to his *Hubert Crackanthorpe and English Realism in the 1890s* (Columbia, Missouri & London, 1977), though its suggestion, pp. 32-33, that Gissing might have contributed anonymously to *The Howtownian* is, in our view, untenable.
26. Besides David Crackanthorpe's important book, see discussions in *Notes & Queries* by Patrick Parrinder, CCXXIV (1979), 592-93, and by Pierre Coustillas, XXVIII (1981), 421-22.
27. Gissing to Harrison, 24 June 1884, Pforzheimer Library, quoted in Gissing's letter to his brother in *Letters*, pp. 142-43; Gissing to Harrison, 17 Aug. 1884, Pforzheimer Library.
28. *George Gissing's Commonplace Book: A Manuscript in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library*, ed. by Jacob Korg (New York, 1962), p. 57; Austin Harrison, "George Gissing," in Michaux, p. 26.
29. *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. by Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks, 1978), p. 420; see also Gissing's allusion to Austin's information in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Autumn, XXI.
30. David Crackanthorpe, *op. cit.*, for details; *The Times*, 2 Jan. 1897, 6c, reporting the memorial service in London and naming Mrs. Harrison among those attending; Ethel Bertha to Frederic

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Harrison, 23, 25 Sept. [1910], FC, about her dismay at finding the Crackanthorpes so lonely at

“gloomy” Newbiggin.

31. And also very possibly Geraldine Edith Mitton, who became a prolific writer of travel books and fiction and the second wife of the famous administrator in Burma, Sir James George Scott, whose diaries she edited after his death in 1935.
32. David Crackanthorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

George Gissing and Robert Louis Stevenson

Dick Hoefnagel
Etna, New Hampshire

Soon after its publication in 1888, Gissing read Henry James's *Partial Portraits* and recorded in his *Diary* of Wednesday, June 20 "... Home, and sat down with Henry James's 'Partial Portraits,' foreseeing that it would take up my evening; impossible to resist articles on Daudet, Tourguéneff, and so on. *A paper on Stevenson I cannot read; my prejudice against the man is insuperable, inexplicable, painful; I hate to see his name, and certainly shall never bring myself to read one of his books. Don't quite understand the source of this feeling.*¹ [Italics added] What could have accounted for this almost visceral ill feeling towards a fellow author whom Gissing never met in person and whose books he did not begin to read until 1892?

By 1888 Stevenson had published, in addition to travel books and novels, a considerable number of essays, several of which had appeared in such well-known literary magazines as *Cornhill*, *Macmillan's* and *Scribner's*. The essays at times contained strongly held opinions upon life and literature, opinions often directly at variance with those held by Gissing. How much Gissing could be influenced by the reading of such an essay is illustrated by the following incident.

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Gissing had responded to a request to contribute to a lecture on the art of writing: *Diary* "Mond. Sept. 24 1888 ... A letter from a stranger, Rev. George Bainton, of Coventry, who says he is going to deliver a lecture on the art of composition, and is writing to one or two "well-known authors" requesting them to give him hints as to their method of study in such matters. Wrote a rather long, and I think, good reply."² This was followed the next day by "... Letter of thanks from Rev. Bainton, who asks to be allowed to print my letter in his lecture."³ Gissing answered this request in a letter, the signed autograph of which is in the Special Collections of the Dartmouth College Library (MS 888530):

Rue Linné, 33
Paris
Sept. 30th 1888

Dear Sir,

Should you think any passage in my letter suitable for the purpose you name, it can only give me pleasure to know that you have so used it.

Yes, your remarks remind me that all I said certainly presupposed a literary bent; as regards the man who has no intention of pursuing literature as an Art

(by which you will, I am sure, understand something quite other than the abominable nonsense recently put forth by Mr. R. L. Stevenson, in an article which I am glad to see has excited a good deal of indignation), all one can say is that the study of writers marked by individual excellence of style cannot but have the effect of making him thoughtful in the use of language and that, I take it, is a desirable thing, – the *consciousness* which becomes *conscientiousness*.

From the city, which, in spite of all things that make one shake one's head, must still remain the metropolis of modern art, I send you all good wishes,

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Faithfully yours,
George Gissing.

