

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 XXVI, Number 4  
October, 1990  
\*\*\*\*\*

-- 1 --

CONTENTS

From Dorking to Wakefield, By Chris Kohler.	2
“G. R.G.”, Anonymous, and “G. R. Gresham” in America, by Robert L. Selig.	3
Lawrence of Arabia and “Ryecroft,” by M. D. Allen.	11
“Of George Gissing.” John Davidson’s short Notice, by John Sloan.	16
Belated Praise of “ <i>Workers in the Dawn</i> ” in the <i>Daily News</i> , by Pierre Coustillas.	21
The Italian Translation of <i>The Ryecroft Papers</i> : Two Opinions.	27
Notes and News.	35
Recent Publications	37

\*\*\*\*\*

Editorial Board

Pierre Coustillas, Editor, University of Lille  
Shigeru Koike, Tokyo Woman’s Christian 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: £5.00 per annum  
Libraries: £8.00 per annum

\*\*\*\*\*

-- 2 --

## From Dorking to Wakefield

Chris Kohler

This is the last issue of *The Gissing Newsletter* to be published from Dorking. From January 1991 *The Gissing Journal* will be published from Wakefield.

In January 1969 Pierre Coustillas took over the editorship of *The Gissing Newsletter* from Jacob Korg and I assumed responsibility for the business aspects of printing, distribution and subscriptions. The Gissing Trust in Wakefield will now be responsible for the business functions and a printer in Thompsons' Yard, Wakefield, will print *The Gissing Journal* direct from copy generated by H  l  ne Coustillas's computer. Pierre Coustillas continues as editor.

For 22 years Lee and Joan Welsh have set and printed the *Newsletter*. I thank them for their skilled work, their faithfulness and their humour. The distribution and dealing with subscriptions for a small academic journal needs close attention to detail, patience with "claims" for missing issues, the ability to smile ruefully when bank charges exceed the amount of the dollar cheque being deposited and, above all, nifty fingers and a moist tongue for stuffing envelopes and sticking on hundreds of thousands of stamps. Pauline Whitehead started this work in 1969 and has been succeeded by Hazel Coombes, Diane Lawrie, Kathleen Bennett and Lyn Donovan. Thank you to all of them. May *The Gissing Journal* prosper mightily.

\*\*\*\*\*

-- 3 --

### "G. R. G.," Anonymous, and "G. R. Gresham" in America.

Robert L. Selig  
Purdue University Calumet

As a surprisingly large number of Gissing's American stories continue to emerge from 1877,<sup>1</sup> one small yet tantalizing puzzle remains. Why did he publish them sometimes anonymously, sometimes as "G. R. G.," and sometimes as "G. R. Gresham"? These odd variations on the importance of being Gissing deserve at least a scholarly glance. With the help of new details about Chicago journalism in 1877, I shall attempt an explanation.

Gissing's first story in Chicago, "The Sins of the Fathers," appeared unsigned in the *Tribune* on 10 March 1877. On March 31st a tale most probably by him, "R. I. P.," appeared there unsigned. Then, more than a month after breaking into the *Tribune*, he published a story in it with his own initials, "G. R. G.": "Too Dearly Bought" (14 April 1877). If, as I have argued elsewhere, George Everett Hastings misattributed to Gissing the *Tribune*'s "Browne-Vargrave" group – Felix Browne's "The Death-Clock" (21 April 1877), Dr. Vargrave's "The Serpent-Charms" (28 April 1877), and Dr. Vargrave's "Dead and Alive" (14 July 1877) – a clear pattern emerges. From "Too Dearly Bought" onward, Gissing used his own initials for his *Chicago Tribune* fiction: for "Gretchen" (12 May 1877) and also for "Brownie" (29 July 1877). He seems, in short, to have established his byline there. Indeed, the Browne-Vargrave disruption of this perfectly logical sequence casts additional doubt on Hastings's attributions, apart from other evidence.<sup>2</sup>

One can easily surmise why Gissing avoided his own full name: fear that it might draw attention to himself as a recently convicted thief expelled from Owens College. When he had

worked as a teacher in Waltham, Massachusetts, just a few months before, a reporter had asked Gissing “where” he “came from” and “where” he “had studied” – disconcerting questions for a guilt-ridden exile.<sup>3</sup> And several years after Gissing had returned to England, a former schoolmate exposed Gissing’s old disgrace to Frederic Harrison, his benefactor.<sup>4</sup> Gissing’s apprehension that his printed name could focus attention on his shameful recent past might well have led to concealment of that name in all his American writings.

Lingering shame cannot explain, however, why Gissing omitted the perfectly discreet “G. R. G.” signature when he started to publish elsewhere than the *Tribune*. Just ten days after first appearing in the *Tribune* as “G. R. G.,” Gissing published an unsigned tale in the *Daily News*: “Too Wretched to Live” (24 April 1877). He kept all of his subsequent stories in the *News* unsigned as well: “The Portrait” (18 June 1877), “The Mysterious Portrait” (6 July 1877; reprinted in *News*, 16 July 1877), and “The Picture” (14 August 1877).<sup>5</sup> The one other Gissing tale in the *News* – “The Warder’s Daughter” (18 May 1877) – had necessarily to appear without signature because that paper had stolen it from his unsigned “The Warden’s Daughter” in the *Evening Journal* (28 April 1877). In addition, he wrote the unsigned “Twenty Pounds” for the *Journal* (19 May 1877). And he also published without any signatures “Joseph Yates’ Temptation” (2 June 1877) and “One Farthing Damages” (28 July 1877) in the *Chicago Post*.

One possible explanation suggests itself for his alternation between “G. R. G.” and total anonymity: a wish to conceal from each daily paper that he had contributed to any of the others. A knowledge of Chicago’s journalistic wars during this very period tends to confirm the hypothesis. Papers engaged in ferocious verbal battles against one another. Yet amid this world of editorial insults, Gissing owed a profound obligation to Samuel Medill of the *Tribune*, who had “befriended the desperate” exile, “encouraged his attempts to write short stories, eased them

into print, and saved the future novelist from starving in the street.”<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the first paper other than the *Tribune* from which Gissing eked out additional earnings was its bitterest antagonist, the *Chicago Daily News*.