The “abominable nonsense” referred to an article by Stevenson that had just appeared in the September issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, “A Letter to a young Gentleman who proposes to embrace the career of Art.” In it, the author propounded that the true artist lived, almost exclusively, for his own pleasure and “To live by a pleasure is not a high calling; it involves patronage, however veiled; it numbers the artist, however ambitious, along with dancing girls and billiard makers. The French have a romantic evasion for one employment, and call its practitioners the Daughters of Joy. The artist is of the same family: he is of the Sons of Joy, chooses his trade to please himself, gains his livelihood by pleasing others, and has parted with something of the sterner dignity of man.”⁴ While Henry James later praised the article and called it “a mine of felicities,”⁵ Gissing's rage and the intensity of his reaction have been recounted by his friend and biographer, Morley Roberts: “In many ways writing was to him a kind of sacred mission. It was not that he had any faith in great results to come from it, but the profession of a writer was itself sacred, and even the poorest sincere writer was a *sacer vates*. He once absolutely walked all the way to Chelsea [Gissing lived in the Marylebone section of London at that time] to show me a well-known article in which Robert Louis Stevenson denied, to my mind not unjustly, that a writer could claim payment at all, seeing that he left the world's work to do what he chose to do for his own pleasure. Stevenson went on to compare such a writer to a *fille de joie*. This enraged Maitland furiously. I should have been grieved if he and Stevenson had met upon that occasion. I really think something desperate might have happened,

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little as one might expect violence from such a curious apostle of personal peace as Maitland. Many years afterwards I related this incident to Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa, but I think by that time Maitland himself was half inclined to agree with his eminent brother-author.”⁶

The mention of “excited a good deal of indignation” refers to the article that followed the one by Stevenson, “A Letter to the same Young Gentleman”⁷; the author of it was Will Hicock Low (1853-1932), a painter and close friend of Stevenson. Low was with Stevenson at Saranac at the time the article was written; he had always vigorously taken issue with Stevenson's viewpoint as expressed in the article, yet it was Stevenson who convinced the editor of *Scribner's Magazine* to add Low's demurrer.⁸

Roberts's visit to Samoa took place in 1894, about six months before Stevenson's death on 3 December. Gissing wrote to his friend, Eduard Bertz, who was an admirer of Stevenson, “So, Stevenson is dead. I think, now as ever, that his merit is much exaggerated. But he was a most interesting personality,”⁹ – evidence of a mellowing attitude. In 1902, Gissing made amends for the

intemperate entry in his *Diary* of 20 June 1888, by adding a note, "Was this mere jealousy? Of course I have long ceased to be capable of such feeling."¹⁰

1. P. Coustillas, ed., *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 33.
2. P. Coustillas, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 42.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
4. Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Letter to a young Gentleman who proposes to embrace the career of Art," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 3, September 1888, pp. 377-81.
5. Henry James, *Notes on Novelists with some other Notes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 18.

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6. Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland. A Portrait of George Gissing*, Morchard Bishop, ed. (London: The Richards Press, 1958), pp. 83-84. Roberts recalled his visit to Stevenson in "With Stevenson last May," *The Saturday Review*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 2046, January 12, 1895, pp. 38-39, and "A Visit to R. L. Stevenson. A 'Personal View,'" *Literature*, Vol. IX, No. 197, July 27, 1901, pp. 85-86. Only in the first one of these two accounts did Roberts recall "... your celebrated letter comparing writers with *filles de joie* ...," without mention of Gissing. As far as I can ascertain, Stevenson never referred to Gissing in his letters or essays.
7. Will H. Low, "A Letter to the same young Gentleman," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 3, September 1888, pp. 381-84.
8. Will H. Low, *A Chronicle of Friendships 1873-1900* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), pp. 413-17.
9. Arthur C. Young, ed., *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz 1887-1903* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p. 194.
10. P. Coustillas, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

An Unpublished Passage of *By the Ionian Sea*

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A preliminary examination of the manuscript of *By the Ionian Sea* in the Pforzheimer Library shows that Gissing made many changes in his text before the book was published serially in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900. The most interesting, however, is a passage which Gissing cancelled,

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for reasons which can only be guessed. It is devoted to one of Gissing's favorite themes, criticism of England. He expressed himself vigorously enough on this subject in his letters and Diary, but was more discreet in his published writings, and he may well have felt that the cancelled passage went too far.

It occurs in the last chapter of the book at the point where Gissing, wandering about the streets of Reggio di Calabria, notes the carved memorials for people who gave their lives for Italian independence. The printed text reads:

Amid quiet byways, for instance, I discovered a tablet with the name of a young soldier who fell at that spot, fighting against the Bourbon, in 1860: "*offerse per l'unita della patria sua vita quadrilustre.*" The very insignificance of this young life makes the fact more touching...

Between these sentences, and immediately following the Italian quotation, Gissing had written:

Things such as this keep alive the historic sense. In England, it is so long since anything happened which could profoundly impress the popular imagination; English history is an affair of school-books, vaguely outlined, not at all understood, in average minds; the phrase suggests something long gone by, practically forgotten. Happy nation! in whose memory preside, as events of vivid interest, the Corn-law struggle, the victory of steam, the establishment of a penny post. This, to be sure, is civilization; it means common-sense, comfort, security; it holds abundant recompense for a lack of the picturesque. The English spirit, moreover, is little contemplative; sure that it has attained to something like perfection of view and method, it looks contentedly forward to a reshaping

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of the whole on British principles. – But of this attitude comes imperfect sympathy. Greater travellers than any other people, the English see and understand very little in countries of alien tongue. They carry England with them, make colonies in hotels, and even in railway carriages. One who loves travel because it brings him in contact with other histories, other minds, abhors the perpetuation of the familiar; and as I rambled about those streets of Reggio, it pleased me to remember that, on the whole way from Naples hither, I had not (with one exception, our consul at Taranto) seen an English face or once heard the English language. I had been in Italy; not on the Anglo-Saxon highroad.

Stretching across the whole front of the Cathedral (a much-restored building of but two hundred years old) is an inscription more impressive, it seemed to me, than any I had ever read on Christian temple, save only those resonant words which circle the inner base of the dome of St. Peter's, "Circumlegentes devenimus Rhegium – Acts XXVIII, 13."*

(The last paragraph describing the inscription on the Cathedral was inserted, with altered wording, in the next paragraph of the printed text),

*Quoted by permission of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library.

Review

George Gissing, *Sleeping Fires*, Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

“*Sleeping Fires* is an exuberant, eloquent little tale that has always been too quickly passed over by Gissing’s critics. It is a brilliant story, highly dramatic, and wonderfully passionate. I

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believe it is one of the greatest short novels ever written, though no one has ever heard of it. But this neglected masterpiece deserves to be read – not only for what it tells us of Gissing’s state of mind early in 1895 (though at first glance it seems remote from his own experience) but also on its merits as a superb piece of English fiction.” Thus wrote John Halperin in his recent study of the relationship between Gissing’s life and his books, and as this passage is quoted in part on the back cover of the present edition, it is not unreasonable to think that it was Halperin who gave someone in Lincoln, Nebraska the idea of reprinting this little known novel of Gissing’s.

The story of the book’s composition is largely told in the author’s diary, while that of its reception can be reconstructed in part from the reviews reprinted or listed in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*. What is not as well known is the embarrassment the (now lost) manuscript created in the firm of T. Fisher Unwin. Unwin’s readers both reported on the story but in diametrically opposed terms. It goes without saying that Unwin, who had commissioned the book, followed Chesson’s, not Edward Garnett’s advice, as a rejection of the manuscript would have involved the loss of £150 which Gissing had been promised before he set pen to paper. This was as much as he had received for *The Nether World*, *The Emancipated*, *New Grub Street*, and, more recently, *Eve’s Ransom*. Never had he earned such a sum so easily, the consequence of two concomitant phenomena – the sudden though belated recognition of the value of his fiction and the revolution in English publishing which involved the launching of new series of short novels by publishers who, like authors, celebrated the enfranchisement from the old three-decker thralldom.

Published on December 7, 1895 *Sleeping Fires* was on the whole favourably received. H. G. Wells, yet unknown to Gissing personally, did grumble a little in the *Saturday Review* as did

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Arnold Bennett, writing under the pseudonym of Barbara in *Woman*, but nearly all the reviewers praised the story because it was so unexpected from Gissing. The *Athenæum* welcomed “this brave venture in a new style,” the *Pall Mall Gazette* praised this graceful little love story “with its glorification of the Greek spirit of joy and sanity,” and *The Times* approved of the Greek setting turned to such good account by a novelist who “has seldom written such a sympathetic story.” Fisher Unwin pushed the sales vigorously. He had bought all the rights and sold the book wherever the English language was spoken. Thus in Australia it was distributed by George Robertson & Co., who had published a colonial edition of *Denzil Quarrier* with indifferent success apparently. A recently exhumed review in the Melbourne *Sun* styled the volume “fully up-to-date, both in regard to matter, conception, and style”. The sales were fairly substantial: a second edition was called for

in 1896, and like the first, it was made available both in cloth and in wrappers.