In existence since only the end of 1875, the *News* tossed daily gibes at the far more established *Tribune*; at its editor-in-chief, Joseph Medill; and sometimes even at Samuel Medill, its young managing editor. The editor of the *News* had a personal grievance against Joseph Medill in particular. When Stone needed money desperately to keep his paper going in 1876, an angry Medill had blocked his own star journalist, Henry Demerest Lloyd, from raising a loan to invest in the *News*.<sup>7</sup> Stone’s daily paper had, in fact, begun on a journalistic shoe string. Sharing very cramped quarters with a Norwegian-language paper and a morning paper in English, the *News* had a business office only eight feet square and a twenty-one-square-foot working space, where editors, reporters, and compositors all had to squeeze together. The staff wrote its stories on a packing-case table and sat on kitchen chairs. Prevented by Medill from raising needed funds, Stone sold his paper to a wealthy local printer yet remained on as editor with a not-so-private grudge against the rival *Tribune*.<sup>8</sup>

The *News*’s editorials and editorial squibs gave mocking nicknames to Joseph Medill, as the *Tribune*’s major shareholder and editor-in-chief: “Nancy Medill,” “Sister” Medill, and sometimes “Aunty Medill.” The disparagement of him as a womanly male apparently refers to his prudishness as Chicago’s mayor from 1871 to 1873 in shutting down taverns on Sunday and enforcing local blue laws.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps for the same reason, the *Daily News* made fun of Samuel Medill for spending much of his time “in conspicuous saloons” with his ferocious pet dog.<sup>10</sup> The *News* twitted both Samuel and Joseph Medill with so running out of creative ideas that they had to ask for suggestions from “the elevator boy” – a sarcastic hit at the contrast between the

*Tribune's* lavish building complete with elevator, and its supposedly uninventive journalism.<sup>11</sup> Stone's editorial columns accused "Miss Nancy Medill" of worrying about the rising "price of bread" simply because "one of these days her half-starved employees will demand better salaries," and Stone also accused Joseph Medill of conspiring with other American editors to reduce reporters' wages by "25 to 50 per cent." The *News* further charged "Aunt Nancy" with having made his wealth through crude political graft. And Stone taunted Joseph Medill for a feeble "pretense of decency" even as he stole a dispatch from the *News* and stuck it into the *Tribune*.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the *News* flung these insults at its rival in the very months when Gissing wrote for both Chicago papers.

The *Tribune* itself often attacked competitors, but it seemed to regard the *News* as a one-penny late arrival beneath contempt. The old, established paper did not deign to mention its youngest rival, not even to abuse it. In a sarcastic editorial about the city's English-language dailies, the *Tribune* neglects to list the *News* as a genuine competitor:

A correspondent inquires how many daily newspapers in the English Language are published in Chicago. There are only four, or, to be accurate, four and a half, to-wit: *Tribune* (1), *Times* (2), *Journal* (3), *Post* (4), and the *Inter-Ocean* (4½), the latter being merely an uncomplimentary allusion to journalism.<sup>13</sup>

Although the *News* had survived for a year and a half, the *Tribune* still refused to acknowledge its existence.

The Medills openly attacked, however, both the other dailies in which young Gissing published – the *Journal* and the *Post*:

Some of *The Tribune* paragraphs worry the *Journal*. They act upon it like blisters, and relieve its dropsical tendencies by bringing water to the surface.<sup>14</sup>

Will the *Post's* chattering monkey explain *what that editorial* did mean!<sup>15</sup>

This ill-mannered wrangling, this free-for-all in print, undoubtedly would have disturbed the unaggressive Gissing, who throughout his life, shrank from bellicose insults.<sup>16</sup> He may well have considered it prudent to switch from "G. R. G" to pure anonymity simply to conceal from those quarrelsome editors, and especially from his friend, Samuel Medill, that he had trafficked with rivals.

Our hypothesis fails to explain, however, why Gissing departed elsewhere from both the *Tribune's* "G. R. G." and total anonymity to assume at this same period the pen name "G. R. Gresham" in three other places. He first used it in Chicago's *National Weekly*: "A Terrible Mistake" (5 May 1877). He remained "G. R. Gresham" in Chicago's *Alliance*: "A Mother's Hope" (12 May 1877), "A Test of Honor" (2 June 1877), and "The Artist's Child" (30 June 1877). And he stuck to "G. R. Gresham" in *Appletons' Journal*, a New York monthly: "An English Coast-Picture" (July 1877).

The *National Weekly*, the *Alliance*, and *Appletons'* had something in common, suggesting an explanation for Gissing's use in them of a single pen name. All three stood apart from the *Tribune's* zone of rivalry. The *National Weekly* offered no competition because of its essential lowness. At times it carried the ridiculous alternate title of *Carl Pretzel's Weekly* or *Illustrated*

*Weekly*. Its editor-in-chief, Charles Henry Harris, filled out its skimpy issue with his own bad jokes in mock German-American dialect, and its part-time proprietor, a clothing-store manager named James M. Hill, stalled in paying Gissing's writer's fees.<sup>17</sup> Compared to the influential *Tribune*, this comic little sheet was a journalistic midget.

Although Chicago's *Alliance* was sober and genteel, this nonsectarian religious weekly paper had nothing to do with the *Tribune*'s sphere of day-to-day news. So little did the two compete that the *Tribune* saw fit to praise the other paper on its editorial page (15 April 1877, p. 5):

-- 8 --

Mr. F[rancis]. F. Browne, formerly editor of the *Lakeside Monthly*, has associated himself with the *Alliance*, Prof. DAVID SWING's journal, and it is said to be the intention to add considerably to the literary attractiveness of the paper by securing contributions from well-known writers. MR. BROWNE is a gentleman of good taste and large experience in literary matters, and ought to be a material acquisition to the *Alliance*.

Finally, *Appletons' Journal* was a monthly magazine – not even a newspaper – so that it had no rivalry at all with Chicago's largest paper. In fact, the Medill brothers' pages carried regular advertisements for the New York magazine. The *Tribune* of 18 June 1877, page 7, not only ran an advertisement for *Appletons' Journal* but one that, indeed, listed "An English Coast-Picture" by G. R. Gresham as part of its coming attractions. Gissing would have realized clearly enough from these frequent paid announcements that a story by him in *Appletons'* need not offend Samuel Medill.

If neither the two weeklies nor the New York monthly threatened the *Tribune* in the slightest, why did Gissing refrain nevertheless from the "G. R. G." signature in these other publications? We must remember once again the attention and kindness of Samuel Medill to the poor, struggling Gissing. He may have felt that to publish anywhere else than the *Tribune* itself – even in noncompetitors – showed a kind of ingratitude to his managing-editor friend. In any case, Gissing arrived at a compromise signature. "G. R. Gresham" has the same initials as "G. R. G." and also, of course, as George Robert Gissing. In choosing this pseudonym, he at once concealed yet also revealed his literary secret. He protected his special relationship to Samuel Medill yet hinted as well to those who knew all four publications that "G. R. G." and "Gresham" were one and the same. The deviousness of his tactic along with a lingering shame

-- 9 --

over the affair at Owens may explain why he later used the name "Gilbert Gresham" for the villain of *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) rather than for its hero.

1. Up to now the total is eighteen, not including two lost ones from the *National Weekly* or the doubtful Browne-Vargrave trilogy from the *Tribune*. An annotated secondary bibliography by me of Gissing's 1877 works in America, accompanies my article "Three Stories by George Gissing: Lost Tales from Chicago" in *English Literature in Transition*, 33 (1990), no. 3, pp. 295-96.
2. See Robert L. Selig, "Unconvincing Gissing Attributions: 'The Death-Clock,' 'The Serpent-Charms,' 'Dead and Alive,'" *The Library*, 6th ser., 9 (June 1987), pp. 169-72. For

Professor Coustillas's defence of the Hastings attributions and my reply to him, see Pierre Coustillas and Robert L. Selig, "Correspondence: Unconvincing Gissing Attributions," *The Library*, 6th ser., 9 (September 1987), pp. 274-77.