Doubtless, after only two further editions in 1927 and 1974, none in America after Appleton brought out the book in 1896, and one in Japan under the imprint of Hokuseido in 1930, the time for a new edition in America had come. Unaccountably AMS Press left it out of its programme of Gissing reprints in 1968-1969. When three paperback editions of *The Odd Women* are in print, it is surely desirable to have one of *Sleeping Fires* considering that the story has not yet been fully discussed. As has been said elsewhere, the book deserves consideration as the only story in which Gissing made use of the Greek background at some length, as an illustration of the theme of “the guilty secret” to be placed somewhere between *Born in Exile* and *The Crown of Life*, as a criticism of middle-class mores and a plea against asceticism. In this last respect the book makes full sense as a rebuttal of Tolstoy’s ideas which Gissing was to criticize in his long letter to Halpérine-Kaminsky,

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the French translator of *What is Art?* The book also confirms, at a rather unexpected moment in Gissing’s career, what has been called his inveterate romanticism. And now a claim is made by the publishers of this welcome edition – in *Sleeping Fires* Gissing treats “a subject much neglected in fiction: the renewal of love in middle age, when a man and woman can feel love and its dangers without being its fool.”

The University of Nebraska Press has produced an attractive pictorial paperback. The text has been reset and the 101 pages give one the impression that the story is even shorter than one thought after reading it in the 1895 or 1927 editions. But some of the features of the first English edition have been preserved – the author’s facsimile signature on the verso of the half-title page and the pleasant ornamental head letters at the beginning of each chapter. Let us hope the University of Nebraska Press will promptly dispose of the copies printed and publish another Gissing title. – Pierre Coustillas.

Notes and News

With regret we announce the death of John Stewart Collis, the author of the introduction to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (Harvester, 1982), who was well-known as a historian of farming life. He was eighty-four and lived near Dorking. In its obituary (March 3) the *Guardian* commented: “A disciple of Bernard Shaw, he wrote a number of literary books during the 1920s and 30s, but it was not until the outbreak of the war in 1939 that he found his true vocation.” His two best known books are *While Following the Plough* (1946) and *Down to Earth* (1947). They were recently republished under the title *The Worm Forgives the Plough*.

Anthony West, the son of H. G. Wells and Rebecca West, has just published his biography of

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his father: *H. G. Wells: Aspects of His Life* (Hutchinson, £12.95), repeatedly announced in the last few years. A recent advertisement in the *Times Literary Supplement* highlighted the chapter on Gissing. Most reviewers have alluded to this chapter which, like the whole book, is said to be highly controversial. John Bayley (*Guardian*, June 7) says that “Anthony West has a natural instinct to see that no one shall come out well, not even poor George Gissing, whom he portrays his father as

finding out about – after years of devoted friendship – rather as he himself has found out about the shortcomings of so many persons.” Norman Mackenzie, in a hostile review (*Sunday Telegraph*, June 3), predicts that readers will be fascinated by Mr. West’s amplified account of Gissing’s death. Scott Rivers in the *Financial Times* (June 2) wrote that “the relationship between Wells and Gissing is fully and absorbingly explored” and “Shaw is shown up as a merciless bully whom Wells came to loathe.” Perhaps the B.B.C. 2 review (June 2, as announced by the *Radio Times*) was more explicit. The main facts about the relationship between Gissing and Wells have long been established: their mutual regard lay on ambiguous foundations, and by the time Gissing died he had realized that Wells could behave to him in a way that was both unfair and unfriendly. This is what John Gross seems to have had in mind in his long review entitled “With Malice Toward Mom” in the *New York Times Book Review* (May 6, pp. 7 and 9) when he observed that the chapter on Gissing “is not altogether fair to that imperfect but deeply interesting novelist.” David Holloway was more outspoken in “Wells as Philanderer” (*Daily Telegraph*, June 15, p. 14): “The last third of the book is largely taken up with accounts of Wells’s relationship with George Gissing and with Dorothy Richardson. The writing here is vivid enough but when dealing with Gissing is curiously circuitous. Gissing’s biographers have sorted out the facts quite clearly now and Mr. West makes rather a meal of showing the slowness with which Wells came to discover that Gissing was not all that he

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seemed. Indeed here one feels that Mr. West is indulging in another of his exercises of cutting everyone down to size.”