3. Letter of George Gissing to Algernon Gissing, 28 January 1877, *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, collected and arranged by Algernon and Ellen Gissing (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1927), pp. 19-21.
4. Jacob Korg, *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), pp. 6-7.
5. The full text of these newly discovered tales appears in my *ELT* article, mentioned above, pp. 283-94.
6. Robert L. Selig, "Gissing's Benefactor at the *Chicago Tribune*: An Identification from a

-- 10 --

Passage in *New Grub Street*," *Études Anglaises*, 37, no. 4 (1983), p. 434.

7. Lloyd Wendt, *Chicago Tribune: The Rise of a Great American Newspaper* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1979), p. 261.
8. Charles H. Dennis, *Victor Lawson: His Time and His Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 8 and 16.
9. *Chicago Daily News*, 14 May 1877, p. 2, and 10 May 1877, p. 2. See Stephen Longstreet, *Chicago: 1860-1919* (New York: David McKay, 1973), p. 223.
10. *Chicago Daily News*, 14 April 1877, p. 4.
11. *Ibid.* For the *Tribune's* building and elevator, see "The Tribune," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 February 1873, p. 2. For the lack of an elevator in the building used by the *News*, see Dennis, p. 10.
12. *Chicago Daily News*, 2 May 1877, p. 2; 11 June 1877, p. 2; 24 May 1877, p. 2; 29 May 1877, p. 2.
13. *Chicago Tribune*, 10 May 1877, p. 4.
14. *Chicago Tribune*, 18 April 1877, p. 4.
15. *Chicago Tribune*, 2 April 1877, p. 4.
16. For a notable comment by Gissing about his own timid avoidance of harsh words to others, see the entry for 14 October 1888 in George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: the Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1978), p. 51.
17. Robert L. Selig, "The *National Weekly*: A Lost Source of Unknown Gissing Fiction," *The Gissing Newsletter*, 18 (January 1982), pp. 2-9.

\*\*\*\*\*

-- 11 --

Lawrence of Arabia and “Ryecroft”

M. D. Allen  
University of Wisconsin  
Menasha

Readers of the *Newsletter* may be interested in two comments about *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* made by T. E. Lawrence, better known as “Lawrence of Arabia.” Lawrence performed the deeds that won him fame in the last two years of World War One, when he acted as liaison officer between the British Army in the Middle East and the Arab forces rebelling against their imperial masters the Turks. A highly intelligent man whose most enduring ambitions were literary, rather than military or political, Lawrence went on to write a lengthy and mannered account of his war, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), and to discuss his and others’ books and literary talents, or lack thereof, in a multitude of often brilliant letters. It is in two of these that we find his comments on *Ryecroft*. (They are his only written comments on Gissing, as far as I am aware.)

The first occurs in a letter of 10 June, 1924 to Charlotte Frances Shaw – that is, Mrs. G. B. S. Charlotte received a whole series of confessional letters from Lawrence between 1923 and his untimely death in a motorcycle accident in 1935, letters in which he discussed such sensitive (and, at that time, largely secret) matters as his illegitimacy and the treatment meted out to him during a night spent in Turkish captivity. In fact, this very letter of 10 June expresses its author’s wretchedness in “this misery of a world”<sup>1</sup> and, in particular, his detestation of physicality, especially its sexual dimension. Lawrence at that time was unhappily serving as a private in the Royal Tank Corps. This was a regiment of the armed forces that he saw as accepting a lower calibre of man than the R. A. F., from which he had recently been dismissed

-- 12 --

after newspaper revelations of his true identity. He expresses to Mrs. Shaw his surprise and amusement that the drunken and lecherous soldiery of the R. T. C. should take pleasure in, of all books, the gently meditative *Ryecroft*.

You’ll laugh to hear of the book which has made a great hit in Hut G. 25 lately “The private papers of Henry Ryecroft.” They love it. “Poor old Henry”: they argue his tastes & fortunes in bed after lights out.

Here we have interesting evidence of Gissing’s ability to appeal to the lower reaches of a wide audience.

Whether he consciously realised it or not, Lawrence was himself beginning to lead a Rycroftian existence at this time, at least in his off-duty hours. He was stationed at Bovington Camp, which is not in Devon but in Dorset. A mile and a half to the north of the Camp is a cottage called Clouds Hill, which Lawrence acquired in the Summer of 1923, and which, unRyecroft-like, he improved himself and made, according to his own standards, pleasantly habitable. There he would escape from the squalor of service life; there he and like-minded friends would eat simple meals, listen to records – and read, for one of the two rooms was (is, as the Cottage is maintained by the National Trust in all but its former state) “book-lined.”<sup>2</sup>

Ryecroft, old before his time at fifty-odd, retires to his nameless cottage to forget the vain ambitions of the world, ramble along Devon lanes, and read his days away. Lawrence, old before *his* time at thirty-five (“It is hard for [G. B. Shaw, he wrote to Charlotte,] with all that inherent force and courage, to credit a man’s being worn out at thirty-five”),<sup>3</sup> takes weekend refuge in it, eventually retires permanently to, Clouds Hill, to speed along Dorset roads on his motor-cycle, and read *his* days away (it is Lawrence, but it might be Ryecroft, who writes to a

-- 13 --

friend, “My life is full of books, and I get heaps of them, every week. There must be 2,000 in the cottage...”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, there are remarkable similarities between the two battered wanderers who finally turn from the world in a mixture of weariness, horror, and disgust. Lawrence (but, again, it might be Ryecroft, apart from the conditional tense) writes:

Perfection would be to do nothing: to have something like a pound a day from investments, & live on it, as I very well could. I’ve learnt a lot about living in the last five years: and have a curious confidence that I need not worry at all. Desires & ambitions & hopes and envy ... do you know I haven’t any more of these things now in me, for as deep down as I can reach?<sup>5</sup>

Ryecroft, when he has not quite “a pound a day,” reflects that “At this time of life, many a man is bracing himself for new efforts, is calculating on a decade or two of pursuit and attainment. I, too, may perhaps live for some years; but for me there is no more activity, no ambition” (Autumn XXIII). Ryecroft, furthermore, has read much history, “a nightmare of horrors” (Winter XVII), and justifies his aloof quietism thus: “For me, it is a virtue to be self-centred; I am much better employed, from every point of view, when I live solely for my own satisfaction, than when I begin to worry about the world. The world frightens me, and a frightened man is no good for anything” (Winter XXV). Lawrence has lived through and helped create history (and witnessed and recorded in *Seven Pillars* acts of the kind that appalled Ryecroft). Now he can find a precarious happiness only by living the same “selfish” sort of life: “One can be poised, busy and content while engrossed in some loved toy: but when a man lifts his head and looks round him, he grows terrified instanter.”<sup>6</sup>

One might note other congruencies of opinion or experience, even if qualified. Both men

-- 14 --

were “beguiled” by Flinders Petrie (but Lawrence personally, as a young archaeologist in Egypt, not just through books);<sup>7</sup> both men suffered from military drilling (but Lawrence also wrote about the spiritual cohesiveness of a group of men well drilled);<sup>8</sup> both men knew Homer well (although Lawrence translated *all* the *Odyssey*, and grew to dislike its author); and both men were cold before women (in the selection from the private papers his “editor” gives us, Ryecroft never mentions the wife and daughter we are told he had, but records the purchase and portorage of Gibbon, a representative incident in his book-loving life, in the language of displaced sexuality; Lawrence’s indifference to women was such that he has been accused, wrongly, of homosexuality).

Ryecroft, like Lawrence, attains resignation and even contentment. It is this aspect of the book that Lawrence remembers some time after the Tank Corps years, writing to E. M. Forster on 12 December, 1928, “As you say, happiness doesn’t ‘write’ well. I don’t know any entirely happy book – unless it’s *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*.”<sup>9</sup> This slightly strange



recollection of *Ryecroft* – strange because few of us would describe the book as “entirely happy” – forms for Lawrence part of a mesh of ideas, feelings and opinions, part of a defence of his own abdication from life and his lack of literary productivity. “Misery, anger, indignation, discomfort,” he wrote in the early thirties to another correspondent, “— those conditions produce literature. Contentment – never.” And in a letter of the same day to yet another correspondent, “Hang it all, I am a contented being, wanting nothing for myself or anybody else, & contentment is uncreative. It is a little folding of the hands for sleep.”<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps we can end by doing the historically impossible, and asking what Gissing would have thought of Lawrence. (Gissing was a thirty-year-old writer of some small repute, on holiday in the Lake District, on the August day in 1888 when Lawrence was born; and had been dead for nearly a quarter of a century when *Seven Pillars* first appeared.) The novelist’s liking

-- 15 --

for Anglo-Arabian travel narratives has been noted by Coustillas, who sees his subject as taking refuge in out-of-the-way countries to compensate for the disappointments that so often awaited him in real life.<sup>12</sup> Why should not Lawrence’s book have joined the list of exotic accounts that comforted the hard-beset Gissing, along with, for example, W. C. Palgrave’s insufficiently celebrated *Personal Narrative of a Year’s Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia* (1862-63)<sup>13</sup> (“delightful” – Gissing; “brilliant” – Lawrence<sup>14</sup>)? Perhaps even now Gissing turns the pages of Lawrence’s book, far from cheating publishers, imbecile critics, and shrieking wives, in the superlunary peace he deserves so well.

1. Malcolm Brown, ed., *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Dent, 1988), p. 268. Brown’s edition of the *Letters* – published to coincide with the centenary of Lawrence’s birth – makes publicly available for the first time significant and lengthy extracts from the letters to Mrs. Shaw. The sentences concerning *Ryecroft* are omitted from Brown’s selection from the letter of 10 June 1924, and I quote them later in this article directly from the British Library Add. MS. 45903.
2. Brown, p. 499.
3. Brown, p. 323.
4. David Garnett, ed., *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Cape, 1938), pp. 752-53.
5. Brown, p. 319.
6. Brown, p. 493.
7. Cf. Winter XVI and Brown, p. 43.
8. Cf. Spring XIX and Brown, p. 385. Comments about the “spiritual” benefits of drill are to

-- 16 --

be found in Lawrence’s account of life in the R. A. F., *The Mint* (London: Cape, 1955).

9. Garnett, p. 626.

10. Brown, p. 459.
11. Brown, p. 460.
12. Pierre Coustillas, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1978), p. 12.
13. Published in 1873.
14. Coustillas, p. 326.
15. Garnett, p. 768.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Of George Gissing”  
John Davidson’s Short Notice.

John Sloan  
Balliol College, Oxford

On June 19, 1907 the poet and dramatist John Davidson wrote to his friend and publisher Grant Richards to say that he had begun to put together a prose book which he intended to call *Causeway and Forest*.<sup>1</sup> Less than a month later, it was in the hands of the typist, and, in writing to Richards to request £25 on account, Davidson described it as containing “semi-autobiographical stuff, short notices of Oscar Wilde, George Gissing and others.”<sup>2</sup> In the

-- 17 --

end, Richards decided against publication, undoubtedly because of the financial failure of Davidson’s earlier prose miscellanies. The manuscript, it appears, was eventually destroyed.

The idea that Davidson had written a piece on Gissing was fascinating, but puzzling; for although it has long been known that the two writers became close friends in the 1890s, it was not Davidson’s custom to write on novels and novelists, particularly contemporary ones. Moreover, John A. Lester’s extensive *John Davidson: A Grub Street Bibliography* (1958) listed no notice either of Gissing or of Wilde among Davidson’s journalistic writings.<sup>3</sup> However, a clue to the identification of these pieces lay, for the present writer, in Davidson’s method in compiling his earlier prose miscellanies where passages and extracts of personal, literary and philosophical interest are edited and brought together from his published newspaper articles.

In an article entitled “A Railway Journey” in the *Glasgow Herald* for the 27th April 1907, Davidson includes an extensive passage on Gissing which can be none other than the short notice of Gissing later included in *Causeway and Forest*. The “railway journey” of the title was a journey from Christchurch to Totnes in which Davidson had to stop at Exeter for an hour and a half. It is Exeter which causes Davidson to remember Gissing. His recollections provide a splendid portrait of Gissing, a testimony of their warm friendship and a new and fascinating problem for students of Gissing’s work. I quote the passage in full:

From Poole to Exeter my recollection is of rich rolling hill and dale, much pasture green with grass beginning to grow again, and every bank yellow with primroses. At Exeter, where I had to wait an hour and a half, I

-- 18 --

lunched in the refreshment room, and thought of George Gissing. Gissing lived for a year in Exeter: I think the year in which he wrote "*The Whirlpool*." I knew Gissing and liked him. He lunched and dined with me two or three times in clubs and restaurants, and I dined and lunched with him two or three times in restaurants and clubs. The strings were already frayed when I first met him, but they were well-strung. He had a keen mind and a genial temperament: he thought ill of no man, and lived his own life not unheroically. His passion for actuality, or what he understood to be actuality, possessed him, inspired him, thwarted him – I had almost said, spoiled him. His health fluctuated more than with most men. He had great endurance; he was very dogged in purpose, in pursuit, in standing to it; he would have set up a great defence in a beleaguered city. But he never could launch out. Nevertheless he was always cheerful, and when he remarked on adverse circumstances in his own life, it was without complaint, rather as of things that had happened in the world at large than as personal to himself. He was a man who had to enjoy much of life and of the world by proxy; and he did so without rancour. He had a high idea of friendship, and once wrote me that he could not rest satisfied until he had assured me that a character in a novel he was about to publish was not intended for me, although he had used certain matters of fact and remarks of my life and conversation. It was a surprise to the reading public when "*Veranilda*" appeared, but those who were intimate with him were aware of his scholarship. He could lie on a sofa and read Sophocles for pleasure; he loved wine, gaiety, bright skies, and blue seas; some clot in his blood, some knot in his nerves compelled him for a time to write uninteresting tales of the lower middle classes. He was a man who died

-- 19 --

too soon – the rarest thing that can be said of anyone. Another twenty years, and he might have been the greatest name in English fiction since George Meredith's.<sup>4</sup>

Although Davidson clearly failed to appreciate fully some of the merits of Gissing's work – he himself had little taste for realism or for the novel generally – his respect for Gissing as a writer and a friend is unequivocal. The problem as to which of Gissing's fictional character was modelled on Davidson is clearly one that will provoke some interesting speculation.