Dr. Francesco Badolato gave two lectures on Gissing in recent months, first in the Institute of English language and Literature at the University of Pisa, on February 17, then at the Anglo-Italian Club (which was founded by Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Mills) at Reggio Calabria on April 13. Thanks are due to Professor Luisa Catanoso, President of the Club, for reporting the second lecture, which was entitled “Gissing, late Victorian Novelist.” On these two occasions Dr. Badolato spoke on Gissing’s life and literary career.

A letter to the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, entitled “Those were the days,” was published on May 28, p. 9. Its author, Mrs. Ernesta Spencer Mills, quoted from Gissing’s diary entry for November 18, 1893: “Yesterday a conference put an end to the great coal-strike of 16 weeks. Miners go to work on Monday. To-day coals have fallen to 1/10 a cwt.”

The Times for December 28, 1983 did not forget Gissing in its list of anniversaries, and *Village Voice* (New York) for March 6, p. 45, had an article on “Oscar Contenders and Other Chit-Chat” by Andrew Saris with a long quotation from *New Grub Street* (“Now just listen ... they want chit chat,” Ch. 33) as an epigraph.

Mr. Kazuo Mizokawa, who has translated *Born in Exile* and, thanks to Professor Koike, found a publisher for it, reports his having found an interesting reference to *Henry Ryecroft* in a Japanese book by Kitaro Nishida, a famous philosopher. Nishida tried to learn Greek in his latter days and what stimulated him to make the effort was a Greek sentence from the *Anabasis* which Gissing cites in *Henry Ryecroft*: “Were this the sole book existing in Greek, it would be abundantly worthwhile to learn the language in order to read it.” Nishida was sixty-eight years old at the time (1938);

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regrettably he had to renounce his attempt to get a good command of Greek after a couple of years. He used White's *First Greek Book*.

In an entertaining article on the British Library entitled "The Cells of Knowledge" (*The Literary Review*, No. 69, March 1984, pp 17-19) David Profumo makes an allusion to "Gissing's Mr. Quarmby, an inveterate chatterbox of the Reading Room." This was a noisy place in the Victorian era and the Trustees received a number of complaints.

The Odd Women is probably the novel by Gissing which has received the largest amount of critical attention in the last fifteen years. A significant article on the story was overlooked by the *Newsletter* and it is a pleasure to thank Mrs. Edith B. Burke, Associate Editor of *Modern Language Quarterly* (University of Washington, Seattle), for sending a copy of the number in which the article appeared. The full references of the article are:

Katherine Bailey Linehan, "The *Odd Women*: Gissing's Imaginative Approach to Feminism," *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4, December 1979, pp. 358-75.

Ms Linehan praises Gissing's objectivity in this novel, and her well-documented article goes a long way to correct some of the views expressed at the 1978 MLA Convention in New York. This article is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the book

Among the forthcoming publications are an edition of the Gissing notebook held by the Dartmouth College Library, *Extracts from my Reading*, edited by Pierre Coustillas and Patrick Bridgwater (Enitharmon Press), *A Life's Morning* and *Workers in the Dawn* (Harvester Press), both edited by Pierre Coustillas. A volume of W. H. Hudson correspondence, *Landscapes and Literati*, due to appear next January under the imprint of Michael Russell (The Chantry House, Wilton,

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Wiltshire) will also be of interest to readers of Gissing since besides all the letters from Hudson to George and Algernon, it will contain the few letters from George to Hudson that have been preserved. This volume has been edited by Dennis Shrubsall and Pierre Coustillas.

Our April number mentioned new editions of two books in which Gissing appears but the author's name, possibly because it is familiar to all readers of *By the Ionian Sea* and travel narratives concerned with Southern Italy, was omitted. Let us therefore repeat that *Siren Land* (Penguin, 1983) and *Old Calabria* (Century Publishers, 76 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PE), Norman Douglas's best known titles, are currently available, as well as an edition of *Siren Land* published by Secker & Warburg in association with the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1982.

Recent Publications

Volume

Francesco Badolato (ed.), *George Gissing: Antologia Critica*. Premessa di Pierre Coustillas, Rome: Herder Editrice, 1984, pp. xxiii + 268. Lire 30,000. Stiff white wrappers with portrait of Gissing. After the foreword and a 13-page chronology, the volume is divided into three parts. Part I is an account in Italian of Gissing's life and personality. Part II contains thirteen contributions, twelve in English and one in French by Jacob Korg, Pierre Coustillas, Adrian Poole, Samuel Vogt Gapp, J. W. Blench. C. J. Francis, Jerome H. Buckley, David B. Eakin,

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Gillian Tindall, Alfred Gissing and Osamu Doi. Part III contains two pieces in Italian by Mario Praz and Gabriele Armandi, as well as a little known but interesting essay in English by Desmond MacCarthy. The volume ends with an index. The publishers address is Herder Editrice e Libreria, Piazza Montecitorio, 120, 00186 Roma, Italy.