1. ALS dated June 19, 1907; Princeton University Library.
2. ALS dated July 16, 1907; Princeton University Library.
3. Davidson's view of Wilde is to be found in an article entitled "Oakley," *Glasgow Herald*, December 29, 1906, p. 8.
4. *Glasgow Herald*, April 27, 1907, p. 9.

Editor's Note: The question raised by John Sloan in his concluding paragraph may, I think, be answered in a manner which should satisfy biographers and critics. Not that the letter is available in which Gissing wrote to Davidson "that he could not rest satisfied until he had assured me that a character in a novel he was about to publish was not intended for me, although he had used certain matters of fact and remarks of my life and conversation." Gissing's letters to Davidson, unless they were destroyed, still have to be discovered. But a good substitute is extant – a letter from Clara Collet to Morley Roberts about *The Whirlpool* – the only novel of

-- 20 --

modern life mentioned by Davidson, who first met Gissing on 29 July 1893, that is only a few weeks after he had left Exeter for London, an occasion on which he certainly mentioned his stay of two years and a half in Devon. Clara Collet visited Gissing several times in 1896, as is attested by his diary and his letters to her. She was his best and most reliable confidante and discussed literary matters with him in a way which must have been fascinating. The name of John Davidson, his domestic arrangements, his literary work and projects recurred in their conversations. It seems reasonable to speculate that when Miss Collet called on the Gissings on 29 February 1896, the day after Gissing wrote to Davidson to congratulate him on the success of "For the Crown" – his translation of François Coppée's play *Le Justicier* – Davidson's name came up in the conversation as did the plans for the novel that was to become *The Whirlpool*. This speculation is all the more reasonable as Gissing had met and lunched with Davidson a few weeks before, on 11 January, at the Grosvenor. Gissing's diary entry for that day reads in part: "He in good health and spirits. His two boys have been sent to live at a farm in Sussex, and the experiment is a great success." The idea of living away from the vortex of London life was applied by Davidson to his children. Gissing's discussion of Davidson with Clara Collet is indeed all the less unlikely as Davidson had been present before in their correspondence (unpublished letter of 10 December 1894 and 13 January 1896).

Her crucial letter to Morley Roberts about the influence of Davidson's life and thoughts on *The Whirlpool* is dated 25 November 1904, and it offers a strong rebuttal of Roberts' interpretation of the novel which – Clara Collet was emphatically right – made no sense: "I am sure you have read 'The Whirlpool' under a wrong impression. G. never altered a sentence from any

-- 21 --

thought of his wife. His own home circumstances had no place in his thoughts. In so far as he was influenced by his surroundings at the time the Henry Normans and the Davidsons would count for something. I am not fond of the book but believe that it deserves a high place. Don't trouble to answer this" (Berg Collection).

Much could be said on the influence of the Henry Normans, but this would be irrelevant here. Not so Davidson's desire to withdraw from the influence of London, a desire which was ultimately fulfilled and proved disastrous. As for the more specific question – which character in *The Whirlpool* was modelled on Davidson – it cannot be answered convincingly without a thorough discussion of Davidson's political and philosophical ideas, but I think that Hugh Carnaby is the best candidate even though the exponent of some of Davidson's views regarding the city and the country is recognizably Harvey Rolfe.

\*\*\*\*\*

Belated Praise of *Workers in the Dawn*  
in the "Daily News"

Pierre Coustillas

There is in a letter of Gissing to his sister Ellen dated 14 March 1882 (soon to be published in Volume II of the *Collected Letters*) a passage which seems to defy the annotator. After mentioning his “little book,” unknown to posterity, “Watching the Storm Clouds,” he

-- 22 --

wrote: “By the bye, I saw myself referred to in the newspaper the other day, as ‘the author of that remarkable book’ so-&-so. I laughed.” Cryptic allusions to unavailable press-cuttings, to unknown people whose doings are obliquely mentioned and to incidents of which there is scarcely any hope of finding a trace in the press are not infrequent in Gissing’s early letters, and the present desultory reference in which can be read some self-satisfaction tinged with bitterness was on the face of it a hopeless case. Still capitulation is an unscholarly attitude and, as it happened, the case was not a hopeless one, although Gissing was probably not conscious at any time in later life of giving any clue to the solution of the enigma he had devised by omitting the name of the daily newspaper in which his first full-length story was so flatteringly described. In early 1882 Gissing was still an avid, if often disappointed, reader of daily newspapers – he found in them much of the information he needed for his contributions to *Vyestnik Evropy* – and the allusion to *Workers* might just as plausibly have been made in the *Standard*, the *Echo*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* or the *Daily News*, all of which he read or consulted in his early London days. That the last named paper turned out to be that which had praised his novel was not discovered by accident. Gissing himself, though unconsciously, put the future editors of his letters on the track of the mysterious allusion. The key is supplied long after the event in an undated letter to Algernon written one Friday night in which he mentions characters that were to play a minor part in the background of *Demos* and which can safely be assigned to 13 November 1885: “Thanks much for this review. It is almost the first really sympathetic word that has been spoken. Twice before, the Daily N. has been very friendly. I wish it hadn’t been left so late.”

The review in question was one of *The Unclassed*. It had appeared on 19 October, some eighteen months after Chapman & Hall had published the story and, but for this casual mention

-- 23 --

in a letter, no scholar familiar with the Victorian reviewing world would have deemed it possible that a three-volume novel might be discussed in a daily newspaper so belatedly. The comments were indeed of a nature to stimulate Gissing. After reminding his readers that “a novel, written a few years ago by Mr. George Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, was so remarkable for power and a certain intensity and gloom of pessimistic philosophy that it made a permanent impression on those who met with it,” the reviewer passed an equally favourable judgment upon *The Unclassed*, which had doubtless escaped his notice at the time of publication and which he aptly described as a work “profoundly imbued with despondency – the despondency of a thoughtful man, whose experience has apparently persistently hindered his ambition and aspiration ... Mr. Gissing’s is a powerful and interesting story in many ways ... The subject is what people call unpleasant. The knife with which he probes the wound is sometimes roughly handled, but it is held by one who well knows what he is doing. Waymark’s mingled experiences of good and evil, ambition, egotism, strength and weakness, seem to be drawn from life. They are certainly marked by singular energy, force and vigour of expression.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the *Daily News* had reviewed *Workers* in mixed terms – an example of the embarrassed response to his early work even in a liberal paper<sup>2</sup> – and since Gissing had apparently not seen the review – it is ignored by his album of press-cuttings – it seemed unlikely that this was one of the two occasions on which, by his own admission, the *Daily News* had been “very friendly” to him before 1885. The first having been the printing of his attack on a

feeble play entitled “Mock Turtles” in early 1883, it was possible that the other occasion, which could not be a review of a book from his pen, was the discussion of some novel having affinities with *Workers*, and this is what it proved to be.

Unsurprisingly the novel concerned is a story which has sunk into oblivion, *A Man of the*

-- 24 --

*Day*, published anonymously in the previous summer. Under the heading “Recent Novels,” Gissing had read the following assessment:

The plan of the story “*A Man of the Day*” (3 vols., Richard Bentley and Son) reminds us a little of that very remarkable book by Mr. Gissing, “*Workers in the Dawn*.” In both the conception is that of a working man, raising himself from the lowest rank by intelligent industry, being confronted by the inscrutable problems of good and evil in this life, and finding the solution offered him by the religion of the period insufficient to satisfy his awakened reason. Only to general outline, however, does the resemblance extend. Mr. Gissing followed his logical conclusions to their tragic end. The “authors” of the “*Man of the Day*,” for they are described on the title-page in the plural, have not had the courage or the cynicism, as the reader may choose to consider it, to do the same. Alick Lisle is left in a state of mental uncertainty at last as to whether a dawn of happiness in his life is due to returning faith, or to his being married to a very charming and loving young woman. This halting conclusion is not the only point in which the novel falls behind Mr. Gissing’s singularly powerful story. Nevertheless, it has an interest of its own, and if the central purpose had been kept steadily in the foreground, and more strongly worked at, the result might have been impressive. (“Recent Novels,” 2 March 1882, p. 6)

*A Man of the Day*, explains Robert Lee Wolff,<sup>3</sup> who had a copy in his collection, was the joint work of two Northumberland ladies, Lillias Wassermann and Isabella Weddle. They had previously written *David Armstrong* in collaboration, and *A Man of the Day* was to be followed

-- 25 --

by *The Counter of this World* (Hurst & Blackett, 1884). After that date collaboration ceased and, if Mrs. Wassermann wrote several more stories, Miss Weddle apparently composed only one, with a symbolic title, *Soap Bubbles* (1889).

The *Daily News* reviewer was right. *Workers in the Dawn* was, and after one hundred and ten years remains, whatever its undeniable blemishes, “a very remarkable novel” which is sure to find readers as long as Victorian fiction will be read. That some light has been thrown on an obscure passage in a Gissing letter is a matter for satisfaction, but the latter sentiment is not unmingled with frustration – the frustration which attaches to our incapacity to identify the reviewer. Unfortunately literary criticism in English newspapers of those days was invariably unsigned, and there is no evidence that the records of the *Daily News*, which later merged with the *Daily Chronicle*, another Liberal organ, to become the *News Chronicle*, have survived. So frustration over this minor episode in Gissing’s early literary life will in all likelihood remain unmitigated for ever.

1. “Recent Novels,” *Daily News*, 19 October 1885, p. 2.

2. As this review, which was published on 29 July 1880, p. 6, has never been reprinted, it is appropriate to reproduce the most significant part of it: "*Workers in the Dawn* is an extraordinary book, and we should think Mr. G. R. Gissing, the writer of it, is not an ordinary man. With the intention of giving his readers some idea of the depth and extent of depravity which exists in the heart of our social system he has written the history of Arthur Norman [sic] ... Mr. Gissing has evidently seen a great deal of the life of the London poor and can describe powerfully and graphically. The tone of the book is bitter and resentful;

-- 26 --

the style, often illiterate, is redeemed only by its intensity of earnestness. It is not easy to care much for the hero, who is morally weak, but Mr. Gissing's meaning has been to show how much men and women have to strive against who endeavour to rise from social degradation, how little society does to help them, and how unwisely and wrongly that little is done. His politics are Radical of course, Socialist some would call them, his tone pessimistic rather than hopeful. The 'Workers in the Dawn' are a young lady who tries to do some good among the lowest class, and dies from exhaustion in the effort, and an active Nonconformist clergyman, whose character and energy the author respects, though he rejects his religion. The painful nature of many of the scenes which are described without a touch of ideality, and the tone of bitter frustration over the whole story, make it a sad one. It is not, however, without grim humour, and passages are here and there deeply interesting, and written with a certain rough elegance."

3. See his *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. IV (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985), where the novel is item 7075.

\*\*\*\*\*

-- 27 --

The Italian Translation of the *Ryecroft Papers*:  
Two Opinions

Francesco Badolato (Milan) and Enrico Mozzachiodi (Pisa) have offered reviews of GEORGE GISSING: *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*, translated with an introduction by Francesco Marroni. Roma: Lucarini, 1990. Lire 23.500.

Francesco Badolato writes:

Last December saw the publication in translation of the Italian sections of Gissing's Diary, entitled *Da Venezia allo Stretto di Messina*. Just a month later a new contribution to Gissing scholarship graced the windows of Italian bookshops, *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*, translated with an introduction by Francesco Marroni. It was gratifying to learn that the translation had been done by an Italian academic of professorial standing noted for his recent work on Elizabeth Gaskell, on whom he is the leading authority in Italy, as has already been reported in this journal. Professor Marroni has made his mark both as a critic with *La Fabbrica nella Valle* (1987) and his introduction to *La Donna Grigia* (1988) and as a translator with *Il Fantasma nella Stanza del Giardino* (1989). His edition of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* shows him in both capacities.

The novelty of the book will be correctly assessed if it is remembered that an Italian translation by Jole Pascarelli, *Il giornale Intimo di Henry Ryecroft*, appeared as long ago as

1957 under the imprint of the Edizioni Paoline and that it has been out of print for years. The most striking feature of the new Italian version is that it is a complete translation whereas the former was nothing more than a generous selection. Of the 25 sections of Spring only 20 had

-- 28 --

been translated, 22 out of 27 for Summer, 16 out of 25 for Autumn, and 19 out of 26 for Winter. The following sections had been left out – for reasons which it might be interesting some day to analyze: Spring V, VII, XI, XIV, XX; Summer VI, XIII, XV, XVII, and XIX; Autumn I, II, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIII and XIV; Winter VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIX and XXII. Accordingly Italian readers were deprived of an appreciable portion of the original text, whereas now in this new and highly competent translation they do not miss a single line and so can gain a more informed understanding of the book proper, though praise of the new translation implies no detracting of the old one. Indeed the 1957 version was well received and remained in circulation for some twenty years, and was reprinted in various formats no fewer than six times. However, if Professor Marroni felt, as he probably did, that the time had come for making available an unabridged Italian version of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, he was certainly right. The reader needs the full text to form a valid opinion.

The volume appears just a century after Gissing's second visit to Italy, following the trip to Greece, when he landed at Brindisi, then made his way to Naples by rail through Taranto and Metaponto. With this book we have fresh evidence of the growing interest in Gissing among Italian scholars – an interest which can be traced back to 1939, when Sonzogno published Elena Baruffaldi's translation of *Thyrza*. Marroni's translation appears in the series "Il Labirinto," which includes works by Somerset Maugham, Leonid N. Andreev, August Strindberg, Massimo Bontempelli, Paul Verlaine, Elizabeth Gaskell, Bertold Brecht, Jan Neruda, Machado de Assis and many others. So Gissing is in good company in a fine collection stylishly produced with attractive pictorial dust-jackets.

In their response to this new Italian edition of *The Ryecroft Papers* Italian scholars have been highly appreciative.