Articles, reviews, etc.

The Yellow Book: An Anthology Selected and Introduced by Fraser Harrison, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1982. Contains Gissing's well-known short story, "The Foolish Virgin," originally published in *The Yellow Book* for January 1896.

John Lucas, *Romantic to Modern Literature: Essays on Ideas of Culture 1750-1900*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982. Contains (pp. 188-205) the essay "From Naturalism to Symbolism," which has some passages on Gissing.

W. G. Regier, "Biogrubby," *Prairie Schooner*, Vol. 57, No. 3, Fall 1983, pp. 82-85. Review of John Halperin's *Gissing: A Life in Books*.

William J. Scheick, "Compassion and Fictional Structure: The Example of Gissing and Bennett," *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Winter 1983, pp. 293-313.

Juliet Standing, *Exordium: Daedalus Press 1968-1983*, Wymondham, 1983. Daedalus Press printed most titles in the Enitharmon Press Gissing Series. The novelist appears on pp. 22-29, 38 and 44.

Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, *The London Encyclopaedia*, London: Macmillan, 1983. On p. 557, under "Oakley Street", we read: "To the East is Oakley Gardens where, at No. 33,

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George Gissing, the novelist, lived in 1882-4, the longest period the impoverished author of *New Grub Street* ever spent in any one of the 13 houses in London at which he could at various times be found." Thirteen is a questionable figure and Gissing lived for six years at 7K Cornwall Residences.

Kathleen Blake, *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-Postponement*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983. Gissing's novels, mainly *The Odd Women*, are discussed on pp. 79-98.

John R. Reed, "A Friend to Mammon: Speculation in Victorian Literature," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Winter 1984, pp. 179-202. *Demos* and *The Whirlpool* are discussed on pp. 198-200.

Wendell V. Harris, "Review," *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1, March 1984, pp. 412-15. Review of *Gissing: A Life in Books*.

Michael Collie, "Book Reviews," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Spring 1984, pp. 389-91. Review of *George Gissing*, by Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, ed. Jean-Pierre Michaux and *Gissing: A Life in Books*, by John Halperin.

Anthony Curtis, "Books: When all roads led to Edmund Gosse," April 7, 1984, p. 12. A review of Ann Thwaite's biography of Gosse with a passage on Gissing and Gosse.

Dick Hoefnagel, "George Gissing's 'Extracts from my Reading,'" *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin*, Vol. XXIV (NS), No. 2, April 1984, pp. 51-55. This is a descriptive article on the notebook which is to be published by the Enitharmon Press.

Anon., "Paperbacks," *Sunday Times*, May 5, 1984, p. 40, Notice of *The Whirlpool* (Hogarth Press) and *The Town Traveller* (Harvester).

Giovanni Rulli, "I conflitti interiori di George Gissing," *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 24, 1984, p. 3. Review of *George Gissing: Antologia Critica*, edited by Francesco Badolato.

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Sylvère Monod, "Comptes Rendus," *Etudes Anglaises*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2, April-June 1984, pp. 215-16. Review of *The Town Traveller* (Harvester). This is preceded by a review of *Will Warburton* (Harvester) by Pierre Coustillas on p. 215.

Pierre Coustillas, "Book Reviews : 5 The Twayne Gissing," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1984, pp. 71-73. Vol. 27, No. 2, p. 17 contains a notice of *Demos* and *The Nether World* (Harvester paperbacks).

Benny Green, *London* (Small Oxford Books), O. U. P., 1984. Contains extracts from *In the Year of Jubilee* (pp. 12-13) and *Henry Ryecroft* (pp. 34-35).

Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, Vol. IV 1903-1913, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. Gissing appears on pp. 234-35 in a letter to James Douglas of November 10, 1912 about *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*.

Paul Goetsch, "The Sunday in Victorian Literature," in *Functions of Literature: Essays presented to Erwin Wolff on his sixtieth birthday*. Edited by Ulrich Broich, Theo Stemmler and Gerd Stratmann, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984. Gissing is discussed on p. 247.