-- 29 --

Enrico Mazzachiodi writes:

Ninety years after what proved to be a most significant holiday for George Gissing in St. Honoré-les-Bains, in the heart of France, a new Italian translation of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is in the bookshops. This time<sup>1</sup> it has been translated by Prof. Francesco Marroni and published by Lucarini under the title *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft*. This is happening at a time when there is renewed interest in Gissing's work in Italy. Among other forthcoming publications, an abridged edition of the same book is being prepared by Francesco Badolato for use in schools.

Professor Marroni's translation is accompanied by an interesting and informative introduction, also written by him. In it, he draws parallels between Charles Dickens, George Orwell and Gissing, all of whom, he asserts, had negative attitudes towards society. He goes on to give a detailed biographical portrait of the author, followed by an assessment of *The Ryecroft Papers*, in which he supports the thesis that the book is not autobiographical in nature.

In his introduction, however, there is no mention of the aforesaid stay in St. Honoré-les-Bains with Gabrielle Fleury in the summer and early autumn of 1900, of which Gissing wrote in a letter to Bertz:



“The [Paris] flat has been let to strangers for the summer, and, in consequence, we have to go into the country on the 25<sup>th</sup>. of this month, exactly. We are going to St. Honoré-les-bains, near Nevers, a beautiful place at the foot of the Morvan hills, where we have taken a villa till the end of October.”<sup>2</sup>

-- 30 --

The five months spent in the French countryside were most profitable for the author. Not only did he begin rewriting *Our Friend the Charlatan* (then called “The Coming Man”), this time bringing it to its conclusion, he also composed *An Author at Grass: Extracts from the Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, which was published in instalments from May 1902 to February 1903 in the *Fortnightly Review*. The title was later shortened to *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* when it was published in book form in January 1903.

From the beginning Gissing was justly pleased with his new creation. Indeed he said that: “As a bit of English, it is better than anything I have yet done – of that I feel no doubt.”<sup>3</sup> In a previous letter he had explained what the book was about: “I imagine an author who has led a long Grub Street life, and who, at the age of fifty, is blest with a legacy which gives him £300 a year. Forthwith he goes down into Somerset, establishes himself in a cottage, and passes the last five years of his life in wonderful calm and contentment. During this time he keeps a diary – not a formal day-book, but occasional jottings of his experience and thought and memories. I, at his death, am supposed to publish selections from this *Nachlasz*.”<sup>4</sup>

He then adds that the book is divided into four sections, named after the four seasons, thus confirming the importance that nature has in the work, as does the countryside considered as the setting where these changes of season are most felt. The rural scene plays a major part in this book, and even though *The Ryecroft Papers* is set in the English county of Devon, the French countryside Gissing saw around him as he wrote the book must have had some influence on its setting. The idyllic rendering of the English countryside in the book is no doubt partly the

-- 31 --

result of the homesickness felt by its self-exiled author, and the longing for England which prompted Gissing to write the book was probably increased by the similarities he saw between England and this part of France: “One might easily imagine oneself in England; there is very little ‘foreign’ in the scene,”<sup>5</sup> he wrote to H. G. Wells, and to his son Walter: “It is wonderfully like England, and I see all the old flowers – foxgloves, honeysuckle, rockrose, yellow rattle and numberless more.”<sup>6</sup>

*I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft* does, in general, read well, but the price to be paid is high. All the more so as, despite the great need for a larger diffusion of Gissing’s works in Italy, Professor Marroni’s text unfortunately contains some inaccuracies. One of these, and quite a curious one, derives from his apparent unawareness that the library at the British Museum is round in shape and protected from the sky by a great glass dome which provides the only natural light for the main reading room. As a result, he translates “and there were poor fellows working under the great dome” (p. 25) by “sotto la volta del cielo” (p. 42),<sup>7</sup> which in English would be the equivalent of “under the sky’s dome” or “under the vault of heaven.” Furthermore, by translating “that superfluity of intramural space” by “quel tanto di spazio in più”<sup>8</sup> – which roughly translates as “that little bit of extra space” – the irony at Henry Ryecroft’s expense is lost and this loss makes it difficult to interpret the book fully. As has been observed, irony is used by Gissing in *The Ryecroft Papers* to distance himself from the character in order to create “a challenging and unstable work of art, in which we can never be entirely sure of the author’s position.”<sup>9</sup>

It seems to me that in a literary translation it is important to retain the linguistic constants that make up that author's idiolect. With one or two exceptions<sup>10</sup> Professor Marroni

-- 32 --

has reproduced the repetitions used by Ryecroft, notably when, in the incipit, the word "life" occurs five times. However, he has also created a linguistic constant of his own – the proliferation in the text of "quietudine." He uses it not only to translate "quietude,"<sup>11</sup> but also for such different terms as "stillness,"<sup>12</sup> "leisure,"<sup>13</sup> "tuned one's mind,"<sup>14</sup> "tranquillity,"<sup>15</sup> "at peace"<sup>16</sup> and "calm"<sup>17</sup> (on more than one occasion).

Moreover, Professor Marroni is not innocent of occasional omissions from and additions to the text. Some of the additions appear to have been made in order to give greater strength to Gissing's text, for instance when "molto" is introduced in "parecchi testi molto antichi," the English text reading simply "several old ones."<sup>18</sup> On occasion these additions seem to aim at clarifying or explaining what Gissing/Ryecroft wrote. One such example is when, to Gissing's "the rest-harrow sometimes grows" the Latin name of the herb, "ononis," is added: "L'ononide, o restabue, cresce talvolta."<sup>19</sup> Another instance of explanatory addition is found when, in the same Summer section, Gissing writes: "My old Liddell and Scott still serves me." The translator adds a definition of the book concerned: "Il vecchio Liddell and Scott, il dizionario di greco, ancora mi è utile."<sup>20</sup> These additions would have been much more appropriately put to use in footnotes, thus leaving the text unaltered.

Some omissions imply personal interpretations of the English text. For example, in the passage referring to the first edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Ryecroft remarks that "the price [was] an absurdity – I think it was a shilling a volume," while the Italian reads "ad un prezzo ben oltre le mie possibilità,"<sup>21</sup> leaving out the recollection of the price he paid. In other places, if the omissions simplify the translation, they also mar its literary quality, as in the rendering of "which lets you see the white steam of the engine float and fall upon a meadow ere

-- 33 --

you pass," by "che ti lascia ammirare alle tue spalle il filo di vapore bianco che esce dalla locomotive."<sup>22</sup> In the present case the words ignored in the Italian translation – "float and fall upon a meadow" – are precisely those that turn a matter-of-fact description into something more artistic.

Perhaps the difficulties encountered in the process of translation account for some of these omissions. Ryecroft's recollections of his carefree childhood days by the sea "laughing if I slipped into the shallows among starfish and anemones!" read in the Italian version: "ridendo quando scivolassi tra stelle marine e anemoni."<sup>23</sup> The graphic detail "into the shallows" has gone. Apparently for the sake of simplification or smoother reading, two sentences are sometimes run together and a few words left out in the process; thus, when Ryecroft philosophises upon the human condition, in particular upon conflict and harmony in society. In one place we see him reflecting upon how frequently an individual comes across "cases of coldness, alienation, or downright enmity" within his own family or circle of friends: "the number will be considerable, and what a vastly greater number of everyday 'misunderstandings' may be thence inferred! Verbal contention is, of course, commoner among the poor and vulgar." Inexplicably, the Italian omits "of everyday 'misunderstandings'" and "Verbal contention is, of course, commoner." The two sentences have been reduced to the following words: "sarà un numero considerevole, e di qui può desumersi facilmente un numero considerevolmente più altro tra i poveri e la gente volgare."<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, despite all the reservations that have been made, *I taccuini segreti di Henry Ryecroft* will remain the first complete translation in Italian of *The Private Papers of Henry*

*Ryecroft*. As such, it is a major contribution to the knowledge of George Gissing in Italy.

-- 34 --

1. First published in Italy under the title *Il giornale intimo di Henry Ryecroft*, by Jole Pascarelli (Edizioni Paoline, 1957).
2. Arthur C. Young, ed., *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903* (London: Constable, 1961), p. 280.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
5. Royal A. Gettmann, ed., *George Gissing and H. G. Wells; Their Friendship and Correspondence* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), pp. 141-42.
6. Algernon and Ellen Gissing, eds., *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family* (London: Constable, 1927; reprinted in New York by Kraus, 1970), p. 370.
7. All my references are to the Oxford University Press edition (The World's Classics), 1987, edited with an introduction by Mark Storey. Unfortunately, the Italian edition does not mention which English text was adopted for the translation.
8. English text, p. 13; Italian text, p. 27.
9. Mark Storey, Introduction, p. IX.
10. *Coffee-shop* is translated by "modesta osteria" on p. 43 (English text p. 27) and by "caffé antichi" on p. 47 (English text p. 29); *omnibus* by "omnibus" on p. 49 (English text p. 31) and by "mezzi pubblici" on p. 50 (English text p. 32); *highway* by "parte di Londra" on p. 49 (English text p. 31) and by "selciati" on p. 85 (English text p. 65).
11. English text p. 59; Italian text p. 78.
12. English text, p. 17; Italian text p. 32.
13. English text p. 28; Italian text p. 46.

-- 35 --

14. English text p. 32; Italian text p. 50.
15. English text p. 49; Italian text p. 69.
16. English text p. 50; Italian text p. 70.
17. English text pp 50 and 59; Italian text pp. 70 and 78.
18. English text p. 66; Italian text p. 86.

19. English text p. 66; Italian text p. 86.
20. English text p. 67; Italian text p. 87.
21. English text p. 31; Italian text p. 49.
22. English text p. 55; Italian text p. 73.
23. English text pp. 55-56; Italian text p. 74.
24. English text p. 63; Italian text p. 82.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Notes and News

A special Gissing session will be held at the Convention of the Modern Language Association of America on Friday 28 December 1990 in Chicago. It is scheduled to take place from 10.15 to 11.30am in Columbus Hall B, Hyatt Regency. The session organizer is Professor Martha Vogeler, of California State University, Fullerton. The speakers will be Jacob Korg, who will discuss critical approaches to Gissing, Robert L. Selig, whose paper will be entitled "A Chicago Pretzel and a Gissing Feast," and Pierre Coustillas, who will review the scope and contents of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*.

-- 36 --

A seminar of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute on the Political Novel was held at the home of Dr. Russell Kirk and Mrs. Annette Kirk, Piety Hill, Mecosta, Michigan on 3, 4 and 5 August 1990. Dr. Kirk's lectures were entitled "Who Knows George Gissing?" and "The Novel as a Source of Political Wisdom." Pierre Coustillas read papers on "Gissing's Sense of the Past" and "Gissing and Democracy." The seminar took place in very pleasant and peaceful surroundings and was most efficiently and gracefully organized by Mrs. Kirk. Some thirty to thirty-five academics and students attended the lectures which were followed by many stimulating questions and answers. This seminar will be remembered as a landmark in the continuing interest in Gissing.

Volume 33, number 3 of *English Literature in Transition* is a number not to be missed. The leading article is "Three Stories by George Gissing: Lost Tales from Chicago," by Robert L. Selig, of Purdue University Calumet, who discusses the addition of the three stories to the Gissing canon, and reprints them: "The Portrait," "The Mysterious Portrait," and "The Picture" appeared in the *Chicago Daily News* on 18 June, 6 July and 14 August 1877 respectively. The article is preceded by a portrait of Gissing by Naudin (May 1884) and followed by a very useful bibliography of Gissing's 1877 American short stories. *English Literature in Transition*, Special Series Number 4, which can be ordered from ELT or from an agent, contains an essay by John Goode, "Unexpected Tales: Hardy and Gissing."

The Gissing Trust has sent a pamphlet issued by the Department of External Studies of the University of Leeds, "Courses for Adults 1990-1991," which reads in part:

-- 37 --

Wakefield Education Opportunities Centre,  
Margaret Street. GEORGE GISSING. One-year course, 24 meetings.  
25 September, 1.15-3.15 pm.  
Ted Tyler, M. A.

The course – which coincides with the opening of the centre at Gissing's birthplace – will concentrate on his fiction, exploring his art, the times in which he lived and the man himself.

We remind our readers that Audio Book Contractors (P.O. Box 40115, Washington, D.C. 20016-0115) offer *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* on cassettes (four 97's). Text read by Grover Gardner. 30-day rental: \$9.00. Purchase: \$26.95.

\*\*\*\*\*

Recent Publications  
Volumes

George Gissing, *A Freak of Nature or Mr. Brogden, City Clerk*: An uncollected short story edited by Pierre Coustillas, Edinburgh: The Tragara Press, 1990. Blue and pink stiff wrappers. 40 numbered pages. Edition limited to 110 copies (of which 85 are for sale) set in Bembo type and printed on Abbey Mills laid paper. Eight additional copies lettered A to H, printed on Ingres d'Arches paper were printed.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, n. d.

-- 38 --

Tenth impression. Same pictorial cover as for previous impressions, but gilt titling instead of red or blue. £3.50 or \$4.95 USA or \$7.95 Canada.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, New York: New American Library, [1989]. Fourth impression. Same pictorial cover as for the first and second impressions (the third has not yet been seen). The price has risen to \$5.95 (Canada \$7.95).

\*\*\*

Articles, reviews; etc.

Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, eds., *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, Volume 3 1903-1907, Cambridge University Press, 1988. Gissing and his friend Henry Hick appear in various letters.

Rosa Parolini Penati, "Scheda bibliografica," *I Quaderni della Brianza*, January-February 1990, pp. 161-63. Review of *Da Venezia allo stretto di Messina*.

Giovanni Rulli, "L'arte e la cultura greco-latina in Italia nel diario di viaggio di George Gissing," *L'Osservatore romano*, 21 July 1990, p. 3.

Mario Marcolla, "Diari : Un viaggiatore sulle rive dello Jonio," *Avvenire*, 8 September 1990, p. 16.

Robert L. Selig, "Three Stories by George Gissing: Lost Tales from Chicago," *English*

-- 39 --

*Literature in Transition*, Vol. 33 (1990), no. 3, pp. 277-296. The same number contains a review of John Sloan's *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge*, by Bruce Teets, pp. 358-361.